



Smart Start Halton
Funding their future



Smart Start Halton: Canada Learning Bond Coaching Toolkit



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About Smart Start Halton

Background

In early 2013, the Halton Poverty Roundtable reached out to the Omega Foundation to learn more about their successful initiative, SmartSAVER.org. The initiative was launched to strengthen lower-income Canadian families' ability to save for their children's post-secondary education using Registered Education Savings Plans (RESP) and the Canada Learning Bond (CLB). The CLB is a federal contribution of up to \$2000 to a child's Registered Education Savings Plan (RESP). The CLB builds the education savings of low-income Canadian households, **without requiring any deposit or savings activity by the family**. It's a valuable transfer and a critical 'seed' for the college savings of low-income Canadians. The national take-up rate for the Canada Learning Bond is low across the country, averaging 28%.

Ultimately, as a result of the SmartSAVER campaign, the CLB uptake increased in Toronto over the course of the initiative from 27.7% of eligible children at the end of 2009 to 39.3% at the end of 2012.

In the spring of 2013, the Halton Poverty Roundtable convened a broad group of strategic stakeholders to determine if there was interest in organizing a similar campaign in Halton, where the take-up rate was 28.5% at the time. There was unanimous agreement and Smart Start Halton was formed.

Impact

Over the last year and a half, the Smart Start Halton team has worked tirelessly to build awareness of the Canada Learning Bond (CLB) in Halton.

In 2014, we held nine enrollment events across Halton, delivered a series of Train the Trainer events to educate community organizations about the Canada Learning Bond and the enrollment process, and made over 25 community presentations to build awareness of this opportunity for eligible families who receive the National Child Benefit Supplement.

Thanks to partnerships with community leaders such as the Halton Catholic District School Board, Halton District School Board, Service Canada, St. Vincent de Paul Association, the United Way of Oakville, Halton Region Health Department and Halton Region Community and Social Services, Our Kids Network, BMO, RBC, Scotiabank, and TD Canada Trust, and a host of community organizations, **8,599 eligible children in Halton** have been signed up for a Canada Learning Bond. **From 2012 to 2014, Halton's take-up rate for the Canada Learning Bond went from 28.5% to 35%!**

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Smart Start Halton 2.0 – 2015 Canada Bond Awareness-Building Collaborative Blitz

There are **at least 14,345 eligible children** in our community who still need to take advantage of this free money for education from the federal government. In early 2015, motivated by the success of the convening working group, the Smart Start Halton working group expanded to include the leadership of the following organizations:

- Oakville YMCA
- ArtHouse
- Oak Park Neighbourhood Centre
- Town of Oakville

By working collaboratively to promote this program, our hope is to more than double the current take-up rate to over 75% across Halton in 2015. A full list of the partnering organizations, along with their contact information, can be found at the end of this toolkit.

We are asking community organizations and stakeholders to support our collaborative blitz in the following ways:

- 1. Invite us to come and speak to your organization, group, or the families you serve about the Canada Learning Bond**
- 2. Agree to have your organization's name and logo included in the campaign's online and, where applicable, print material;**
- 3. Where resources permit, participate in a Train the Trainer session to learn more about how families can sign-up for the Canada Learning Bond. These sessions will empower you to assist clients/users of your organization's services in accessing these funds;**
- 4. Promote the Canada Learning Bond by:**
 - Speaking with parents served by your organization about the opportunity
 - Conducting information sessions for your target market
- 5. Posting or otherwise sending home details on how families can register, and;**
- 6. Sharing the information in your social media conversations through:**
 - a. The www.smartstarhalton.com website,

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- b. On Twitter via [@SmartStartHalton](https://twitter.com/SmartStartHalton), and
- c. On our Facebook Page <https://www.facebook.com/SmartStartHalton>

We are grateful to the generous and on-going support that the Omega Foundation and the SmartSAVER team have been to our campaign. Many of the materials in this toolkit have been created by the SmartSAVER team, as well as the Canada Education Savings Program team at Employment and Social Development Canada, and made available to community partners to use in their own CLB campaigns.

