

An Analysis of the Multilateral Early Learning and Child Care Framework and the Early Learning and Child Care Bilateral Agreements

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Child Care Now

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INTRODUCTION

A new chapter in the “never-ending story”

Almost two decades ago, scholar Rianne Mahon described the struggle for universal child care in Canada as a never-ending story:

On the one hand, there is a stubborn and persistent need for good-quality child care linked to the high labour force participation of mothers. [...] On the other hand, there are barriers that continue to block the development of an accessible, high-quality, publicly-funded child care system (Mahon, 2000).

The barriers in the way of a national early learning and child care (ELCC) strategy in Canada are well-known. Among the most significant challenges are: Canadian federalism; an unwillingness to allocate sufficient public funding; and the contested historical belief that publicly-funded child care should be treated as “welfare” rather than a universal entitlement. Yet, the need for good ELCC remains pressing: today, 71% of mothers whose youngest child is between 0 and 2 years of age are in the labour force, as are 77% of mothers whose youngest child is between 3 and 5 years of age (Friendly, et al., 2018).

The consequence of this never-ending story is that ELCC in Canada is in a perpetual state of crisis. Numerous studies and assessments paint a nation-wide picture of a severe shortage of spaces, unaffordable fees, poor working conditions for early childhood educators (ECEs), service gaps that have led to the expansion of for-profit services, and programs of questionable quality.¹

ELCC in Canada performs poorly by international standards. [UNICEF’s oft-cited 2008 study of early childhood education and care \(ECEC\) in 25 OECD countries ranked Canada at the bottom of the list in terms of ten quantified ELCC benchmarks \(UNICEF, 2008\)](#). Since the publication of this study, ECEC services have continued to develop in OECD countries, especially in Europe. The situation in Canada, however, has barely improved since the study was released a decade ago. Child care services in Canada are organized on a market model, resulting in unaffordable parent fees, inequitable and inadequate availability of services, and, too often, of low or modest quality (Beach and Ferns, 2015).

¹ The exception on some counts, particularly on affordability, is Québec, which implemented a provincial child care program in 1997.

What is required to address this crisis is already known. For decades, child care advocates, researchers, anti-poverty organizations, women's equality groups, ELCC practitioners, and parents have been writing their side of the story. These stakeholders have developed a strong vision for a national system of universal, affordable, comprehensive, inclusive, and high-quality ELCC. In particular, such a system must be supported by a national policy framework, long-term sustained funding, and collaboration between the federal and provincial and territorial governments. A national system of universal, affordable, comprehensive, inclusive, and high-quality ELCC would:

- Enhance women's equality
- Support child development, including school readiness and well-being
- Help reduce poverty
- Ensure family-work balance
- Strengthen social integration and inclusion
- Alleviate the struggles of vulnerable children and families
- Foster economic prosperity²

The latest chapter in this never-ending story was set in motion on June 12, 2017, when the federal government released the [Multilateral Early Learning and Child Care Framework \(MELCCF\)](#), and then a year later, the [Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care Framework](#).

The [2017 federal budget](#) included an accompanying funding plan for both Frameworks of a total \$7.5 billion over 11 years. Of that total, \$1.2 billion was earmarked for the first three years.

The MELCCF (the focus of this report) commits the federal government to work with the provinces and territories to achieve five overarching principles: **quality**, **accessibility**, **affordability**, **flexibility**, and **inclusivity**.

The MELCCF forms the basis of the [Early Learning and Child Care Bilateral Agreements \(BAs\)](#) between the federal government and the provinces and territories, with the exception of Québec's

The Multilateral Early Learning and Child Care Framework can be found online:
<https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/early-learning-child-care/reports/2017-multilateral-framework.html>

The Early Learning and Child Care Bilateral Agreements, as well as the Canada-Québec Asymmetrical Agreement, can be found online:
<https://www.canada.ca/en/early-learning-child-care-agreement/agreements-provinces-territories/quebec.html>

Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care Framework can be found online:
<https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/indigenous-early-learning/2018-framework.html>

² A clear, comprehensive, and detailed articulation of this vision can be found in *Child Care in Canada by 2020: A Vision and a Way Forward*, a discussion paper prepared for the ChildCare2020 conference in November 2014 (ChildCare2020 Steering Committee, 2014).

Asymmetrical Agreement – Early Learning and Child Care Component.³ The BAs outline each jurisdiction's priorities and guide how federal transfer funds should be spent by the provinces and territories. The provinces and territories (except Québec) were also required to develop and release three-year Action Plans to show how they will use the first phase of federal funding.

Assessing the MELCCF and BAs: In brief

Does the MELCCF offer the potential to write a positive and potentially transformative new chapter in the story of ELCC in Canada? Does it have the potential to move Canada towards a universal, high quality, and comprehensive *system* of ELCC, rather than the *patchwork* of services that exist today? At the very least, can the MELCCF and BAs alleviate the child care crisis in Canada and improve the state of ELCC programs across the country?

There are some reasons to be optimistic about this latest chapter in ELCC. Several provinces and territories, including New Brunswick, Ontario⁴, British Columbia, and the Northwest Territories, have, in recent months, announced plans to move toward universal systems of child care, propelled in part by the infusion of federal funding under their respective BAs.

A model for ELCC delivery variously called Early Years Centres (in Prince Edward Island), Early Learning Centres (in New Brunswick), and Early Learning and Child Care Centres (in Alberta) has been adopted. These centres have significant operational funding that allows them to cap parent fees and provide higher quality services.

The MELCCF also calls for provinces and territories to implement inclusive and diverse programming. A greater focus on accessible ECE training programs and some attention to rural and non-standard hours suggests that ELCC in Canada is moving in the right direction.

However, the MELCCF and the BAs fall short in several crucial respects, especially when measured against a vision for universal, affordable, inclusive, and high-quality ELCC.

Firstly, the MELCCF and BAs fail to commit the federal, provincial, and territorial governments to a national, *universal* system of ELCC. Instead, the MELCCF specifies a targeted approach to the provision of child care with a focus on vulnerable families.

Secondly, although the principles of quality, accessibility, affordability, flexibility, and inclusivity are identified in the MELCCF, there is little in the way of accountability to ensure that provinces and territories achieve these overarching goals.

³ Although the Government of Québec supports the general principles of the MELCCF, it does not adhere to the Framework because it intends to preserve its sole responsibility in this area on its territory. The Government of Québec also expects to receive its share of the federal funding while continuing to invest significantly toward programs and services for families and children.

⁴ A provincial election was held after the Ontario agreement was signed in 2017. The election of a Progressive Conservative government signaled a reversal of the previous Ontario Liberal government's plan for expansion and improvements in ELCC services.

Thirdly, it will be difficult to operationalize these principles because the funding promised by the federal government over the next decade is inadequate. In fact, the federal government's 2017 budget commitment is still less than half of that promised for ELCC in 2005, the last time Multilateral/Bilateral Agreements were on the table.

Fourthly, notwithstanding the commitment to policy-making that is evidence-based, there are significant silences on well-studied quality indicators, including wages, training of ECE workers, and the crucial issue of auspice.⁵

Finally, a lack of transparency surrounds the development of the MELCCF and the BAs, making it difficult for advocates, researchers, educators, and families to engage in meaningful change.

