



END CHILD AND FAMILY POVERTY IN CANADA

**OPEN LETTER TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE STEPHEN HARPER,
PRIME MINISTER OF CANADA, THE HONOURABLE JIM FLAHERTY,
FINANCE MINISTER AND THE HONOURABLE TONY CLEMENT, PRESIDENT,
TREASURY BOARD
RE: RE-PROFILING THE UNIVERSAL CHILD CARE BENEFIT (UCCB) FUND**

February 6, 2012

Dear Mr. Harper, Mr. Flaherty and Mr. Clement:

We are writing to you on the sixth anniversary of your announcement of the Universal Child Care Benefit (UCCB) to make a proposal about this fund. We make this proposal in the current fiscal, social and economic context. In this context, the continuing high rate of child poverty and the acute need of Canadian children and working families for adequate child care must be foremost priorities.

Specifically, we propose that the \$2.5 billion annual federal government UCCB expenditure be divided between provincial/territorial/Aboriginal ECEC programs and the National Child Benefit for low and modest income families.

Families in all regions of Canada are desperate for high-quality, affordable child care so they can work or study while provinces, local governments and community groups are struggling to find the funds to provide the early childhood education and care programs that families need. Child care is becoming increasingly inaccessible while the most recent statistics show that more than 639,000 children in this country were living in poverty. The child poverty rate has dropped little since the House of Commons' 1989 unanimous all-party resolution to end child poverty by the year 2000. It's clear that at current levels, the Canada Child Tax Benefit/National Child Benefit is not adequate to do what the House of Commons committed to in 1989.

Both high quality child care and the eradication of child poverty have clearly demonstrated economic and social benefits that are well documented in research, while the UCCB cheque to families across-the-board does not.

As Canada's deficit has mushroomed during the world-wide economic crisis, your government has committed to "finding efficiencies through cuts to non productive spending" through the ongoing strategic operating review. With this in mind, we argue that Canadians simply cannot afford to let a substantial public expenditure like the UCCB without documented efficacy continue. .../p. 2

We note that Ottawa cannot state definitively what the \$2.5 billion annual UCCB fund (approximately \$15 billion since July 2006) has been spent on or whether the expenditure has had any impact on “choice in child care”, child/family well-being or productivity.

Thus, we urge your government to re-profile the UCCB fund, redirecting the annual \$2.5 billion expenditure to: a) earmarked transfers to provincial/territorial governments to support publicly-managed high quality affordable early childhood education and care programs and b) enhance the child benefit program for low- and modest-income families.

We would like to meet to discuss this proposal with you and your colleagues in the period leading up to the 2012 federal budget.

Yours truly,



Shellie Bird
Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada

Laurel Rothman, National Coordinator
Campaign 2000

cc. The Honourable Diane Finley
Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development

Jean Crowder, Member of Parliament
Official Opposition Human Resources Critic,

Lise St-Denis, Member of Parliament
Liberal Critic for Early Learning and Childcare

Daniel Paille
Leader, Bloc Quebecois

Elizabeth May, Member of Parliament
Leader, Green Party