

Redesigning the "welfare mix" for families: Policy challenges ^[1]

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AVAILABILITY

Available in print for order (see SOURCE) and online for download.

- Executive summary in pdf ^[3]

- Full report in pdf ^[4]

Excerpts from the report:

Child care is important not only because it allows parents to balance their work and family responsibilities. It is also absolutely key to ensuring positive developmental outcomes in children. The OECD has joined this chorus recently. Its report, as the title indicates, emphasizes Starting Strong. It states: "Research shows that participation in quality, centre-based ECEC [early childhood education and care] programmes can have important and immediate short-term impacts on the cognitive and socio-emotional development of disadvantaged children." According to the OECD, the international institution that has done the most to promote employment policy based on increased participation rates and making work pay, this advantage is huge.

Yet, despite this widespread social knowledge, policy-makers in Canada seem not to be listening. This means that, in contrast to so many other countries, several Canadian provinces are still holding the line on child care spending, although there is still a good deal of unmet demand for affordable care and quality spaces. Moreover, as described above, there has been a tendency to embrace informal forms of child care (neighbours and relatives) as a solution to meeting the needs of low-income parents leaving social assistance or employed in low-wage work, despite the evidence that simply investing in custodial care has significantly fewer payoffs in terms of good child outcomes. The necessity still exists, in other words, to imagine creative ways of meeting parents needs for flexible, reliable, and developmentally appropriate care in the system.

Given its commitment to competing in the knowledge economy and making the most of its work force, Canada cannot afford to ignore the contribution that quality early childhood education and care programs can make to achieving goals for both adults and children. Child care needs to be a key component of any low-income strategy.

Region: Canada ^[5]

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