

Who cares? Why Canada needs a public child care system ^[1]

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Executive summary

Despite considerable evidence pointing to the benefits of child care for women's economic equality, for economic growth and for children's development, many governments fail to recognize child care as a public good and adequately resource it.

Women in Canada do almost twice as much unpaid care work than men and this has significant financial and economic impacts for women and society at large. Families struggle to find child care and women are forced to make difficult tradeoffs between expensive child care and their careers. Child care is one of the most feminized job sectors in Canada and early childhood educators are some of the most undervalued workers, resulting in low retention rates, low levels of job satisfaction and labour shortages.

Getting to a public child care system that is affordable, accessible, high-quality and inclusive for all families in Canada is possible. It would be good for gender equality, good for the economy and good for children. Public child care is one of the smartest investments the government can make to ensure Canada is more inclusive, more equal and more prosperous. Child care advocates have long advocated for increased leadership from the federal government and they have a clear road map: the Affordable Child Care for All Plan. It is time for federal leaders to take up this challenge.

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