

Behind the spin: The party positions on child care

The Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada (www.childcareadvocacy.ca) has compared the party positions on child care. Here's how they measure up:¹

What we need	Liberal position	Conservative position	NDP position
An Early Learning and Child Care Act , making child care a permanent social program by guaranteeing the right of every child to services and accountability through standards for quality, universality, inclusion, accessibility and developmental programming.	Says it favours child care as a permanent social program, but has not made good on its 2004 election promise to “enshrine in legislation” the four principles of quality, universality, accessibility and developmental programming.	No legislation. Would cancel existing and pending federal/provincial child care agreements.	Protecting gains made through a child care act that enshrines quality and accessibility principles and makes funding to provinces conditional on their meeting standards.
Expansion of child care spaces so that by the end of 10 years every child in Canada has access to quality programs.	Beginning in 2010, annual funding of \$1.2 billion until 2015. Claims this will create 625,000 new spaces, however the promised funding is insufficient (\$1,600/space). A commitment to include child care in “renew(ed) pertinent infrastructure programs” without specifics.	In place of funding support to child care services, the Conservatives propose a \$1,200 a year per child taxable allowance to parents that is not tied to child care spending. A child care investment program of \$250 million a year to help employers, corporations or small business create child care spaces. Claims this will create 125,000 child care spaces. A similar program under Ontario’s Harris Government did not produce any new spaces.	Annual funding starts at \$1.8 billion and grows to \$2.5 billion by year 4 to support the creation and operation of 275,000 new non-profit, licensed child care spaces (\$9,000/space).
A commitment to child care as a public service .	Would not restrict federal funding to not-for-profit, community based child care, allowing for expansion in the commercial and corporate sector.	Would not restrict federal funding to not-for-profit, community based child care, allowing for expansion in the commercial and corporate sector.	Would ensure non-profit delivery that is accountable to parents and communities, restricting growth in the commercial sector and shutting the door on corporate child care.

¹ The Bloc Quebecois’ child care position relates mostly to Quebec, which already has a child care system. The BQ wants the federal government to turn over to Quebec the \$1.5 billion dollars saved in child care tax deductions since 1997, when the province introduced its \$5.00 a day (now \$7 a day) child care program.