

Prime Minister wows SARC crowds at funding announcement



By Brock Weir

New skates, a few weeks at hockey camp, nine out of 10 parents now have more money in their pockets at the end of each month to go the extra mile for their kids with the Canada Child Benefit, according to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau.

The Prime Minister dropped into the Stronach Aurora Recreation Complex (SARC) on Thursday afternoon to help local kids lace up and hit the ice ahead of a funding announcement stemming from this month's Federal Budget.

Before and after the announcement, he was greeted by a rapturous reception from kids, parents, and curious bystanders, all eager to shake his hand and take a picture.

But in between the selfies ? and there were too many to count ? there was business to attend to.

Joined by local parents in the SARC's daycare space, Mr. Trudeau announced that, effective this July, two years earlier than previously estimated, the Canada Child Benefit will be indexed to inflation.

?Some of you will remember [the Canada Child Benefit, CCB] was a central feature of electoral platform,? said Mr. Trudeau. ?It was also one of the very first things we did as a government. The reason for that is very simple: it is the kind of real change that Canadians overwhelmingly voted for. We heard from parents who told us that despite working harder than ever before, they were struggling to make ends meet. They were spending more time at work and less time at home with their families because the cost of living was going up and their wages simply weren't. And, as any parent would, they worried most about what that meant for their kids and their future.

?We wanted to do more to alleviate this anxiety by giving our working families a little extra help at the end of each month. Today, nine out of ten families have more money in their pockets for things like new skates or hockey camp. The CCB now helps more than six million children and their families. It has helped with hundreds of thousands of kids out of poverty since its inception in 2016. That is what real change looks like.?

Donning purple to mark International Women's Day, Mr. Trudeau was flanked by Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill MP Leona Alleslev and Newmarket-Aurora MP Kyle Peterson for last week's announcement, during which he said the Federal Government's plan to ?grow the economy by supporting the middle class? has ?actually worked better than planned,? allowing them to bring forward their plans to index the CBB to inflation.

?That means when the cost of groceries goes up, so will the benefit cheques families receive each month,? he said. ?In 2017, a single mom earning \$35,000 with two kids aged three and eight received \$11,125 tax free through the CCB. \$3,535 more than under the previous system. Indexing the benefit two years earlier than originally planned will contribute \$560 towards the increasing cost of raising their children through the 2019-2020 benefit year.

?This single parent will be able to use this additional money for things like summer camps and she will, in turn, be in a better position to advance her career to her own terms. In Budget 2018 we're building on the progress we've made since the beginning of our mandate while putting a special focus on ensuring all Canadians fully and equally participate in the economy.?

He said he has heard firsthand from parents when he visits community centres like the SARC how the benefit is making a difference

in the lives of their kids.

?The extra money is giving people more confidence about their own future, their kids' future, more money for their daily expenses,? he said. ?I'll be honest with you: every now and then I talk to someone maybe working behind the counter at a place like this or someone who just approaches me in the streets and says, ?I've seen firsthand what the CCB has done for our school, for our community. The impact this child benefit has done for low income parents to middle income families who are getting ahead and getting benefits, [but] I don't have any kids, I'm working really hard, how are you helping me out?'

?That is why in Budget 2018, we are moving forward with enhancement to the Canada Workers Benefit, which is helping low income folks in the workforce make more money to be able to incentivize them to stay in the workforce or get into the workforce if they have fallen out of it.

?Whether it is the Canada Child Benefit, or the Canada Workers Benefit, our focus in this budget and on every budget and every day that we serve Canadians is focused on helping the folks that need a little extra boost so they can be confident about their future; they can contribute to growing their communities and build a better, stronger economy for us all.?