This report fleshes out these assessments in greater detail. It also describes and analyzes each provincial and territorial Action Plan, and details initiatives proposed in the creation of spaces, affordability, working conditions of ECEs, auspice, and inclusion/equity/diversity.⁶

Before delving into an in-depth analysis of the Action Plans, however, it is useful to consider the previous chapters that have set the stage for current developments in the never-ending story of ELCC in Canada.



⁵ Auspice refers to the owners and operators of ELCC programs (Prentice, 2000). This includes services that are incorporated as non-profits or are part of a larger incorporated non-profit. Public child care is defined as operated (owned) by a body of government such as a municipality or a school board. Non-profits are legally governed by a board of directors. For-profit or commercial services are legal entities incorporated with an object to earn a profit from providing service. These may be operated by a single owner or a chain, or be publicly traded on a stock exchange.

⁶ These indicators have been identified by research as necessary for the creation of a high-quality system of ELCC.

BACKGROUND

Halting steps forward...and back again

The earliest child care programs in Canada were provided as charitable services for poor working mothers. Therefore, the association between welfare and child care has been difficult to shake. Besides a short-lived day nursery program for wartime working mothers between 1942 and 1946, the federal government's first meaningful foray into the child care field was designed with welfare goals in mind. Under the cost-shared Canada Assistance Plan (CAP), introduced in 1966, provinces and territories could spend federal monies on day care programs, but only on behalf of families that were deemed in need of such services. The CAP approach ensured that public child care services were targeted and residual, rather than universal entitlements. In practice, these supports primarily took the form of child care subsidies targeted to low-income parents.

At various points in the past several decades, the federal government has taken steps towards a more robust approach to ELCC. During the 1980s, both Liberal and Progressive Conservative governments (under Pierre Trudeau and Brian Mulroney, respectively) initiated national-level analyses of child care. In 1984, Prime Minister Trudeau established the [Task Force on Child Care](#), which reported to the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women. Headed by sociologist Katie Cooke, the Task Force on Child Care reported in 1986 with a recommendation for a universal national child care program.⁷

Before the Task Force on Child Care had completed its work, however, Prime Minister Trudeau retired. The Liberals were also defeated in the 1984 election. In the fall of 1985, Prime Minister Mulroney set up his own child care study through an all-party Special Parliamentary Committee on Child Care. The outcome was [Bill C-144](#) that proposed to replace the CAP approach to child care with a new funding scheme. Social policy experts and child care advocates opposed Bill C-144, largely because it placed new limits on child care funding, made public funds available to for-profit programs, and relied heavily on tax-based measures (Friendly & Prentice, 2009, 79). Bill C-144 passed in the House of Commons; however, it died in the Senate when an election was called in 1988.

Through the 1990s, child care was mostly absent from the national policy agenda. Funding of child care programs was affected by the introduction in 1995 of the Canada Health and Social Transfer (CHST), a block fund that replaced the CAP and removed the possibility of open-ended cost-shared funds for child care (Friendly, 2000).

⁷ Similar to the recommendation, it should be noted, that was called for in the Report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in 1970.

The exception to trends in the 1990s was Québec. In 1997, Québec introduced an improved parental insurance plan, full-day kindergarten for all five-year-olds, and a plan for high-quality early childhood education and child care services. The hallmark of Québec's early childhood education and child care system was that it was universal in type, as well as accessible to all families in *Centres de la Petite Enfance* (CPEs) and in home child care programs (Japel & Welp, 2015).

The main policy breakthrough in Québec was the decision to fund child care centres operationally, rather than through parent fees and fee subsidies for low-income parents. When the program began, all parents paid a flat, provincial fee of \$5 a day per child if a regulated space was available. After several fee increases, today, Québec parents pay according to an income-based fee scale, which ranges from \$8.05/day to \$21.95/day.⁸

The 2005 Foundations Program and its demise

Another chapter in child care began in 2003, when the federal government introduced the Multilateral Framework Agreement on Early Learning and Child Care (MFA). The MFA committed the federal government to \$1 billion over five years to support regulated ECEC programs (Government of Canada, 2003). All provinces and territories, except for Québec, were signatories to the agreement. Although the promise of significant federal funding was welcome, child care advocates were concerned that the funds were not tied to a more robust and comprehensive national strategy (Friendly & Prentice, 2009).

As the 2004 federal election approached, the Liberal Party made a national child care strategy one of its key campaign promises. In addition to committing \$5 billion over five years, they promised to create a national ELCC system based on the principles of Quality, Universality, Accessibility, and Developmental programming, or the QUAD principles. After being elected with a minority, Social Development Minister Ken Dryden began to negotiate bilateral agreements with all ten provinces and the territories.

⁸ The Québec Daily Daycare Costs calculator is available here:
http://www.budget.finances.gouv.qc.ca/budget/outils/garde_en.asp

Government of Canada Spending Promises: Foundations Program
(Government of Canada, 2005)

2004/2005 (part year)	\$200 million
2005/2006	\$500 million
2006/2007	\$700 million
2007/2008	\$1.2 billion
2008/2009	\$1.2 billion
2009/2010	\$1.2 billion
TOTAL	\$5 billion
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - \$100 million of this total devoted to services for First Nations on reserve - \$100 million of this total reserved for an accountability package/data strategy 	

By December of 2005, all ten provinces and the territories (including Québec this time) had signed agreements. It finally seemed like a national system of ELCC was becoming a reality. Canada was, according to leading advocates and scholars, “closer than it had ever been to a national early childhood education and childcare system” (Friendly & Prentice, 2009, 84; Childcare Resource and Research Unit, 2012).

The election of the Conservative Party in January 2006, however, brought the Liberal government’s plans to a screeching halt. During the campaign, the Conservative Party framed their promise of a monthly cheque directly to parents as providing “choice in child care” (Friendly, 2007, 43). Following his swearing-in ceremony on February 6, 2006, Prime Minister Harper immediately cancelled the child care agreements with the provinces and territories. The Conservative government then replaced the national strategy with the Universal Child Care Benefit (UCCB), a \$100/month taxable allowance for all children under six years of age. The federal government did not support a larger federal role in support of ELCC from 2006 forward.

2015 election promises

After a decade of federal stagnation on ELCC, advocates and the child care community across Canada were buoyed by the fact that ELCC featured prominently in the platforms of all major parties during the 2015 election.

In the lead-up to the election, the Conservative government increased the UCCB amount to \$160/month for children under 6 years of age (\$60/month for children 6-17 years old). They continued to frame this policy approach as providing the most “choice” for parents despite evidence that individual transfers to parents do little or nothing to improve availability, affordability, or quality of child care spaces.

The New Democratic Party released a detailed and ambitious plan for a national child care program. The plan promised an increase in federal spending to \$5 billion/year in order to support a large expansion of child care spaces and to cap parent fees at \$15/day (Anderson & Ivanova, 2015).

The Liberal Party's platform included commitments for ELCC services as part of its focus on building the middle class. ELCC funding, however, was grouped with other broad investments in social infrastructure, amounting to \$20 billion over 10 years. Advocates cautioned that there was no specific amount earmarked for ELCC, and wondered how much of this money would actually go towards childcare services, especially given competing priorities such as affordable housing, seniors' facilities, and cultural and recreational infrastructure (Anderson & Ivanova, 2015).

