



January 30, 2017

Email: Alaina.Lockhart@parl.gc.ca

Alaina Lockhart
Member of Parliament
599 Main Street - Suite 104
Hampton, New Brunswick
E5N 6C2

Dear Alaina Lockhart,

I am writing to you in your capacity as a Liberal Member of Parliament—and as a woman Parliamentarian—to help secure an increase in federal financial support for child care in the 2017 federal budget. Further, I request that you do everything you can to ensure the new promised federal-provincial-territorial framework agreement on early childhood education and child care properly sets the stage for the building of a universal, high quality child care system in Canada.

As I am sure you are aware, there is a critical shortage of high quality affordable child care in the Atlantic region and across the country. The last comprehensive study of early childhood education and child care shows there are enough licensed child care spaces for less than 25 per cent of children between the ages of 0 and 12. Parent fees for child care are very high and going up faster than the rate of inflation. Working parents—particularly young parents—are spending a very high percentage of their income on child care costs. The situation puts children at risk and has put an impossible burden on parents, particularly working women. The Liberals promised to help the middle class and those who aspire to join it, and the promise to women's equality, simply cannot be realized without paying attention to child care.

The heart of the problem is the approach to child care taken by all governments in Canada is forcing parents to rely on a child care market where services are sold and bought as a private commodity. The assistance to parents mostly comes through inadequate child care subsidies or tax breaks. What we need instead is a system of child care that directs public funds to the provision of child care. It is only by funding the supply of child care that governments can address problems of quality, availability, affordability, inclusiveness and accountability. Also, governments must support the full involvement of stakeholders in the building and improvement of the system, and take measures to address the workforce problems that plague child care, including the poor wages and working conditions in the sector, and the difficulties of attracting and retaining highly qualified staff.

The federal government has an opportunity to lead the way to fixing the crisis in child care through the current framework agreement negotiations.



The Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC) has worked diligently with many others, including child care advocates and policy experts, to develop a proposed child care policy framework that we call the Shared Framework. We have forwarded it to all the parties involved in the negotiations. I urge you to read the document and to communicate your support of this position to your Minister of Families, Children and Social Development.

Building a child care system is a long-term commitment and will require a gradual increase in funding over time. I ask you to support the call of the Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada for a funding commitment of \$600 million in the 2017-2018 federal budget, and a further annual increased allocation until the federal government's contribution reaches 1 per cent of the GDP. UNICEF and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development have confirmed that this is the international minimum funding benchmark for countries striving to establish effective early childhood education and child care systems.

In addition to all the other benefits I have outlined above, it is important to note that building a child care system will give an immediate and long-term boost to the economy. There is a vast literature outlining the evidence of the economic benefits, including but not limited to:

- Direct job creation in the female-dominated child care sector and the economic stimulus associated with the construction of new child care spaces;
- Increased participation of women in the paid labour force and the increases in tax revenue that go with it;
- Benefits to employers from reduced staff turnover, absences, and increased productivity;
- Lower government expenditures in other areas because of the significant role child care can play in combatting poverty.

Thank you for taking action on child care and making it a priority in your work as a Member of Parliament elected on a platform that promised Canadians to address women's concerns, and to strengthen the middle class. I look forward to your reply and to working with you to make child care a reality.

Sincerely,

Jeannie Baldwin
Regional Executive Vice-President, PSAC-Atlantic

cc.: Regional Council
Debbie McLaughlin, Regional Coordinator
The Honourable Jean-Yves Duclos, Minister of Families, Children and Social Development
Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada