

FINAL
REPORT

Canadians' Attitudes Toward
National Child Care Policy

Prepared for the:
Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada

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pn 5920



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INTRODUCTION

Environics Research is pleased to submit this report to the Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada regarding public opinion among Canadians regarding child care and their reactions to proposed changes in policy from the new Conservative government.

Environics conducted telephone interviews with 2,005 Canadians (18 years of age and over), between May 5 and 10, 2006. A sample of this size would be expected to provide results accurate to within plus or minus 2.2 percent, in 19 out of 20 surveys.

The objectives of this research are as follows:

- To determine Canadians' attitudes towards child care programs, their level of importance and how they are beneficial
- To measure support for a role for government in the provision of child care
- To measure awareness of support for the proposed \$1,200 allowance per child being proposed by the Conservative government.
- To determine how Canadians view the relative advantages of the \$1,200 allowance compared to funding for more child care spaces.
- To determine the impact of new information on support for the \$1,200 allowance.
- To measure the political impact of a cancellation of proposed government funding of affordable child care spaces.

A more detailed description of the methodology used to conduct this survey is presented at the back of this report, along with a copy of the questionnaire.

This report begins a detailed analysis of all survey findings accompanied by graphics illustrating the results. Provided under separate cover are detailed "banner tables" that present the results for all survey questions for the total sample, and for a number of key subgroups of the population by demographic and attitudinal profile (e.g. age, gender, children under six, political preference). *Unless otherwise noted, all results are presented as a percentage.*

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The findings of this survey reveal a number of things about Canadians' overall attitudes towards the issue of child care, their opinions about various policy options, and the potential political impact of these.

First of all it is clear that the Canadian public places a high value on child care programs and the importance of affordable child care to the fabric of society. The vast majority regard the lack of affordable child care to be a serious problem, and there is almost unanimous agreement on the need for governments to play a role in helping parents meet their child care needs. Moreover, this view is by no means limited to parents of young children (although this group may be among the strongest proponents), but holds true for Canadians across all demographic and regional strata, as well as across political party affiliations. There is a strong public consensus that child care programs are beneficial both in terms of the benefits they provide to children in early development and in preparing them for school, as well as in helping parents, particularly those with lower incomes, participate in the work force. Consistent with this viewpoint, Canadians strongly oppose a move by the federal government to cut funding for research into child care as well as cutting funding to the provinces to help monitor the quality and delivery of child care services.

Given the public's support for a strong child care infrastructure, it is not surprising that a strong majority of Canadians endorse the plan announced in 2004 to create a national early learning and child care system that has a goal of providing affordable child care to all parents who need it. This support is consistent across all demographic and geographic groups and among supporters of all political parties, including the Conservatives.

When this plan is compared with the Conservative plan to replace it with a \$1,200 a year allowance for each child under the age of six, Canadians express a preference for the former by a 50 percent to 35 percent margin (with the remaining 15 percent having no clear opinion either way). This preference is driven partly by the fact that majorities believe the child care agreements with the provinces would be more effective in creating enough affordable child care spaces, preparing children for school, ensuring access to low income families and in to families in all regions of the country. This preference is also a function of concerns that the \$1,200 allowance would not be enough to make a significant difference to parents in need, and that there is no way to ensure the money is actually spent on child care. The primary relative advantage of the \$1,200 allowance is that it is perceived as providing parents with more choice, but on this perception Canadians are evenly divided.

Despite some suggestions that Canadians living in rural areas have a different perspective on child care than those living in cities, the results of the survey indicate no significant differences of opinion between urban and rural Canadians when it comes to their preference for the funding of a national child care system.

The option Canadians most strongly favour is for the government to proceed with both plans, and continue to fund the provinces for the provision of affordable child care, in addition to providing parents with the \$1,200 allowance. That being said, fewer than half of Canadians think the opposition parties ought to defeat the government in Parliament over this issue.

What impact might this issue have on Canadians' support in the next federal election? Close to half of Canadians say that the issue of child care is likely to influence how they vote in the next federal election, with one-quarter indicating it will definitely have an effect on who they support. It is notable that those who say they will be influenced tend to be those who favour the continued funding of affordable child care. Moreover, to the extent that this issue will have an impact on voting intentions in the next election, it is far more likely to make people less likely to vote for the ruling Conservatives, than to vote for them. Those who voted for the opposition parties in the last election overwhelmingly say that if the Conservative go ahead with their proposed child care plans, it will make them less likely to vote Conservative, while Conservative voters are split in terms of whether it makes them more or less likely to vote Conservative next time. It is premature at this point in time, however, to accurately predict the impact this issue will have on voter preferences, relative to other issues and priorities that will be front and centre when and if Canadians return to the polls in the next year.

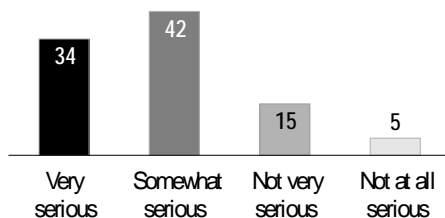
SURVEY FINDINGS

Seriousness of lack of affordable child care

The vast majority of Canadians consider the lack of affordable child care to be a serious problem.

Over three-quarters of Canadians (77%) believe that the lack of affordable child care is a very (34%) or somewhat (42%) serious problem in Canada today. Just twenty percent feel this is not very (15%) or not at all serious (5%).

