

Early child learning and care in Canada: Who rules? Who should rule?^[1]

Discussion paper prepared for the CCSD's national conference on child care in Canada

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AVAILABILITY

- Discussion paper in pdf (English)^[2]

- Discussion paper in pdf (French)^[3]

Excerpts from the discussion paper:

The aim of this paper is to contribute to the debate on the most appropriate framework for developing and sustaining a pan-Canadian early child learning and care system (ECLC) of the sort Canadians have long demanded. Such a system would have the following characteristics:

- Universal accessibility: Early child learning & from birth to school start & should be understood as similar to education & that is, a public entitlement, accessible to all who want it. No children should be excluded on the basis of income, parental employment status, place of residence or formal citizenship.
- High quality: There is a wealth of scientific support for the notion that children begin to learn, in the broadest sense, from birth. Parents have an important role to play in their development, especially in the early years, but they also deserve societal support. Canada's child care system, therefore, has got to be much more than that. It must also support the child's all-round development. It has to be an early child learning and care system. This means a healthy, safe and stimulating physical environment; appropriate staff-to-child ratios; and programs based on a sound knowledge of care and learning, which recognize the child as a rights-bearing actor.
- Comprehensive: As citizens, children and their parents are bearers of universal rights, but that doesn't mean they have the same needs. The ECLC system should serve the child who is still at home with a parent, as well as those who need part-time care or full-day/full-year care. It also needs to support children with special needs and to respect and reflect the cultural and linguistic diversity of the population. This is especially important for Aboriginal children, whom society has long failed.
- Accountable: Those who spend public funds are accountable to the public & both directly and indirectly through elected governments. There are many forms of government oversight (longstanding systems of regulation and monitoring, plus the newer emphasis on reporting measurable outcomes) but of particular importance here are questions about the requisites for effective citizen participation.
- Locally based: Social programs in the form of government transfers to individuals can easily be designed and managed at the national (or provincial) level, but social services, like ECLC, are delivered in communities. It is this level which is most capable of recognising specific needs and bringing about the level of integration required of a truly comprehensive system.

Region: Canada^[4]

Tags: quality^[5]

privatization^[6]

federal programs^[7]

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