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Poll results show Harper's "choice in child care" a failure

TORONTO—EnviroNics polling data show that the lack of affordable child care is a serious issue for 77% of Canadians, demonstrating that the Harper government is out of touch with the public and has failed to support parents struggling to find quality services.

"These results are a strong rebuke to the Conservatives, who have been claiming to have achieved 'choice in child care' for Canadian families by mailing them a small amount of money each month," said Jody Dallaire, spokesperson for Code Blue for Child Care.

When Quebec, which has its own child care system, is removed from the polling data, the results are even higher, with 80% of Canadians seeing lack of affordable child care as a serious issue (86% in Atlantic Canada, 85% in British Columbia, 78% in Ontario and 75% in the Prairies). The high numbers also hold true across male and female respondents, urban and rural communities, and show strong concern among homemakers as well as employed women. The issue is even a concern for a strong majority of Conservative voters.

"The results demonstrate that the Harper government has failed to address the increasing demand for affordable, high quality early childhood education and care services," said Dallaire. "The situation has long been a crisis, but with no leadership by the federal government over the last two years it is even worse today."

The EnviroNics poll also asked Canadians whether government had a role to play helping to meet parents' child care needs. Eighty-three per cent said that governments have an important role to play.

"Canadians are saying that we need to take care of this as a society, together, just as other developed nations have done. We can't just hand people cheques and let them fend for themselves. We need the right policies so that together we can build the services we need." Growth in child care spaces has slowed down dramatically since the Conservatives took office and tore up agreements with the provinces and territories for \$5 billion over five years to start to build a national child care system. The Harper government cut federal child care spending to \$600 million each year, down from \$950 million in 2006.

A 2006 report by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) ranked Canada as doing poorly in early childhood education and care compared to other developed nations. Canada had the lowest public investment and service access rates, and among the highest parent fees.

The survey of 1,000 Canadians 18 years of age and over was carried out between September 24 and October 4, 2008 and can be considered accurate to within plus or minus 3.2 percent, 19 times out of 20.

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CODE BLUE for child care