The Liberal Party campaigned on a number of other promises with respect to children:

- Replacing the Canada Child Tax Benefit (CCTB) and the UCCB with the Canada Child Benefit (CCB).
- Introducing more flexible parental leave benefits to cover 18 months of leave (as opposed to 12 months), albeit with reduced benefit levels.
- Working with provinces, territories, and First Nations, within the first 100 days, to create a new National ELCC Framework in order to “deliver affordable, high-quality, flexible, and fully inclusive child care for Canadian families” (Liberal Party of Canada, 2015).⁹

The federal role for ELCC today

The Liberal government followed through on its first two campaign promises. In 2016, they introduced the CCB, which replaced the UCCB, the existing CCTB, and income splitting. The CCB is a tax-free monthly payment to eligible families with children under 18 years of age. An income-tested benefit, the CCB provides families with up to \$6,400/year for children under 6 years of age and up to \$5,400/year for children 6 to 17 years old. In late 2017, the Liberal government gave parents the option of spreading the parental leave portion of federal benefits over an 18-month period (including maternity leave).

The CCB and maternity and parental benefits are part of a package of federal supports for ELCC that includes the Child Care Expense Deduction, Aboriginal Head Start in Urban and Northern Communities, Aboriginal Head Start On-Reserve, the First Nations and Inuit Child Care Initiative, ECEC programs for newcomer children and military families, and block transfers to the provinces (through the CHST) (Friendly et al., 2018). The federal transfers available under the MELCCF add a child care element to the federal government's supports for children and families.

⁹ This framework, they stated, was not going to result in a “one-size-fits-all national program – particularly one that imposes pre-determined costs on other orders of government” (Liberal Party of Canada, 2015).

Negotiating the 2017 Framework

The path to the MELCCF began in September 2016, when the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, the Honourable Jean-Yves Duclos, was directed in his mandate letter from Prime Minister Trudeau to:

Work with the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs to launch consultations with provinces and territories and Indigenous peoples on a National Early Learning and Childcare Framework as a first step towards delivering affordable, high-quality, flexible and fully inclusive child care (Prime Minister Trudeau, 2016).

In the following months, the Liberal government developed a multilateral framework with consultation from provinces and territories, but little or no involvement of those who work in ELCC, or child care advocates.



THE 2017 MULTILATERAL EARLY LEARNING AND CHILD CARE FRAMEWORK

The MELCCF was announced on June 12, 2017. According to this agreement, the federal government will provide the provinces and territories with \$1.2 billion over three years to support ELCC programs. The MELCCF “sets the foundation for collaboration,” with the expectation that “each jurisdiction has the responsibility to develop systems that best respond to the needs and priorities of their communities.”

Guiding principles

Three sets of guiding principles (five principles in all) constitute the basis of the MELCCF. These principles set long-term goals for ELCC systems to which the governments agree:

- **Quality:** high-quality ELCC recognizes the importance of qualifications and training of the early childhood workforce; provides rich learning environments for children; and values relationships.
- **Accessibility, Affordability, Flexibility:** services should be flexible and broadly available to “respond to the varying needs of children and families,” including families who are participating in employment, education or training, and harder-to-serve populations.
- **Inclusivity:** ELCC programs will give consideration to families and children “more in need” or experiencing vulnerability, including children with varying abilities; programs must be respectful of language and culture; and “in particular recognize the unique needs of French and English linguistic minority communities...and of Indigenous peoples.”

Scope of investments and spending parameters

The MELCCF provides for three years of transfers to the provinces and territories beginning April 1, 2017:

- \$399,669,692 for the fiscal year beginning April 1, 2017
- \$399,347,695 for the fiscal year beginning April 1, 2018
- \$399,347,695 for the fiscal year beginning April 1, 2019

The March 2018 federal budget includes these amounts as well as additional promises for spending on Indigenous child care, ELCC innovation, and reporting and accountability (data) measures. All told, the Government of Canada has committed to \$7.5 billion over 11 years.

Government of Canada Total Spending Promises for ELCC (Government of Canada, 2018)

2018/2019	\$540 million
2019/2020	\$545 million
2020/2021	\$550 million
2021/2022	\$550 million
2022/2023	\$725 million
2023/2024	\$775 million
2024/2025	\$775 million
2025/2026	\$800 million
2026/2027	\$870 million
2027/2028	\$870 million
TOTAL	\$7 billion
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - includes \$360 million over three years (2017/2018 – 2019/2020) to develop an Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care Framework - includes \$100 million for ELCC innovation - includes \$95 million to “close data gaps and support strong reporting” 	

The federal government has committed to an annual allocation until 2027-2028 of no less than it was in 2017-2018. The funds will build upon existing provincial and territorial investments in ELCC, and are targeted for children under six years of age.

There are few parameters for provincial and territorial spending in the MELCCF. The funds are prioritized in regulated programs, including (but not limited to) child care centres, family child care homes, early learning centres, preschools, and nursery schools. Federal funding must not displace existing provincial and territorial funding for ELCC. It should also be used to help vulnerable families. Other than that, provinces and territories have significant leeway with respect to how they can spend this money.

Provincial and territorial accountability is required through annual reporting. The MELCCF gives a list of indicators that governments have agreed to work towards and report on. However, provinces and territories are under no obligation to commit to these indicators and may add others that

reflect their investment priorities. The suggested list of indicators includes:

- Quality
 - o Number and proportion of providers with ECE certification and/or participating in professional development and training
 - o Number and proportion of providers adopting innovative new tools for early learning and child care
- Accessible, Affordable and Flexible
 - o Number and percentage of children that have access to regulated ELCC programs
 - o Number of children receiving subsidies or other financial supports
 - o Number of flexible ELCC arrangements (eg., programs for irregular hours, weekend services) for harder-to-serve populations
- Inclusive
 - o Number of children benefiting from programs and/or number of programs designed to serve children from diverse populations
 - o Number of children with additional support needs participating in ELCC programs
 - o Number and proportion of children from low-income and middle-class families participating in ELCC programs

Other elements of the MELCCF include a focus on research, knowledge, and information. Governments are encouraged to work together to improve data collection and dissemination of key ELCC information in order to inform policy development and create common quality and outcome measures. A separate framework for Indigenous ELCC will be implemented alongside the MELCCF, in cooperation with provinces and territories.

Finally, the MELCCF indicates that provinces and territories must demonstrate innovation as they navigate the complexities of ELCC services:

Provincial and territorial governments will, as identified in bilateral agreements, promote, define and deliver identifiable innovative approaches to enhance the quality, accessibility, affordability, flexibility, and inclusivity of early learning and child care systems, with consideration for those more in need.

THE EARLY LEARNING AND CHILD CARE BILATERAL AGREEMENTS

The MELCCF forms the basis of the three-year BAs between the federal government and the provinces and territories that make up the first phase of the childcare strategy. The BAs “outline the unique early learning and child care needs that will be addressed and the funding allocation for each jurisdiction,” and each BA must include an Action Plan.

