



Canadians Rejecting Government Child Allowance, Poll Shows

TORONTO, June 20, 2006 – The results of a poll released today show that Canadians are rejecting Stephen Harper's plan to distribute a \$1,200 child allowance to parents with children under six years of age. The Environics poll asked more than 2,000 Canadians their views on child care and the response was clear – 76% of Canadians support a national affordable child care strategy such as the 2004 federal-provincial agreement that was cancelled by the Conservative government.

“Support for a national child care strategy was high across the country – in both rural and urban communities, in all provinces, and across all demographics. Canadians just aren't buying into the government's strategy,” said Monica Lysack, Executive Director of the Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada (CCAAC). “They see that this plan isn't going to help them find affordable, quality care for their children.” The poll showed that only 35% of Canadians support the government's child allowance plan.

What's most crucial for the minority Conservative government is that many Canadians say that their opposition to the child allowance is strong enough that it is likely to influence their vote in the next federal election. This is even true for one third of Conservative voters. “This will be a central issue in the next election,” predicted Lysack. “Stephen Harper should be very concerned.”

“Canadians perceive the Conservative allowance as an effort to buy them off as cheaply as possible, without actually solving the problem,” asserts Laurel Rothman, the National Director of Campaign 2000, a campaign to end child poverty. “After taxes and the loss of other benefits like the young child supplement, the net benefit will actually be much lower than \$1,200 for many Canadians.”

In fact, families in the lower middle-income range will take home the least - as little as \$301. “Compare \$301 to the cost of full-time, regulated child care - which can be as much as \$12,000 a year - and tell me, who is this going to help?” asks Rothman. It turns out that families in the highest income bracket will receive the most from Harper's plan, with net benefits of \$971. Rothman notes that Campaign 2000 supports an equitable child benefit and funding for a universal child care system.

Like many Canadian parents, Jody Dallaire, a mother of two from New Brunswick, finds good-quality, affordable child care difficult to find. “I don't how know a few hundred dollars will help me find the care that my child needs. The spaces just aren't available. This allowance is like giving me a bucket of gravel and telling me to go build a road.”

The results of the Environics poll are available at the CCAAC web site at www.childcareadvocacy.ca.

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For more information or to arrange interviews, contact:

Monica Lysack, Executive Director, 613.818.0067 (cell) or Amanda Mayer, 613.594.3196 ext 233