

## Kids First and the new Universal Child Care Allowance

### ***KIDS FIRST INFLUENCING POLICY***

Many of you have received Universal Child Care Allowance cheques. KF helped make this change in policy happen.

Kids First worked to provide research, suppressed by the daycare lobby, to all parties. Gathering and interpreting data is very time consuming but essential work in disproving arguments in favour of discrimination. For example, almost no one was aware that the daycare lobby is tax-funded, that only 13-15% of little children are in daycare, that daycare “wait lists” are bogus and that most daycares have vacancies, etc. (see <http://www.kidsfirstcanada.org/daycarerecommendations.pdf>).

We assured anyone who would listen that they would hear a lot more from the daycare lobbyists than from parents: **parents are not even considered “stakeholders” in “child care”** unless then use government-regulated facilities. So other parents’ voices are drowned out by paid lobbyists, and we have almost no access or time to get our voices heard.

We assured anyone who would listen that funding daycare rather than parents is a **vote loser**, contrary to the much-publicized spin.

However, at that time only the Conservative Party was at all interested. Dealing with facts rather than the dis-information provided by daycare lobbyist-advisors strengthened their capacity to improve policy. Now the federal Liberal and NDP parties have shown some openness to our input. They have had to change the rhetoric to emphasize support for both daycare and “income support”: expect competition for the parental vote in the next election.

We say the new policy is a small step towards equality. However, there is still far more funding allotted to daycare than to any other form of care: **parents are still being punished for looking after their own children.**

We also see this as a first step in reversing what is called the “post-familialist” or “post maternalist” agenda that has seen **Families with Dependent Children (FDC) de-funded of billions of dollars** over the last 2- 3 decades. Eliminated completely or dramatically reduced are: child-rearing tax deductions and credits, universal family allowance, FDC welfare eligibility and amounts, sales tax on children’s clothes, birth bonuses in Quebec of up to \$8000 per child, special wage/benefits for

family ‘breadwinners’. These cuts were made in order to transfer cash to “services” – daycare and related bureaucracy and lobbyist-researchers. These cuts and transfers were made by Federal and Provincial governments from all parties.

### ***LEGAL SIGNIFICANCE***

We told the government consistently that “child care” MUST be explicitly defined, not just as government-regulated daycare and preschool, but as the “care of a child including parental care”. Thus they have challenged the definitions currently in all policy and some laws that explicitly exclude parental care from the definition of ‘child care’. Many politicians, advisors and bureaucrats have fought - and continue to fight - hard to prevent parents from getting **equitable financial support**. But the government appears to be adapting the inclusive definition. This sets an important legal and policy precedent. This will impact the promised spending on tax credits for “child care” “spaces”.

### ***HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE***

In terms of policy direction, the Universal Child Care Allowance is very significant - a real sea change for Canada, and internationally. Canada is beginning to buck the trend of governments in the US, Australia, Sweden, etc. where tax money has increasingly gone to institutional daycare and parental care is the least supported option.

The taxable \$100/month amount is almost exactly the current value of the \$20 of the “Family Allowance” in the 1970s. But that was for **all dependent children 0-17, not just 0-5!**

Clearly in terms of the amount of money, it is not near enough to replace the income we forego in order to care for our children, or even to pay others to do that. However, \$1,200 (taxable at lower-income parent’s tax-rate) per year per child is more than \$0, which is what the vast majority would get under the discriminatory daycare funding deals. The 5 billion over 5 years amounted to just \$500/child/year 0-5, to be spent on bureaucracies in 3 levels of government, regulation, training, buildings, higher wages. There was no guarantee that more ‘spaces’ of ‘high quality’ would actually emerge at the end of the spend, or that children would fill the ‘spaces’.

### ***US AND CANADA DIVERGING ON CHILD FUNDING***

Under the Bush administration the US continues to increase funding for daycare/preschool while de-funding families. There, work-fare programs provide

huge subsidies to corporations to put single low income mothers in McJobs, and more money to corporations or non-profits who own the daycares their babies attend. The movie, *Bowling for Columbine*, highlighted the shooting death of a child by a 6 year old whose mother was bussed out at 6 am (before daycare or school starts) to a low-pay work-fare McJob in a high-end mall.