The provincial and territorial allocations to the end of the Fiscal Year 2019/2020 (the length of the three-year agreements) are as follows:

ALLOCATIONS	2017/2018	2018/2019	2019/2020	TOTAL
British Columbia	\$51,036,249	\$50,993,994	\$50,993,994	\$153,024,237
Alberta	\$45,630,673	\$45,593,076	\$45,593,076	\$136,816,825
Saskatchewan	\$13,848,167	\$13,837,957	\$13,837,957	\$41,524,081
Manitoba	\$15,621,272	\$15,609,534	\$15,609,534	\$46,840,340
Ontario	\$144,960,100	\$144,836,900	\$144,836,900	\$434,633,900
New Brunswick	\$9,941,829	\$9,934,985	\$9,934,985	\$29,811,799
Nova Scotia	\$11,818,026	\$11,809,566	\$11,809,566	\$35,437,158
Prince Edward Island	\$3,519,129	\$3,517,820	\$3,517,820	\$10,554,769
Newfoundland and Labrador	\$7,383,089	\$7,378,451	\$7,378,451	\$22,139,991
Nunavut	\$2,382,092	\$2,381,762	\$2,381,762	\$7,145,616
Northwest Territories	\$2,453,191	\$2,452,801	\$2,452,801	\$7,358,793
Yukon	\$2,391,493	\$2,391,156	\$2,391,156	\$7,173,805
TOTAL	\$310,985,310	\$310,738,002	\$310,738,002	\$932,461,314

Québec's Asymmetrical Agreement

Québec is not a signatory to the MELCCF in the same way the other provincial and territorial governments are; instead, Québec has signed an Asymmetrical Agreement with the federal government. This agreement recognizes that Québec's ELCC is under the exclusive jurisdiction of Québec.

Under the Federal Infrastructure Plan, and more specifically the social infrastructure child care component, Québec will receive approximately \$1.2 billion between 2018 and 2028:¹⁰

- 2017/2018: \$87,447,014
- 2018/2019: \$87,373,383
- 2019/2020: \$87,373,383

The federal contributions paid to Québec under the Asymmetrical Agreement will be used to directly fund services for families, including both CPEs and other services outside child care services as follows:

- In 2017/2018, \$2.3 billion for the approximately 233,000 licensed, operationally-funded (reduced contribution) spaces in centres and home child care for children 0-4 years of age in Québec.
- Create 5,800 new child care spaces.
- Support initiatives that are part of the Stratégie relative aux services éducatifs offerts aux enfants de 0 à 8 ans – Tout pour nos enfants.
- Improve services for families affected by autism spectrum disorder.
- Provide services for vulnerable youth and their families (plans announced November 28, 2017).
- Enhance psychology services for vulnerable youth (plans announced March 12, 2018).
- Fund action plans on runaways from rehabilitation centres.

¹⁰ The Asymmetrical Agreement covers the same period as the Bilateral Agreements (2017/2018 – 2019/2020), with the expectation that it will be renewed after 2020.

Assessing the Bilateral Agreements and the Action Plans: Quality indicators

The BAs and accompanying Action Plans vary significantly across Canada. However, all promise to work towards the overarching principles of quality, affordability, accessibility, flexibility, and inclusivity.

A large body of evidence shows that a high-quality ELCC system requires a complex mix of factors, including robust public policy, substantial public investment, well-designed curricula, appropriate training, fair working conditions, and meaningful inclusion (Friendly, Doherty and Beach, 2006, OECD 2017, Vandebroek, 2015).

Overall, **availability, affordability, working conditions, auspice,** and **inclusion/equity/diversity** set the stage as crucial components and predictors of quality. Since no level of government in Canada currently provides sufficient resources to ensure quality in these areas, it is crucial to understand each Action Plan's proposed path forward.

Availability: In the past two decades, the supply of regulated child care spaces in Canada has grown considerably. In 2016, there were 1,349,827 regulated child care spaces for children aged 0-12 across the country, up from just 371,573 in 1992. However, the availability of regulated child care remains inadequate, especially when considered a percentage of children aged 0-5. In 2016, there were only enough regulated full-time or part-time centre-based spaces for 28.9% of those children across the country (Friendly et al., 2018).

Finding high-quality child care is more difficult for parents with infants and toddlers, for children with additional needs, rural children, and Indigenous children. As researchers and advocates have long pointed out, providing individually-targeted subsidies to low-income parents, which has been the main approach to funding, does nothing to increase the *supply* of regulated ELCC spaces.

Affordability: The affordability of child care is a key part of accessibility. It is also closely linked to child care public policy. Recent data on child care fees, from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternative's (CCPA) report [Time Out](#), reveals high parent fees across the country. In Toronto, for example, infant fees are up to \$1,758/month, followed closely by toddler (\$1,292/month) and pre-school-aged fees (\$1,212/month). The 2017 study shows that policy matters when it comes to parent fees. As the report notes, provinces that provide operational funding, in addition to setting parent fees, consistently have the lowest fees (Macdonald and Friendly, 2017). Québec, Manitoba, and Prince Edward Island provide operational funding and set parent fees. As a result, ELCC is more affordable in these provinces.

The CCPA's now annual fee survey for 2016 analyzes whether directing subsidies to parents makes child care affordable. The survey shows that even low-income parents for whom subsidies are intended still pay out-of-pocket fees of as much as \$500/month or wait on long waiting lists (MacDonald and Friendly, 2016). Additionally, a comprehensive economic analysis of affordability issues in Ontario has shown that fee subsidies are less effective than low-fee or no-fee child care in making child care services affordable for families, especially for low-income families (Cleveland, Krashinsky & Colley, 2018).

The child care workforce: Evidence shows that high quality ELCC programs are directly linked to the wages, training, qualifications, education, and job satisfaction of ECEs (Halfon and Langford, 2015). However, “no province or territory has adequately dealt with these issues,” and the wages and working conditions of ECE educators in all parts of the country leave much to be desired (Halfon & Langford, 2015). Comprehensive data on wages and working conditions is difficult to find. However, the report [You Bet We Still Care!](#) reveals that the hourly wages of ECEs are still well below the overall Canada-wide average worker wage. Moreover, access to benefits is uneven (fewer than 50% of staff had benefits in 2012), and recruitment is expected to become an even larger challenge because of an aging child care workforce (Flanagan, Beach and Varmiza, 2013). A 2010 study by Jane Beach and Kathleen Flanagan shows serious human resource issues in home child care, including lack of access to employment benefits; exclusion from employment standards legislation; excessive working hours; and inadequate training opportunities (Beach & Flanagan, 2010).

Auspice: Statistics from 2016 show that 30% of regulated centre-based child care spaces in Canada are provided by for-profit enterprises, albeit with differences across the country. For much of the past decade, for-profit child care has been expanding at a greater rate than not-for-profit ELCC services and programs (Friendly et al., 2018; Childcare Resource and Research Unit, 1997; McGrane 2014).

The evidence is clear that not-for-profit services are more likely to offer high-quality ELCC than for-profit services. The reason is simple: since parent fees are relatively fixed, for-profit operators increase their revenues by lowering costs, usually by limiting wages, benefits, and other workforce-related elements. To put it simply: “profits are achieved through sacrificing quality” (Prentice, 2000, 278; Lyons et al., 2002). As Susan Prentice has shown, provinces and territories can encourage or discourage auspice patterns through legislation and funding. Saskatchewan, for example, passed legislation in the 1970s that prohibited all public funding to for-profit centres. Today, Saskatchewan has almost no for-profit child care (Friendly et al, 2018).

Inclusion/Equity/Diversity: In the ELCC field, inclusive programs are considered those in which:

Children with disabilities not only attend the same programs/spaces as children without disabilities, but that they participate fully in the program through accommodations and modifications” (Halfon & Friendly, 2013).

