

Funding for Canadian childcare slows: Report [CA]^[1]

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AVAILABILITY
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EXCERPTS

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[A report released] Tuesday - titled **Early Childhood Education and Care in Canada**^[2] - tracks trends in childcare and kindergarten, using data from the provinces and Statistics Canada.

The snapshot of Canadian childcare is released every two years by Toronto's Childcare Resource and Research Unit and found that 77 per cent of mothers with children between the ages of three and five now work, up from 75 per cent in 2006.

But as the number of mothers in the labour force continues to grow, data shows funding for childcare has seen a slowdown over the last five years. The report finds there was a \$147.3-million increase in childcare budgets between 2006 and 2008, compared to \$538.3 million between 2004 and 2006 and \$512.1 million between 2002 and 2004.

"Provincial budget increases have really slowed down and spaces have slowed," said researcher Martha Friendly. "We're seeing very little progress. There are so many families that are still scrambling for childcare."

Friendly believes Canada's system is disjointed and the country needs to have a national early education program that is overseen by the federal government, but run by the provinces, similar to Canada's health-care program.

"We are kind of at this point where we know we need mothers to work . . . and it's clear that Canada is lagging behind in early childcare education. But it is just not coming together," she said, adding that research shows early childhood development has a direct impact on how children learn in elementary school and can affect their learning abilities as adults.

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- reprinted from Canwest News

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