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<sup>1</sup> Please note that the title of the federal department Human Resources and Social Development Canada was changed to Human Resources and Skills Development Canada in 2008. The older term is used throughout the publication as most of the data refer to 2008.

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## ■ EXPLANATORY NOTES

We have made every effort to ensure the accuracy of the data provided in this publication and to use accurate and consistent terminology and categories across provinces/territories. 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), federal/provincial/territorial government officials and from community, published and other resources.

Information on ECEC programs under federal aegis and Aboriginal ECEC programs was provided by federal officials, augmented with publicly available data as noted in the text.

Information on kindergarten and regulated child care was provided by provincial/territorial officials.

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 step was followed by a telephone interview with officials in each jurisdiction. Additional information from community sources may also have been utilized. A draft was then compiled using material provided by government officials, community sources, print and online material. Each jurisdiction assisted further by providing clarification and updates. Further follow-up proceeded throughout the editing stage to ensure the information's accuracy.

Kindergarten information was assembled by identifying and contacting the officials in each jurisdiction with responsibility for kindergarten, collecting information using a questionnaire developed for this purpose. These data may have been supplemented by print and online information.

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, 2007 annual average. Conducted by Statistics Canada.

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

Special tabulation based on the Labour Force Survey, 2007 annual average. Conducted by Statistics Canada.

#### **Children 0-14 years identifying with an Aboriginal group.**

Statistics Canada. 2006 Census. Catalogue Number 97-558-XWE2006007

<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/bsolc/olc-cel/olc-cel?catno=97-558-X2006007&lang=eng>

#### **Number of children by marital status of families**

Statistics Canada. 2006 Census. Catalogue Number 97-553-XWE2006011

<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/bsolc/olc-cel/olc-cel?catno=97-553-X2006011&lang=eng>

### **Number of children by mother tongue**

Statistics Canada. 2006 Census. Catalogue Number 97-555-XWE2006021

<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/bsolc/olc-cel/olc-cel?catno=97-555-X2006021&lang=eng>

### **Children 0-14 years with disabilities**

Statistics Canada. Participation and Activity Limitation Survey 2006.

Analytic Paper, Catalogue Number 89-628-XIE - No. 003

<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/89-628-x/89-628-x2007003-eng.pdf>

The Participation and Activity Limitation Survey 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 below the LICO**

Special tabulation based on the Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics master file, 2006. Conducted by Statistics Canada.

### **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).

Ad Hoc Committee on Work-Life Balance. (2002). Work-life balance in Canada: A report to Ministers Responsible for Labour in Canada. Chapter II: The legislative framework. Retrieved March 1, 2009 from <http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/lp/spila/wlb/pdf/wlbc-ctvpc-en.pdf>. Updated using online sources.

### **EI maternity, parental, and adoption claims (2007)**

*For all provinces except Quebec*

- *Monitoring and Assessment Report*, HRSDC (2007). Annex 2, Tables 2.8, 2.9, 2.10.
- [http://www1.servicecanada.gc.ca/eng/employment/ei/reports/eimar\\_2007/transf/annex2.pdf](http://www1.servicecanada.gc.ca/eng/employment/ei/reports/eimar_2007/transf/annex2.pdf)

#### *For Quebec*

- Reports from Conseil de gestion de l'assurance parentale Québec:
- Statistiques officielles sur les prestataires du Régime québécois d'assurance parentale. Tableaux 5, 6, 7, 8
- [http://www.cgap.gouv.qc.ca/publications/pdf/stat\\_RQAP200712.pdf](http://www.cgap.gouv.qc.ca/publications/pdf/stat_RQAP200712.pdf)
- Rapport sur le portrait de la clientèle du Régime québécois d'assurance parentale.
- 2007 data provided through personal communication with statistics manager at Conseil de gestion de l'assurance parentale Québec. Link to 2006 report below (2007 not yet available).
- [http://www.cgap.gouv.qc.ca/publications/pdf/Rapport\\_portrait\\_clientele\\_RQAP-2006.pdf](http://www.cgap.gouv.qc.ca/publications/pdf/Rapport_portrait_clientele_RQAP-2006.pdf)

#### **Number of births and birth rate (July 1, 2007 to June 30, 2008)**

Statistics Canada. Births and birth rate, by provinces and territories.

<http://www40.statcan.gc.ca/l01/cst01/demo04a-eng.htm>

#### **ECEC programs under federal aegis**

Data provided by federal officials

#### **Aboriginal ECEC programs**

Data provided by federal and provincial/territorial officials

#### **Francophone ECEC in minority context**

Statistics Canada. 2006 Census of Canada. Children, percentage of target population on total population, by geographic region and by age group.

Commission nationale des parents francophones. (In press). *Cadre de collaboration*. Un report de la table nationale en développement de la petite enfance. Ottawa: Author.

#### **Median full-time, full-year employment income for centre-based early childhood educators and assistants**

Statistics Canada. (2006). *National occupational classification for statistics (NOC-S) 2006*. Catalogue no. 12-583-XIE. Special run conducted by Statistics Canada.

#### **Table 31 Federal transfers designated for early childhood education and care**

MFA and bilateral agreement figures are from the Department of Finance Canada website: *Federal Support for Early Childhood Development and Early Learning and Child Care*. Retrieved May 2007 from <http://fin.gc.ca/FEDPROV/ecde.html>

2007 budget figures are from Department of Finance Canada website: *Federal Support for Children*. Retrieved May 2007 from <http://www.fin.gc.ca/FEDPROV/fsce.html>



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## ■ THE STATE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CHILD CARE IN 2009

Over the last three decades, participation in an early childhood education and care program has become the norm for older preschool-aged children in Canada. Early childhood education and care, or ECEC, refers primarily to kindergarten and regulated child care programs. National data show that nearly 80% of preschool-age children with employed or studying mothers are regularly in some form of non-parental child care or early childhood program with almost 50% in an organized ECEC program, although data that indicate whether these meet parents' needs for "care", and whether they are high quality enough to be defined as "early childhood education", are not available (Cleveland, Forer, Hyatt, Japel and Krashinsky, 2008). Between the 1980s and 2009, the proportion of children aged six months to five years who were in some form of extra-parental child care increased significantly, while more child care-using families shifted to child care centres and relative care (Statistics Canada, 2005). At the same time, kindergarten programs developed across Canada to cover virtually all five year olds and some four years, although kindergarten is usually a part-time program, ordinarily covering two and a half hours a day. Of the more than 70% of children with both parents or a single parent in the paid labour force, many or most were presumed to be in family child care provided by an unregulated family child care provider, an in-home caregiver or a relative for at least part of their parents' working hours.

