

Canadians still waiting for child care



Canadian Union of Public Employees
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Stephen Harper revealed a new program aimed towards female entrepreneurs on Monday. The plan, which promises to extend parental and maternity benefits to the self-employed, was an attempt to curry favour among female voters looking for real action on the national child care crisis.

The plan, like so many of Harper's other child care policies, is cold comfort to working women looking for real child care solutions. The Conservatives' paltry gesture does nothing to address the real equality issues that working women experience.

Due to casual employment and part-time jobs, many women don't even qualify for EI. And the Conservatives' new proposal still doesn't change the fact that the EI stipend itself remains down at only 55% of a worker's salary.

But Harper's wilful blindness is nothing new. This is the same government that dismantled plans for Canada's first national early learning and child care program and gave us the Universal Child Care Benefit (UCCB) instead. The UCCB is a monthly cheque mailed to families with children six and younger. Families get a taxable \$100 a month per child.

But for working women who can't afford child care, \$100 couldn't even buy a week, never mind a month. And the cheques don't help if parents can't find a space for their kids. Since the Conservatives came to power in 2006, the expansion of child care spaces has dropped to its lowest level in years.

The daily reality is long wait lists, unaffordable fees and dubious quality. As a result, Canada has the least accessible and lowest quality early education and child care program of any country belonging to the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

We have an opportunity in this election to turn Canada around. We need a national plan to provide quality early childhood education and care for everyone who needs it. We need a government who will increase federal funds for childcare, and we need federal legislation to ensure that child care is high quality in all provinces and territories.

This fall, we're voting for the next generation of children and grandchildren who deserve the best start possible. Make your vote count. Stand up for child care.