

Alarming statistics highlight child care accessibility crisis in Canada ^[1]

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Source: Troy Media

Format: Article

Publication Date: 31 May 2023

AVAILABILITY

Access online ^[2]

Excerpts

Canadian parents know child care can be hard to find. And it's not getting easier despite the fact that fees are falling quickly across the country.

These diminishing fees are prompting more parents to look into child care as an option, including those who'd found it too costly before. To meet this increased demand, and get the full economic benefits of affordable child care, we need a rapid expansion in the number of spaces. Without that, we'll end up with longer and longer wait lists.

Across the country, 48 per cent of children not yet of kindergarten age live in child care deserts. That means these children live in a postal code with three or more children competing for every licensed child care space.

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The range of child care coverage rates also varies widely by city and argues for both the need for rapid expansion and to target it in specific places.

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The difference between rural and urban communities shows again why increasing the number of child care spaces is so urgent. There are huge shortages of licensed spaces in basically every rural postal code in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and Newfoundland. And yet again, Quebec, with only 16 per cent of its rural children living in child care deserts, shows that services can be better provided.

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Finally, we have to change how we think about child care from something businesses provide according to their economic priorities to something we establish according to society's needs. That would mean placing them where the children are, thereby eliminating child care deserts.

After all, you don't build schools where it's more convenient for the school principal. You build schools where the kids are, and you manage that process very publicly. The same should be true for child care centres, with cities, the provinces and the federal government working together.

If making high-quality child care accessible to all Canadian families is our goal, we must plan rationally to expand public, licensed child care spaces and make child care deserts a thing of the past.

Region: Canada ^[3]

Tags: accessibility ^[4]

child care expansion ^[5]

child care deserts ^[6]

public management ^[7]

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