The range and quality of early childhood education and care services and access to them vary enormously by region and circumstances. Organized ECEC services across Canada are in short supply or, like public kindergarten, not sensitive to the labour force needs of parents and are available for only a minority of preschool-aged children. Regulated child care is often too costly for ordinary families or not sufficiently high quality to be considered "developmental". Young school-aged children may be alone after school or attend recreation or other community programs that are not intended to provide "care". Overall, no region of Canada provides a system of well-designed, integrated and adequately funded early childhood education and care services to meet the needs of a majority of families and children.

One of the most salient pieces of information about Canada's early childhood education and care situation is that, although participation in the paid labour force has become the norm for mothers of young children, and the evidence about the benefits of quality early childhood programs for young children has accumulated, the situation has failed to progress significantly. International comparative studies such as the OECD's Thematic Review of Early Childhood Education and Care<sup>1</sup> and UNICEF's 2008 report card on provision of early childhood education and care indicate that while — as the OECD has described it — "Policy makers have recognized that equitable access to quality early childhood education and care can strengthen the foundations of lifelong learning for all children and support the broad educational and social needs of families" (OECD, 2001, p.7), Canada has fallen farther and farther behind most other affluent countries, ranking — according to UNICEF's 10 benchmarks — at the very bottom (UNICEF, 2008).

### HOW EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE IS ORGANIZED IN CANADA

Each of Canada's 14 jurisdictions — 10 provinces, three territories and the federal government — has a number of programs for care and early childhood education as well as for meeting other objectives such as supporting parents and ameliorating the effects of poverty.

Each province and territory has a program of regulated child care that includes centre-based full-day child care, regulated family child care, school-aged child care and, usually, nursery or preschools. The provincial/territorial child care programs provide legislated requirements for operation of services and a variety of funding arrangements, usually under a social or community services ministry.

Provincial/territorial governments also have responsibility for public kindergartens that primarily operate part-time — usually 2.5 hours a day — for five year olds under ministries of education.

Generally, kindergarten programs for five year olds (or fours in Ontario) are a public responsibility while “care” and early childhood education for children younger than age five is a private family responsibility. In addition to these provincial/territorial programs, a variety of care and education programs — for example, Aboriginal Head Start and Military Family Resource Programs — operate under the aegis of the federal government.

ECEC (or early learning and child care) in Canada consists of regulated child care and kindergarten, supplemented by family resource programs that are primarily intended to support parents and by an assortment of cash payments, complemented by maternity and parental leave.

## ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES FOR ECEC

That Canada has a federal system is key to the definition of responsibilities for the country’s ECEC. The division of powers between federal and provincial governments was originally defined in the Constitution Act of 1867 and has evolved over the years. The 1990s and 2000s have been periods of devolution of roles and responsibilities for social programs, primarily from the federal to the provincial level. The Social Union Framework Agreement (SUFA) of 1999 shaped Canada’s social policy<sup>2</sup> for some years although its status is unclear at this time.

A new role that developed in the 2000s for the federal government is that of financing some ECEC costs. For the first time, the federal government began to transfer earmarked funds to the provinces and territories to spend on regulated child care in 2003<sup>3</sup>. These specifically earmarked funds flow through several intergovernmental agreements (see Federal ECEC section). Earmarked federal transfers reached as high as \$950 million annually for a short period in the mid-2000s and totaled \$600 million in 2007/08.

Thus, with few exceptions, ECEC services — child care, nursery schools, kindergarten — are, like health, social services, and elementary, secondary and post-secondary education — under the jurisdiction of provinces and territories. Each of Canada’s 10 provinces and three territories has developed a program of regulated child care and — in most cases — a separate public kindergarten program.

Canadian municipalities do not have powers assigned by constitutional arrangements but are subordinate to the provinces, which delegate powers, including taxing powers, to them. Outside Ontario, where they play several important roles in child care (funding, operation of services [about 10% of regulated child care services are municipally operated] and policy-setting), local governments generally have no function in regulated child care, although the City of Vancouver has adopted a key planning role. Local school boards (or school divisions) are also subordinate to provincial governments; these usually have primary responsibility for operation of elementary schools, including kindergarten, and may host child care programs as landlords as well.

Parent-users, non-governmental organizations and other community-based actors are a key part of Canadian ECEC. At the service delivery level, the bulk of the supply of regulated child care is initiated and maintained by parent and/or voluntary boards of directors; these child care programs comprise most of the nonprofit child care sector, which represents 75% of the total supply. Otherwise parents generally have little specific role in regulated child care, although the bulk of child care services and private arrangements are paid for by parent fees; a national study in 1998 found that an average of 49.2% of revenue for full-day child care centres came from parent fees.

In most parts of Canada, advocacy, professional and service groups, researchers and, to some extent, organized parent groups where they exist, make up what is often called “the child care community”. These groups are important providers of services like professional development and in-service training. In addition, advocacy for more and better child care —

and now ECEC — has been a visible feature of the Canadian ECEC landscape for decades. Alliances with other groups with an interest in ECEC — for example, the labour movement, anti-poverty activists, feminists and other sectors — have long been a fundamental element of Canadian advocacy for child care. At the present time, professional, service and advocacy groups are considerably weakened as the federal funds that have traditionally supported their activities have been withdrawn.

## SERVICE OVERVIEW

Most of Canada's ECEC programs are under provincial jurisdiction. Generally, regulated child care includes centres, usually (except in Quebec, Saskatchewan and the Yukon) nursery schools, preschools or part-day centre-based programs and regulated family child care under the same legislation. Almost all jurisdictions now require at least some of the staff working in child care with children to have some training in early childhood education; however, Canadian requirements for early childhood training are generally acknowledged to be less than adequate (UNICEF, 2008).

All jurisdictions subsidize at least some of the costs of regulated child care for low-income, usually employed, parents. However, in some cases, limitations on the number of these subsidies exclude many eligible parents; in other cases, the subsidy provided does not cover the whole fee; sometimes there is a significant gap between the subsidy rate and the parent fee. As well, in most provinces/territories, the income level that determines eligibility is too low to cover modest and middle income families (Beach and Friendly, 2005)<sup>4</sup>. In much of Canada, middle class or modest income families do not qualify for a fee subsidy and cannot afford regulated child care.

Some provinces also provide funds to support the overall operation of child care services; this may be in the form of wage grants to raise staff wages. Overall, though, except in Quebec, child care is primarily a fee-paying service with many families not able to access services due to costs. Only Quebec has set out designated substantial public funding.