Problem of lack of affordable child care in Canada
May 2006



The view that the lack of affordable child care is a very serious problem is particularly strong among women and among residents of Atlantic Canada, Ontario and British Columbia. It is notable that in Quebec, where there is already widespread access to affordable access, only 17 percent regard this as a “very serious” problem. It is also notable that those living in rural areas are just as likely to regard this as a serious issue as are those living in major urban centres.

It is also notable that the proportion who regard the lack of affordable child care as a very serious problem rises to 45 percent in households who have children under the age of six and this proportion is consistently high even among those households where there is a stay at home parent.

A large majority of those who voted for all the political parties in the January 2006 election regard the lack of affordable child care as being a very or somewhat serious problem. The proportions who regard this as a very serious problem range from a high of 51 percent among NDP and 42 percent among Liberal voters to a low of 26 percent among Conservative voters.

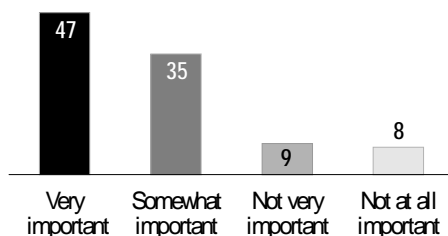
Role of governments in child care

Canadians overwhelmingly feel that governments have an important role to play in child care and they also agree with governments creating an affordable national child care and early learning system.

When Canadians are asked how important a role they believe governments should play in helping parents meet their child care needs, an overwhelming eight in ten (82%) feel that government should play a very (47%) or somewhat (35%) important role. Less than two in ten (17%) feel that government should play a not very important role (9%) or no role at all (8%).

Role of government in helping parents meet child care needs

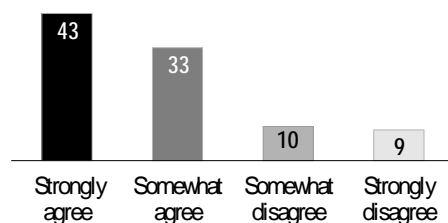
May 2006



Belief in the importance of a role of government in child care is consistent across all regions and among all demographic groups. It is notable that the view that this is “very important” is particularly prevalent among women (51%), 18 to 44 year olds (52%), residents of the Greater Toronto Area (62%), those who speak languages other than English and French at home (57%) and those with family incomes of less than \$25,000 per year (56%). It is particularly notable that among those with children under the age of six in their house the proportion who feel that governments should play a very important role rises to (58%). While supporters of all the opposition parties have a greater tendency to believe that governments should play a very important role in helping parents meet their child care needs, even among Conservative supporters almost four in ten (37%) also take this position.

The vast majority of Canadians also agree with the proposed national child care program for Canada that had been announced in 2004. When Canadians are told that this would have created a national early learning and child care system with the goal of providing affordable child care to all parents who need it, three quarters (76%) strongly (43%) or somewhat (33%) agree with this approach. Two in ten (19%) strongly (9%) or somewhat (10%) disagree.

**National child care system for Canada
to provide affordable child care to parents**
May 2006



Agreement with this type of national child care system for Canada is very strong across all demographic and regional segments. Those most likely to strongly agree with it include women (48%), 18 to 29 year olds (48%), Atlantic Canadians (49%), residents of the Greater Toronto Area (55%), those who speak neither English nor French at home (54%) and those with annual household incomes of less than \$25,000 (53%). Once again, we find that agreement with this approach is particularly strong among those with children under the age of six in their households (54%). It is notable that while support for this system is particularly strong among parents of children under six who currently have children in a day care facility (60%), even among families where there is a stay-at-home parents, almost half (47%) strongly agree with having a national child care system. A majority of NDP and Liberal voters (55% each) strongly agree with this kind of child care system, as do one third (33%) of Conservative voters.

Perceived impact of child care programs

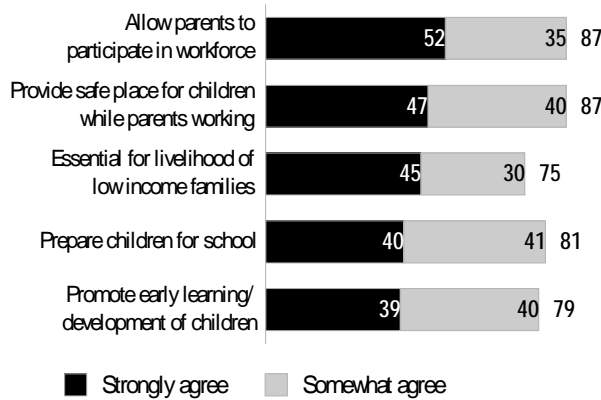
There is a broad consensus among Canadians that child care programs allow parents to work, provide a safe place for children, prepare children for school, promote early learning and development of children and are essential for the livelihood of low income families.

All in all, the vast majority of Canadians at least somewhat agree that child care programs in Canada accomplish each of five objectives. These findings are evidence of the extent to which Canadians do have a positive regard for child care programs and the impact they can have both on children and on parents. These perceived positive impacts are seen consistently across all demographic and regional groupings. It is notable that even among people who voted Conservative in the last federal election; overwhelming majorities agree that child care programs accomplish all of these objectives.

