

Addressing the early childhood educators labour shortage in Canada: Challenges, solutions, and impacts ^[1]

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Abstract

The Canada-wide early learning and child care program may not successfully provide the additional 250,000 child care spaces by 2026 as envisioned in Budget 2021. A key reason for this is the lack of qualified Early Childhood Educators (ECEs) needed to staff these additional spaces. This shortage is partly due to the low wages in this occupation. This report investigates a proposal for an across-the-board 25 per cent wage increase for qualified ECEs. It finds that this proposed wage increase would be sufficient to attract the necessary number of ECEs to support the expansion of the child care system in Canada. However, other considerations such as investment in physical capacity and training for the child care workforce would also be needed for expansion. The report also reviews the social benefits of the expanded child care network. It projects that with the estimated cost of \$1.2 billion needed to raise ECE wages by 25 per cent, investment in higher ECE wages would have a benefits-to-cost ratio between 1.88 and 2.06, due to the economic benefits it generates. Lastly, the report discusses the potential long-term effects of this expansion of the child care system on children's development, quality of care, and fertility rates.

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