

Are we doing enough? A status report on Canadian public policy and child and youth health ^[1]

2012 Edition

Author: Canadian Pediatric Society

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AVAILABILITY

[Full report in pdf](#) ^[2]

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Abstract

To encourage policy-makers to examine their progress on child and youth issues and to foster discussion among Canadians, the Canadian Paediatric Society produces a biennial status report on public policy affecting children and youth.

This report examines how well provincial/territorial and federal governments use their legislative powers to promote the health and safety of children and youth.

The fourth edition, released January 10, 2012, continues to assess key indicators of child and youth health and rates progress on these indicators since 2009. The report includes recommendations to improve public policy affecting children and youth, actions based both on need and evidence.

Excerpts

Federal leadership has the potential to make major, long-term improvements in the health and wellbeing of Canada's youngest citizens.

In the areas of early child development and injury prevention, the federal government could strengthen the efforts of provinces/territories if it provided national research and surveillance, a national strategy that would be implemented at the provincial/territorial level, and public education programs to raise awareness of such initiatives.

To address child and youth poverty, the federal government has a pivotal role to play through its fiscal and social policies, including income security, social programs and incentives for action. It can also support parental and community capacity, generate and transfer knowledge, build societal support for action on the determinants of health, and foster action among different sectors. The federal government has direct fiscal obligations to two groups with especially pressing needs: First Nations and Inuit children and youth.

Having access to quality early learning and child care is too important for families to be subject to the vagaries of competing government positions. In a country of nearly 5 million children aged 0 to 12, there are at present fewer than 90,000 regulated child care spaces. The vast majority of families find child care expensive and hard to access. Among 37 OECD nations, Canada places second-to-last in spending on child care and pre-primary education.

Yet one recent Quebec study showed that their provincially funded early learning and child care (ELCC) program more than pays for itself in increased tax revenue.⁹⁹ By 2008, the number of working women in Quebec had grown by almost 4%, increasing provincial GDP by \$5.2 billion (1.7%). For every dollar spent on ELCC, the provincial government recouped \$1.05, and the federal government received \$0.44 in tax revenue without contributing to the provincial program.

The Canadian Paediatric Society continues to call on the federal government to implement a national child care strategy, with an integrated system of services that are universal and publicly funded.

A Canadian Commissioner for Children and Youth would consider the needs of children and youth in all federal government initiatives and policies affecting them. The Canadian Paediatric Society continues to recommend the immediate establishment of this position.

Related link: [Child-friendly public policies good for economy, says study](#) ^[4]

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