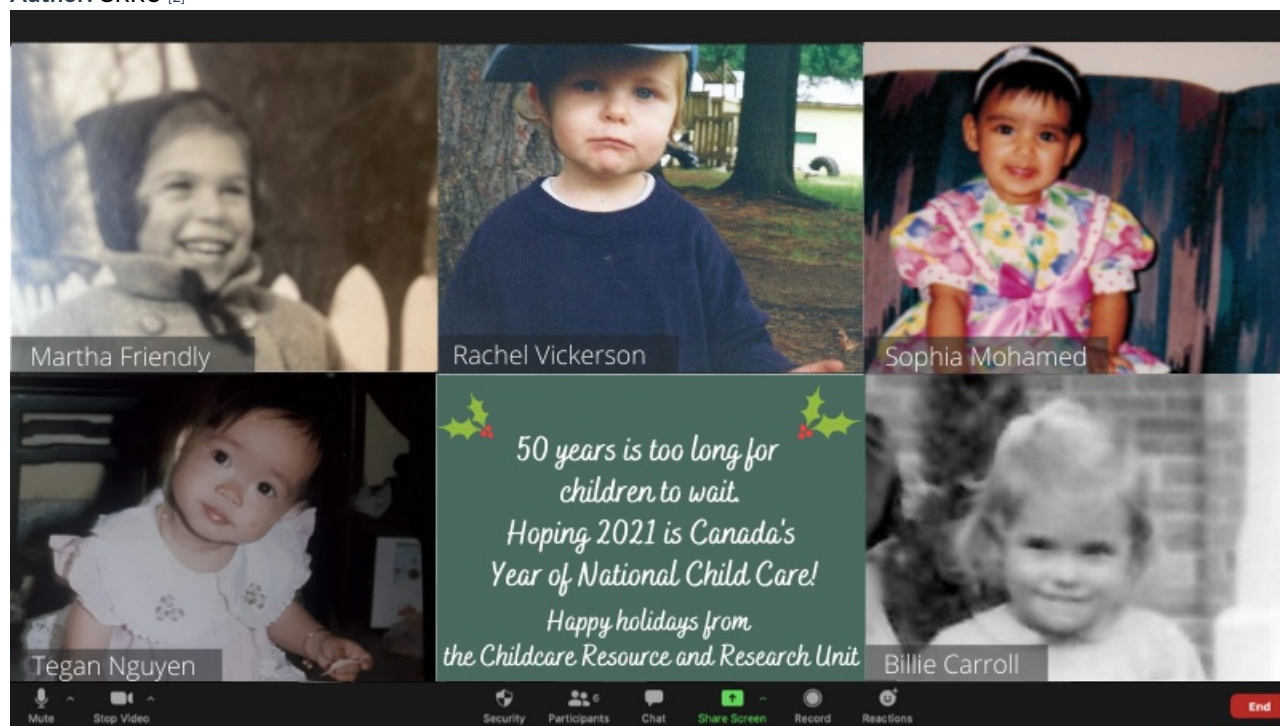


Happy holidays, and the child care year in review^[1]

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Author: CRRU^[2]



The year in review from Childcare Resource and Research Unit

What a year 2020 has been – certainly one for the history books! But while this year has been filled with unprecedented challenges for individuals and governments alike, one outcome of the pandemic is a future that looks much brighter for child care in important new ways. With this in mind, we’ve taken the opportunity of the year-end to note the year’s main child care markers and our activities.

Like so many other organizations, this extraordinary year began for us when—shortly after the world-wide coronavirus epidemic was declared to be a pandemic – with a great deal of uncertainty, we decided on March 13th to close the CRRU office “for a week, and then we’ll assess it again”. The office, however, didn’t reopen until July.

Between March and July, we figured out how to work remotely and—like other Canadians and governments at all levels—tried to adapt and do the right thing personally and professionally as conditions kept shifting. We observed and experienced the confusion of many child care programs closing their doors under unclear and shifting conditions and laying off staff, while – paradoxically—it became obvious how much parents (especially women)—both those **trying to work at home**^[3] and those **going to jobs**^[4] deemed “**essential**”^[5]—relied on them. As the damaging impact of the pandemic on thirty years of progress towards women’s equality and on their labour force participation was **documented**^[6] by researchers, it became obvious that new sectors had begun recognizing how **central**^[7] accessible, reliable, stable child care will be for Canada’s post-pandemic economy. Since the spring, child care and its importance for women and for the economy has been identified again and again^[8] as key to ensuring a **robust recovery**^[9] from the pandemic.

CRRU, working with child care sector partners, was the first to **survey**^[10] child care centres and licensed home providers to ascertain the impact of COVID-19 ON Canadian child care, collecting Canada-wide data from 8,300 facilities in late April-early May. We also contributed to **policy**^[11] analysis and developed **online resources**^[12] on the shifting policy and service provision responses to the crisis, **research**^[13] on COVID-19 and young children and community and other expert responses. Later, as confusion reigned with regard to re-opening **elementary schools**^[14] after the summer, we also compiled information about provision of school, as it became apparent how much parents rely on schools to provide child care.

In May, amidst the pandemic struggles, we had some great news. We were thrilled to learn that a seven year **SSHRC Partnership Grant**^[15], lead by sociologist Andrea Doucet (Brock University) in which we play a key role, had been approved. CRRU is the lead community partner and Martha Friendly is co-lead of the child care cluster in this academic-community examination of the intersections among child care, parental leave and work.

