
■ ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Early childhood education and care in Canada 2006 is the seventh edition of this publication that the Childcare Resource and Research Unit has published. Although collecting and synthesizing the relevant data from across Canada for each successive edition has always been challenging, the many shifts in policy that have occurred recently meant that putting this edition together was especially so. In light of this, special thanks are due to the provincial/territorial officials from across Canada who willingly collaborated with us to ensure that the information in this version of *ECEC in Canada* is as complete and consistent as possible. Federal government officials too were most helpful and supportive in a number of ways. Thanks to Barry Forer for assembling the national and demographic data. Finally, we would like to acknowledge the financial support of Human Resources and Social Development Canada for this and previous editions of *ECEC in Canada* and for their support of the Childcare Resource and Research Unit during the period 1984-2006.

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PREFACE

In the last edition of *ECEC in Canada* (2005), I observed that in the past few years, Canada had “seen unprecedented recognition in Canadian social and economic policy that ...early childhood education and care (ECEC) is central”. The backdrop to this recognition had been child care’s more than decade-long stagnation and crisis in most of Canada while federal governments had capped, eroded and slashed social programs throughout the 1990s. At the same time, throughout the 1990s and first part of the 2000s, ECEC directions in a number of regions of Canada had swung wildly in an up-and-down roller coaster ride as new policy and increases were replaced by downsizing and expansion was followed by cuts, then – in some instances – growth again.

With this edition of *ECEC in Canada* in 2007, several other abrupt shifts have taken place in early learning and child care directions. In early 2003, “the first step” toward a national early learning and child care program had been agreed to by the federal government and all provinces and territories (outside Quebec, which had been putting its own ECEC program in place). The 2003 Multilateral Framework agreement on Early Learning and Child Care was designed to ramp up to \$350 million in 2007 to expand and improve regulated early learning and child care according to agreed-upon principles.

Then in the 2004 federal election there was a historic commitment to a national early learning and child care program with an initial promise of \$5 billion over five years and four principles identified - quality, universality, accessibility, developmental [programming] for early childhood programs to be designed and maintained by provinces/territories.

When a Liberal minority government was elected, it seemed to many in the child care community who had worked for years to convince Canadian governments - federal and provincial - to take up their responsibilities to families that the long roller coaster ride might be slowing down - even coming to a stop. This was, it seemed, the beginning of the hard work needed to put a system in place by expanding public funding for programs and developing a real policy framework to improve quality and access.

But the government that had begun to implement their election promise fell in December 2005. Another federal election was held in January 2006 with a result that meant the end of the nascent early learning and child care program. The election platform of the subsequent government promised to annul the early learning and child care program and in February, the federal/provincial early learning and child care agreements negotiated in 2005 were indeed cancelled by the new federal government which put in place instead a monthly payment to all parents of 0–6 year olds.

The ticket kiosk for the early learning and child care roller coaster ride was open again as the 2005 federal funding was extended for just one more year, until March 31st, 2007. Provincial plans were put on hold, cancelled or reduced. Then a different early learning and child care transfer – \$250 million, slated to become part of the Canada Social Transfer – was announced in the 2007 federal budget as this volume was being finalized.

At the time that the 2004 edition was being finalized, the Canada Review conducted by Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development’s (OECD) 20-country analysis of early learning and child care had recently been released, making a series of practical recommendations to Canada. Since then, data from the OECD’s cross-national project has shown Canada’s spending on early learning and child care to be in last place among 14 OECD (industrialized) countries. This provides a graphic illustration of Canada’s on-again, off-again affair with early learning and child care. Over the past

two or three decades, most other OECD countries have built their systems, devoting public funding and attention and generally moving ahead rather than taking two steps forward, three steps back, then one step ahead again. International data included in *Looking beyond our borders*, a new addition to *ECEC in Canada* in this edition, illustrates where Canada stands.

It's worth noting that with this edition of *ECEC in Canada* the federal government has - for the first time since the Canada Assistance Plan¹ (CAP) and its child care provisions were eliminated in 1996 - become a player in early learning and child care programs whose development and management are constitutionally under provincial/territorial jurisdiction in Canada. The federal transfers for these programs - unlike the cost sharing arrangements of CAP - are earmarked, either in transitional arrangements or in the Canada Social Transfer and although they are relatively modest and there is no national policy framework, the idea that the national government has a role to play now seems relatively established.

Finally, it's important to note that - while the data available to compile the snapshot pictures of early childhood education and care in Canada have always been sparse and not as consistent as one would have desired - with this edition, data difficulties have increased. Indeed, on some important topics there are no consistent data as some sources of consistent information have become too old to use. The OECD's observations about the importance of good data for policy and program development as well as public accountability are echoed here.

Clearly Canada - federal governments, provincial/territorial governments together with organizations, researchers and parents - has a long way to go. How quickly Canada catches up to other countries by beginning to make good use of valuable information from comparative research and examples from ECEC practice will influence whether successive generations of children and families finally get off the early learning and child care roller coaster.

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¹ It's important to note that child care was eligible for CAP's cost-sharing provisions with provinces insofar as they were supports to parental employment as a means to alleviating or preventing poverty, not as early learning programs. (See the State of ECEC in Canada section).