The highest level of agreement is with the notion that child care programs allow parents to participate in the workplace with 87 percent expressing agreement; and of those, 52 percent express strong agreement. Similarly, 87 percent of Canadians also agree (47 percent strongly agree) that child care programs provide a safe place for children while their parents are working.

Eight in ten Canadians also agree that child care programs help prepare children for school (40 percent strongly agree) and that they promote the early learning and development of children (39 percent strongly agree). Three quarters of Canadians agree that child care programs are essential to the livelihood of low income families with 45 percent expressing strong agreement with this.

Impact of child care programs in Canada today
May 2006

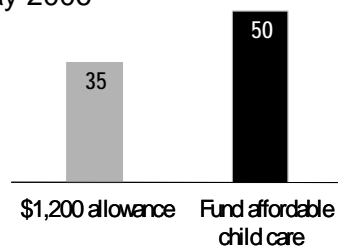


Preference for \$1,200 allowance vs. funding for affordable child care

Most Canadians prefer that the government fund affordable child care spaces instead of giving parents a \$1,200 annual allowance.

When Canadians are told about two possible plans for child care – one plan similar to the previous federal government’s plan and consisting of funding to provinces to create 100,000 new affordable child care spaces, and the other being the Conservative government plan to provide parents with \$1,200 per year for each child under six – a plurality of one half (50%) favour the funding of new child care spaces. Just over a third (35%) prefer the \$1,200 allowance. The remaining 15 percent is made up of people who have no preference, say it depends or insist on both approaches.

\$1,200 allowance vs. funding for 100,000 affordable child care spaces – preferred government action
May 2006



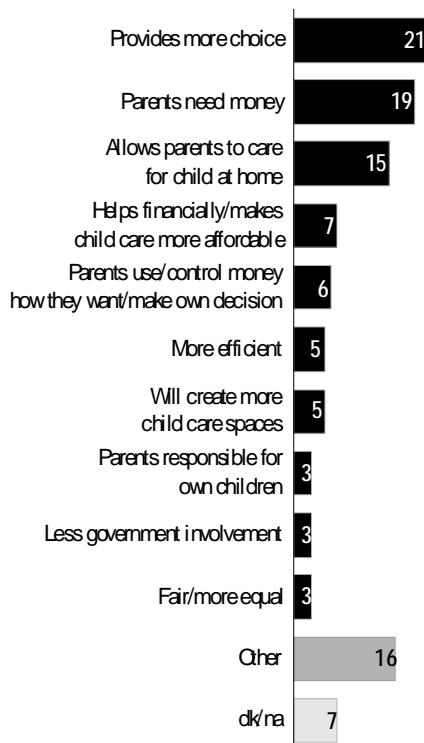
Support for the funding of affordable child care is highest among women (54%), 30 to 59 year olds (55%) and Montrealers (59%). Opinion tends to be more evenly split among younger people, rural residents and among those who have children under six years of age. The only segment of the population that clearly favours the \$1,200 allowance are people with children under six where there is also a stay at home parent, though even in this group, a large minority of 37 percent prefer the funding of affordable child care.

It is also notable that among people who think that the lack of child care is a very serious problem, fully 65 percent prefer the funding of new affordable child care spaces over the \$1,200 annual allowance. Also, among Canadians who say that child care policy will definitely or likely influence their vote in the next election, six in ten (59%) prefer the funding of affordable child care. There is more divided opinion among people who say that this issue will not be a major influence on their voting decision.

Politically, there are also some notable patterns. Preference for funding to provinces to create 100,000 new affordable child care spaces is very strong among supporters of the NDP (63%), Liberals (66%) and BQ (62%). A majority of those who did not vote in the last election (53%) also favour this option. While a majority (52%) of those who voted Conservative prefer the \$1,200 allowance – which was a centrepiece of their election platform - it is significant that 33 percent also prefer the funding of affordable child care spaces.

Reasons for preference for \$1,200 allowance

May 2006



In an open-ended question, Canadians give a wide variety of reasons for preferring that government implement one plan or the other. The main reasons that are given for preferring the \$1,200 allowance are that it provides more choice (21%), that parents need the money (17%), that it allows parents to care for children at home (15%), helps parents financially and makes child care more affordable (7%), that it gives parents more control over money and lets them make choices (6%), that its more efficient (5%) and that it will create more child care spaces (5%). The remainder give a wide variety of other reasons for preferring this option. Clearly though, the reasons for preferring the \$1,200 allowance tend to revolve around giving parents a choice of how to spend their money and the fact that this will mean money in parents' pockets.

Those who prefer funding to the provinces to create 100,000 new affordable child care spaces also give a variety of reasons for their preferences. The top two reasons given are that \$1,200 isn't enough to make a difference (22%) and that parents may spend the \$1,200 on other things (22%). Other reasons given by smaller proportions include that more child care spaces will be available (7%), that the allowance is taxable and so people won't get as much as they think (5%), that it won't create enough new spaces (5%), or that it just sounds better in general (4%).

Reasons for preference for funding for affordable child care spaces
May 2006



Which plan does a better job of accomplishing goals?

Most Canadians think funding child care spaces is more likely than the \$1,200 allowance to create enough affordable child care spaces, prepare children for school and ensure access to child care for those with low incomes and in all provinces and regions of Canada.

