

September 15, 2009

FOR RELEASE 12:30 AM

## **Early Childhood Education and Care in Canada 2008: Highlights**

A new report released today finds heightened interest among governments across Canada in developing new policies and programs for young children, yet finding good childcare remains as elusive as ever for parents.

*Early Childhood Education and Care in Canada 2008*, the eighth bi-annual report of the Childcare Resource and Research Unit tracks trends in childcare and kindergarten. This latest edition identifies a number of new provincial initiatives, including:

- A commitment to universal full school-day kindergarten in three provinces (in addition to three already offering it);
- An innovative full-day early learning program under consideration in Ontario
- Another province piloting its first school-based programs blending kindergarten and childcare;
- New publicly-operated centres in several provinces;
- Childcare moved to education departments in two provinces;
- Early childhood curriculum frameworks in five provinces;
- New capital funds in several provinces;
- Initiatives to strengthen the childcare workforce.

A number of trends are noted:

- Mothers' labour force participation continues to grow and is now 77% among those with children 3-5 years old;
- A sharp slowdown in increases to total provincial/territorial childcare budgets with only a \$147.3 million increase between 2006 -2008, compared to \$538.3 million 2004-2006 and \$512.1 million 2002-2004;
- Coverage (percent of children for whom there is a space) grew by only 1% since the last report in 2006 (enough spaces for 19.3% of 0-5 year olds in 2006 and 20.3% in 2008);
- Growth in childcare spaces has dropped, with growth of 26,131 spaces in 2007 and 29,791 in 2008, compared to 32,668 (av) in 2005 and 50,831 (av) in 2003;
- For-profit childcare grew sharply, now accounting for 25% of centre spaces, up from 21% in 2006.

The main report (216 pages) and "30 quick facts about Canadian ECEC" are available online at [www.childcarecanada.org/ECEC2008](http://www.childcarecanada.org/ECEC2008)

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