

Early learning and child care in Saskatchewan: Results from a national survey during the COVID-19 pandemic ^[1]

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Access online [PDF] ^[2]

Excerpted from introduction

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in mid-March had a dramatic impact on daily life in Canada. Provincial and territorial governments ordered the majority of businesses and public services to close to reduce the risk of the coronavirus spreading and introduced measures to maintain some level of community and economic well-being. The federal government provided significant leadership and investments through a series of national benefits and supports to help organizations and individuals weather the resulting economic storm.

Early learning and child care sectors were hit particularly hard by the economic and social disruptions brought on by the pandemic. In the two months following the shut down of much of the economy and community life, provincial and territorial governments took different steps to support their economies in general and their early learning and care sectors in particular. The Saskatchewan government, in common with most other provinces, introduced emergency child care for the children of essential workers. It also, like eight of the nine other provinces, provided some government funding for services that remained open as well as those that decided to close. This funding provided organizations with some revenue in the face of the dramatic fall in fees as parents withdrew their children from child care for a combination of health and financial reasons. Unlike eight of the provinces, the Saskatchewan government did not require community-based child centres to close at the onset of the pandemic.

The other province to do the same was British Columbia. This resulted in most child care centres in Saskatchewan remaining open for at least a period of time after mid-March, although many subsequently closed due to low enrolments and the fall in parent fee revenues. The following summary report draws on data collected in a national survey of early learning and child care services undertaken in May. It focuses specifically on the experiences of Saskatchewan early learning and child care service providers, six weeks into the pandemic, with survey findings from the neighbouring provinces of Alberta and Manitoba, as well as from British Columbia, included for comparison purposes. The survey results for different provinces reveal, in part, the differing impacts of the policies and supports provincial governments put in place during the initial phase of the pandemic, as well as the varied strengths and capacities of early learning and care sectors prior to the pandemic.

Related link: Canadian child care: Preliminary results from a national survey during the COVID-19 pandemic ^[3]

Region: Saskatchewan ^[4]

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