All the provinces and territories provide public kindergarten. In most cases kindergarten is part of the public education system<sup>5</sup> and in most jurisdictions, it is treated as an entitlement with no fees. All provinces/territories provide kindergarten for five year olds; in Ontario, four year old kindergarten is available universally too. Most kindergarten is part-day or part-time with three provinces offering full-day kindergarten (for the length of a school day). Attendance at kindergarten is compulsory in two jurisdictions; however, almost all age-eligible children attend public kindergartens when they are offered. Three provinces and the territories maintain more than one publicly funded school system (public and Catholic). All offer kindergarten in both official languages where population warrants. Some jurisdictions, such as Nunavut provide kindergarten in regional First Nations or Inuit languages.

Generally, there is little connection between kindergarten programs and regulated child care services at either the policy or service delivery level. In some provinces, Ontario, for example, many child care centres are located in schools. Except in Quebec, where school-aged child care (including for four and five year olds who attend kindergarten) is under the aegis of the Ministry of Education, and Saskatchewan, where child care has been transferred to the Ministry of Education, child care services are usually not the responsibility of the education system but are operated by community-based boards of directors, other nonprofit institutions or organizations, or by for-profit operators. School-based child care usually serves children up to age 12, with varying entry age for school-age programs; in Quebec, for example, four and five year olds in kindergarten are in school-age programs under the Ministry of Education outside of regular school hours while other provinces usually consider school-age child care to begin at Grade 1. Other age groups, including infants and toddlers, may also be served in school locations. In 2007/08 initiatives in a number of provinces — most notably Ontario — have begun to blend or integrate child care and kindergarten policy-wise, as well as programmatically and administratively<sup>6</sup>.

Provincial/territorial ECEC programs are covered in more detail in the individual section for each jurisdiction, in the Big Picture and Long View tables and in the *Trends and analysis* documents published to accompany this publication. ECEC services for Aboriginal communities, those under federal aegis and those for minority francophone populations are described in subsequent sections.



## TWO HISTORIES: EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CHILD CARE

The history of early childhood education and child care in Canada stretches back to the mid-19th century. In the first half of the 1800s, infant schools were developed in several provinces to offer care and instruction to poor children. Following these — motivated by the idea that children benefit from formal education and then influenced by contemporary thinking about the importance of education in early childhood — the first private kindergartens began to appear and, in cities and larger towns, were commonplace by the end of the 1870s.

The kindergarten movement soon grew beyond its first middle and upper class clientele as private kindergartens spread across Canada. These included "free kindergartens" run by missionary and charitable groups which were used as a tool for social reform and as a way of assimilating immigrant children (Prochner, 2000). Following on the heels of the first public kindergartens in the United States, the Toronto Board of Education opened the first Canadian public kindergarten in 1883. Influenced by the work of European educational specialists like Pestalozzi and Froebel, the Ontario kindergartens were recognized officially in 1885 and funded by the province two years later (Mathien, 2001). By 1900, there were kindergartens intended for three to five year olds and full day in many towns and villages across Ontario.

Some of the early kindergartens were apparently used — in part, at least — as "care" programs and, as Toronto's public school kindergartens were becoming more widespread, some were opened to look after children while their mothers were employed. Even before this, however, a few services were developed to take care of young children in Montreal, Toronto and, by 1920, in Halifax, Ottawa, Winnipeg, Vancouver and other cities. Throughout this period, these early childhood services — some of which accommodated infants — were developed and run by churches and women's charitable groups.

While there was organized child care in several of Canada's provinces early in the 1900s, there was little government involvement until World War II when a 1942 Order-in-Council established the Dominion-Provincial-War-time Agreement, the first federal intervention in organized child care. It offered 50% cost sharing to assist provinces to provide care for children whose mothers were working in essential war industries. Only Ontario and Quebec participated in this agreement. After the war, the federal government withdrew its support and all six of the Quebec child care centres, and many of Ontario's, closed.

Following World War II, the federal government's role in child care was mostly indirect and limited. Nevertheless, its second foray into the area in 1966 had an important impact on the way child care has developed since that time. The Canada Assistance Plan (CAP), the national welfare program, was introduced in 1966 to ameliorate or prevent poverty. Through the child care provisions of CAP, the Government of Canada entered into cost sharing agreements with the provinces for welfare services including child care. For the purpose of 50/50 cost sharing, CAP treated child care like other welfare services and established federal conditions. These stipulated that federal funds were available to pay only for services for needy, or potentially needy, families, and that to be eligible for funding as a welfare service, child care had to be regulated and public or not-for-profit<sup>7</sup>. The design of CAP meant that federal funds were used almost exclusively for fee subsidies for families who were income- or means-tested to determine eligibility<sup>8</sup>.

As social services are a provincial responsibility in Canada, the provinces were not compelled to participate. However, although it took a decade for them all to begin to use CAP's child care provisions, eventually all the provinces cost-shared their eligible child care costs through CAP. Thus, CAP began to spur the development of child care services throughout Canada and to shape their evolution throughout the 1970s and 1980s. Its residual approach to funding meant that regulated child care emerged as a welfare rather than a universal or educational service.

But as mothers with young children entered the paid labour force in growing numbers, middle class families also began to use child care centres that usually served both subsidized and fee paying families. Although there were always difficulties with the limited funding arrangements, the supply of regulated child care services grew dramatically throughout Canada as most of the provinces developed and refined service delivery, regulation and funding in the 1970s and 1980s.

In 1971, parental out-of-pocket child care expenses were allowed as a tax deduction for eligible families under *The Income Tax Act*, and maternity benefits for eligible new mothers were included under *The Unemployment Insurance Act*.



In 1970, the Royal Commission on the Status of Women called for a National Day-Care Act, the first national recognition of child care as part of the growing acknowledgement of women's equality. The provinces — beginning with Quebec in 1979 — began to provide funds other than fee subsidies to child care centres to reduce operating costs or to improve wages. Community demand for child care services — especially from a vibrant feminist movement exemplified by the National Action Committee on the Status of Women — swelled throughout the 1980s.

At the same time, separated conceptually, administratively and programmatically from “care”, public kindergarten was established in almost every province and territory to provide early childhood education, becoming an entitlement in most jurisdictions so that by the mid 1980s, most Canadian five year olds (and in Ontario, four year olds) were enrolled in public, mostly half-day kindergarten programs.

#### EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE IN THE 1990s

Between 1984 and 1995, there were three significant attempts to develop a national approach to child care as successive federal governments announced a national strategy. Each of these — the Task Force on Child Care set up by the Trudeau government (1984), the Special Committee on Child Care of the Mulroney government (1986), and the initiative based on Jean Chretien's 1993 Red Book election commitment — recognized the primacy of the provinces in social or educational services such as child care. However, none of these efforts was successful in producing a pan-Canadian strategy or approach to early childhood education and care.