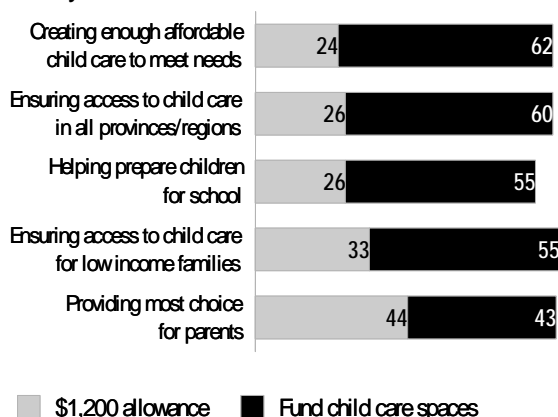
When Canadians are asked which of the two child care policies they think would do a better job of accomplishing various goals, it is clear that in almost every case, they think that the funding of child care space is more effective.

Solid majorities of Canadians think that funding to the provinces to create child care spaces will do a better job of “creating enough affordable child care spaces to meet the needs of Canadian parents” (62%), “ensuring access to child care in all provinces and regions of the country” (60%), “helping prepare children for school” (55%) and “ensuring access to child care for low income families” (55%).

Canadians are evenly split on which plan would do a better job of “providing the most choice to parents” with 44 percent saying that the \$1,200 annual child care allowance will do a better job in this regard compared to 43 percent who pick the funding to provinces for child care spaces.

Which plan does better job?

May 2006



In general, the demographic groups that are most likely to feel that the funding of child care programs will do a better job in each of these areas include: those living in the Atlantic provinces and to a lesser extent in Quebec and those with post-secondary educations. Those who voted for all of the opposition parties are also much more likely to think that the funding of child care spaces will do a better job and it is also notable that those who consider the lack of affordable child care spaces to be a very serious problem and those who say that this issue will influence their vote in the next

election are much more likely to think that funding affordable child care spaces will do a better job in each of these areas.

The only segments of the population that tend to think that the \$1,200 allowance will do a better job in most of these areas are homemakers. Those who voted Conservative in the last election and stay at home parents children under six tend to be divided, as are those who do not think that the lack of affordable child care spaces is a serious problem in the first place.

There is little significant difference of opinion between Canadians living in large urban centres and those in rural areas or between those who have children under the age of six and those who do not.

As mentioned above, Canadians overall are quite divided as to which plan does a better job of “providing the most choice to parents”. There are some demographic patterns here. Men tend to feel that the \$1,200 allowance will provide more choice while women tend to choose the funding of child care spaces. Those aged 18 to 29 years of age tend to choose the \$1,200 allowance while those 45 and over tend to feel that the funding will provide more choice for parents. Among those who have children under six in their household, a majority (56%) think that the \$1,200 allowance gives them the most choice compared to 35 percent who opt for the funding of child care spaces.

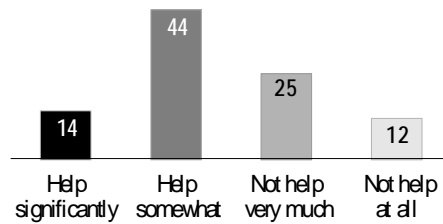
Conservative voters also tend to think that the \$1,200 allowance gives parents the most choice, while Liberals think that the funding of child care spaces does a better job in this regard. Others are divided.

Significance of \$1,200 allowance

While a majority think the \$1,200 allowance will help Canadian families afford the kind of child care they want, only a small minority think it will help significantly.

Over half of Canadians (58%) think that a \$1,200 allowance per child is likely to help the average Canadian family afford the type of child care they may want. However, only 14 percent think this will help “significantly” and 44 percent think it will only help “somewhat”. In addition, 37 percent think that the \$1,200 allowance will not help very much (25%) or will not help at all (12%).

**\$1,200 allowance as help to average family
in affording desired type of child care**
May 2006



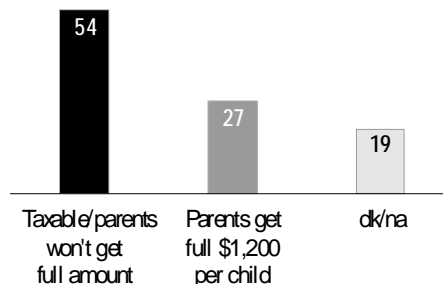
These results are very consistent across all demographic segments of the population, though there is a slight tendency for Quebecers and those with lower incomes to be more likely than others to think that the allowance will help significantly. In the case of Quebecers, this may be partially explained by the fact that the current child care program in that province actually only costs seven dollars a day (i.e. less than two thousand dollars a year) Among parents of children under six years of age who are the ones who would actually get the allowance, 19 percent think it will help significantly and another 42 percent think it will help somewhat, compared to 35 percent who think it will not help very much or at all. It is also notable that even among Canadians who prefer the \$1,200 allowance over the funding of child care spaces, only 25 percent think that the allowance will help significantly and only 20 percent of Conservative voters think it will help significantly.

Awareness and impact of \$1,200 being taxable

A significant minority assume the \$1,200 is not taxable, or are not sure. When told that it is taxable, support for the allowance declines.

Just over half of Canadians (54%) believe that the \$1,200 allowance will be taxable and that most parents will not get the full amount. One quarter (27%) believe that the parents will actually get the whole \$1,200 and a further 18 percent have no opinion.

