

Childcare Policy for Whom? Advocacy Disguised as Research and the Hidden Cost of Ideology Behind the \$10-a-Day Campaign

When assessing influential reports like "The Price is Not Right (Yet)" from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA), it's crucial to understand not only the data but also the perspectives and motivations behind them. While advocacy groups like CCPA contribute important insights, clarity around their underlying biases and interests ensures transparency and genuine accountability to families and stakeholders.

The authors of this report bring extensive experience and dedication as policy advocates within the Canadian child care movement. However, notably missing from their extensive professional histories is practical experience running child care centers, operating child care businesses, or directly working with young children in daily settings. Their expertise remains rooted deeply in advocacy and policy rather than hands-on child care provision. This critical distinction means their perspectives often prioritize policy ideals over the practical realities and evolving needs faced daily by child care providers and families.

Similarly, the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives openly advocates for increased government involvement in social sectors. Founded by union activists and progressive academics, its funding streams—primarily from unions, donations, and labour organizations—underscore its commitment to public-sector solutions over alternative or market-based approaches. While this does not diminish the value of their research, it requires acknowledgment that their analysis inherently favors specific ideological outcomes.

This ideological preference shapes the report's content, leading to an analysis that tends to minimize or mischaracterize challenges within the child care sector, often placing blame primarily on provincial governments and private-sector operators. Important perspectives, such as incentivizing private investment, empowering families through increased choice, or exploring Conflicts of interest become apparent when recognizing that research units and advocacy organizations associated with the authors have historically received government funding specifically to advocate for universal child care. Promoting expansive public solutions directly benefits these organizations, reinforcing their influence, securing additional research funding, and granting them greater policy sway. Without clear disclaimers, reports like these may inadvertently mislead parents, policymakers, and the public about the authors' vested interests in the policy's success.

What becomes apparent is a heartfelt concern about experts losing sight of the flexibility required to meet contemporary family needs. Clinging to policies and ideologies formulated half a century ago risks overlooking critical changes in family structures, employment patterns, and community needs. True expertise in child care demands adaptability and humility: "In child care, as in life, genuine leadership means putting aside personal agendas and biases to truly listen—to learn from the children and families we serve, ensuring their needs guide our decisions rather than our own stubborn adherence to outdated plans."

Child care policy requires balanced insights, combining policy expertise with real-world experience. Only by integrating diverse, frontline voices can we ensure policies truly serve the best interests of children and families rather than the ideological commitments of any single interest group.

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Link to the report:

<https://childcarecanada.org/sites/default/files/price-is-not-right-yet%20July%209.pdf>