In the mid-1990s, Canada's political arrangements, which had historically featured tensions between federal and provincial roles, tilted toward provincial primacy. This shift had a strong impact on the future of early childhood education and child care. The Canada Assistance Plan was abolished in 1996 (and never re-established) and all federal dollars for provincial health, education and welfare programs were subsumed in a block fund, the Canada Health and Social Transfer (CHST)<sup>9</sup>. Social policy experts feared that, without conditions like those that had been part of the CAP agreement, provincial spending of the substantially reduced federal dollars in the CHST would become less accountable both to the federal government and to the public.

A debate about what was termed “social policy renewal” arose in a climate of anxiety about Quebec separation and the fiscal deficit. This was formalized in February 1999 as the federal government and the nine provinces comprising “the rest of Canada” outside Quebec signed the Social Union Framework Agreement (SUFA). These features of politics vis-à-vis Canadian federalism continued to play key roles in the development of a national early learning and child care program after 2000. While there was interest in young children and in “child development” as manifested in the National Children's Agenda (1997) and the Early Childhood Development Agreement (2000) which carried new federal funds for provincial children's programs, early childhood education and child care per se was off national policy agendas throughout this period and, indeed, lost ground in some provinces such as Ontario, Alberta and British Columbia (Friendly, Beach and Turiano, 2002).

In 2001, the federal government increased the parental leave portion of the Employment Insurance benefit to 35 weeks, making a total benefit covering 50 weeks combined maternity/parental leave available to eligible new parents. In response, all provinces/territories eventually amended their employment legislation to allow for an extended parental leave to match or exceed the federal benefit period.

#### EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE IN THE 2000s

Child care remained off the national policy agenda and while it remained off most (not all) provincial/territorial agendas, Quebec took a giant step forward. With a process that began in 1997, Quebec started to bring in a publicly-funded universal ECEC program. The evolution included moving from reliance on parent fee subsidies (like other provinces) to a public funding model; introduction of full- day kindergarten for all five year olds; expansion of spaces — supported by capital funding — to provide much greater availability through community-based centres de la petite enfance (CPEs) that include centre-based and family day care; a \$5-a-day parent fee for all families regardless of income; and a commitment to improved maternity/parental leave (Tougas, 2002). The process continued into the 2000s, although it shifted gears somewhat when a Quebec election brought in a new government.

Canada-wide, it was not until 2003 that another intergovernmental agreement — the Multilateral Framework on Early Learning and Child Care — was put in place by Federal Human Resources Minister Jane Stewart and provincial/territorial social services ministers. The ministers' communiqué said that, "This early learning and child care framework represents another important step in the development of early childhood development programs and services" (Government of Canada, 2003), while Minister Stewart called the Agreement "the beginning of a very solid national day-care program for Canadians" (Lawton, 2003).

But it was the next step towards a national early learning and child care program that was historic as it was the first time that a national child care program had been promised since Brian Mulroney's Progressive Conservative government considered it in 1986. This commitment came in the 2004 election campaign when the federal Liberals promised to develop a national early learning and child care system based on four principles — Quality, Universality, Accessibility and Developmental [programming] (QUAD). The campaign platform promised \$5 billion new dollars over five years to begin to build the system. Most of this money was to be transferred to provinces/territories using the CST formula; \$100 million was to be used for "accountability and data" and \$100 million for early learning and child care for First Nations communities (on-reserve).

After the Liberals won the 2004 election, they began negotiations with provinces to secure agreement to participate. The federal government's conditions were: a) provinces were to produce Action Plans before a five-year funding agreement was finalized; b) federal funds would be used only for regulated early childhood education and care programs; c) provinces would publicly report on the use of funds. By December 2005, nine provinces had signed bilateral agreements-in-principle with the Government of Canada on early learning and child care and two — Ontario and Manitoba — had published provincial action plans. These two, along with Quebec, which did not sign an agreement-in-principle or publish an Action Plan, moved on to negotiate full five-year funding agreements with the federal government.

These agreements marked the first time that a Canadian government had followed through with an election commitment to improve child care across Canada. While there was some variation in the provinces' directions as described in the agreements-in-principle, in signing them, the provinces committed to developing detailed Action Plans based on the four QUAD principles. In addition, all agreements included provincial commitment to collaborative infrastructural work in such areas as a national quality framework and data systems.

## NEW DIRECTIONS

In January 2006 a minority Conservative government was elected. The new government announced that the processes set in motion by the bilateral agreements would be terminated; that all jurisdictions — the three provinces with five-year funding agreements<sup>10</sup> (Quebec, Ontario and Manitoba), the seven provinces that had not yet released their Action Plans, and the three territories — would get one year's worth of federal funding; it would end March 31, 2007.

The new federal government promised an individual cash payment to parents — the Choice in Child Care Allowance, later renamed the "Universal Child Care Benefit" — an annual payment of \$1,200 to all parents with children under age 6, taxed in the hands of the lower-income spouse. In addition, the Conservatives said that they would initiate a Community Childcare Investment Program, later renamed the Spaces Initiative (capital funding to set up child care) to "help employers and communities create child care spaces in the workplace or through cooperative or community associations by establishing a tax credit for capital costs of \$10,000 per space; funding of \$250 million a year was identified for this initiative and — in the 2007 federal budget — was subsequently included as a transfer payment to provinces in the Canada Social Transfer.

The Universal Child Care Benefit cheques began to flow to parents in July 2006. An advisory committee was established to advise the Minister on the Child Care Spaces Initiative and consultations were held across Canada on this initiative. The advisory committee released a report and recommendations (Ministerial Advisory Committee on the Government of Canada's Child Care Spaces Initiative, 2007); \$250 million in transfer payments were announced in the 2007 federal budget.

After the January 2006 election and the cancellation of the national early learning and child care program, the focus of ECEC policy shifted to the provinces and territories.

While growth in regulated child care continued, between April 2006 and April 2007 there was limited growth in the number of regulated child care spaces in most provinces/territories, with expansion in Quebec slowing sharply. The increase — 26,661 spaces — was the smallest in several years; between 2007 and 2008, the increase was 29,271 spaces. In comparison, supply grew by 65,337 (an average of 32,668 in each year) between 2004 and 2006, and by 152,493 between 2001 and 2004 (an average of 50,831 a year in each of those three years) (Childcare Resource and Research Unit, 2008). The increase in spaces between March 2007 and March 2008 was again quite small — an additional 29,271 spaces.

In May 2006, an NDP-sponsored private member's bill, Bill C-303 was introduced. The "Act to establish criteria and conditions in respect of funding for early learning and child care programs in order to ensure the quality, accessibility, universality and accountability of those programs, and to appoint a council to advise the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development on matters relating to early learning and child care" was supported by the New Democrats, the Liberals and the Bloc Québécois and — although ruled a "money bill"<sup>11</sup>, made its way through committee hearings to Third Reading<sup>12</sup>, when the government was prorogued in November, 2008. The NDP Critic for child care, Olivia Chow, reintroduced the bill in April 2009.

