

OPINION: Making the Canada-wide early learning and child-care program work for everyone ^[1]

Parents deserve a choice when it comes to child care

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Excerpts

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While there will always be partisan debates about the best approach toward child care, what is often left by the wayside is that CWELCC is already providing affordable child care to 938,000 children aged 0-5.

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Part of the argument in favour of simply giving families money for child care is that the money could be used for alternatives to licensed care spaces. However, we know that the majority of families in Canada already use licensed child-care services. Our most recent report reveals that only about 12% of children in Canada are in informal child-care arrangements and 21% are cared for exclusively by parents as opposed to 67% in licensed care. On top of that, more than half of families in Canada outside of Quebec currently not using daycares would like to use licensed child care.

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In Quebec, where licensed child care has been highly affordable for more than two decades, the employment rate of mothers is 13% higher than in the rest of Canada. As Dr. Gordon Cleveland, an economist who has specialized in child-care policy over the last 30 years, notes in our report, "If we could simply bring the participation rate of prime-age women in the rest of Canada up to the level in Quebec [87%], we could add almost 300,000 people to our country's workforce." Employers would then gain access to a broader, more diverse talent pool. At a time when optimizing our country's economic growth must be a priority, investing in the expansion of the federal child-care program is a no-brainer.

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— Julie Savard-Shaw is Executive Director of The Prosperity Project. Janet Ecker, Kathleen Taylor, and Penny Collette are Founding Visionaries of The Prosperity Project.

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