**Awareness of taxable status
of \$1,200 allowance**
May 2006

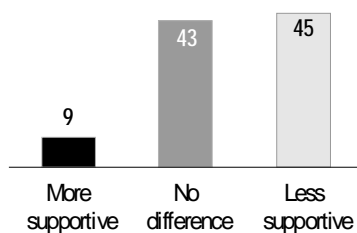


The misconception that most parents will get the entire \$1,200 is most widespread among 18 to 29 year olds (34%), Albertans (39%), those who speak languages other than English or French at home (33%), homemakers (35%) and those who have children under six years of age (32%). There is no variance by income in terms of how Canadians respond to this question.

It is also notable that among those who prefer the \$1,200 allowance over the funding of child care spaces, 46 percent are aware that the money will be taxable, compared to 37 percent who think parents will keep the whole \$1,200. Similarly, 51 percent of Conservative voters know that the allowance will be taxable but one third (32%) think that parents will keep the whole amount.

When Canadians are told that the \$1,200 will in fact be considered taxable income, so that most parents will only get to keep a portion of it, almost half (45%) say that knowing this makes them less supportive of the allowance. Nine percent say this makes them more supportive and 43 percent say it makes no difference to them. It is notable that among Canadians who supported the \$1,200 allowance in the first place, 32 percent say that know that the allowance will be taxable makes them less supportive, 11 percent say it makes them more supportive and 53 percent say it makes no difference to them. Similarly, 36 percent of Conservative voters say that knowing this makes them less supportive of the plan.

\$1,200 allowance is taxable
May 2006



Tax breaks to businesses for creation of child care spaces

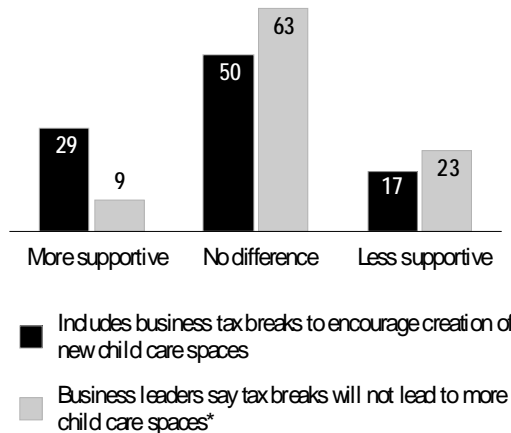
One-third of Canadians are more supportive of the Conservative proposal when told it includes tax breaks to businesses to create child care spaces. Knowing that business leaders do not believe these tax breaks will accomplish this has little impact on their opinion.

Conservatives are also proposing to provide tax breaks to businesses and other organizations as a way to encourage them to create new child care spaces. Three in ten Canadians (29%) say that knowing this makes them more supportive of the overall Conservative proposal, 17 percent say this makes them less supportive and 50 percent say it makes no difference to them. There are no demographic or regional patterns in the extent to which Canadians say that this makes them more favourable.

It is notable that among people who preferred the \$1,200 allowance over funding for child care in the first place, 37 percent say that knowing about these tax breaks makes them even more supportive of the Conservative proposal. But awareness of these tax breaks does little to influence those who initially prefer the funding of affordable child care spaces. While 24 percent of them say that the tax breaks for businesses now makes them more favourable towards the Conservative proposal, this is balanced by 22 percent who say this makes them even less favourable and 53 percent who say this makes no difference to them.

Those who say that the tax breaks for businesses makes them more supportive of the Conservative proposal or who favour the \$1,200 allowance and are indifferent to the business tax break, were told that many business leaders have recently stated that they do not believe these tax breaks will encourage the private sector to create any new child care spaces. This information has little on impact on their over support for the Conservative proposal. Over six in ten say that this makes no difference to them and nine percent say that it actually makes them more supportive. However, 23 percent do say that knowing this now makes them less supportive of the Conservative child care proposal.

Business tax breaks
May 2006

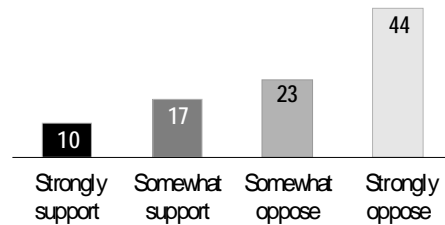


Ending funding of research into child care

The vast majority of Canadians oppose the Conservative plan to stop funding research into child care and to stop supporting the provinces in the monitoring of the quality of child care services.

Two thirds of Canadians (66%) strongly (44%) or somewhat (23%) oppose the Conservative plan to stop funding research into child care or to help fund the provinces to monitor the quality or delivery of child care services. Just 27 percent strongly (10%) or somewhat (17%) support these funding cuts. Opposition to these cuts in funding tends to be most intense among women (71% opposed), 18 to 29 year olds (72%), Quebecers (71%) and households with children under the age of six (71%).

Cutting funding of child care research and monitoring of quality and delivery of child care services
May 2006



While those who prefer that the government fund affordable child care spaces overwhelmingly oppose these research funding cuts (78%), it is notable that a majority (53%) of those who prefer the \$1,200 allowance also oppose these cuts in research funding. Also, while those who voted for the opposition parties in the last election overwhelmingly oppose these cuts, less than half (44 percent) who voted Conservative are supportive of the cuts. Among those who say that child care policy will influence how they vote in the next election, three-quarters (74%) say that they are opposed to these cuts.