Inclusion is accepted as best practice and reflective of high-quality ELCC.

High-quality child care also helps young people develop positive ideas about diversity, and supports employment, training, and education opportunities for low-income, immigrant, and refugee families. ELCC acts as a crucial lever for creating equity across race, class, immigration/refugee status, and other factors that lead to the marginalization of some groups in Canada. However, access to child care is not distributed equitably, not only regionally, but by a child’s age, level of ability/disability, and their family’s work schedule, household income, and/or level of vulnerability.

Unsurprisingly, then, there is also a broad consensus that a coordinated and comprehensive approach to inclusion, equity, and diversity is crucial– supported, of course, with robust policy and consistent funding.

What follows is comprehensive accounting, sorted into these categories, of each province’s and territory’s Action Plan. Additionally, as one of the priorities identified in the MELCCF, this report also considers whether the Action Plans promote **innovation**.



PROVINCIAL and TERRITORIAL ANALYSES

The provincial and territorial analyses that follow reflect the commitments of each jurisdiction's government as of June 2018. However, because of the results of recent provincial elections, the Action Plans as originally developed may not be fully implemented, and some may even be revised.

In the section that follows, comprehensive information¹¹ about each province and territory is provided, including:

- Statistics at-a-glance
- A description of recent initiatives
- Summary of Action Plan
- Discussion of innovation



¹¹ Provincial and territorial data is compiled from several sources, including Friendly et al., 2018; Flanagan & Beach, 2013; and Macdonald & Friendly, 2017.

Bilateral Agreement on Early Learning and Child Care for Newfoundland and Labrador

Newfoundland and Labrador At-a-Glance	
Spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regulated centre-based spaces are available for 24.3% of children aged 0-5 (2016)¹² Full-day kindergarten is available for 5-year-olds but is not compulsory
Fees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Median full-time monthly fees in St. John's, including centres and home-based care (2016): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Infants - \$1085 Toddlers - \$890 Preschool - \$868
Auspice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 72% of regulated child care for children aged 0-12 is for-profit (2016)
Wages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Median gross hourly wages of program staff: \$14 (2012) Median gross hourly wages of program directors: \$16 (2012)
Provincial Allocations (2015-2016) Total spending on regulated child care: \$39,313,197	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fee subsidies: \$17,325,831 One-time funding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Equipment grants (paid out of the Operating Grant budget) Recurring funding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ELCC Supplement \$6,500,874 Inclusion \$1,986,894 Capacity Initiative \$1,815,300 Family Child Care Initiative \$1,000,000 Operating Grant Program \$10,684,298 Other related funding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ECE bursaries \$224,000 Other grants and funding \$4,695,160

¹² All provinces and territories also provide regulated home child care, but an age breakdown (0-5, 6-12) is not available. In 2016, there were regulated spaces (including centres and home child care) in Newfoundland and Labrador to cover 12.9% of children aged 0-12.

Recent Initiatives in Newfoundland and Labrador

In 2012, the province launched its 10-year strategy *Caring for Our Future: Provincial Strategy for Quality, Sufficient and Affordable Child Care in Newfoundland and Labrador 2012-2022* (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2012). As the title suggests, the strategy builds on the three pillars of quality, sufficiency, and affordability. Since 2012, it has resulted in a number of new initiatives:

- Full-day (non-compulsory) kindergarten for 5-year-olds was launched in the 2016/2017 school year. It is available in public schools.
- The *Child Care Act and Regulations*, introduced on July 31, 2017, includes somewhat enhanced qualification requirements for ECEs, changes in age ranges, flexibility for licensees, and the opportunity to provide child care services outside regular hours.
- *Navigating the Early Years: An Early Childhood Learning Framework* was introduced as a new curriculum framework.
- In November 2016, a Premier's Task Force conducted a review of K-12 education and ELCC. Key recommendations include expanding the Operating Grants Program and enhancing training and opportunities for ECEs.
- In August 2017, the ELCC Supplement increased (increases ranged from \$2,840 to \$5,340 annually). The supplement is paid to eligible, qualified ECEs, and is anticipated to be “an important factor in recruiting and retaining well-educated early childhood educators and... encourage them to upgrade their qualifications.”
- Three core programs are available:
 - o The Child Care Services Subsidy assists eligible low-income and moderate-income families with the costs of regulated child care.
 - o The Operating Grant Program provides grants to centres to improve the affordability and sustainability of their services. Centres may receive operating grants as long as they adhere to conditions that include capping parent fees, serving healthy snacks and lunches, and ensuring minimum wages for staff.
 - o The Child Care Capacity Initiative provides start-up, developmental, and capital funding to not-for-profit community groups who want to develop child care spaces in underserved areas of the province, particularly in linguistic minority and Indigenous communities.

Almost all funds are available both to for-profit and non-profit services, except the Capacity Initiative.

The Action Plan will use federal funding to improve accessibility, affordability, and quality for low-income and moderate-income income families.

NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR'S ACTION PLAN

Federal transfers	Year 1: \$7,383,089	Year 2: \$7,378,451	Year 3: \$7,378,451	Total: \$22,139,991
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Availability

- In **each of the 3 years, \$500,000 investment** in the Child Care Capacity Initiative. This will provide increased developmental, capital, and start-up funding to not-for-profit community groups who want to create child care centres, *as well as* family child care. The goal of this investment is to increase the number of regulated services in underserved areas, resulting in 180 new spaces in centres and 56 spaces in family child care for small, rural, remote, and linguistic minority communities.
- Introduction of a one-year Capital Renovation Grant for licensed child care centres, which is intended to address the pressing quality-related physical changes required for 195 licensed centres and family child care homes. These facilities were granted waivers when the new *Child Care Act* introduced physical space requirements. It is anticipated that 50 centres/homes will apply for this grant to address these requirements.

Affordability

- In **each of the 3 years, \$4,150,000 investment** in the Operating Grant Program. This includes increasing the operating grants available to licensed centres and introducing new operating grants to licensed family day care homes. The Operating Grant Program caps parent fees at the child subsidy rate at participating centres. This investment will reduce child care costs for low-income and moderate-income income families and enhance affordability for all. It is expected to result in five additional centres participating in the program, amounting to 180 affordable centre-based spaces. It will also provide 360 affordable spaces in family day care homes.
- In **each of the 3 years, \$1,000,000 investment** in changes to the Child Care Services Subsidy. This includes increasing the income threshold from \$32,000 to \$35,000 for full subsidy. It is expected to result in 100 additional families receiving full subsidy and 60 moderate-income families receiving partial subsidy by 2020, thereby eliminating or reducing child care costs for 540 children.

Working Conditions

- Increasing the ECE Trainee Bursary, including lifting the cap on the number of courses eligible for the bursary. The maximum amount available to those upgrading their qualifications is \$1,000 per year (up from \$500/year). Lifting the cap is expected to attract up to 10 ECEs per year to upgrade their qualifications faster.
- Increasing the ECE On-Campus Field Placement Bursary to \$2,500 (from \$1,200) in order to support the cost of completing the mandatory field placement, which is part of the ECE certificate and diploma programs. This is expected to allow up to five additional ECEs per year to complete their training.
- Increasing the ECE Graduate Bursary Program. Recipients of this bursary are enrolled full-time in ECE diploma programs, and must agree to a two-year return in service in regulated child care in the province. New investments will increase the bursary to \$7,500 (up from \$5,000) and the service return to three years. This program is anticipated to retain up to an additional 10 ECE grads per year to remain in the province.