For more information, please contact Michael Shaen or June Cockwell at:

Halton Poverty Roundtable
3425 Harvester Road, Unit 107
Burlington, ON L7N 3N1
Tel: 905-635-3131 ext. 303

Email: Michael@haltonpovertyroundtable.com

Email: June@haltonpovertyroundtable.com

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The Canada Learning Bond

Did you know?

- As of September, 2014 over **22,944** children in Halton were eligible to receive free government money to help pay for higher education?
- Of those children, only **8,599** have begun to access this money.
- That means, **over 14,345** children have no idea this opportunity exists.

Studies show that the existence of educational savings makes a child 50% more likely to pursue post-secondary education. Help make *education* a possibility!



What is the Canada Learning Bond (CLB)?

The Canada Learning Bond (CLB) is a Government of Canada program that provides **\$500** in education money to children born on or after January 1, 2004 whose families receive the National Child Benefit Supplement.

Sound good? Keep reading...

- The Government will add **\$100 more every year** your child is eligible, up to age 15.
- Your child could get up to \$2000 (plus interest) in RESP contributions!
- NO family contribution is required.



What does a parent need to do to get the CLB?

1. Go to your local Service Canada office and obtain a Social Insurance Number (SIN) for your child. Parent must bring their Social Insurance Number and government issued photo identification, and their child's Canadian Birth Certificate (if born in Canada) or Citizenship Card (if born outside of Canada).
2. Make an appointment with your financial institution (where you do your banking) and say: "I want to open a no-fee RESP and get the Canada Learning Bond. How do I do that? What ID do I need to bring with the SINS's?"
3. Grow your child's savings without having to make *any* contributions.

Is there a catch?

No. But there are some conditions:

- CLB can only be used for the child's education after high school or later on.
- The child has up to age 36 to use the money.
- If the child doesn't continue his/her education, the CLB must be returned to the Government of Canada.

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The Canada Learning Bond

Tools for you and your clients!

You may be wondering how you will answer all of the questions that clients may have about this program. Don't worry...there are many tools and resources to help you along.

Go to www.smartsaver.org to:

- Watch a 20 minute online workshop.
- Learn more about data trends and the number of families accessing the CLB across Canada.
- Get Government brochures to hang in your office.
- Get information to share with clients about the CLB from participating financial Institutions.
- Access multilingual resources to share with clients.

A few things to remember:

There may be a few reasons why families don't access the CLB, for example:

- Lack of awareness of the program
- Intimidated by the multistep process
- Don't have a SIN# or RESP
- Concern that RESP could affect social benefits – the CLB is an exempt asset and will **not** have any impact on social benefits that a family may be receiving.

With this in mind, it is important for you to offer as much support and direction as possible.

3 Important Ways to Support Families

1. Build awareness about the CLB program.
2. Make sharing CLB information part of your intake process with clients.
3. Encourage families to sign up online at: <https://StartmyRESP.ca/Halton>
4. Spread the word!

Questions










If you have any questions please contact Michael Shaen at the Halton Poverty Roundtable, at (905) 635-3131 ext. 303 or by email at michael@haltonpovertyroundtable.com.

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2015 Quick Reference Sheet

RESP Government Incentives for Families

Net Family Income	Canada Learning Bond (CLB) Min. \$500 – Max. \$2,000	Basic Canada Education Savings Grant (CESG)	Additional Canada Education Savings Grant (A-CESG)	Total Government Entitlement
Less than \$44,701	 IF child was born January 2004 or later <u>AND</u> parent ever received National Child Benefit Supplement (NCBS)	 20% on the first \$2,500 in annual contributions made to each child's RESP.	 An additional 20% on the first \$500 contributed to an RESP annually.	40% government match
\$44,702-\$89,401		 20% on the first \$2,500 in annual contributions made to each child's RESP.	 An additional 10% on the first \$500 contributed to an RESP annually.	30% government match
\$89,402+		 20% on the first \$2,500 in annual contributions made to each child's RESP.		20% government match

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FAQs: Questions Parents Often Ask

1. Who is eligible for the Canada Learning Bond?
2. How much money could my child get from the Bond?
3. How does the government know when and where to deposit the CLB and the CESG?
4. What if a financial institution tells a family that they have to make a contribution to get the CLB?
5. How does a financial institution pay out RESP funds when the child is ready to go to school?
6. How and when can a parent get their contributions out of an RESP?
7. Can someone with refugee status get the CLB?
8. What if a family is not eligible for the CLB now, but was eligible a couple of years ago?
9. How does a family change their RESP provider?
10. How does a family choose the right provider for the best return on their investment?
11. What's the difference between a Group Plan and an Individual or Family Plan?
12. What if someone already has an RESP but doesn't know if they're getting the CLB?
13. How can I find out what RESP provider a family is using if they have forgotten?
14. How can I help a family that's finding it difficult to make required monthly contributions to their RESP?
15. Where can I find out more about the Canada Learning Bond?

Abbreviations:

RESP: Registered Education Savings Plan

CESG: Canada Education Savings Grant

CLB: Canada Learning Bond

SIN: Social Insurance Number

1. Who is eligible for the Canada Learning Bond?

Your child can get the Canada Learning Bond if:

- Your child was born after December 31, 2003, and
- You receive the National Child Benefit Supplement as part of the Canada Child Tax Benefit, commonly known as "family allowance".

2. How much money could my child get from the Bond?

Through a Registered Education Savings Plan (RESP) you could get \$500 now to help you start

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saving early for your child's education after high school. Your child may also get an extra \$100 each year up to age 15, as long as you continue to receive the National Child Benefit Supplement. That's up to \$2,000 in Canada Learning Bonds (plus interest) for your child's education. An extra \$25 will be paid to help cover the cost of opening an RESP.

3. How does the government know when and where to deposit the CLB and the CESG?

When families open an RESP at their financial institution they should make sure they complete the application for the Canada Learning Bond and the Basic and Additional CESG at the same time. It's the RESP provider's (financial institution) responsibility to submit all required documentation to the government. The government will verify the family's eligibility and forward any grants to the RESP account. Income eligibility for grants is re-checked each year. The government commits to deposit the Canada Learning Bond and any CESG directly into the RESP account within 65 days of receiving the application so parents should check their statements to make sure the grants are deposited. If they don't see them on their statements, parents should contact their RESP provider to make sure all documentation has been sent to the government. If it's been sent, but there's a delay, parents can call the Canada Education Savings Program Hotline at 888-276-3624 to check on status.

4. What if a financial institution tells a family that they have to make a contribution to get the CLB?

Some financial institutions only open RESPs with a minimum contribution. But even in those institutions, like the major banks, where no contribution is required to open an RESP a lot of branch staff are not aware of the fact or familiar with the Canada Learning Bond. Make sure the parents you talk to are armed with information. Give them appropriate materials like the banks' own [flyers](#). This will help them talk to their RESP provider and help educate branch staff at the same time.

5. How does a financial institution pay out RESP funds when the child is ready to go to school?

The RESP is made up of two parts:

- a. the family's own contributions; and
- b. the government's contributions (the Canada Learning Bond and Canada Education Savings Grants) and any income generated in the account.

Once a child is enrolled in a qualifying educational program, the RESP's subscriber (the person who opened the RESP - typically the parent) can withdraw any family contributions in the RESP tax-free and without impacting any grants they received. The subscriber can also ask that the child be issued an Educational Assistance Payment (from the government's contributions and income in the account). The subscriber will be asked to provide proof of the child's enrollment in a qualifying program. Note: Some RESP providers restrict when subscribers can request payments and the type of educational programs that qualify. Families should check for restrictions before they start an RESP or contact their RESP provider for more information.

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6. How and when can a parent get their contributions out of an RESP?

Families can withdraw their own contributions from an RESP at any time, but any CESG grants that matched those contributions will be returned to the government. The Canada Learning Bond is not affected by a withdrawal. Note: While some RESPs charge no fees, others charge enrolment fees that are deducted from a family's contributions (and are paid back in part or in full for the child's education). A family that withdraws early from a plan with enrolment fees may not get all of their contributions back. Families should learn about any fees before they start an RESP or contact their RESP provider for more information.

7. Can someone with refugee status get the CLB?

As long as both a parent and their child have Social Insurance Numbers (SIN), they can start an RESP to receive the CLB. This includes individuals with temporary Social Insurance Numbers that begin with a "9", issued to temporary workers who are not yet Canadian citizens or permanent residents, including refugee claimants, foreign workers and foreign students. If a parent's temporary social insurance number is not renewed, the parent can withdraw their own contributions from the RESP, but any federal grants (Canada Education Savings Grants, Canada Learning Bond) will be returned to the government.

8. What if a family is not eligible for the CLB now, but was eligible a couple of years ago?

A child's entitlement to the Canada Learning Bond is tracked and is paid out retroactively once an RESP is opened. If a family is not eligible now, but has been in the past - or may be in the future - then they should open an RESP and apply for the Canada Learning Bond.

9. How does a family change their RESP provider?

If a family decides to transfer their RESP from one provider to another they should start by opening an RESP account with their new provider and asking them to start the transfer application. Many RESP providers charge a fee to transfer an account to another provider.

10. How does a family choose the right provider for the best return on their investment?

An RESP is an important investment in a child's future so first, a family should choose a provider they trust and feel comfortable dealing with. Every parent's investment knowledge and tolerance for risk is different. Since different RESP providers offer different investment options from Guaranteed Investment Certificates (GICs) to fully self-directed investing, a family should decide what types of investment options they want to have and choose a provider that suits their needs. Families should remember that any fees that a provider charges will reduce overall returns. Any contributions a family is able to make can attract CESG matching grants (up to a maximum of \$7,200 in grants per child). The CLB adds even more for eligible children. These grants by themselves represent a significant return on investment that no family should miss.

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11. What's the difference between a Group Plan and an Individual or Family Plan?

Group plans are intended for families that want a consistent savings program and can continue regular saving until their child is ready for post-secondary education. Families who are in a position to commit to a disciplined savings schedule (for instance, monthly contributions) may wish to participate in a group RESP. However, not every family is able to commit to a regular savings schedule. Families who don't want to or can't contribute to an RESP regularly may prefer an individual or family plan that allows for more flexible savings.

12. What if someone already has an RESP but doesn't know if they're getting the CLB?

If the family meets the eligibility criteria for the CLB, ask them to check their RESP account statement. It should show what grants the family is receiving. If it doesn't look like the family is receiving all the grants they should, or if the family doesn't have a statement, encourage them to contact their provider or call the Canada Education Savings Program Hotline at 888-276-3624 to check their account. Note: An education savings plan cannot be registered as an RESP unless the family has provided Social Insurance Numbers for both the parent and child. A child will not receive any government grants they're entitled to if the plan is not registered.

13. How can I find out what RESP provider a family is using if they have forgotten?

Encourage the parent to call the Canada Education Savings Program Hotline at 888-276-3624 to discuss their RESP account with a federal government representative. They will need to provide their own and their child's Social Insurance Numbers to access information.

14. How can I help a family that's finding it difficult to make required monthly contributions to their RESP?

If a family committed to making monthly RESP contributions and can no longer do that, they should contact their RESP provider immediately. Depending on the provider and the plan, there may be different options to stop regular contributions. In an individual or family plan, they may be able to just stop and re-start again in the future. In a group plan, they may be able to suspend contributions for a while, reduce the number of units they're purchasing or switch to a more flexible individual or family plan. What they shouldn't do: Stop payment, cancel the plan or transfer the plan until they've talked to their provider to discuss all of their options. Any of these actions could cost the family more in fees or cause them to lose contributions or grants.

15. Where can I find out more about the Canada Learning Bond?

- Visit Smart Start Halton at www.smartstarhalton.com
- Visit www.SmartSAVER.org
- Visit your local Service Canada Centre

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What happens when an application is submitted on SmartSAVER.org?

BMO – Bank of Montreal



"SmartSAVER applications received by BMO are sent into our Investment Services team who determines the client's local branch and forwards the application to an investment professional at that location. Once the application is received in the branch the customer will be contacted and a meeting is set up to complete the application to set up the account and receive the government grants and Bond. Customers should bring ID and SIN for themselves and their beneficiaries. Customers are typically contacted in two to three business days following the receipt of the application."

Scotia Bank



"Within two business days of your SmartSAVER application being received, you will be contacted by a representative from your local Scotiabank branch. They will schedule an appointment for you to meet with your Financial Advisor who will finalize your RESP and Canada Learning Bond applications, answer any questions you may have about saving for your child's education, and help you to meet your other financial goals."

RBC – Royal Bank



"All SmartSAVER applications are sent to RBC's Advice Centre. The Advice Centre calls the client within 1 to 3 days to book an appointment to open the RESP at a RBC Royal Bank branch convenient for the client and then sends the completed application form to the branch. If for some reason the Advice Centre can't reach the client, an appointment will be booked at the RBC Royal Bank branch nearest the client's home and the application will be sent to the branch. An e-mail will be sent to the client advising them of the appointment details, along with instructions to call the Advice Centre at 1-800-769-2511 if the appointment day or time is not convenient. At the meeting, the RESP application will be completed and signed. Applicants should be sure to bring their Social Insurance Numbers for themselves and their beneficiaries and two pieces of ID (one piece of government-issued photo ID)."

TD Canada Trust



"After the application is received by our head office, the customer's local TD Canada Trust branch will reach out to the customer within 2 business days of receiving the application to schedule an appointment. When the applicant comes to their local TD Canada Trust branch, they will formally complete required documentation with their branch representative. The applicant should ensure they bring key government-issued documents to their appointment like the RESP beneficiary's Social Insurance Number and birth certificate. In addition, all subscribers should bring government-issued photo ID like a passport or driver's license in addition to their Social Insurance Number. At the time of the appointment, the applicant will have the opportunity to discuss other products and services that TD Canada Trust offers to help them achieve their savings and investing goals."

Hosting a CLB Sign-up Event

The Canada Learning Bond is an excellent opportunity to host an event in your community to assist families to get their Canada Learning Bond.

Here are some tips to maximize the impact of your sign-up event:

Plan ahead

- Give yourself one month to plan and one month to promote your event.

Find partners

Any agency serving lower-income families with children born in 2004 or later could be interested in partnering:

- Schools, day cares, churches, community centres, libraries, employment and income support programs, public or co-op housing and ESL programs are all examples of the types of agencies that have partnered in CLB sign-up events.

Choose a location convenient for families

- Daycares, schools, community centres, libraries, employment centres and churches host other community events for families and can usually provide space for free;
- If your agency works with eligible families and you have the space, host your own RESP sign-up event.

Connect with Service Canada

- Some Service Canada offices are able to provide off-site Social Insurance Number sign-up service. If your local office offers this service, they typically require that the host site be able to provide access to a non-wireless internet connection. If your local office can't provide mobile service, consider organizing a group excursion to Service Canada to ensure parents and kids get their Social Insurance Numbers.

Pick your timing

- Choose a date that builds on and doesn't conflict with other community events;
- Try to keep the event under four hours. Events held in the morning (9 am-12 noon) and late afternoon (3 pm-6 pm) seem to attract more parents than ones held in the middle of the day.

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Promote your event*

- Create an eye-catching, colourful flyer and make sure to include the logos of partner agencies. This will raise awareness and trust.
- Engage local agencies in promotion:
 - Including agencies that work with children, agencies that support lower-income families, employment and income support services, public housing, local media, local churches and local schools;
 - Ask agencies to register parents or keep track of the number who will be attending to help you to plan.

*Promotion is very important to make sure your event is successful and benefits the most number of families possible. Many parents are unfamiliar with the Canada Learning Bond and wary of RESP providers. Make every effort to reassure parents that the event is free, the CLB is available for no-cost and that the event is not a sales opportunity for an RESP provider. Make sure agencies promoting the event clearly understand this as well. Their ability to confidently promote participation will increase attendance.

The day of the event

- Assign a greeter to register parents as they arrive, to encourage non-registrants to participate and to direct parents to the appropriate service;
- Establish separate activity areas:
 - **Have food and refreshments on hand.**
Coordinate your event with a community barbeque, lunch or event you may already be organizing is always helpful;
 - **Social Insurance Number Registration**
Staffed by Service Canada. Requires some privacy to discuss personal information;
 - **RESP Information**
Staffed by you and other event organizers;
 - **Sign-up Initiation Process**
Have staff ready with laptops to take families through initiating the sign-up process online. Explain to the families what will happen next once they complete the online process.
 - **Waiting and Childcare Area**
An opportunity for you and your partners to provide related workshops or information to families.

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Start your kid's education savings with **FREE MONEY.**

What FREE money?

It's the Canada Learning Bond, available now through SmartSAVER.org

This is a Government of Canada contribution to a child's Registered Education Savings Plan. It provides up to \$2,000 in savings for the post-secondary education of eligible children.

Who can get it?

You are eligible if your child was born in 2004 or later and you have ever been eligible for the National Child Benefit Supplement as part of the Canada Child Tax Benefit, known as the "family allowance."

All eligible children receive at least \$500 and will receive \$100 more for each year they're eligible up to age 15 or a maximum of \$2,000.

How do I get the Canada Learning Bond?

- SmartSAVER can help you apply for the Canada Learning Bond and start an RESP with \$0 when you use the Start My RESP online tool at SmartSAVER.org
- You'll need a Social Insurance Number for yourself and your child to complete the application
- There is no cost and you don't need to contribute any money to get the Canada Learning Bond

Don't wait! Get started at SmartSAVER.org today.



1. Complete the SmartSAVER application in about 10 minutes.



2. SmartSAVER will send your information to the Financial Institution you choose.



3. The Financial Institution will contact you to meet.



4. When you meet, you'll show your ID and sign your application.



5. Your Financial Institution will send your completed application to the Government. If you're approved for the Canada Learning Bond, the money will be deposited into the RESP.

What's the catch?

The Canada Learning Bond can only be used for education after high school or later in life. This includes part-time or full-time studies at college, university or other qualifying schools in Canada or outside the country. Your child has up to 36 years to use the money.

Saving is easier with the Canada Learning Bond.

COMMUNITY PARTNER
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SAVING IS *EASIER*
WITH THE CANADA
LEARNING BOND

Visit SmartSaver.org

Every eligible child
receives at least

\$500

and could
receive up to

\$2,000!





Registered Education Savings Plan

THIS CERTIFICATE IS AWARDED TO

Congratulations!
This is a great start to
your education plan!



DATE



Additional Resources

SmartSAVER website: <https://www.smartsaver.org/canada-learning-bond.shtml>

SmartSAVER Online CLB Sign Up Link: <http://www.smartsaver.org/>

SmartSAVER Youtube Channel

Jess' Story – Everything Starts Somewhere:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ev6ZtfjRdBg>

Jack's Story: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3tnh342A_JY

RESPs Made Easy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6IS-co9by3I>

Government of Canada's CanLearn website:

<http://www.canlearn.ca/eng/savings/clb.shtml>

Canada Revenue Agency – Registered Education Savings Plan:

<http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/tx/ndvdl/tpcs/resp-reee/>

Service Canada – Social Insurance Number:

<http://www.servicecanada.gc.ca/eng/sc/sin/>

Service Canada – Newborn Registration Service:

<https://www.orgforms.gov.on.ca/IBR/start.do?lang=en>

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