

# Lakritz: Child care money is just more Tory sexism <sup>[1]</sup>

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## EXCERPTS

Ever notice how children and old people are the ones who get short-shrift from government? These two groups are at opposite ends of the demographic spectrum, but they have one thing in common that works against them — they require care.

Thus, we have the abysmal situation in Alberta — one that successive provincial governments promised to remedy for decades, but never got around to — of not enough long-term care spaces and even fewer quality ones. That's why I often hear members of the baby-boom cohort mutter that if they ever get to the point of needing long-term care, could someone please give them cyanide first?

Children require care, too. Unfortunately, it's still 1959 in Stephen Harper's Ottawa, where Wally and Beaver come home from school each day to a smiling June Cleaver, apron on and high heels clicking across the floor as she welcomes them with a plate of freshly baked cookies in her hand.

Gee, Wally, what about all those kids who need daycare? Well, Beav, the Harper government isn't interested in them. It scrapped the previous Liberal government's plan for a national daycare system, and instead bestowed \$100 a month on families with children under six. That did absolutely nothing for parents who must work, but can't find or afford daycare.

As Calgary mom Rachel McDougall-Sutherland wrote then-Liberal MLA Kent Hehr in 2013: "The \$100/month taxable child payments from the federal government do not cover 1/10th of regular daycare expenses in Calgary, and only act as a talking point in debate to defer the issue of equal rights for women in Canada."

Now, the federal Tories are gloating over their own generosity in giving universal child care money to families, who will get a payment worth six months of benefits, of \$1,040 if they have, say, two children aged eight and two. Just before the election, of course. Yet, the average monthly daycare cost for one child in Calgary is well over \$1,000.

This is just another way the Harper government punishes women who work, and consequently punishes their children. These families need quality, affordable and available daycare. This is insidious sexism because women who can't, won't or don't stay home with their children, are being discriminated against. It is 2015 everywhere but in Harperland, where sexist sentiment against working mothers runs rampant.

It's not just women living below the poverty line who are getting the short end of the federal government's stick. Throw out the stereotypes about single moms in low-income jobs. There are other kinds of single moms, too.

No woman entering university plans to become a single mother. That's not on her radar screen. But marriages end and life throws a lot of curve balls, and that working mom suddenly needs daycare for her little ones and she can't find it, or afford it on her one salary and the \$100 a month the Tories send her. Too bad, says the federal government, you should have stayed married like a good little girl, and been a stay-at-home mother. Merry Christmas in July, working mom. Here's a lump of coal for your stocking.

The former Liberal government's idea of national daycare was to give each province money to be used to remediate its own individual child care needs, whether for more kin-care subsidies for rural families or more urban daycare spaces. It was never about setting up government-run daycare centres, Soviet-style. That was mindless right-wing fearmongering, promulgated by those who think that, just like in the 1950s, neighbours or grandparents are available to babysit the kids.

Meanwhile, who pays the ultimate price for the government's sexism? The children. They end up in piecemeal, potentially unsafe, and quite possibly unlicensed child care arrangements where the quality of care is anyone's guess. Oh, well, I suppose there's some consolation. When they get old and they enter long-term care, which won't have been ameliorated in the intervening years, at least it will all feel familiar.

-reprinted from Calgary Herald

**Region:** Canada <sup>[3]</sup>

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