

Learning from each other: Early learning and child care experiences in Canadian cities ^[1]

ELCC Report 2006

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AVAILABILITY

- [Charts and tables in pdf](#) ^[2]

- [Full report in pdf](#) ^[3]

Excerpts from the report:

Why are cities interested in early learning and child care? In Canada, the only part of ELCC where they have direct responsibility is recreation and that sector's role in ELCC is, as the report points out, ambiguous. Local school authorities run publicly-funded kindergartens. With the exception of Ontario municipalities, Canadian cities do not plan, manage, fund or operate child care.

Lack of mandate does not mean lack of interest or diminished responsibility for the well-being of all residents. Approximately one-half of urban dwellers are either in two-parent or loneparent families, so if a city is going to serve all of its residents effectively, ELCC must be part of the local infrastructure. The changes in family composition and family activity (principally maternal employment) over the last 40 years mean that ELCC is an important support to parents as they work or participate in education or training. Our increased understanding of how children develop and learn, as well as a concern about child health and safety, provide an imperative for high-quality programs for children before they start school and outside school hours.

The study found that cities advocate for more and better ELCC, work in partnership with provincial authorities, school boards and community organizations, carry out research, have local children's advisory committees, take the lead in promoting innovation in ELCC such as the creation of children's services hubs, use zoning provisions and development charges to build ELCC facilities, and support community networks such as those organized by the YWCA and local United Ways. Nevertheless, as the government with the most limited tax base, cities cannot, on their own, strengthen and expand local ELCC to the extent needed by children and their families. Recognizing that the other governments must join the partnership and that local government must be recognized as a full partner, the report argues for local or regional solutions within strong federal and provincial frameworks.

To start, there is not enough ELCC in any of the 11 cities in the study. Child care, the piece of ELCC with the least local control, is particularly problematic. Montreal, in the province with the most extensive ELCC provisions, has child care for just under 45% of children aged 0 & 12. Most of the other cities cluster in the 10 & 16% range, with the exception of Saskatoon with child care available to 6.9% of children.

Moreover, as can be imagined with provincial, municipal and school authorities in 10 provinces and two territories involved, the report shows that provision of children's programs remains inconsistent nationally, provincially and locally. In addition, there is evidence that provision is inconsistent across cities, favouring communities with better ability to take advantage of whatever funding exists.

The study shows that there is an increasing understanding that collaboration among all governments and community organizations is essential if children's programs are to expand and move towards greater coherence in ways that will help both children and parents.

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[Nova Scotia](#) ^[5]

[Canada](#) ^[6]

[Ontario](#) ^[7]

[Manitoba](#) ^[8]

[Saskatchewan](#) ^[9]

[Alberta](#) ^[10]

[British Columbia](#) ^[11]

Tags: [urban](#) ^[12]

- [1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/research-policy-practice/06/07/learning-each-other-early-learning-and-child-care>
- [2] http://www1.toronto.ca/city_of_toronto/childrens_services/files/pdf/elcc_charts.pdf
- [3] http://www1.toronto.ca/city_of_toronto/childrens_services/files/pdf/elcc_report.pdf
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