

Justin Trudeau won't accept his family's child-care benefit ^[1]

Author: Toronto Star

Source: Toronto Star

Format: Article

Publication Date: 21 Jul 2015

AVAILABILITY

Read online ^[2]

EXCERPTS

Justin Trudeau is putting his money where his mouth is when it comes to the Conservative government's newly enhanced universal child-care benefit (UCCB).

The Liberal leader maintains it's wrong to give the benefit to wealthy families that don't need help raising their kids. And to underscore that point, he's going to give his own family's windfall to charity.

With three young children, one under the age of 6, Trudeau is entitled to collect annual UCCB payments of about \$3,400.

In an interview Tuesday, he said he'll give that money to La Maison Bleue, a charitable group in his Montreal riding devoted to helping vulnerable women during pregnancy and the early days of motherhood.

Child-care benefits should go to families who need the help, "not families like mine or Mr. (Prime Minister Stephen) Harper's," Trudeau told The Canadian Press.

"When it comes to child benefits, fair doesn't mean giving everyone the same thing, it means giving people what they need."

On the same principle, he previously promised that he and his wife won't take advantage of the Conservatives' newly introduced parental income-splitting scheme — forgoing some \$2,000 in potential savings on his family's annual income taxes.

Should the Liberals win this fall's election, Trudeau is vowing to scrap income splitting for couples with children, a measure worth more than \$2 billion which many experts have said would benefit primarily the top 15 per cent of income earners.

He's promising to plow that money, and more, into a single, new, tax-free child benefit. It would replace the UCCB and two other existing child benefits with what Liberals say would be more generous payments for most parents than what they currently receive from the Conservative government.

Trudeau said he actually agrees with the Conservatives that boosting child benefits will help stimulate the sluggish economy but he fundamentally disagrees with their insistence that all families, regardless of income, should get the same amount.

Under the Liberal proposal, benefits would be gradually reduced for families with incomes of more than \$150,000, and cut off entirely for those with incomes over \$200,000.

"We're choosing to do more for the people who need it by doing less for the people who don't," Trudeau said. "Our plan is progressive."

He stressed that the Liberal benefit would also be tax-free, not clawed back through income taxes like the UCCB.

The government is delivering the enhanced UCCB payments, retroactive to January, in lump sum payments to parents this week.

-reprinted from Toronto Star

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