

# Ten-year framework agreement falls short: Child care advocates vow to push for better <sup>[1]</sup>

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## AVAILABILITY

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### Full response

The Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada welcomes the release today of a federal-provincial-territorial agreement on early learning and child care but says the framework is not ambitious enough to address the child care crisis facing so many families with young children.

“It’s good that the Government of Canada is engaged in discussion on child care after being absent for so long, but if the agreement is not strengthened, Canada will end up a decade from now with even greater disparities in access, affordability, quality and inclusion” said Morna Ballantyne, CCAAC Executive Director.

“As it is, the agreement ignores the federal government’s election promise to create a ‘framework ensuring affordable, high-quality, fully inclusive child care is available to all families who need it’; it does not make universality even a long-term goal,” she added.

She noted that Ontario recently joined Quebec in building universally accessible child care, and an NDP BC government has promised to do the same. “The federal government should support these approaches, and use its spending power to make it happen across the country, especially since significant financial benefits of a universal child care system will flow directly back to federal coffers,” she said.

The framework requires that the first installment of federal funds for child care be used to provide help only for high need parents rather than all families, and it encourages spending on regulated child care but not exclusively.

“The federal government’s targeted approach goes against all the evidence that quality child care is critical to the healthy development of all children and that the best child care systems are those designed to be inclusive of all children regardless of their circumstances,” said Ballantyne. “Also, we are concerned that the framework agreement is not strong enough in requiring provinces and territories to spend the federal funds on licensed early childhood education services and programs.”

CCAAC expressed frustration that the agreement does not reflect the experience of parents, or the expertise of those working in the sector, child care advocates and child care policy experts.

“The federal government is engaging in constructive consultation in other areas so we do not understand why the sector’s consensus position on what should be included in the framework seems to have been ignored,” said Ballantyne.

According to the announcement, the framework will be implemented through three-year bilateral funding agreements with the provinces and territories starting in 2017. The federal has agreed to make an overall funding commitment of \$400 million in the first year, up to \$540 million in the second, and up to \$545 million in the third. The Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada says this is a fraction of what is required by the provinces and territories. Quebec already spends more than \$2.5 billion each year on its child care program.

The provinces will have to file action plans and make public reports on their progress, but it is up to each province and territory to set its own goals and measure progress.

CCAAC is calling for transparent bilateral negotiations, and meaningful consultation and input into the funding agreements and action plans.

Together with its many partners and allies across the country, CCAAC will continue to push both levels of government to reject the market-based patchwork approach to child care and agree to replace it over the next ten years with a comprehensive, publicly funded system of high quality early childhood education and child care that is inclusive of all children, meets the development needs of children,

while also meeting the needs of parents.

**Region:** Canada <sup>[3]</sup>

**Tags:** federal <sup>[4]</sup>

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