

Almost half of Canadians support Liberal child care plan: poll ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

More Canadians prefer the Liberal Party's child care plan to the Conservatives' Universal Child Care Benefit or the NDP's \$15-a-day plan, says a new poll.

The Liberal plan to create a Canada Child Benefit based on income and the number of children received support from 47 per cent of Canadians, according to a poll by Forum Research, released July 8.

Under the Liberal plan, all families with children will receive a tax-free monthly benefit based on their income and the number of children they have. The plan starts at \$6,400 per year per child under six and \$5,400 per year per child six to 17 years old and is slowly phased out depending on the family's income.

The Forum Research poll showed that Quebecers, Canadians aged 55 to 64 and those who earn \$60,000 to \$80,000 are more likely to support the Liberal plan. The poll also found that 40 per cent of Conservative voters and 39 per cent of NDP voters support the Liberal plan.

"Over the past two years I have met thousands of Canadians across the country. What I have heard is clear: under Stephen Harper, middle class Canadians have had to work harder just to make ends meet," Liberal Leader Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Que.) said when he released in the spring. "We have a plan for fairness. A Liberal government will give a tax cut to the middle class and provide middle class families with more money to raise their kids."

The Universal Child Care Benefit, which the Conservative government has recently increased in the 2015 budget, gives families \$160 per month per child under six years old and \$60 per month per child aged six to 17 years regardless of income. The Forum poll showed that 23 per cent of Canadians support the government's plan.

In addition to the child care benefits, which are taxable, the Conservatives have also introduced an income splitting program for families with children where couples can split up to \$50,000 per year to save on income tax.

"The government of Canada wants to ensure hard-working families start receiving their benefits as soon as possible. If you've got kids under 18, you qualify. It doesn't matter how much you make or the type of child care you choose," Employment and Social Development Minister Pierre Poilievre (Nepean-Carleton, Ont.) said in a recent statement urging parents to apply for the benefit.

The Forum poll, conducted July 5 to 7 by interactive voice response telephone with 1,200 Canadians and accurate to within three percentage points, showed that Canadians aged 35 to 44 support the government's plan the most at 27 per cent. The government's plan is also most supported by mothers of children under 18 years old (30 per cent), the least wealthy Canadians (28 per cent), and those in Atlantic Canada (28 per cent). Only 14 per cent of Liberal voters support the Conservatives' UCCB and only 10 per cent of NDP voters.

The NDP is proposing to work with provinces to create more child care spaces for \$15 per day per child across the country.

"As a father and grandfather, I understand the importance of childcare services," Mr. Mulcair said in a statement when announcing the plan last fall. "As a former Quebec cabinet minister, I've seen firsthand how affordable childcare helps families and boosts the economy. It's time parents across Canada were able to benefit from this type of program."

The Forum poll showed that 23 per cent of Canadians support the plan. Those who prefer the NDP plan the most are Canadians aged 18 to 34, those earning \$100,000 to \$250,000 and Canadians in Atlantic Canada and British Columbia.

In a statement, Forum Research president Lorne Bozinoff said: "It appears that voters see that giving a universal child care benefit even to those who don't need it doesn't make sense, but they are also distrustful of a proposal which promises day care at the bargain basement price of \$15 a day."

-reprinted from The Hill Times

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