

Ottawa Journal by David Tilson MP ? A closer look at Trudeau's National Child Care Proposal

Earlier this year, it was announced that the Liberal government was working with its provincial and territorial counterparts on a National Child Care Proposal.

The current federal government committed to providing \$400 million next year to the provinces and territories for child care, based on all of the provinces and territories agreeing to a national child care framework that would define the federal government's role in what is essentially a provincial matter. This announcement raises concerns about where the current Liberal government expects to find this funding and why it is removing choice in child care from parents.

According to the Liberal Party of Canada's Platform, the Party committed to starting discussions with the provinces and territories, as well as First Nations, to create a new National Early Learning and Child Care Framework, to be initiated through Ministerial meetings, within the first 100 days of taking office. The proposed framework is part of a wider collection of commitments with the intention of providing assistance to families, including the Canada Child Benefit (CCB); more flexible parental benefits under Employment Insurance (EI); and the Teacher and Early Childhood Educators School Supply Tax Credit.

The current Liberal government's suite of commitments may sound good for families; however, the reality is something completely different. The previous Conservative government understood the challenges the average Canadian family faces and that is why we introduced the Universal Child Care Benefit (UCCB). This benefit gave parents the ability to make their own choice in best meeting their child care needs. Sadly, the current Liberal government cancelled this benefit, as well as several other initiatives the previous Conservative government put into place to support families.

The previous Conservative government had a strong record of supporting families with young children. In 2013-2014, we provided more than \$6.5 billion in support of early childhood development and child care transfers to the provinces and territories, direct spending and tax measures for families. In 2007, a 25 per cent investment tax credit was introduced to businesses to create new child care spaces for their employees, to a maximum of \$10,000 per space. Between 2006 and 2014, 390,115 regulated child care spaces were created in Canada. In 2014, there were enough regulated centre-based child care spaces for approximately 24.1 per cent of all children aged five and younger and a number of jurisdictions introduced full-day kindergarten. On a national level in 2011, 33 per cent of parents used daycare centres; 31 per cent used home daycare; and 28 per cent had private arrangements (children younger than the age of four).

It is unfortunate that instead of building on the work of our previous Conservative government to support families, the current Liberal government has taken away choice in child care for families by scrapping the UCCB and is now stepping into a provincial/territorial matter that will cost \$400 million. This raises serious concerns about where the current government will find the money to honour its promise to the provinces and territories. The Minister for Families, Children and Social Development Jean-Yves Duclos himself has said the federal government has limited resources.

The previous Conservative government made supporting families a priority and did it in a way that was fiscally responsible. It was also a government that believed that parents are in the best position to make the best decisions with respect to their child care needs. The Conservative Opposition will continue to stand up for parents and families, despite the current government's efforts to remove choice in child care and to make financial promises without having the necessary funds to honour those commitments.