Auspice

- The enhancement of the Child Care Capacity Initiative (see above) is only available to not-for-profits (centre-based and family-based). All other funds are available to all.

Inclusion, Equity, Diversity

- Of the 180 anticipated new spaces provided through the Child Care Capacity Initiative (see above), the province will make an effort to ensure that 20 of them are in an official-language minority community. The expectation is that, by opening the Child Care Capacity Initiative as well as the Operating Grants Program to family day care, more families in remote and underserved communities will benefit.
- The province will undertake a needs assessment to “help target resources to communities and neighbourhoods most in need of early learning and regulated child care, including rural, Indigenous, and official language minority communities.”
- The province will complete “targeted engagement with Indigenous peoples and official language minority groups” to gather input on how best to deliver services to those groups.
- At this time, there is no specific budget in the ELCC area that focuses on Indigenous populations.

Other

- In 2018/19, the province will roll out the Quality Improvement Program. Child care consultants will work with all child care services looking to increase quality. It is anticipated that 50 centres and 20 family day care homes will benefit from this program.
- In addition, a Quality Enhancement Grant will be available to centres participating in the Operating Grant Program in order to improve quality and provide consultation. It is anticipated that about 15% of centres and homes participating in the Operating Grant Program will apply for this grant.

What is innovative about the Newfoundland and Labrador Action Plan?

Much of the province's actions emerge as a response to the need for high-quality child care services in remote, rural, and underserved communities. Thus, the Action Plan focuses on expanding grants to, and enhancing the capacity of, home child care. They call this “an innovative approach to filling the gap where a child care centre may not be viable,” because of remote locations or to serve a linguistic minority community. The Action Plan also identifies quality improvement support through consultation services and a quality improvement grant as innovative approaches to improving ELCC in the province.



Bilateral Agreement on Early Learning and Child Care for Prince Edward Island

Prince Edward Island At-a-Glance	
Spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regulated centre-based spaces are available for 39.4% of children aged 0-5 (2016)¹³ Kindergarten is full-day and compulsory for 5-year-olds
Fees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Average daily fees in regulated centres (2016): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Infants - \$36 2 years - \$29 3 years (school entry) - \$28 Early Years Centres (the majority of centres) receive operating funding and have provincially-set parent fees (fees are not set in other centres) (2017): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$34 for 0-2 years \$28 for 2-3 years \$27 for 3-school age
Auspice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 59% of regulated child care for children aged 0-12 is for-profit (2016)
Wages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Median gross hourly wages of program staff: \$15 (2012) Median gross hourly wages of program directors: \$21 (2012) Early Years Centres have a salary grid (2017): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Directors: \$21.42/hour ECEs: determined by level of qualifications and years of experience, ranges from \$12.24-\$17.22/hour Uncertified and support staff: \$11.25/hour
Provincial allocations for regulated child care (2015-2016) Total spending on regulated child care: \$11,821,500	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fee subsidies: \$2,871,500 One-time funding – not available Recurring funding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Operating grants \$295,000 Special needs funding \$1,200,000 Early Years Centres \$7,455,000 Other related funding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Home visiting program \$1,221,100 Early Childhood Development Association \$160,000

¹³ All provinces and territories also provide regulated home child care. However, an age breakdown (0-5, 6-12) is not available. In 2016, there were enough regulated spaces (including centres and home child care) in Prince Edward Island to cover 23.2% of children aged 0-12.

Recent Initiatives in Prince Edward Island

In 2010, full-day kindergarten, administered by the public school system, became mandatory for 5-year-olds. This had a significant impact on the early childhood sector. In particular, trained ECEs began to move into positions in public schools, while enrolment declined in early childhood centres. The province was therefore forced to re-think the kinds of ELCC programs offered to children aged 0-4.

Based on research by Kathleen Flanagan (Flanagan, 2010), the province launched a new approach to ELCC: *Securing the Future for Our Children: Preschool Excellence Initiative* (Government of Prince Edward Island, 2010). This initiative provides a detailed and ambitious plan to transform ELCC from a *sector* to a *system* that is publicly managed. At the core of this new system are Early Years Centres, which receive provincial funding to bridge the gap between regulated parent fees and operating costs. In return for quarterly operating funding, Early Years Centres are required to meet a set of criteria:

- A minimum number of children.
- Commitments to inclusion.
- High levels of quality measurements, such as additional educational requirements for staff; a uniform wage grid that includes benefits; parental advisory committees; and a standardized fee structure set by the provincial government.

As of February 2017, there were 46 Early Years Centres in the province (Government of Prince Edward Island, 2018).

Several other changes resulted from, or occurred alongside, the *Preschool Excellence Initiative*, including the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (now the Department of Education, Early Learning, and Culture); an online centralized waiting list of all licensed ELCC spaces in the province; supports for curriculum implementation; and investments in staff training.

In July 2016, an Early Years Advisory Committee was established to build and sustain these initiatives. The Advisory Committee's recommendations informed the Action Plan.

The Action Plan proposes to use the federal government's investment in ELCC to increase access in under-served populations, particularly for children who are vulnerable, and to improve quality of services.

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND'S ACTION PLAN

	Year 1:	Year 2:	Year 3:	Total:
Federal transfers	\$3,519,129	\$3,517,820	\$3,517,820	\$10,554,769

Availability/Spaces

- Through a one-time investment (**\$60,000 in Year 1**), update the Early Learning and Child Care Registry to improve access and provide an understanding of demand for spaces across the province.
- **In years 1-3, \$849,129/\$1,176,820/\$1,179,820** to increase the number of spaces, with a particular focus on infant spaces (an area of need due to high staff-child ratios and expense). This will result in approximately 200 new spaces for infants and preschoolers.
- **\$400,000 in Year 1** for capital investments in new spaces.
- **\$500,000 in each of the 3 years** to create spaces for children whose parents work non-standard hours and/or seasonally, through a couple of different strategies:
 - Create up to five new Early Years Centres with a focus on serving these populations.¹⁴
 - Work with stakeholders and industry to identify flexible ELCC needs.
 - License additional spaces for non-standard hours to serve these populations.

Affordability

- **In years 1-3, \$700,000/\$700,000/\$700,000** to increase the child care subsidy program and modify entrance criteria. These increases and modifications will target vulnerable children and families, making child care affordable for approximately 100 children.

Working Conditions

- **In years 1-3, \$100,000/\$75,000/\$40,000** to incentivize ELCC workers to achieve greater levels of education. The goal is for up to 20 staff to attain their ECE certification and/or further their professional development.
- **In years 1-3, \$75,000/\$100,000/\$100,000** investment in the Quality Enhancement Grant to increase the credentials of educators.

Auspice

- The only mention of auspice is in the discussion of the six French first-language programs in the province, which are all non-profit and located in Francophone schools.

¹⁴ The Education, Early Learning and Culture website currently says that three Early Years Centres designations are available, one in each of the communities of Charlottetown, Stratford, and the area of Montague, Lower Montague, Brudenell, and Cardigan. See <https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/information/education-early-learning-and-culture/early-years-center-designation>.

