

# "This half century of struggle": A look back at child care advocacy <sup>[1]</sup>

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Access online <sup>[2]</sup>

## Excerpt

If you know one thing about the history of child care in Canada, it's probably that it is a story littered with disappointment. Over and over, studies and task forces have called for the building of a universal child care system. Over and over, governments have promised action only to walk back their commitments or have their plans derailed by shifting political winds. Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland, however, has promised that "this time, we're going to do it." Budget 2021, which Freeland delivered on April 19th, included \$30 billion in funding to build a universal early learning and child care (ELCC) system.

A few days after the budget speech, I watched a webinar hosted by some of the country's leading ELCC advocates. While they were understandably wary about some of the fuzzy parts of the announcement, the overall mood was hopeful — and not just because of the amount of spending, which is significant, but because of its substance. Freeland set an affordability target: in five years, she said, parents will have access to services for an average of \$10 per day. She promised to focus on support for the higher quality not-for-profit sector. Money has been earmarked to improve accessibility, and to support culturally appropriate Indigenous ELCC programs.

Affordability, accessibility, quality, inclusivity: these are all standards that have been lifted from the child care movement. In other words, decades of advocacy paved the way for Freeland's announcement. To be sure, the COVID-19 crisis "brutally exposed" (to use Freeland's words) the desperate need for good child care and made it impossible for governments to ignore the centrality of care work to the economy. But child care was in crisis long before COVID-19, and advocates have spent years calling attention the scope of the crisis as well as our path out of it. That we may emerge from the pandemic with a universal system of ELCC is because of this long and deep groundwork of advocacy.

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

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

federal budget <sup>[5]</sup>

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**Source URL (modified on 7 Nov 2024):** <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/research-policy-practice/21/05/%E2%80%9C-half-century-struggle%E2%80%9D-look-back-child-care-advocacy>

## Links

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/research-policy-practice/21/05/%E2%80%9C-half-century-struggle%E2%80%9D-look-back-child-care-advocacy>

[2] <http://activehistory.ca/2021/05/childcare2021/> [3] <https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/7864> [4]

<https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/advocacy> [5] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/federal-budget>