In mid September, as it had begun to be apparent that a second wave of the pandemic would soon shut down non-essential workplaces and other establishments again, CRRU launched a new website to provide “resources for building a system of early childhood education and child care for all”.^[16] The new website has all the old CRRU website’s functions – keyword search of an extensive database of documents

and online availability of multiple resources – in improved, updated formats. It also has built-in functionality for CRRU to continue to add additional kinds of resources.

As COVID's second wave forced us to again close our downtown Toronto office in October, working again on Zoom with the CRRU team and colleagues across Canada, we were elated when it became apparent that the lessons of the pandemic about child care were being taken seriously at the federal level and in many of the provinces/territories. The Trudeau government's intention to develop an early learning and child care system for all was highlighted in the September Throne Speech [17] and commitment to a plan in the next federal budget was central in the Finance Minister [18]'s Economic Update in November.

CRRU published two major reports. In early December, *Moving from private to public processes to create child care in Canada*, [19] the report of an "Innovation" project funded in 2019 by the federal government was finalized and published. And on December 18, we ended the year right before the holiday season by releasing the 12th version of *Early childhood education and care in Canada* [20] (2019). This—CRRU's leading data report – will provide important benchmarks for assessing progress in ELCC in the months and years ahead as Canada recovers from the pandemic.

In closing out 2020 with this "journal of our plague year [21]", the CRRU team – Martha Friendly, Sophia Mohamed, Rachel Vickerson, Tegan Nguyen and webmaster Billie Carroll – are honoured to be part of a child care community that has made a significant contribution to Canada's public life during this difficult year.

We wish all our colleagues in the child care movement – front line service providers, advocates, researchers, feminist and social justice organizations, labour sisters and brothers, child care supporters working in government, and everyone else who is part of the child care movement – a safe and happy holiday season. We look forward to working together more and better next year; we will need to if we are to create the system of high quality, inclusive child care for all needed to ensure children don't wait another 50 years for Canada to deliver on the 1970 recommendation of a national day care program by the Royal Commission on the Status of Women [16]. And we look forward to everyone having more fun in '21.

CRRU's main works/works in which we shared in 2020

Early childhood education and care in Canada 2019 [22]. (December 2020).

Martha Friendly, Laura Feltham, Sophia S. Mohamed, Ngoc Tho Nguyen, Rachel Vickerson, Barry Forer. Toronto: Childcare Resource and Resource Unit.

Moving from private to public processes to create child care in Canada [19]. (December 2020). Martha Friendly, Jane Beach, Sophia S. Mohamed, Laurel Rothman, Rachel Vickerson & Carol Ann Young. Toronto: Childcare Resource and Research Unit.

Child care and the Royal Commission on the Status of Women [16]. (December 2020).

Federal funding supporting Canadian early learning and child care advocacy, research and capacity building 1988 – 2007 [23]. (November 2020).

Martha Friendly. Toronto: Childcare Resource and Research Unit.

Rebuilding childcare in Canada must include a national strategy [24]. (July 2020).

Martha Friendly, Morna Ballantyne & Lynell Anderson. Policy Options.

Canadian child care: Preliminary results from a national survey during the COVID-19 pandemic [10]. (July 2020).

Martha Friendly, Barry Forer, Rachel Vickerson, & Sophia S. Mohamed. Toronto: Childcare Resource and Research Unit, Canadian Child Care Federation, Child Care Now.

The pandemic experience has created an uncertain future for Canadian child care services: Highlights of a national survey [25]. (June 2020).

Martha Friendly, Barry Forer, & Vickerson, R. Toronto: Childcare Resource and Research Unit, Canadian Child Care Federation, Child Care Now.

In progress: Child care fees in Canada 2019 [26]. (March 2020).

David Macdonald & Martha Friendly. Ottawa: Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

COVID-19 and Child Care in Canada ISSUE File [27]. (March 2020 – October 2020).

COVID-19 crisis shows us childcare is always an essential service [11]. (March 2020).

Martha Friendly & Morna Ballantyne. *Policy Options*.

Non-standard work and child care in Canada: A challenge for parents, policy makers, and child care provision[28]. (December 2019).

Donna S. Lero, Susan Prentice, Martha Friendly, Brooke Richardson, Ley Fraser Childcare Resource and Research Unit and the University of Guelph.

Tags:

COVID-19 [29]

economic recovery [30]

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- [2] <https://childcarecanada.org/blog/author/crru>
- [3] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/20/06/nearly-impossible-balance-working-mothers-during-pandemic>
- [4] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/20/03/canadas-medical-workers-scramble-find-child-care-amid-covid-19-0>
- [5] <https://policyoptions.irpp.org/magazines/march-2020/covid-19-crisis-shows-us-childcare-is-always-an-essential-service/>
- [6] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/20/07/covid-19-and-gender-employment-gap-among-parents-young-children>
- [7] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/research-policy-practice/20/06/canada-needs-childcare-system-recovery-and-beyond>
- [8] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/research-policy-practice/20/11/role-early-learning-and-child-care-rebuilding-canada%E2%80%99s>
- [9] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/20/08/open-letter-prime-minister-and-deputy-prime-minister-canada-there-no>
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- [21] <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/376/376-h/376-h.htm>
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- [28] <https://childcarecanada.org/publications/other-publications/20/02/non-standard-work-and-child-care-canada-challenge-parents>
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