Inclusion, Equity, Diversity

- **In years 1-3, \$20,000/\$26,000/\$26,000** to support up to 50 children in newcomer families. This may include creating culturally appropriate guidelines, building capacity, developing interpretation materials, and providing cultural sensitivity training.
- **In years 1-3, \$510,000/\$515,000/\$515,000** to increase educational resources for children with unique needs. This will support approximately 30 children—representing an expansion of such services by 25%.
- **\$60,000 in each of the 3 years** to invest in “Dès la naissance,” a Francophone Early Learning Supports program. This will allow up to 15 additional Francophone and Acadian children to receive early intervention supports.
- **In years 1-3, \$70,000/\$125,000/\$205,000** for the Handle With Care program, which promotes mental health for children aged 0-6.

Other

- The province will undertake a feasibility study to identify needs and gaps in the existing program, and will establish indicators to measure the impacts of the BA based on this benchmark data.
- **In years 1-3, \$175,000/\$240,000/\$192,000** investment in administration and data collection.

What is identified as innovative in the PEI Action Plan?

In the past few years, the province has adopted a model that includes operational funding for some centres and sets a wage scale for ECEs and other staff. The Action Plan identifies as innovative services that provide parents with non-standard hours of care as well as ELCC programs that are co-developed with the Francophone and Acadian communities.



Bilateral Agreement on Early Learning and Child Care for Nova Scotia

Nova Scotia At-a-Glance	
Spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regulated centre-based spaces are available for 26.7% of children aged 0-5 (2016)¹⁵ Kindergarten (called Grade Primary) is compulsory for 5-year-olds
Fees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Median daily fees, province-wide (2016): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Infants – \$40 in centres; \$21-40 in family child care Toddlers - \$34.68 Preschool - \$34 Median monthly full-time fees in Halifax (2017): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Infant: \$910 Toddlers: \$825 Preschool: \$823
Auspice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 55% of regulated child care for children aged 0-12 is for-profit (2016)
Wages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Median gross hourly wages of program staff: \$12.84 (2012) Median gross hourly wages of program directors: \$17.56 (2012)
Provincial Allocations (2015-2016) Total spending on regulated child care: \$42,891,901	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fee subsidies: \$16,941,101 One time funding: none Recurring funding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Early Childhood Enhancement Grant \$19,022,119 Child Development Centre Grant \$260,000 Family Home Day Care \$1,409,939 Supported Child Care \$5,258,742 Other funding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Early Childhood Education Training Initiative \$807,714 ECE Assistance Program \$264,207 Continuing Education \$234,297 Early Years Centres \$949,876 NS Child Care Association \$39,237

¹⁵ All provinces and territories also provide regulated home child care. However, an age breakdown (0-5, 6-12) is not available. In 2016, there were enough regulated spaces (including centres and home child care) in Nova Scotia to cover 17% of children aged 0-12.

Recent Initiatives in Nova Scotia

In 2015, the province launched an in-depth review of regulated child care.¹⁶ In June 2016, the province released *Affordable, Quality Child Care: A Great Place to Grow!* The report includes recommendations for 27 strategic actions on ELCC in the province, in five priority areas: (1) affordability, (2) quality, (3) support and development of the workforce, (4) accessibility, and (5) structure and governance of the system (Government of Nova Scotia, 2016).

In response to the review, the province has undertaken a number of actions:

- In the summer and fall of 2016, the province invested \$6,000,000 in two new initiatives:
 - o New per diem rates for the child care subsidy program increased from an annual family income of \$20,880 to \$25,000. As result, 700 more families currently receive the maximum per diem rate. In addition, those families now pay approximately \$10/day (down from approximately \$17/day) due to a cap on parent fees.
 - o In October 2016, a wage floor was introduced for trained ECEs, guaranteeing an hourly rate of \$15-\$19 depending on their level of training.
- The province also launched the Quality Matters Program, which requires all funded child care centres to engage in a Continuous Quality Improvement process. This program emerged from a funding consultation that took place in the fall of 2016. In this province-wide review, stakeholders overwhelmingly agreed that provincial funding for regulated child care should be directly linked to program quality. The Quality Matters Program ensures all regulated centres are required to develop and implement quality improvement plans to qualify for ongoing funding from the province.

Using funds from the BA, the province will invest in three key priority areas: (1) affordability and accessibility, (2) quality through workplace development, and (3) inclusion in ELCC environments.

The BA should also be considered in light of the Commission on Inclusive Education's final report in March 2018. After a year of consultations, focus groups, and surveys on the public education system in Nova Scotia, the report recommends a new model of inclusive education for the province. This model is based on a three-tiered system of academic, behavioural, and social-emotional-health supports at the level of individuals, small groups, and classrooms (Njie et al., 2018). The report also emphasizes the importance of early identification and intervention for specialized learning needs.

¹⁶ The review included consultation with more than 7,000 Nova Scotians.

Although the report does not specifically mention ELCC services, presumably there is a link between inclusion-focused ELCC and the proposed changes to the public education system. It remains to be seen, however, whether these recommendations are taken up by the province.

NOVA SCOTIA'S ACTION PLAN

	Year 1:	Year 2:	Year 3:	Total:
Federal transfers	\$11,818,026	\$11,809,566	\$11,809,566	\$35,437,158

Availability

- **\$5,355,000** to increase accessibility of regulated child care in the province. This investment will target underserved communities, with a focus on infant care and services for Acadian/Francophone, African Nova Scotian, Indigenous, and newcomer families. It is estimated that over 500 new child care spaces will be created in communities for families in need (15 new child care centres, 90 new family home day care sites, and 45 new infant family home day care sites).

Affordability

- **\$13,150,000** in enhancements to the Child Care Subsidy Program:
 - Eligibility for the maximum subsidy will increase to \$35,000. This increase will benefit over 500 children, and families in the subsidy program will save approximately \$4.88/day.
 - The province will also adjust the Assessed Daily Parent Fee sliding scale so that the break-even point is \$70,080/year, enabling 675 children to receive higher subsidy rates.
 - For the first time, subsidies will be provided to families who require part-time or flexible care. Approximately 375 spaces in part-time care, as a result, will be made available to low-income and middle-income families.

Working Conditions

- **\$2,895,000** over three years towards workforce development. By 2021, it is anticipated that all staff “required for ratio” will have, or be engaged in, training towards a minimum of a two-year diploma in ECE. This investment in workforce development includes:
 - **\$1,045,000** to implement a Workplace Training Model. The province will partner with a provincial learning institution to allow staff to engage in a diploma program while continuing to work. These funds will be provided to employers to support substitute costs, allowing staff to be released from work to attend courses without losing wages. It is anticipated that by 2021, 200 additional staff will complete a diploma through this program.

- **\$200,000** for a Recognition of Prior Learning Initiative, which will assess those with previous experience and education in ECE (but do not have a recognized diploma) and allow them to be recognized as trained. This initiative is anticipated to benefit 140 individuals in the system over three years, including those who hold international credentials.
- **\$1,050,000** for Leadership Development. Training will be provided to centre directors (250 individuals, or 70% of directors in the province), leading to enhanced quality in the centre.
- **\$600,000** for Professional Development. Training opportunities, both in-person and online, will be provided to family home care providers, ECEs, and centre directors, to create standardized professional development opportunities across the province.

Auspice

- Nothing specified.

