

Federal investment in child care exactly what is needed right now

Just four years ago, high fees were keeping children from accessing early learning and childhood education and keeping women out of the workforce. Weak and sporadic public funding meant early childhood educators were fleeing the sector for jobs with higher wages, benefits and pension plans.

In 2021, the federal government finally took the advice of child care advocates and started to build a publicly-funded system that could make access to \$10-a-day child care universally a reality within ten years. Already, most provinces and territories have used federal funds to lower parent fees significantly and increase the number of licensed child care spaces.

I worry that the impact of the \$10-a-day plan is not given its due. Maybe this program is not recognised as an economic powerhouse because it focuses on young children and is especially beneficial for women.

The \$10-a-day child care plan came at the right time, delivering affordability to families, improvements for child care workers, and predictability to non-profit and public child care providers after the deeply unsettling upheaval of the COVID-19 pandemic and its economic and social impacts.

Today, we are again facing destabilization but this time it's President Trump and his henchmen sowing chaos, taking away jobs and putting at undermining our economic and social security.

Holding on to the \$10-a-day child care program and improving it will help get us through. Families need reliable, affordable, and high-quality child care to keep working. Also, a lot of jobs will come from building new centres and expanding child care services.

Today, families are saving up to [\\$16,200 per child, per year](#). Across the country, [900,000 children](#) are enrolled in affordable child care. After just two years of the \$10-a-day plan, labour force participation among mothers with a young child reached [an all-time high](#). The \$10-a-day plan helped us [avoid a recession](#) in 2023, and added [\\$32 billion to Canada's GDP in 2024](#) alone.

Of course, the plan needs improvement. Much more needs to be done to attract and retain qualified child care workers and grow the program. Every province and territory must improve wages province-wide, establish a sector-wide pension plan and health benefits for those who work in child care. Those next steps won't happen if government support for universal child care declines.

On Thursday, the Prime Minister announced that almost every province and territory had signed on to extend the \$10-a-day plan for five more years. NDP, Liberal and Conservative provincial governments all said yes. Only Saskatchewan's Scott Moe and Alberta's Danielle Smith refused, throwing their constituents into peril.

As a lifelong trade unionist, I'm left scratching my head. These premiers are walking away from a good deal – leaving billions of public dollars on the table. And they are turning away from a program that will help Canada withstand President Trump's attacks.

I urge them to reconsider, as I urge any and all future federal governments to stick with the program and make it even better.