#23 - Creating Systems to Provide Adequate Child-care Spaces to Ensure Parents - Particularly Women - Have Equal Opportunities to Enter the Workforce

Description

The much-anticipated introduction of the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care plan has created a higher demand for spaces as regulated child-care facilities struggle to find qualified staff, which in turn continues to impact parents – many of them women who continue to act as primary child-care providers – from entering or re-entering the workforce. Now that this provincially driven issue has been moved into the federal realm, the responsibility to ensure this national plan does not detrimentally impact businesses and the economy should be an impetus for the federal government to work with the provinces/territories to mitigate potential legislative solutions in effort to ensure enough child-care spaces are available.

Background

There have been several major attempts prior to the introduction of the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC) plan to create a national child-care strategy in Canada, starting in 1970 when The Royal Commission on the Status of Women noted that women should be 'free to choose whether or not to take employment outside their home' and that 'practical' obstacles that could impede them from exercising this right be eliminated.[119], As well, the report noted that child care is a 'shared responsibility' between the mother, father, and society. Since then, three more attempts were made including the 1986 Task Force on Child Care (Katie Cooke Task Force), the 1987 Special Committee on Child Care and the Foundations Program, which was cancelled in February of 2006.

A key stumbling block to creating a national strategy centered on the successful navigation of the arduous terrain of federal-provincial jurisdiction. However, that 'block' began to be chipped away when the federal government introduced its CWELCC plan in the 2021 budget which confirmed $30 billion to create 250,000 new child-care spaces nationwide by March 2026 to provide families more affordable options. Combined with previous investments since 2015, approximately $9.2 billion per year is expected to be invested in child care, including Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care, starting in the fiscal year 2025 to 2026.

The federal government negotiated deals throughout 2021 with the provinces and territories, securing a six-year $13.2 billion deal in March 2022 with Ontario that will result in lower fees for families and deliver $10 a day child care by September 2025.

Quebec, considered the North American leader in early childhood education, will receive $6 billion of federal money through the deal to complete its existing network of subsidized spaces

[119] 1. 'Report of the Royal Commission on The Status of Women in Canada' - 1970