

Investing in our children's early years

NDP **BACKGROUNDER**

Our children's first years are their foundation for lifelong success—or struggle. Healthy environments, nutrition and engagement are crucial. And we know that learning-oriented child care is one choice that gives kids a valuable head-start.

Yet, 18 years after Parliament passed Ed Broadbent's motion to end child poverty by 2000, nearly 800,000 kids live in third-world conditions that sap their potential. And while most families with preschoolers rely on outside child care, Canada's patchwork of public programs can't even accommodate one in five. With a shortage of 1.4-million quality spaces, many families can only afford options that may short-change their kids.

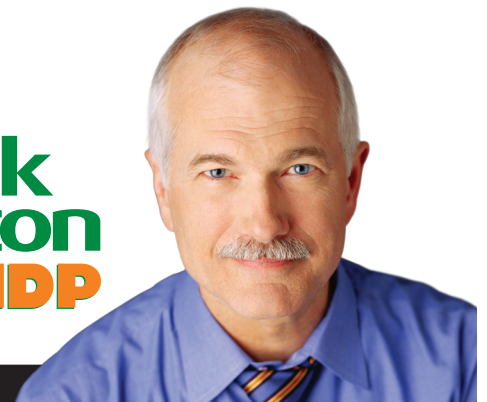
When European countries invested to ensure child care for most of their citizens, they found that each dollar spent returned two more to the economy. But here in Canada, three straight Prime Ministers have broken their commitments to improve our kids' early years, squandering billions on corporate tax giveaways instead.

It doesn't have to be this way.

It's time for a Prime Minister who's ready to make child poverty history—and quality, affordable child care a reality. It's time for a Prime Minister who will put you and your family first. Jack Layton will be that Prime Minister.

Don't let them tell you it can't be done.

**Jack
Layton**
NDP



Stephen Harper can't be trusted.

- One of his first acts as Prime Minister was to cancel agreements with Canadian provinces to fund the creation of affordable child care spaces for working families.
- Ignoring all advice from early learning advocates, he committed to create 125,000 new at-work child care spaces a year by offering tax credits to private employers—and not one new space has ever been created through this scheme.
- He replaced his failed tax credit scheme with a \$250-million provincial child care transfer—one fifth of what experts say is needed to begin filling the national shortage of regulated, affordable child care spaces.
- His “Universal Child Care Benefit” is a deceptive family allowance subject to unfair clawbacks—families that need childcare the most get the least, and nobody gets more than \$100/month, which does little to offset the average family's child care costs.

Stephane Dion is not the change we need.

- By instructing his MPs to skip crucial votes, he rubber-stamped Harper's plan to squander \$50-billion on tax giveaways for large corporations—200 times more than this year's federal investment in new child care spaces.
- In 1993 and every election thereafter, Liberal governments promised to launch a national child care program with 50,000 new spaces every year—but did nothing until their fragile 2005 minority government was pressured to sign first-step deals with provinces—which they didn't bother to protect with legislation. That's not the change we need.

Jack Layton's New Democrats: Putting you and your family first.

This election, Jack Layton and his team of New Democrats are presenting a plan invest in your children's early years. Already, Layton's team has led the way in Parliament:

- Successfully passed at Second Reading the **Early Learning & Child Care Act**—legislation to finally establish licensed child care as a national program governed by same principles as the Canada Health Act: quality, accessibility, affordability, and universality.
- Staged a cross-Canada tour to expose efforts by multinational child care providers to import their “**big box**” profits-before-development approach by buying out hundreds of community-based operators.
- Successfully passed a motion enshrining “**Jordan's Principle**”, which ensures that First Nations children will no longer be denied access to medical care and essential services while governments bicker over who should pay the bills.
- Tabled legislation **banning exploitative advertising** targeting kids under 13—ads that generally promote unhealthy food products with massive profit margins.
- Co-launched a prototype **Children's Health & Nutrition Initiative** to build a national coalition of stakeholders who are passionate about Canada becoming a world leader in making safe and healthy food available to all children and reshaping our communities to better support child health.