



Letter to Child Care Advocates

CCAAC / ACPSGE Ottawa 27 Jan 06

Dear Child Care Advocates,

While Monday's election results represent a setback for child care and for progress on many other social equity and justice issues that matter to Canadians, the minority government is a fragile one. The minority government will need to rely on combinations of three other parties – the Bloc, the NDP and the Liberals – who all support funding child care programs.

While only 36% of Canadians voted for the Conservative minority government, a solid majority of Canadians – 64% voted for parties who support funding early learning and child care programs.

While the government may have changed, our mission stays the same: to work together for the right of all children to access a publicly funded, non-profit, inclusive, high quality child care system. We will continue to advocate for our goals even as the boxes are being unpacked in the Prime Minister's Office. We are proud of the efforts our community - parents, grandparents and advocates - has made during the election and are confident that these efforts will continue.

Today we are beginning to develop our strategy to ensure that all the work that has been invested in establishing a national child care program will not be undone. We will be counting on you to contribute to our collective work.

These are some preliminary thoughts for consideration:

1. This is a fragile minority government without a clear mandate for undoing the intergovernmental work put in place by the previous federal government. (Note that this was the federal government, not the Liberal party.)
2. There are several strong advocates for child care among the opposition caucuses.
3. Canceling the child care agreements will not signal that this is a minority government willing to work cooperatively.
4. We will be looking for very strong opposition statements – certainly from the Liberals and New Democrats – that maintaining the existing child care agreements is a “bottom line” for maintaining a government.

We will soon be sending an open letter to the new prime minister, pointing out that reneging on the child care funding previously committed in the federal budget will deepen the child care crisis. It will mean that provincial plans to expand and improve child care – plans that could support 250,000 funded child care spaces by 2007 – will be in jeopardy. The child care crisis will deepen, the quality of under funded programs will continue to be a problem and access will remain restricted to the lucky few.

Once again, we will deliver the message that the cash allowance (as little as \$1 a day for some parents)—more comparable to the old “baby bonus” than to a real child care program—will neither create services nor provide significant help with the costs of child care, even unregulated care.

Our message is that our struggle is not over. We’ve had setbacks before. But our commitment is clear: in the coming weeks and months, for whatever the duration of the Harper government, we will work with new allies and redouble our efforts to secure the right of all children to quality child care.

Sincerely,
Debra Mayer and Jamie Kass
Co-chairs, Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada