


CANADA-WIDE EARLY LEARNING AND CHILD CARE PLAN

Benefits to the RMWB

Why should the RMWB advocate to the Province in support of the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Plan

- Affordable child care is a key component of successful economic recovery which will allow more people, particularly women to return to the workforce
 - Accessibility to flexible childcare options and parents choice that meet the varying and unique needs of their children to provide inclusive programming that will ensure that no children are left behind
 - High quality programs provide developmentally appropriate early learning opportunities for all children by supporting workforce development and advancement in current best practices and education
 - Accountability and transparency for all stakeholders to ensure that public investment is well managed and regulatory obligations are met
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What Regulated Child Care looks like in RMWB

Enrollment and Staffing Statistics (June 2021)

- There are 1556 approved spaces in licensed facilities and 851 spaces are currently being accessed
- There are 77 certified Educators working in licensed facilities
- There are 233 children enrolled in licensed dayhomes of the 300 licensed spaces. These children are attending at 51 active dayhomes of the 70 licensed dayhomes

Enrollment and Staffing Statistics (February 2020)

- There were 1556 approved spaces in licensed facilities and 1027 spaces were being accessed
 - There were 153 certified Educators working in licensed facilities
 - There were 255 children enrolled in licensed dayhomes of the 300 licensed spaces. Those children were attending at 55 active dayhomes of the licensed dayhomes
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Affordable child care is a key component of successful economic recovery which will allow more people, particularly women to return to the workforce

- Every dollar spent on early childhood education, the broader economy receives between \$1.50 and \$17.00 in return. (*Getting It Right Recommendations for improving Alberta's child care licensing legislation*, 2020, p. 3)
- Equal access to quality / affordable care for all demographics
- Growth of a qualified child care workforce that is 95% women.
- Levels of programming increased to all areas ie. Increasing child care spaces in facility based care, out of school care, and flexible child care options.
- Greater access and supports for children with disabilities.
- All centres whether non-profit or for-profit would be eligible to receive supply side funding.

Improves long-term social and economic outcomes

Access to high-quality child care is a fundamental element of children's future academic success, and promotes greater gender equality in the labour market, including by improving and growing the female-dominated early childhood educator workforce.



Increases labour force participation rate of women

If women in the rest of Canada participated at the same level as Quebec, where low-fee child care has been available since 1997, it would add approximately 240,000 workers to the labour force in today's terms.



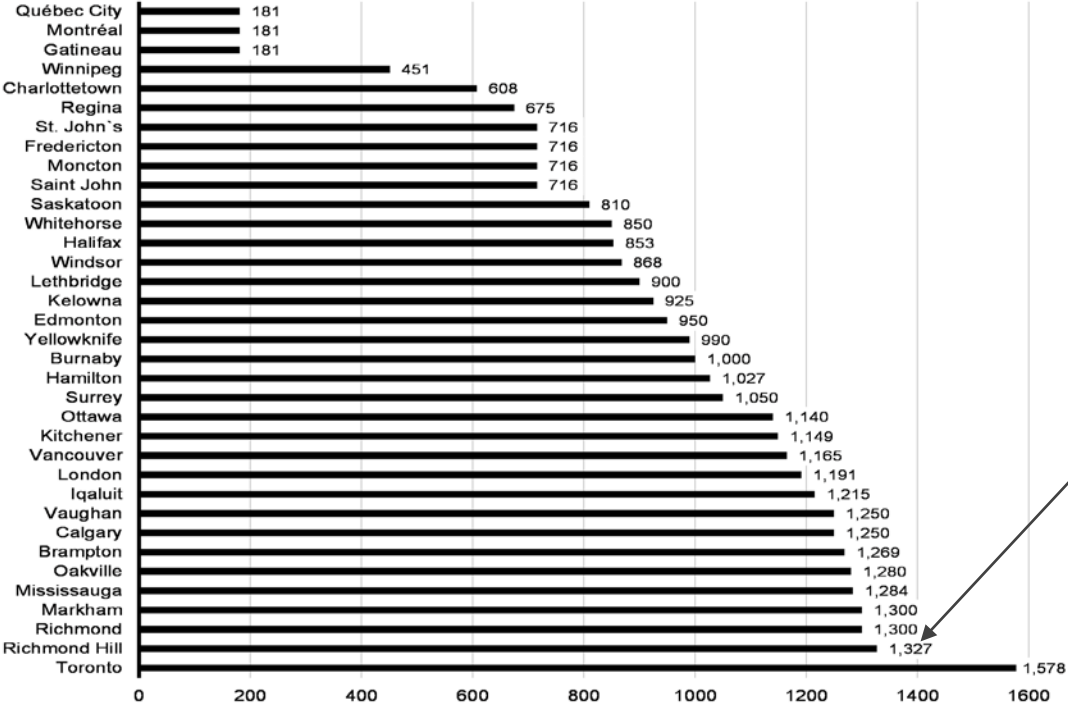
Boosts economic growth

The addition of 240,000 workers in the labour force would drive an increase in real per capita GDP in the long run of as much as 1.2 per cent.



(Dividends of Investing in Early Learning and Child Care, 2021)

Median Toddler Fees 2020 - Canada Wide



Fort McMurray \$1319.00

(Median Toddler Fees in 2020 (gross, monthly), 2021)

Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Plan

Budget 2021 proposes to invest up to \$30 billion over five years, starting in 2021-22 as part of initial 5-year agreements. The largest portion of which will be distributed 2021-2022.

By 2025/2026 this will reach 9.2 Billion and will be ongoing funding.

Future objectives and distribution of funding, starting in year six, would be determined based on an understanding of need and progress achieved as part of this initial plan.

“Provinces that agree to step up will move forward on the agreements... but [if not], won't be getting the resources to move forward on child care.” [PM Trudeau]

Real results for families
across Canada over the
next five years

50%

Average fee reduction for
preschool care by end of 2022

By 2026, an average fee of


\$10/day

Everywhere outside of Quebec

(Real Progress Towards the Goal of \$10 Per Day Average, n.d.)

Accessibility to flexible childcare options and parents choice that meet the varying and unique needs of their children to provide inclusive programming that will ensure that no children are left behind

Accessibility means more than just a space. “Accessing child care should not be a lottery, given to chance. Benefits to society include gender equity, financial security for families and their ability to contribute to Canada’s economy. But most importantly, access to quality child care supports the well-being of Canada’s children. Consequently, child care needs to be planned and publicly managed—ensuring that no matter where a family resides, they are able to access a quality child care program that works for their needs.” (*Affordable, Accessible, Quality Child Care for All*, n.d.) Accessibility also means space that is suitable and inclusive of the varying needs of our children and families, that the hours and location work for the families that are accessing the program, and that the program is sustainable, ie. has a source of reliable public funding. Parents must be able to afford the space or they will be unable to access the space! Spaces can’t be created without a suitable pool of highly qualified ECEs.



High quality programs provide developmentally appropriate early learning opportunities for all children

High quality early learning experiences are derived from interactions that children have with their peers, educators, and environment. Through play, educators scaffold learning opportunities to help children develop deeper understanding of the interests that they have thus deepening their self confidence and sense of accomplishment.

Qualified Early Learning and Care Educators intentionally create responsive environments based on the needs and interests of the children, families and communities. They see the children as Mighty Learners and Citizens capable and competent in making sense of their world. Educators understand that relationships are at the core of all their interactions with the children, with each other, and with families.



Supporting workforce development and advancement in current best practices and education

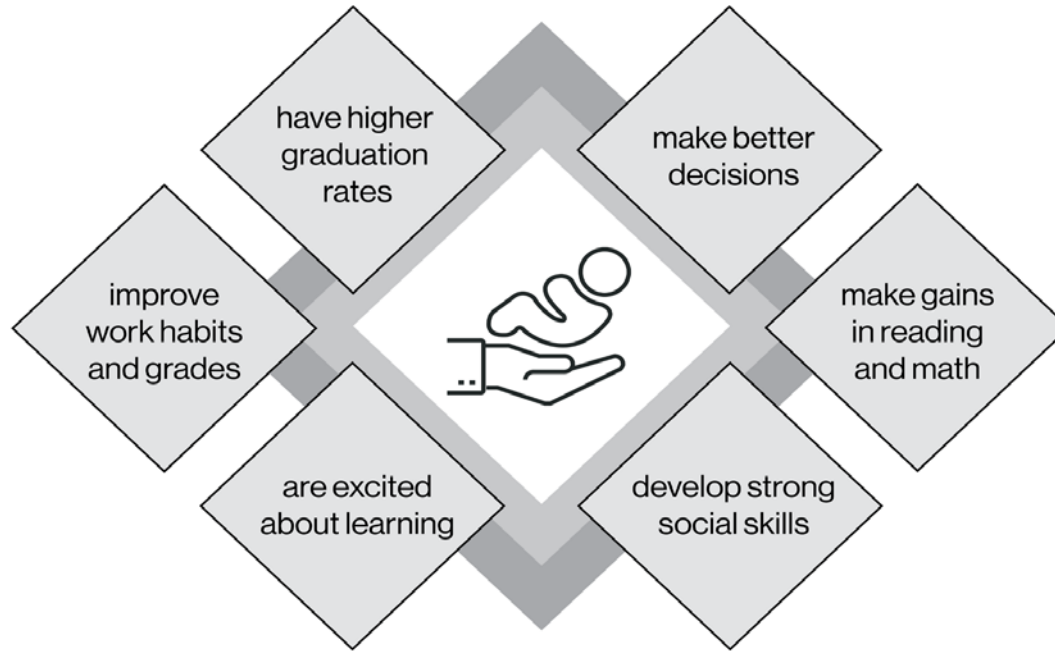
Quality programs require educators with an ELCC-related educational background who are well-supported and well-remunerated. “If early childhood educators are to undertake the education expected of a professional workforce, their investment of time and tuition dollars must be properly compensated with professional-level wages” (*Workforce Strategy for Early Childhood Educators*, n.d., p. 2) Research shows that “better qualified staff support a higher quality pedagogy that contributes to improved outcomes for children and their families.” (Langford, 2014, p. 14)

“Canada’s child care professionals are at the heart of quality. Simply put, Canada’s federal government, working in partnership with provincial and territorial governments as well as Indigenous Nations to support a well-paid, educated Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) workforce in order to ensure quality. Governments cannot create spaces without investment to Canada’s ELCC workforce—or, they take a band-aid approach, providing one-time grants or wage subsidies. These approaches change based on the whim of the government of the day and are not sustainable. A comprehensive workforce strategy will enhance quality and support the over 260,000 people of which 255,000 are women who work in Canada’s ELCC sector.” (*Affordable, Accessible, Quality Child Care for All*, n.d.)

Children and families deserve the support of dedicated early childhood programs for both learning and care. Programs are only strong if their Early Learning and Care Educators are educated, dedicated, and remunerated adequately for their professional services.


Benefits of Early Learning and Child Care for Children

**Children who regularly participate
in early childhood education programs:**



(Benefits of Early Learning and Child Care for Children, 2021)

Challenges for License Holders in RMWB

- As statistics show year over year, 50% of certified Educators are no longer working in the ECE sector in the RMWB
 - Decreasing enrollment
 - Increasing monthly child care fees
 - License holders who have staff vacancies are unable to fill them with qualified Educators
 - Qualified candidates are not applying for posted positions with Licensed providers
 - Shortage of staff coverage for illness/vacation
 - Existing certified Educators are seeking secondary employment just to make ends meet
 - Although income thresholds increased to allow more families to access subsidies, the Fort McMurray threshold was actually lowered and now only household incomes of \$74,999 and less qualify for subsidy (Subsidy levels : \$408 - \$741 for every child under 19 months old and \$354 - \$644 for every child over 19 months old)
 - Subsidies for families attending preschool or utilizing kin care were terminated
 - The ELCC (\$25/ day) child care pilot ended March 31/ 2021
 - The Northern Living Allowance was cancelled for certified Educators in the RMWB (equating to a loss of approximately \$6 per hour)
 - PUF funding in schools was decreased and redesigned having services only based on school sites
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Statistics

Provincial Statistics

- 28,320 children in Alberta receive subsidy. 80% being full subsidy.
- By February 2021 96% of child care centres had re-opened (after COVID closure). There are about 2,900 active licensed or approved programs
- Of the 96% centres opened, on average seeing 50% enrolment
- From the first round of ELCC (\$25/ day) child care sites who ended March 31, 2020 – 7 centres have permanently closed. These centres all had waitlists while they were part of the pilot.
- From the second round the province has agreed to give transitional funding for one year to 12 sites of the 122.
- There are three municipally operated child care centres in the province.

RMWB Statistics

- Census 2016- 13,580 children
- License holders are reporting 55% enrollment vs. capacity
- Expression Of Interest Child Care Capacity listed Fort McMurray has having licensed child care spaces for 6% of the population (0-5 yrs)
- November 2020 CCC-EOI reported 505 spaces being accessed
- Child Development Dayhomes, Pacesetters, and Klorious Kids offer weekend and extended hour options for children and families
- Preschools offer part-time and flexible weekday options for children and families
- 2 of the 4 ELCC centres (\$25.00/day) have closed- Willow Lake and Birchwood YMCA
- At least three centres report having had to increase fees for sustainability

Accountability and transparency for all stakeholders to ensure that public investment is well managed and regulatory obligations are met

Licensed child care programs and day home agencies working under a regulated system provide the highest level of accountability, because they adhere to Alberta's Early Learning & Child Care Act and Regulations. "The whole system - quality, affordability, accessibility - also requires accountability and transparency measures to ensure public funds are being used appropriately" (*Statement on the Federal Budget's Early Learning and Child Care Announcement: Why Establishing a Canada-Wide System is Good for Early Childhood Educators*, n.d., p. 5)

A strong basis for accountability to Canadians—the government will work with provincial and territorial partners to build a strong baseline of common, publicly available data on which to measure progress, report to Canadians, and help continuously improve the system. (*Dividends of Investing in Early Learning and Child Care*, 2021)



The Case for Universal Affordable Child Care

Without universal access to affordable, high-quality child care, women's equality cannot be a reality.

It opens up opportunities for women. In Alberta, women's employment lags behind men's, and women are twice as likely to work part-time compared to men. At home, they do twice the amount of unpaid work. **Lack of access to affordable, quality child care is a key barrier to women finding and keeping work. Low-fee care accessible to all would open up opportunities for women to improve their economic security, while better balancing work and family.**

It benefits children. The early years of childhood are recognized as crucial for the development of cognitive and social abilities. High-quality child care enhances children's development and well-being and provides a foundation for life-long learning. **Ensuring access to high-quality care for all families would lead to better and more equitable outcomes for children.**

It reduces poverty. One in six children living with a female lone parent experiences poverty, compared to 1 in 20 children who grow up with two parents. **Better access to affordable, quality child care would allow lone mothers who live in poverty to look for or return to work and take part in education and training, so they can build better futures for themselves and their children.**

It benefits our communities. When parents have access to affordable, quality child care, they can find and keep work, study, get training, and improve their family's economic situation while better balancing work and family. Every dollar spent in early education has a \$2-\$7 return on investment over the long term. **An investment in child care is an investment in better outcomes for women, children, and whole communities.**

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