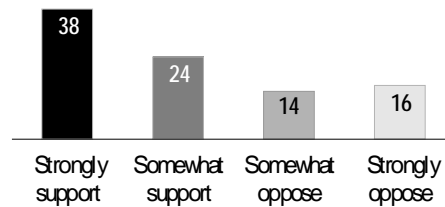
Funding both \$1,200 allowance AND affordable child care spaces

Most Canadians support the opposition parties' proposal of having the \$1,200 allowance in addition to continuing funding for the creation of affordable child care spaces.

Almost two-thirds of Canadians (63%) strongly (38%) or somewhat (24%) the proposal by the opposition parties that the government fund both the \$1,200 child care allowance as well as

continuing to fund the provinces for the creation of affordable child care spaces. Three in ten (30%) are strongly (16%) or somewhat (14%) opposed to this.

Opposition proposal to fund both \$1,200 allowance and new affordable child care spaces
May 2006



Support for funding both is particularly high among women (66%), 18 to 44 year olds (69%), residents of the Atlantic provinces (70%) and Quebec (66%), homemakers (75%) and those with annual household incomes of less than \$25,000 (72%). It is particularly notable that among those who have children under six years of age, support for this idea of having both the \$1,200 as well as funding for affordable child care spaces, soars to 74 percent.

The opposition proposal to have the government fund both the \$1,200 allowance as well as the creation of affordable child care spaces by the provinces also meets with majority approval from those who prefer the \$1,200 allowance over the funding of child care spaces (58%), as well as from those who voted for the Conservative party (56%). It is particularly notable that a majority of Conservative voters support this plan even when it is identified as being a proposal from the opposition parties.

Impact of child care issue on voting preference

Half of Canadians say that the issue of child care is important enough to influence how they will vote in the next election and a plurality say it would make them less likely to vote Conservative.

Canadians are split evenly between those who say that the issue of child care will definitely (25%) or likely (23%) influence how they vote in the next election and those who say that it will likely not (22%) or definitely not (23%) influence them. Another three percent say it is “too early to say”.

Influence of child care issue on vote in next federal election

May 2006



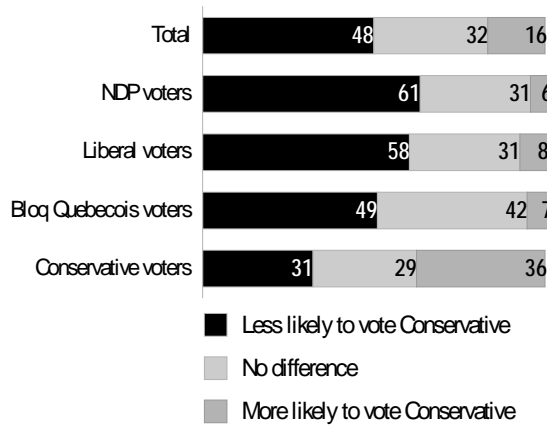
These findings are quite consistent across demographic and regional grouping, but the proportion stating that the child care issue will “definitely” influence how they vote is somewhat higher among women, 18 to 29 year olds, those who speak neither English nor French at home and especially among those who have children under six years of age. Among this latter group, who are most directly affected by child care policies, 37 percent say that this will definitely influence their vote and another 29 percent say it will probably influence their vote.

As might be expected, those who consider the lack of affordable child care to be a very serious issue and those who think governments should play a very important role in child care, are also much more likely to say that this issue will influence how they vote.

It is notable that 28 percent of those who prefer that the federal government fund affordable child care spaces say that this issue will definitely influence how they vote in the next election, compared to 22 percent of those who prefer the \$1,200 allowance. Those who voted Liberal (34%) or NDP (37%) are most likely to say that this issue will definitely influence their vote. This proportion is lower among those who voted Bloc Quebecois (18%) or Conservative (21%) or who did not vote at all (22%).

Those who say that the issue of child care funding will definitely or likely influence how they vote were asked about the impact of the Conservative government proceeding with its plan to give parents a \$1,200 child care allowance and cancelling the funding to provinces for affordable child care spaces. One half (48%) say that this decision would make them less likely to vote Conservative, compared to just 16 percent who that it would make them more likely to vote Conservative. Another 32 percent say that it would make no difference to them. A large plurality in virtually every demographic and regional group say that this decision would make them less likely to vote Conservative.

Impact of implementation of \$1,200 allowance and cancellation of child care funding
May 2006



It is notable that among people who prefer that the government fund affordable child care spaces, 63 percent say that this decision would make them less likely to vote Conservative, compared to just nine percent who say it would make them more likely. But among those who prefer that the government act on the proposed \$1,200 child care allowance, only 33 percent say that this would make them more likely to vote Conservative, compared to 22 percent who say it would make them less likely and 41 percent who say it would make no difference.

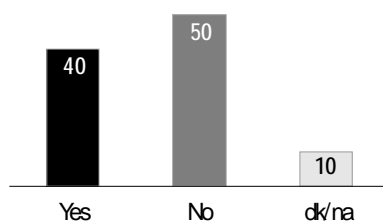
Similarly, those who voted for the NDP and Liberal parties in the last election who say that this issue would influence their vote, overwhelmingly say that it would make them less likely to vote Conservative. A large plurality of BQ voters and those who did not vote at all also say it would make them less likely to vote Conservative. If the government were to go ahead with this policy it would create very little positive traction among Conservative voters. One third (36%) say this would make them more likely to vote Conservative, but an almost equal proportion say that this would make them less likely to vote Conservative again and 29 percent say it would have no impact.

