

Expert calls on universities & colleges to support national child care plan ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

Child care has become a key issue in the 2015 federal election and one of Canada's leading child care experts says universities and colleges have a stake in a national child care plan.

"Universities and colleges have been at the forefront of providing resources and infrastructure for child care centres, more so perhaps than we've seen in other sectors," said Martha Friendly, executive director of the Childcare Resource and Research Unit and the author of *Child Care in Canadian Universities*, a report on best practices and models for university child care.

Even though there is a solid foundation for child care on campuses, it's still treated as a private family responsibility — over which families often have little control.

Lack of spaces, long waiting lists, and high user fees keep the service from being available to parents in the community who need it.

"Most precarious academic workers and graduate students can't afford child care at all," Friendly said. "That's an equity issue."

She argues that universities and colleges have a responsibility to their employees and students to continue supporting child care centres on their campuses.

But should they be solely responsible?

"Post-secondary institutions should be taking leadership in advocating for a national child care program because they are invested in it," she said.

Campus child care centres are also at the forefront of research and teaching on early childhood education in a range of disciplines.

"Many of the campus child care centres are state-of-the art, such as at Trent University," Friendly said. "Public funding of child care programs would bolster accessibility and research carried out at these facilities."

According to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, child care is a human right.

CAUT, along with the policy research unit headed by Friendly, is part of Vote Child Care 2015, a pan-Canadian coalition calling on the next federal government to provide funding and leadership, to work with provinces, territories and Indigenous communities to make affordable quality child care a reality for all families.

"We want a national child care program," Friendly said. "It needs to be affordable, high-quality, public and non-profit. It should be a public service that is publicly regulated. We're hoping we can start implementing the program Oct. 20."

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