

Child care - the ramp that provides equal access to the workforce for mothers ^[1]



Brief prepared for House of Commons' Standing Committee on the Status of Women Study on the economic leadership and prosperity of Canadian women

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Introduction:

This brief is presented to the House of Commons' Standing Committee on the Status of Women to contribute to the Committee's examination of the economic leadership and prosperity of Canadian women in the public sector, the private sector, and the not-for-profit sector.

The Toronto-based Childcare Resource and Research Unit (CRRU) has been a key actor in Canadian child care for three decades. We are a main knowledge mobilizer, providing information and resources about child care research and policy and are recognized in the early childhood education and childcare (ECEC) field for our role in ensuring that policy makers, advocates, service providers and other researchers are empowered by knowledge and that policy initiatives continue to be informed by a wide variety of information. One of CRRU's basic premises has been that good public policy is based on solid information that draws on multi-disciplinary research and policy analysis.

As part of our mandate to inform people about child care and related issues, CRRU had been following the testimony to the FEWO committee last spring and noted that child care and its relationship to the economic leadership and prosperity of Canadian women was referenced repeatedly by witnesses. The context for this brief is the Committee's intention to "examine in particular the societal and systemic challenges that undermine equality of opportunity and limit women's ability to become leaders".

Child care has been considered to be a women's issue in Canada for more than 40 years. When the Royal Commission on the Status of Women proposed a national day care Act in 1970, its main goal was women's equality. Since then, as additional goals (child development, for example) have become part of the debate, knowledge has expanded and the language has shifted. For this reason, what was called daycare in the 1970s and child care in the 1980s/1990s is now often called early learning and care, or early childhood education and care.

Looking at child care from a women's perspective, we argue that poor access to quality child care is one of the main challenges that women across Canada face today. Statements such as the one that opens this brief (above), commenting on how poor access to child care "is one of the biggest barriers" preventing women from entering a well-paid, non-traditional line of work -construction trades- illustrates this well. It is the same, however, for women across the spectrum-women entrepreneurs and those working for NGOs, teachers, students, newcomers to Canada struggling to learn English or French,women farmers, lawyers and Members of Parliament.

Overall, Canada's lack of action on universal child care in every region of the country continues to have a profound impact on women's equality of opportunity and leadership chances in all regions of Canada-across the life span, across diverse groups and across the economic spectrum.

Region: Canada ^[4]

Tags: mother's labour force participation ^[5]

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[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/research-policy-practice/14/12/child-care-ramp-provides-equal-access-workforce-mothers> [2]

<https://childcarecanada.org/sites/default/files/FEWO%20brief%20Nov%2027%202014.pdf> [3]

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<https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/8142>