In 2008, UNICEF published the first international study to rank the quality, access, financing and policy of ECEC programs using measurable benchmarks pegged to the average level of OECD achievement. Canada's provision of early childhood education and care ranked at the very bottom of 25 developed countries, tied with Ireland, as Canada achieved only one of ten minimum standards (UNICEF, 2008).

While Canada has a long way to go to reach the coverage, funding, policy, and infrastructure levels of other countries, there have been some promising, modest provincial initiatives since 2006. Several provinces have attempted to strengthen the ECEC workforce by helping to support training and education of staff; some have introduced recruitment and retention initiatives and some have increased levels of operating funding for regulated programs. Some small capital grants have been made, largely to enable centres to repair and refurbish facilities; while not necessarily increasing the supply of child care, they have improved physical environments for children. In a few instances, incentives to increase the supply of spaces have been initiated. In some provinces, notably Ontario, ministries of education have begun to take an increased interest in early childhood education and have begun discussion with social/community services ministries on issues related to curriculum, expanded full-day programming or full-day kindergarten and school delivery of other early childhood initiatives.

## Notes

- 1 For an online collection of all the OECD Thematic Review of ECEC reports see CRRU's online Issue File: <http://www.childcarecanada.org/res/issues/oecdthematicreviewcanadareports.html>
- 2 See CRRU's Issue File, *The Social Union Framework Agreement: Issues in Canadian policymaking* at: <http://www.childcarecanada.org/res/issues/sufa.html>
- 3 With the exception of funds briefly available during World War II.
- 4 See also individual provincial/territorial sections in this publication.
- 5 See Table 8. Selected characteristics of kindergarten programs by province/territory - 2008
- 6 See provincial/territorial sections in this publication.
- 7 CAP's other route allowed child care costs in for-profit services to be cost shared for eligible means-tested families as an "item of assistance".
- 8 It should be noted that the Canada Assistance Plan was ended by the federal government in 1996 and was not replaced by another national welfare program.
- 9 In 2004, the CHST was divided into the CHT (health) and the CST (social).
- 10 The three five year agreements (Manitoba, Quebec and Ontario) contained a pro forma "escape" clause that specifies that either partner to the agreement may cancel it with one year's notice.
- 11 Federal legislation with financial implications requires support of the governing party to receive Royal Assent.
- 12 Bill C-303 is available online at: <http://www.parl.gc.ca/LEGISInfo/index.asp?Language=E&query=5101&Session=15&List=toc>

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## FEDERAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE

Early childhood education and care programs fall under provincial/territorial jurisdiction, according to Canadian constitutional arrangements. While this is generally the practice, the federal government takes responsibility for a number of ECEC programs. ECEC services under federal aegis are intended for populations for whom the federal government has particular responsibility — for example, Aboriginal people, military families, and new immigrants and refugees. The federal government also makes funds related to child care available to individuals in the form of cash payments and tax benefits. Finally, since 2003, the federal government has been making several different transfer payments to provinces/territories through the Canada Social Transfer.

The following tables describe the ECEC, ECEC-related cash programs and ECEC earmarked transfer payments to provinces for which the federal government is responsible.

### ECEC AND RELATED PROGRAMS UNDER FEDERAL AEGIS (2006/07 UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED)

**TABLE 1.1** LINC Child Minding: Program overview

Program	Department	Objectives	Information	Public spending
Child minding component of the Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC)	Citizenship and Immigration Canada	To provide on-site child care while parents or guardians take language training and to offer children “an opportunity to learn some English or French in a safe environment”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Support settlement programs that provide LINC programs.</li> <li>· 165 sites in ON and 180 across Canada (est.)</li> <li>· Generally not regulated; federal requirements establish minimum standards of care</li> <li>· Supported by CMAS (Childminding, Monitoring, Advisory and Support)</li> </ul>	Not available <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A total of \$122,287,936 was spent on LINC programs in 2006/07 of which child minding is just one part. No breakdown is available. Note that the information in this table does not include Quebec, Manitoba or British Columbia, which are covered by separate agreements.

**TABLE 1.2** Military Family Resource Centres: Program overview

Program	Department	Objectives	Information	Public spending
Military Family Resource Centres (MFRC)	Department of National Defence	MFRCs offer a range of child and family programs and coordinate the delivery of child care services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Mandated to provide emergency child care, emergency/respite child care and casual child care</li> <li>· Regulated child care not mandated or funded</li> <li>· MFRCs served an est. 8,000 children &lt;6 years in 2006/07 in 43 sites in Canada, the UK, Europe and US</li> <li>· All MFRCs provide regulated child care</li> </ul>	Spending for 0-6 years, 2006/07: \$4 million (est.)

*Note: The public spending figure does not include child care, which is user-pay.*

### FEDERAL CASH AND TAX BENEFITS RELEVANT TO ECEC UNDER FEDERAL AEGIS (2006/07 UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED)

#### MATERNITY AND PARENTAL LEAVE BENEFITS

While the length of maternity and parental leaves and the conditions determining terms and eligibility are provincially determined under labour legislation, the benefit that pays eligible parents for portions of these leaves falls under the federal Employment Insurance legislation. First included in the then-Unemployment Insurance Act in 1971, the length of the federal benefit has increased a number of times in the intervening years. A notable increase occurred in 1989 when benefits for parental leave (either parent) were added to maternity leave benefits reserved for birth mothers.

The federal government increased the parental leave portion of the benefit to 35 weeks in 2001. Under these rules, maternity benefits of 15 weeks and the new parental benefit of 35 weeks to a total of 50 weeks will be paid at 55% of insured earnings to a maximum of \$447 a week to eligible parents.<sup>1</sup>

The eligibility requirement is 600 hours of insured work within the past 52 weeks. Human Resources and Social Development is responsible for the benefit programs.

**TABLE 1.3** Federal spending on maternity and parental leave 2000/01 — 2006/07

Year	Maternity (millions of \$)	Parental (millions of \$)	Total (millions of \$)
2000/01	752	502	1,254
2001/02	848	1,311	2,192
2002/03	845	1,880	2,159
2003/04	909	2,015	2,924
2004/05	925	2,112	3,027
2005/06	903	2,064	2,967
2006/07 <sup>2</sup>	775	1,765	2,540

<sup>1</sup> On January 1, 2006 the Government of Quebec introduced its own parental insurance plan, replacing EI maternity and parental benefits. See Quebec section for details.