Defeating the government on child care issue

A plurality of Canadians who want the federal funding of affordable child care to continue do NOT want the opposition parties to defeat the government over this issue if it refuses to back down.

Those who either prefer that the federal government fund affordable child care spaces or who support having both the \$1,200 allowance and the continued funding of spaces, were asked whether or not they want the opposition parties to defeat the government in Parliament. Four in ten say that Yes, the opposition parties should defeat the government if it does not back down on this issue, but one half (50%) say that the opposition parties should not actually defeat the government in Parliament over this. Another ten percent have no opinion.

Opposition parties should defeat government over child care policy
May 2006



Support for defeating the government if it refuses to back down is highest among women (42%), 18 to 29 year olds (48%), Atlantic Canadians (55%), English speakers (45%), those with annual household incomes of less than \$25,000 (50%) and those who have children under the age of six (47%). Support for the defeating the government tends to be lower among men (39%), those over the age of 45 (35%), Quebecers (29%) and those with annual household incomes over \$100,000 (35%).

However, among those Canadians who say that this issue will definitely influence their vote in the next election, 64 percent favour having the opposition parties defeat the government in parliament. It is also notable that solid majorities of people who voted Liberal (56%) or NDP (55%) in the last election want the opposition to vote down the government on this. But only 31 percent of BQ voters feel this way. Not surprisingly, the vast majority of Conservative voters also do not want the opposition to vote down the government over this issue, though one quarter (26%) say they should.

SURVEY QUESTIONS

Environics National Omnibus – May 2006

FINAL Omnibus Questions for the *Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada*

1. I would now like to ask you about child care. Many Canadian children under six years of age are currently in child care programs, which are run mostly by community associations such as the YWCA. From what you know or have heard, would you strongly agree, somewhat disagree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree with each of the following about child care programs in Canada today:

READ AND ROTATE

- a. They provide a safe place for children while their parents are working
- b. They promote the early learning and development of children
- c. They help prepare children for school
- d. They allow parents to participate in the workforce
- e. They are essential for the livelihood of low income families

01 – Strongly agree

02 – Somewhat agree

03 – Somewhat disagree

04 – Strongly disagree

VOLUNTEERED

05 – Depends

06 – Neither agree/disagree

99 – DK/NA

2. There has been a lot of discussion recently about the issue of child care. How serious a problem do you believe the lack of affordable child care is in Canada today? Would you say this issue is a very serious, somewhat serious, not very serious, or not at all serious problem?

01 – Very serious

02 – Somewhat serious

03 – Not very serious, or

04 – Not at all serious

VOLUNTEERED

99 – DK/NA

3. How important a role do you believe governments should play in helping parents meet their child care needs? Do you believe governments have a very important, somewhat important, not very important, or not at all important role in this way?

01 – Very important

02 – Somewhat important

03 – Not very important

04 – Not at all important

VOLUNTEERED

99 – DK/NA

4. In 2004, the Government of Canada announced it was going to create a national early learning and child care system, with the goal of providing affordable child care to all parents who need it. Would you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree with this type of national child care system for Canada?

01 – Strongly agree
02 – Somewhat agree
03 – Somewhat disagree
04 – Strongly disagree
VOLUNTEERED
05 – Neither agree/disagree
06 - Depends
99 – DK/NA

5. The new Conservative government has announced as one of its major platforms a new child care plan that will provide parents with a \$1,200 per year allowance for each child under 6 to help them pay for child care. This plan will replace the national early learning and child care system announced by the previous government, which was to provide provincial funding to create 100,000 new affordable child care spaces..

Which one of these two plans for child care do you think the government should implement?
READ AND ROTATE – CODE ONE ONLY

01 – Providing parents with \$1,200 per child per year to help pay for child care
Or
02 – Funding to provinces to create 100,000 new affordable child care spaces
VOLUNTEERED
03 – Depends SKIP TO Q.7
04 – No preference SKIP TO Q.7
05 – Both approaches SKIP TO Q.7
99 – DK/NA SKIP TO Q.7

6. Why would you prefer this plan for child care?
DO NOT READ – CODE ALL THAT APPLY

Why favour \$1,200 allowance

01 – Provides more choice
02 – Allows parents to care for children at home
03 – Don't believe in child care/day care
04 – Less cost to taxpayer
05 – More efficient system
06 – Allowance will create more child care spaces
07 – Parents need the money/I need the money
98 – Other (SPECIFY _____)
99 – DK/NA

Why favour funding to provinces

01 - \$1,200 isn't enough to make a difference
02 – Parents may spend money on other things
03 – Allowance is taxable, so won't get it all
04 – Unfair to lower income parents/helps the rich
05 – Won't create enough spaces to meet demand
98 – Other (SPECIFY _____)
99 – DK/NA

7. Which one of these two plans – giving parents \$1,200 per child under six or giving money to provinces to create affordable child care spaces -- do you think is more likely to do a better job in each of the following ways?

