

Achieving affordable child care in Canada ^[1]

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Source: Open Access Government

Format: Article

Publication Date: 15 Jul 2024

AVAILABILITY

Access online ^[2]

Excerpts

Three years after Canada announced a historic investment to revolutionize child care, Open Access Government discusses the government's progress in enabling affordable child care nationwide

The provision of care that provides a supportive and enabling environment is essential for a child's acquisition of fundamental learning and development skills. In recent years, the provision of child care has faced criticism due to rising costs and a lack of availability, putting more pressure on parents and families and exacerbating socioeconomic disparities. In 2021, the Canadian Government announced a significant investment to make child care more affordable nationwide, but three years later, has this vision become a reality?

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on care provision

COVID-19 revealed and worsened problems in all areas of care. Canada's care economy experienced significant strain due to years of insufficient funding, which placed unprecedented pressure on vital care sectors, including child care. The prolonged lockdowns had a major impact on families and unfairly burdened women with heavy unpaid household care duties. Even prior to the pandemic, 42% of women of working age globally reported being unable to engage in paid work due to their unpaid care and domestic duties.

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Canada's child care system

According to Moving2Canada, child care costs in Canada are influenced by a multitude of factors. These include the province or territory, whether you live in a large city, town, or a more rural area, the type of care required, the child's age, whether you choose a regulated or unregulated option and the ratio of children to care providers. Understanding these factors is crucial in comprehending the current state of child care in Canada and the potential impact of policy changes.

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Is Canada's \$10-a-day child care plan sustainable?

Lowering fees has made child care more affordable for many families. However, there's a severe shortage of available child care spaces and staff to meet the increasing demand. As a result, some daycares have closed their waiting lists or threatened to withdraw from the national child care program altogether. In 2018, the Government said that an additional 12,000 child-care professionals would be needed over the next ten years to expand affordable child care. However, in efforts to achieve the government's vision, operators have said there is not enough money to cover all their costs, including offering higher wages to ensure they can train and retain early childhood educators. Some say they are finding that the federal-provincial agreements restrict the fees they can charge without providing enough support to cover all of their expenses.

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