

ChildCare2020: Let's put child care back on the public agenda ^[1]

Blog

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EXCERPTS

It begins with a simple premise: Child care is a human right.

It's not a luxury, not a privilege. It's certainly not an issue to be overlooked. All across Canada, parents are struggling to find safe, affordable, quality child care in which their children can thrive.

That's where ChildCare2020 comes in.

From November 13-15, in Winnipeg, ChildCare2020 will bring together a diverse cross-section of the early childhood education and childcare sector along with policy experts, researchers, parents, workers, community leaders and activists from communities across the country to discuss what child care could be in the year 2020. It is the first national conference on childcare policy in a decade. Building a comprehensive system of early childhood education, that includes child care, is a complex challenge requiring a combination of national, provincial and local solutions. The transformation from the current patchwork, market-based reality to a universal system can be done but it will require a major effort that ChildCare2020 organizers know only too well.

"Families in every part of Canada are struggling with finding and paying for quality child care. Communities and families come in all shapes and variations but there are more similarities than differences in what's needed to fill the gaps in child care across the country," says [Martha Friendly](#), executive director of the Childcare Resource and Research Unit, which is convening the conference along with the two national child-care organizations, the Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada and the Canadian Child Care Federation.

Early childhood educator Ruth Bancroft, who serves as a Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada board member, is optimistic about the conference outcomes. "This conference will give those who care about child care across the country the opportunity to share their experiences and perspectives, to collectively build a vision for a national ECEC program and to learn about new ways to mobilize for action," she said.

The timing, Bancroft adds, couldn't be better. "With the 2015 federal election coming soon, public policy issues are being debated widely. This is our chance to put child care back on the public agenda."

Longtime champions of childcare policy such as Stephen Lewis, Ken Dryden and Olivia Chow will be speaking, as well as leading thinkers on every question related to child care from what kind of taxation policies are required to make a system viable, affordable and accessible, to what kind of supports are needed for early childhood educators.

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