

# BUDGET WATCH 2010



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## Putting the budget to work for all Canadians: Child care

### Conservative ideology ignores the benefits of child care

Funding a national childcare program should be a priority in the next federal budget. It's time for the Harper government to remove its ideological blinkers and do the right thing. It's in the best interest of our children; it will ensure that Canada complies with its international human rights commitments; and it will benefit working women.

### Investing in child care would give the economy a boost

Adequately funding a quality public childcare system across Canada would have huge benefits not only to children, but would also go a long way towards ensuring women's equality and the well-being of families. In addition, it would create thousands of good jobs for women, and help the country climb out of the current economic crisis.

Recent research conducted by the Child Care Human Resources Sector Council shows that investing \$1 million in the child care sector generates almost 40 jobs –four times the jobs generated by investing in the construction industry!

Child Care Advocacy Association Chair Jody Dallaire says that “*figuring out the best investment for tax dollars to stimulate the economy should be child's play for the government if it reads this important report*”.

Every dollar invested in childcare programs also increases Canada's GDP (Gross Domestic Product) by \$2.30, because it creates jobs and benefits children and families. More than 90% of the costs of hiring childcare workers return to the government as increased revenue.

According to Dallaire, “*as an economist, Prime Minister Harper should quickly realize that funding child care programs is not just the right thing to do for parents and children, but also the smart thing to do for Canada*”. Dallaire said an investment in the sector would practically pay for itself immediately while creating much needed jobs.

## **Funding public child care is an even better investment**

Investing in childcare is urgently needed. In Canada, less than one child care space in five is publicly regulated. Most children are sent to expensive, private, for-profit child care providers. In spite of the high costs, these child care facilities do not necessarily offer early learning programs, they don't respond to the needs of working women, and children's security is sometimes at risk.

## **Canada ranks in a tie for last in a recent UNICEF study on childcare around the world**

Since the Harper Conservatives came to power in 2006, they have cancelled the provincial and territorial agreements on child care. They've also slashed federal funding for child care programs, replacing it with a so-called "universal child care benefit" of \$100 a month per child under six, a payment that is fully taxed.

When consulted on whether this represents adequate funding for their childcare needs, PSAC members say this amount doesn't even cover the cost of two days of infant care in a big city.

## **We need public investment in child care services**

More and more people are coming to agree that there is a need for public investment in child care services; even some of our Members of Parliament.

In December, 2009, the all-party House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance issued a report (*A prosperous and sustainable future for Canada: Needed federal actions*) with the following recommendation:

***"The federal government, recognizing the jurisdiction of the provinces and territories as well as the need to compensate those provinces and territories that decide not to participate in a country-wide measure, implement a national child care plan providing high-quality, affordable and inclusive child care services. This goal should be achieved through federal transfer payments to participating provinces and territories, and the plan should include measurable targets and timelines."***

It's time for the Harper government to make children, not ideology, a priority.