■ EXPLANATORY NOTES

Every effort was made to ensure the accuracy of the data provided in this publication and to use accurate and consistent terminology and categories across provinces/territories whenever possible. This was not always possible, however, due to the use of different terminologies, categories, data collection methods and missing information. In some cases, information that is consistent by date or definition was not available. Where this occurs, dates and definitions are provided or noted in the text or in footnotes.

METHOD

The data were assembled from a variety of sources including Canada-wide data sources (identified below), information provided by provincial/territorial government officials and from community organizations, researchers and other resources.

Information on federal ECEC programs was assembled using print and online sources.

The method used to collect data on regulated child care from each province/territory followed a series of steps. First, a written questionnaire was sent to each provincial/territorial child care office. P/T officials then assembled their data; this was followed by a telephone interview with officials in each jurisdiction who had relevant information. Additional consultations with community representatives were utilized as well. Using a combination of material provided by government officials, community groups, written and website material, a draft was then compiled. Each jurisdiction assisted further by providing clarification and updates. Further follow-up was done throughout the editing stage to ensure the information's accuracy.

Kindergarten information was assembled by identifying and contacting the official (or officials) in each jurisdiction with responsibility for kindergarten and by collecting information using a short questionnaire developed for this purpose. These data were supplemented by written and website information; sources are noted in the text where they were used. Community representatives were not involved in supplementing this information although provincial/territorial online and print materials supplemented key informants' responses.

It should be noted that timely information that is consistent across Canada and over time is often not available.

DATA SOURCES

Number of children 0-12 years

Special tabulation based on the Labour Force Survey. Conducted by Statistics Canada. 2005 annual average.

Children 0-12 years with mothers in the paid labour force

Special tabulation based on the Labour Force Survey. Conducted by Statistics Canada. 2005 annual average.

Number of children 0-14 identifying with an Aboriginal group

Statistics Canada. 2001 Census of Canada. Topic-based tabulation 97F0011XCB01002.

Number of children by marital status of families

Statistics Canada. 2001 Census of Canada. Topic-based tabulation 95F0313XCB01004.

Number of children by mother tongue

Statistics Canada. 2001 Census of Canada. Topic-based tabulation 97F0007XCB01001.

Children 0-14 years with disabilities

Statistics Canada. (December, 2002). *A profile of disability in Canada, 2001: Participation and Activity Limitation Survey*. Catalogue no. 89-579-XIE.

The Participation and Activity Limitation Survey (PALS) uses the World Health Organization's (WHO) framework of disability provided by the International Classification of Functioning (ICF). This framework defines disability as the relationship between body structures and functions, daily activities and social participation, while recognizing the role of environmental factors.

For the purpose of PALS, persons with disabilities are those who reported difficulties with daily living activities, or who indicated that a physical or mental condition or health problem reduced the kind or amount of activities they could do. The respondents' answers to the disability questions represent their perception of the situation and are therefore subjective.

Number and percentage of children living in families below the LICO

Canadian Council on Social Development using Statistics Canada Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics master file, 2004.

Workforce participation of mothers by age of youngest child

Statistics Canada. Labour force historical review, file CD2T04AN.

These figures include employed and unemployed women by age of child. These two categories are considered to be in the labour force. These figures do not include women who are not in the paid labour force (e.g. students or individuals enrolled in a training program, or other guardians responsible for children).

Family-related leave

Length of maternity, parental and adoption leave in Employment Standards Legislation (unpaid). Table from Labour Law Analysis, Strategic Policy and International Labour Affairs, Labour Program. Human Resources Development Canada (February 18, 2002).

Work-life balance in Canada: A report to Ministers Responsible for Labour in Canada, Chapter II (March 2001, updated February 2002). *The legislative framework*.

Number of births and birth rate (July 1, 2005 to June 30, 2006)

Statistics Canada. Births and birth rate, by provinces and territories. <http://www.statcan.ca/english/Pgdb/demo04a.htm>

EI maternity, parental, and adoption claims

Monitoring and Assessment Report, HRSDC (2005). Annex 2, Tables 2.8, 2.9, 2.10. http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/en/ei/reports/annex2_2005.pdf

Spending for EI maternity and parental leave benefits (2005/06)

Government of Canada (2007, forthcoming). *Early childhood development activities and expenditures: Government of Canada report 2004-2005 and 2005-2006/Early learning and child care activities and expenditures: Government of Canada report 2004-2005 and 2005-2006*. Ottawa, ON: Author.

Federal ECEC programs

Government of Canada (2007, forthcoming). *Early childhood development activities and expenditures: Government of Canada report 2004-2005 and 2005-2006/Early learning and child care activities and expenditures: Government of Canada report 2004-2005 and 2005-2006*. Ottawa, ON: Author.

Federal transfers to the provinces

MFA and bilateral agreement figures- Department of Finance. Federal Support for Early Childhood Development and Early Learning and Child Care

<http://www.fin.gc.ca/FEDPROV/ecde.html>

2007 budget figures- Department of Finance. Federal Support for Children

<http://www.fin.gc.ca/FEDPROV/fsce.html>

Aboriginal ECEC programs

Government of Canada (2007, forthcoming). *Early childhood development activities and expenditures: Government of Canada report 2004-2005 and 2005-2006/Early learning and child care activities and expenditures: Government of Canada report 2004-2005 and 2005-2006*. Ottawa, ON: Author.

ECEC programs under federal and provincial/territorial jurisdiction

Data and other information as reported by provincial/territorial officials.