READ AND ROTATE ITEMS – REPEAT RESPONSE CATEGORIES AS NEEDED

- a. Creating enough affordable child care spaces to meet the needs of Canadian parents
- c. Helping prepare children for school
- b. Ensuring access to child care for low income families
- d. Ensuring access to child care in all provinces and regions of the country
- e. Providing the most choice for parents

01 – \$1,200 annual child care allowance

02 – Funding to provinces to create child care spaces

VOLUNTEERED

03 – Depends

04 – Both equally

05 – Neither

99 – DK/NA

8. How much of a difference do you think a \$1,200 allowance per child is likely to make in helping the average Canadian family afford the type of child care they may want? Do you think this amount would?

01 – Help significantly

02 – Help somewhat

03 – Not help very much, or

04 – Not help at all

VOLUNTEERED

05 – Depends

99 – DK/NA

9. From what you know or have heard, does the proposed child care allowance of \$1,200 mean that parents will get the full \$1,200 per year to spend, or will this be considered taxable income, so that the actual amount received will be less after taxes?

01 – Parents will get full \$1,200 per child

02 – Allowance is taxable, so parents won't get full amount

VOLUNTEERED

99 – DK/NA

10. In fact, the \$1,200 allowance per child will be considered taxable income, so that most parents will only get to keep a portion of the full amount. In particular, single parents and two-earner families would keep considerably less than one-earner families. Does knowing this make you more supportive of this plan, less supportive, or does it not make any difference in your opinion?

01 – More supportive

02 – Less supportive

03 – Makes no difference

VOLUNTEERED

04 – Depends

99 – DK/NA

11. The Conservative government is also proposing to provide tax breaks to businesses and other organizations as a way to encourage them to create new child care spaces. Does knowing this proposal for tax breaks to businesses make you more supportive of the Government's plan on child care, less supportive, or does it not make any difference in your opinion?

01 – More supportive
02 – Less supportive
03 – Makes no difference
VOLUNTEERED
04 – Depends
99 – DK/NA

SKIP TO Q.13

12. (ASK IF MORE SUPPORTIVE/DEPENDS/DK/NA IN Q.11 OR SUPPORT TAX ALLOWANCE IN Q.5 AND SAYS MAKES NO DIFFERENCE/DEPENDS IN Q.11) Business leaders have recently stated that they do not believe these tax breaks will encourage the private sector to create any new child care spaces? Does knowing this make you more supportive of the Government's plan on child care, less supportive, or does it not make any difference in your opinion?

01 – More supportive
02 – Less supportive
03 – Makes no difference
VOLUNTEERED
04 – Depends

13. As part of its new child care plan, the Conservative government has said it will no longer fund research into child care or help fund the provinces to monitor the quality or delivery of child care services. Do you support or oppose this decision? Is that "strongly" or "somewhat"?

01 – Strongly support
02 – Somewhat support
03 – Somewhat oppose
04 – Strongly oppose
VOLUNTEERED
05 – Depends
99 – DK/NA

14. The opposition parties in Parliament have called for the government to fund both the \$1,200 child care allowance and the funding to provinces to create new affordable child care spaces. The government has responded by saying their plan is more effective so provincial funding is not necessary. Would you support or oppose the opposition parties' proposal to fund both the child care allowance for parents and the funding to provinces for new child care spaces? Is that "strongly" or "somewhat"?

01 – Strongly support
02 – Somewhat support
03 – Somewhat oppose
04 – Strongly oppose
VOLUNTEERED
05 – Depends
99 – DK/NA

15. Is this an issue that is important enough to you that it might influence which party or candidate you would consider supporting in the next federal election? Would you say it this issue will definitely, likely, likely not or definitely not influence which party or candidate you might support?

01 – Definitely influence
02 – Likely influence
03 – Likely not influence SKIP TO Q.17
04 – Definitely not influence SKIP TO Q.17
VOLUNTEERED
05 – Too early to say SKIP TO Q.17
99 – DK/NA SKIP TO Q.17

16. (IF DEFINITELY/LIKELY INFLUENCE IN Q.15) If the Conservative government proceeded with its new plan of giving parents a \$1,200 child care allowance and cancelling the provincial funding for affordable child care spaces, would you be more likely to vote Conservative, less likely to vote Conservative, or would it make no difference?

01 – More likely to vote Conservative
02 – Less likely to vote Conservative
03 – Will make no difference
VOLUNTEERED
04 – Depends
99 – DK/NA

17. (IF SUPPORT PROVINCIAL FUNDING FOR CHILD CARE SPACES IN Q.5 OR SUPPORT BOTH POLICIES IN Q.14) Do you think the federal opposition parties should vote to defeat the Conservative government in Parliament if it does not back down on its proposed child care plan?

01 – Yes
02 – No
99 – DK/NA

18. How many children under six years of age, if any, do you have currently in your household?

___ children
00 – None SKIP TO Q.20
9 – DK/NA SKIP TO Q.20

19. What type of child care arrangements do you currently have for your children under 6?
DO NOT READ – CODE MORE THAN ONE IF VOLUNTEERED

01 – Child care/day care facility
02 – Stay at home parent
03 – Babysitter/nanny/relative/family member
04 – Pre-school
98 – Other
99 – DK/NA

20. For which political party, if any, did you vote for in the recent federal election?
READ AND ROTATE IF NECESSARY – CODE ONE ONLY

01 – The Liberal Party

02 – The Conservative Party

03 – The New Democratic Party

04 – Bloc Quebecois [READ IN QUEBEC ONLY]

VOLUNTEERED

05 – Green Party

06 – Other

97 – Did not vote

99 – REFUSE/NA