



## Federal Election 2011

### **BACKGROUND: Child Care**

Since 1981 YWCA Canada has advocated for affordable, quality, accessible child care. Thirty years later, a national plan to ensure comprehensive access to quality affordable early learning and child care services is not a luxury, a frill or a threat to Canadian families, it's a sensible response to changed roles of women. It's also essential to Canadian prosperity, a crucial support for children and parents and should become as normalized in our social structure as the public school system *as a choice for parents*.

#### **Child Care: Social Policy Gap and Shortage of Spaces**

Women's advances in the work force and education over the last three decades demonstrate an unstoppable movement toward equality and mark a quiet revolution in women's lives. Canada needs early learning and child care services, not a social policy gap that is decades behind reality. Despite dramatic changes in women's education and employment, early learning and child care services in Canada today remain an inadequate patchwork that does not offer choice. In 2008, Canada had regulated child care spaces for:

- 20.3% of children under 5
- 18.6% of children under 12

#### **Employment Numbers: Gender Gap Closed**

Women's employment in Canada has seen over 30 years of uninterrupted increases:

- Women and men are in the work force in virtually equal numbers
- Women surpassed men in paid employment in 2009: 50.9%
- 2009 employment rate for women with children under 5: 66.5%
- Employment rate increase for women with children under 3, 1976-2009: 233%

#### **Percentage of Women in the Workforce with a Child Under 4**

<b>1976</b>	27.6
<b>2009</b>	64.4

#### **Education: Gender Gap Reversed**

According to Statistics Canada, a "dramatic reversal has taken place on Canadian university campuses". In 1971, 68% of university graduates 25-29 were male, by 2006, 60% of university graduates 25- 29 were female.<sup>1</sup> Women reversed the gender gap in higher education 20 years ago, becoming the majority of university graduates in 1991.

#### **University Graduates Age 25-29**

<b>Year</b>	<b>1971</b>	<b>1981</b>	<b>1991</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2006</b>
<b>% Female</b>	32	46	51	58	60

## **‘ Past Promises**

In the dying days of the Paul Martin government Social Development Minister Ken Dryden obtained early-learning and child care agreements deals with all 10 provinces on the way to creating a national system of child care for Canada. The agreements were subsequently scrapped by the incoming minority government of Prime Minister Harper, and federal government leadership on early learning and child care services ground to a halt. In April 2009, NDP MP Olivia Chow re-introduced a private members bill, *The Early Learning and Child Care Act*, which had passed two votes in the House of Commons but died when the 2008 election was called.

## **Early Learning and Child Care Services in Canada Today**

With the absence of the federal government from the field of child care, provinces are moving forward at differing rates with partial schemes.<sup>2</sup> The pressure of women in the workforce and in higher education impacts regardless of budget deficits and governments are pressed to respond. The absence of the federal government from the field simply ensures that the response will be inadequate and patchwork.

## **A National Strategy for Early Learning and Child Care Services**

Changes which can be fairly described as a social revolution have already occurred. The social infrastructure to support those changes needs to be put in place. Acting on this macro view — that the workforce is equally women and men and women have surpassed men in higher education — properly falls to the national government of the country.

## **Snapshot: Early Learning and Child Care in Canada<sup>3</sup>**

<b>Number of children under 6:</b>	2.0 million
<b>Number of children 0-12:</b>	4.7 million
<b>Number of regulated child care spaces:</b>	867, 194
<b>Women in the workforce with a child under 6:</b>	1.1million
<b>Women in workforce with youngest child 3-5:</b>	77 %
<b>Women in workforce with youngest child 6-15:</b>	84%

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<sup>1</sup> M. Frenette & K. Zeman, *Why are the majority of university students women?* Statistics Canada, December 2008, <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/81-004-x/2008001/article/10561-eng.htm>

<sup>2</sup> Jane Beach, *Moving to a System of Integrated early Care and Learning in BC: Environmental Scan*, Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC and Early Childhood Educators of BC, July 2010.

<sup>3</sup> Childcare Resource and Research Unit, Trends and Analysis 2008, [www.childcarecanada.org](http://www.childcarecanada.org)