<sup>2</sup> Note that these spending figures do not include Quebec

**TABLE 1.4** Maternity and parental leave benefit claims allowed: Number of children

Year	# of children — Maternity	# of children — Parental
2000/01	176,000	177,000
2001/02	193,000	196,000
2002/03	191,000	193,000
2003/04	202,000	205,000
2004/05	199,000	202,000
2005/06	192,000	192,000
2006/07 <sup>1</sup>	163,000	184,000

*Note: The number of initial maternity leave benefit claims for 2007 may be found in each provincial/territorial section, together with the number of births for 2007.*

<sup>1</sup> Note that these figures do not include Quebec

#### CHILD CARE EXPENSE DEDUCTION

**TABLE 1.5** Child Care Expense Deduction: Program overview

Program	Department	Objective	Information
Child Care Expense Deduction	Canada Revenue Agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· To recognize and offset child care costs up to age 16 incurred by parents who work, carry on a business or pursue education</li> <li>· Lower income spouse must make the claim except in specified circumstances</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Individual tax deduction up to \$7,000 for children &lt; 7 and \$4,000 for children aged 7-16</li> <li>· Receipt may be requested by CRA</li> </ul>

**TABLE 1.6** Federal spending on the Child Care Expense Deduction

Year	Tax expenditures (millions of \$)	# claims by individual tax filers
2000/01	424	1,072,780
2003/04	545	1,137,840
2005/06	545	1,138,780
2007/08	695 <sup>1</sup>	1,183,700

<sup>1</sup> Figure from Government of Canada. (2007). *The budget plan*. Ottawa: Department of Finance, 126.



## UNIVERSAL CHILD CARE BENEFIT

**TABLE 1.7** Universal Child Care Benefit: Program overview and spending

Program	Department	Objectives	Information	Public spending
Universal Child Care Benefit	Human Resources/Skills Development	· Helps Canadians balance work and family by supporting their child care choices through financial assistance	· Taxable cash payment (mailed cheque) of \$100 a month per child <6 years · Introduced 2006 · 2 million children <6 years	\$1,784,358,911

## TRANSFER FUNDS

**TABLE 1.8** Federal transfer funds designated for early childhood education and care — all provinces/territories by program by fiscal year 2003-2009 (\$ millions)

Program	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
Multilateral Framework Agreement	25	150	225	300	350	350
Foundations program-Bilateral agreements		200	500	650		
Child care spaces initiative					250	250
<b>TOTAL transfer earmarked for ECEC (\$)</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>350</b>	<b>725</b>	<b>950</b>	<b>600</b>	<b>600</b>

*Note: In addition, \$300 million in 2001/02, \$400 million in 2002/03, \$500 million in 2004/05, and \$500 million in each fiscal year thereafter was transferred to provinces/territories under the Early Childhood Development Agreement (ECDA). These funds may be used for early learning and child care if a province/territory chooses. An escalator clause of 3% was applied to the ECDA agreement as of 2009/10.*

*Some of the funds in this chart are included in the Canada Social Transfer, a block fund intended for social programs. The full CST fund (cash portion) transferred to provinces was worth \$8.3 billion in 2004/05; \$8.4 billion in 2005/06 and \$8.5 billion in 2006/07. The 2007 federal budget announced a steep increase in the CST so the cash portion will total \$9.5 billion in 2007/08 and \$10.8 billion in 2008/09. The federal budget extended the Multilateral Framework Agreement funds to 2013/14. The funds will grow by 3% annually as a result of the CST escalator.*

## ABORIGINAL ECEC

### CONTEXT

Canada's Aboriginal populations include First Nations and non-status native people (on- and off-reserve), Métis and Inuit. Although many Aboriginal people live in remote and/or northern areas, there are large southern and urban populations as well.

**TABLE 2.1** Number of children 0-14 years identifying with an Aboriginal group, Canada (2006)

Age	North American Indian	Métis	Inuit	Multiple	Other Aboriginal
0-4	71,730	29,010	5,890	680	1,575
5-9	74,065	32,215	5,800	630	2,045
10-14	78,980	37,200	6,030	825	2,160

### ISSUES

#### Accessibility/flexibility

Aboriginal groups have larger than average child populations, making early childhood education and care an especially important issue. According to information from the 2006 Census, "several factors may account for the growth of the Aboriginal population. These include demographic factors, such as high birth rates. In addition, more individuals are identifying themselves as an Aboriginal person, and there has also been a reduction in the number of incompletely enumerated Indian reserves since 1996"<sup>1</sup>.

A particular need for a wide range of flexible services to accommodate the diverse needs of Aboriginal communities has been identified by Aboriginal groups. The analysis of ECEC in Canada conducted by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development noted that

Thirty-five percent of the Aboriginal population is under age 15. Compared to the population as a whole, the Aboriginal population is educationally disadvantaged. Over the past decade, the federal government has introduced a number of new ECEC services for Aboriginal children under age 6 both on and off reserve and increased financial support. Aboriginal organizations often express a strong desire to maintain their culture and for ECEC services that are culturally sensitive, reflecting Aboriginal cultural norms and practices<sup>2</sup>

1 Statistics Canada (2008). Aboriginal Peoples in Canada in 2006: Inuit, Métis and First Nations, 2006 Census. *The Daily*, January 15, 2008.

2 Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (2004). *Canada Country Note*. Thematic Review of Early Childhood Education and Care. Paris: Directorate for Education, 86.

### **Cultural integrity**

The maintenance of indigenous culture is a major concern for Aboriginal peoples. Aboriginal organizations point out that general standards for child care centres are sometimes too rigid for northern and/or remote communities and that they may not reflect traditional cultural norms and practices. Culturally sensitive early childhood education as it pertains to training and service delivery is of special concern. There is a strong interest among Aboriginal groups in developing ECEC programs that are operated and controlled by the communities themselves.

### **Government policy**

Generally, funding for on-reserve social programs is the responsibility of the Government of Canada while social programs for other Aboriginal people may be a federal or a provincial responsibility. In 1996 the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples recommended that

federal, provincial, and territorial governments co-operate to support an integrated early childhood funding strategy that a) extends early childhood education to all Aboriginal children regardless of residence; b) encourages programs that foster the physical, social, intellectual and spiritual development of children, reducing distinctions between child care, prevention and education; c) maximizes Aboriginal control over service design and administration; d) offers one-stop accessible funding; and e) promotes parental involvement and choice in early childhood education options.<sup>3</sup>

Although governments in some provinces carry out regulation of on-reserve Aboriginal child care, others do not. In some provinces, First Nations communities do not recognize provincial jurisdiction on reserves. Generally, First Nations and Inuit organizations have responsibility for administration of funds and for developing services.

