

Lessons from the statistics: Early childhood education and care in Canada 2004 ^[1]

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Source: Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada

Format: Report

Publication Date: 17 Jun 2005

AVAILABILITY

Article in pdf ^[2]

Excerpts from the article:

- What do the findings mean?

The study again emphasizes that a comprehensive approach is required by governments to address the related and perennial problems of early learning and child care: quality and accessibility. It also points to the need for a national pan-Canadian approach to child care policy to maintain some assurances for Canadian parents that regardless of periodic changes in provincial/territorial governments, access to high quality early learning and child care will continue to improve in all regions.

- How can the data be used?

It could tell us if public money is going to its intended purpose & for example, are provincial/territorial child care budgets growing at least by the same amount as new federal transfers? Data and research are also required so we know if progress is being made towards meeting the goals of the new national early learning and child care program & the "QUAD" principles of Quality, Universality, Accessibility and Developmental programming set out in the 2004 federal election platform. Data and research can also point to policy strengths and weaknesses specifying where allocations are needed to address access and quality shortcoming. For example, research suggests that it is counterproductive to increase access without improving quality.

- What can we conclude from the current information?

The data tells us federal funding for early childhood initiatives went to the provinces and territories without sufficient strings attached. Provinces that have decreased child care spending as they received new federal funds continue to cash their cheques from Ottawa. As Ottawa becomes a major player in child care funding it owes Canadians an accounting of where their tax dollars are going and what they produce.

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