Today many First Nations people do not live on reserves. Indeed, according to data from the 2006 Census, “an estimated 40% lived on-reserve, while the remaining 60% lived off-reserve. The off-reserve proportion was up slightly from 58% in 1996”<sup>4</sup>. While programs for which the federal government takes responsibility include Aboriginal Head Start in Urban and Northern Communities, regulated child care for Aboriginal people living off-reserve has no special status with the federal government.

Until 1995, when the First Nations Inuit Child Care Initiative (FNICCI) and Aboriginal Head Start were announced, there was relatively little spending for Aboriginal ECEC in much of Canada. At one time, federal funding for child care was limited to First Nations in the Yukon and Northwest Territories, in Ontario and Alberta where the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND) covered costs in accordance with provincial funding policies, and in Quebec where child care programs for First Nations children received national funding through the James Bay Northern Quebec Agreement.

The number of regulated child care programs located on First Nations’ reserves has grown considerably over the years (see Table 25). The “single window” access that had been discussed for some years had not materialized in 2008.

3 Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996). *People to people, nation to nation*. Ottawa: Author.

4 Statistics Canada (2008). Aboriginal Peoples in Canada in 2006: Inuit, Métis and First Nations, 2006 Census. *The Daily*, January, 2008.

**FEDERAL ABORIGINAL PROGRAMS (2006/07 DATA UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED)**

**TABLE 2.2** First Nations/Inuit Child Care Initiative (FNICCI): Program overview

Program	Department	Objective	Information
First Nations/ Inuit Child Care Initiative (FNICCI)	Human Resources and Social Development Canada	· To increase the supply of quality child care services in First Nations and Inuit communities	· On-reserve First Nations and Inuit communities are eligible · In 2006/07 there were 462 sites and 8,538 spaces funded under FNICCI

**TABLE 2.3** Federal spending on First Nations/Inuit Child Care Initiative (FNICCI)  
2000/01 - 2006/07

Year	Public spending ( \$millions)
2000/01	41.0
2001/02	41.0
2002/03	41.0
2003/04	50.1
2004/05	50.1
2005/06	57.1
2006/07	57.1

**TABLE 2.4** Child/Day Care Program — Alberta: Program overview

Program	Department	Objective	Information
Child/Day- Care Program Alberta	Indian and Northern Affairs	· To provide early child development programming and learning services on reserve that are comparable to those offered by the provincial government to people living off-reserve	· On-reserve First Nations in Alberta are eligible · In 2006/07, 17 sites (812 ) spaces were funded under Child/Day-Care Program Alberta

**TABLE 2.5** Federal spending on Child/Day Care Program — Alberta 1999/2000 - 2006/07

Year	Public spending ( \$millions)
1999/2000	3.6
2000/01	2.7
2001/02	2.7
2002/03	2.7
2003/04	2.5
2004/05	3.4
2005/06	4.0
2006/07	4.7

## Child/Day-Care Program — Ontario: Program overview

Program	Department	Objective	Information
Child/Day-Care Program Ontario	Indian and Northern Affairs	· To provide early child development programming and learning services on-reserve that are comparable to those offered by the provincial government to people living off-reserve	· On-reserve First Nations in Ontario are eligible · In 2006/07 52 sites (2,850 children) were funded under Child/Day-Care Program Ontario

**TABLE 2.7** Federal spending on Child/Day-Care Program — Ontario 1999/2000 - 2006/07

Year	Public spending (millions of \$)	Regulated spaces
1999/00	12.2	n/a
2000/01	12.2	2,097 spaces
2001/02	13.4	3,243 children
2002/03	14.3	3,018 children
2003/04	15.4	2,797 children
2004/05	15.5	2,799 children
2005/06	15.6	2,951 children
2006/07	15.6	2,850 children

**TABLE 2.8****Aboriginal Head Start in Urban and Northern Communities (AHSUNC)**

Program	Department	Objective	Information
Aboriginal Head Start in Urban and Northern Communities (AHSUNC)	Public Health Agency	To prepare young Aboriginal children for school by meeting their spiritual, emotional, intellectual and physical needs (ages 2-6 years)	First Nations, Inuit and Métis children and their families living in urban centres and large northern communities (off-reserve) are eligible. There were 131 sites (4,500 children) funded under AHSUNC in 2006/07

**TABLE 2.9****Federal spending on Aboriginal Head Start in Urban and Northern Communities 1999/2000 - 2006/07**

Year	Public spending ( \$millions)
1999/2000	22.5
2000/01	22.5
2001/02	22.5
2002/03	25.8
2003/04	31.2
2004/05	31.5
2005/06	31.2
2006/07	28.7



**TABLE 2.10** Aboriginal Head Start On-Reserve (AHSOR): Program overview

Program	Department	Objective	Information
Aboriginal Head Start On Reserve (AHSOR)	Health Canada	· To prepare young Aboriginal children for school by meeting their emotional, social, health, nutritional and physical needs (0-6 years)	· On-reserve First Nations communities · In 2006/07 328 sites (9,173 children) were funded under AHSOR

**TABLE 2.11** Federal spending on Aboriginal Head Start On-Reserve 1999/2000 - 2006/07

Year	Public spending ( \$millions)
1999/00	29.5
2000/01	24.4
2001/02	22.6
2002/03	34.7
2003/04	35.1
2004/05	41.5
2005/06	50.2
2006/07	50.6

**TABLE 2.12** First Nations Child and Family Service Head Start — New Brunswick: Program overview and spending

Program	Department	Objectives	Information	Public spending (\$ millions)
First Nations Child & Family Service Head Start - New Brunswick	Indian and Northern Affairs	· To maintain strength of family unit; assist children with physical, emotional, social and/or educational deprivation; and support and protect children from harmful environments (ages 0-6 years)	· In 2006/07 15 sites were funded	1.4

**TABLE 2.13** First Nations Elementary Education: Program overview

Program	Department	Objective	Information
First Nations Elementary Education (including pre-k and kindergarten)	Indian and Northern Affairs	· To provide programs on-reserve comparable to those required in the province/ territory of residence. Or to arrange for students living on-reserve to attend provincial schools	· First Nations students on-reserve including pre-K and kindergarten are eligible · In 2006/07 13,181 children attended kindergarten classes through the program

**TABLE 2.14** Federal spending on First Nations Elementary Education 1999/2000 - 2006/07

Year	Public spending ( \$millions)
1999/00	65.0
2000/01	33.1
2001/02	32.4
2002/03	34.6
2003/04	51.4
2004/05	50.4
2005/06	51.8
2006/07	52.2

## ECEC IN FRANCOPHONE COMMUNITIES IN A MINORITY ENVIRONMENT

### CONTEXT

According to the 2006 Census, 22.1% of Canada's population reported French as their mother tongue, a decrease of 0.8% from 2001. The rate of assimilation into the first-language English community is well documented and troubling for francophones in Canada. Receiving an education in French has been shown to be an effective way to counter assimilation.

Section 23 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms obliges provinces to offer the two official language minorities — anglophones in Quebec and francophones outside Quebec — an education in their first language at the primary and secondary levels. However, the 2006 Census reveals that only half of francophone “rights holders” are sending their children to French schools. Table 3 shows the population of children 0-12 who would be eligible for French language education in regions of Canada outside Quebec.

TABLE 3

Children 0-12 years eligible for French language education, all children and percent of French eligible children in regions outside Quebec (2006)

Region	0-4 years			5-11 years		
	# French education-eligible population	# Total population	%	# French education-eligible population	# Total population	%
NL	180	22,470	0.8	300	36,980	0.8
PE	360	6,560	5.5	650	11,580	5.6
NS	2,120	41,050	5.2	3,700	68,030	5.4
NB (north)	4,720	6,490	72.7	9,130	11,350	80.4
NB (rest)	1,880	19,680	9.6	3,840	32,090	12.0
NB (south-east)	3,740	7,490	49.9	5,790	11,110	52.1
ON (north- east)	7,120	22,170	32.1	12,760	37,420	34.1
ON (Ottawa)	9,500	43,890	21.6	15,470	66,220	23.4
ON (rest)	15,360	452,740	3.4	26,700	717,420	3.7
ON (south- east)	4,200	9,260	45.4	7,830	16,420	47.7
ON (Toronto)	4,850	133,300	3.6	6,570	186,930	3.5
MB	3,040	59,640	5.1	5,400	94,720	6.1
SK	1,110	50,340	2.2	2,170	78,460	2.8
AB	6,430	194,590	3.3	10,330	280,960	3.7
BC	5,530	195,790	2.8	8,790	309,240	2.8
NT, NU,YT	270	8,300	3.3	340	11,690	2.9
<b>Canada</b>	<b>70,410</b>	<b>1,273,760</b>	<b>5.53</b>	<b>119,770</b>	<b>1,970,620</b>	<b>6.08</b>

*Note: Criteria used by Statistics Canada to select respondents were based on answers to the 2006 Census questions on mother tongue, knowledge of official languages and language spoken most often at home. This ensured that the survey covered all the people considered to belong to official language minorities.*

## THE IMPORTANCE OF ECEC FOR LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

The critical period for the development of language skills is known to extend through the early years before formal schooling begins at age six. Research also shows that early childhood is the “gateway” to schooling in French. The establishment of a range of francophone early childhood services as a way to promote linguistic, cultural and identity development during early childhood and to encourage enrolment in French schools constitutes the major goal of key stakeholders living in francophone minority environments including parents, grandparents, early childhood educators, researchers and the 31 French school boards across the country.

## AVAILABLE DATA ON FRANCOPHONE ECEC PROGRAMS IN MINORITY CONTEXT (OUTSIDE QUEBEC)

Data from an analysis conducted by the Commission nationale des parents francophones in 2008 provides the best available information about francophone ECEC programs in minority context (outside Quebec).

The data collection used in the Commission’s analysis focused on four broad areas:

1. ECEC programs and services such as regulated centre-based and home-based child care services, preschool or nursery school programs and family resource centres funded and delivered mainly as part of the social services sector;
2. Early childhood programs such as junior and senior kindergarten, prekindergarten, nursery or pre-maternelle programs funded and delivered through the education sector;
3. Programs offered by school boards to welcome and “accompany” parents (in recognition of the important roles parents play in language, culture and identity transmission);
4. Integrated early childhood development service delivery models.

Re: Early childhood education and care programs funded as part of the social services sector:

- In 2008, 460 regulated francophone centre-based child care and preschool/nursery school settings serving 10,310 children were identified. These data do not include Ontario, as Ontario data on francophone child care centres and nursery schools are not clearly identified in the administrative information provided;
- 50% of the above programs were in school settings;
- Approximately 4,000 francophone early childhood educators (3,250 of them in Ontario) worked in child care settings and 105 in nursery schools/preschools;
- Information is not available on how many of the educators meet their jurisdictional requirements;
- Problems of training, recruitment and retention of francophone educators remain a serious barrier to service expansion;
- Progress has been made in the area of francophone curriculum development;
- Under-funding remains a problem across Canada.

Re: Early childhood education and care programs funded through the education sector:

- Four year old kindergartens are under the authority of francophone school boards in Ontario, Nova Scotia, Saskatchewan and the territories (only Ontario provides widespread four year old kindergarten for virtually all age-eligible children);
- A number of provinces also offer francophone early childhood education programs for three and four year olds (usually called *prématernelle*) where kindergarten for four year olds is not widely available. These may be on school property but not under the authority of the school boards;
- When these are added to four year old kindergarten, there were approximately 480 francophone programs for children younger than the usual Canadian kindergarten age of five years. These served 7,469 children and employed approximately 460 educators;
- Senior kindergartens are under the authority of francophone school boards in all jurisdictions except in Prince Edward Island, where they are part of the regulated child care system;
- Across Canada, 596 francophone senior kindergartens for five year olds served 11,171 children and employed approximately 606 early childhood educators;
- Altogether there were more than 18,000 young children and over 1000 educators (*intervenants*) in francophone junior and senior kindergartens under school board governance across Canada outside Quebec;

- Francophone sections of provincial Ministries of Education and francophone parents' organizations have developed a variety of resources to strengthen programming in early childhood settings to address the needs of exogenous and immigrant francophone families.

Re: Early childhood programs funded through the education system to welcome and support parents:

- Family resource centre-type programs were most frequently reported. They include the provision of a variety of written or audio materials in French to inform or educate parents about early childhood development;
- Other programs described tended to be fairly traditional such as using bulletins and parent meetings to discuss school curriculum and child progress;
- Little information was available about supports to parents of children with exceptionalities;
- Fund raising, events organization, and school trip monitoring continue to be main areas of involvement for parents.

Re: Integrated service delivery models for early childhood education and care programs:

- A great diversity of models exist with different terminology used to describe them such as early childhood and learning centres, parenting centres, early years centres, child and family resource centres;
- It is quite often difficult to distinguish between a bilingual and a francophone model;
- Several jurisdictions that have integrated francophone models established through government policy (Ontario, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba) are currently in the process of evaluating the experience.

## FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Publication of *A Framework for collaboration: A shared vision, common strategies* by the Commission nationale with the collaboration of more than a dozen national partners establishes a roadmap for strategic action on early childhood programs in a francophone minority context.

Data collection remains a challenge. There is no current system of data collection that would permit a detailed description of ECEC services for francophone communities in minority environments. Quantitative and qualitative improvements cannot therefore be accurately measured. The development of a data collection system is a strategic recommendation of the Commission nationale's 2009 study.