Inclusion, Equity, Diversity

- **\$11,580,000 over 3 years** to “imbed inclusion” in early learning and care environments:
 - **\$1,000,000** for the recruitment and retention of a diverse workforce. This funding will be used to provide bursaries to approximately 100 individuals from Indigenous, Francophone/Acadian, African Nova Scotian, immigrant, and newcomer communities.
 - **\$9,000,000** to introduce an Inclusion Incentive for regulated child care centres. Funding will allow centres to provide inclusive programming for children with complex needs and from diverse backgrounds. Funding is tied to the Quality Matters assessment tool, and it is anticipated that an additional 40% of regulated centres will have access to these supports.
 - **\$540,000** for enhancing early intervention. This funding will be channelled through the Nova Scotia Early Child Development Intervention Services, and specifically through the hiring of three developmental interventionists from Francophone, African Nova Scotian, and Indigenous communities.
 - **\$1,040,000** to launch a pilot project to introduce the Pyramid Model for Supporting Social Emotional Competence in Infants and Young Children. This funding will be used to develop a team of trainers and inclusion coaches. Approximately 40 child care centres will be identified as Pyramid Model demonstration sites, and will work with Master Trainers (approximately 8 individuals) to implement the Model. It is anticipated that up to 800 children will benefit from the Pyramid Model over three years. There will be an intentional focus on participation from Francophone child care centres.

Other

- Though an amount is not specified, the Action Plan indicates that the province will use funding from the BA to update its grant management and data tracking system.

What is innovative about the Nova Scotia Action Plan?

The province, which asserts that innovation is at the heart of its Action Plan, commits a significant percentage of federal funding to inclusion. The province also ties inclusion to a high-quality workforce and programming.

Of note is the province's commitment to phasing in free (pre-primary) full-day kindergarten for children four years and older, delivered in public schools and staffed by ECEs.



Bilateral Agreement on Early Learning and Child Care for New Brunswick

New Brunswick At-a-Glance	
Spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regulated centre-based spaces are available for 28.9% of children aged 0-5 (2016)¹⁷ Kindergarten is compulsory for 5-year-olds
Fees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Estimated daily fee of full-time care, province-wide (2015-2016): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Infants – \$33.35 Toddlers - NA Preschool - \$28.11 Median full-time monthly fees in Saint John (2017): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Infant: \$868 Toddlers: \$716 Preschool: \$694
Auspice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An estimated 62% of regulated child care for children 0-12 years is delivered by for-profit organizations (2016)
Wages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Median gross hourly wages of program staff: \$13.50 (2012) Median gross hourly wages of program directors: \$15 (2012)
Provincial Allocations (2015-2016) Total spending on regulated child care: \$42,212,600	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fee subsidies: \$15,554,000 One-time funding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capital and start-up funding provided through the Early Learning and Child Care Trust Fund, including for the creation of new spaces, wage reimbursements, professional development, minority language training, and training assistance – total of \$13,917,176 Recurring funding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality Improvement Funding Support \$23,591,900 Enhanced Support Worker Program \$2,376,700 Developmental Child Care \$700,000

¹⁷ All provinces and territories also provide regulated home child care. However, an age breakdown (0-5, 6-12) is not available. In 2016, there were enough regulated spaces (including centres and home child care) in New Brunswick to cover 29.2% of children aged 0-12.

Recent Initiatives in New Brunswick

ELCC initiatives in New Brunswick have gained momentum recently. In January 2018, the province announced an investment of \$41 million in their ELCC Action Plan, to go along with the federal contribution of almost \$30 million.

New Brunswick's ELCC plans arose out of study, consultation, and change in recent years. In 2010, responsibility for early childhood and K-12 education were combined in the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. This department has overseen changes in ELCC in the past several years, and emerged from the *Greater Opportunities for New Brunswick Children: An Early Childhood Development Agenda (2000-2005)* (Government of New Brunswick, 2001) and the *10-Year Early Childhood Strategy: Be Ready for Success (2008-2018)* (Government of New Brunswick, 2008). In the past decade the number of regulated spaces and educational attainment of staff increased. In 2012, the province released *Putting Children First: Positioning Early Childhood for the Future* (Government of New Brunswick, 2012).

In May 2015, the province appointed a Task Force to study the ongoing challenges in accessing quality and affordable child care services. After extensive consultations, the Task Force released its report in August 2016, *Valuing Children, Families and Childcare* (New Brunswick Child Care Review Task Force, 2016). The report's 30 recommendations position ELCC services as an integral element of the province's social infrastructure, in that ELCC provides long-term sustainability to the population, economy, and labour force. ELCC services also create jobs and reduce dependence on social assistance. As such, the Task Force notes that it requires increased public investment to address the ongoing concerns with affordability, availability, and the child care workforce.

The recommendations of the Task Force fall into five overarching categories:

1. Governance: a strengthened system with greater public funding and public management.
2. Educational practices: enhanced professional development and support for educators; respectful of the two provincial curricula (English and French).
3. ECE as a field of practice: greater access to post-secondary opportunities and attention to qualifications and wages of workers.
4. Public investments: increased public investments as a "first priority" towards a "coherent, publicly managed ELCC system."
5. Children's rights: a new system that protects the rights and interests of every child.

NEW BRUNSWICK'S ACTION PLAN

These five overarching recommendations form the basis of *Everyone at their best...from the start: Early Learning and Child Care Action Plan*- (Government of New Brunswick, 2018) the same Action Plan included in New Brunswick's BA:

By 2030, New Brunswick's early learning and child care system will be transformed to offer higher quality services that are universally available and affordable to all families and children through a robust public policy framework, making New Brunswick an ideal place in which to raise a family.

New Brunswick's Action Plan details provincial as well as federal investments over the three years of BA:

Initiatives	Federal funding	Provincial funding
NB Early Learning Centre Designation and parent advisory boards	\$20,479,856	\$33,525,000
Centres of Excellence in Early Learning	\$2,100,000	Nil
Early Learning and Child Care Improvement Grant	\$3,290,989	Nil
Quality Assessment and Inclusion Policy	\$1,067,624	\$1,275,000
Guidelines for language acquisition and cultural identity learning environments	\$201,000	Nil
Child Care Registry	\$ 100,000	\$900,000
Professional Learning and Development	Nil	\$5,545,800
Administrative Costs	\$1,945,914	Nil
TOTAL	\$29,185,283	\$41,245,800

The foundation of the Action Plan is the creation of a New Brunswick Early Learning Centre designation for ELCC facilities across the province. A minimum of 300 centres will have this designation by 2020, and the the availability of infant spaces, rural services, and support for children of various backgrounds will increase. Licensed facilities that receive designation as an Early Learning Centre will receive increased financial support, and are expected to adhere to the following guidelines:

- Establish a low-fee policy through a subsidized fee grid.
- Provide more infant and toddler spaces, with the option of providing those spaces through a network of affiliated family day care homes.
- Improve their capacity for inclusion.
- Establish a parental advisory board.
- Actively work to strengthen the skills and competences of their ECEs, including a new 90-hour course.
- Develop guidelines to ensure strong language acquisition and cultural identity for Acadian and Francophone communities.

To achieve these long-term goals, the Action Plan outlines a number of key objectives, including establishing New Brunswick Early Learning Centres and Parent Advisory Boards; developing online resources for parents; creating Innovative Centres of Excellence in Preschool Education; implementing professional learning and development opportunities for ECEs; (6) developing an inclusion policy, particularly guidelines for language acquisition and cultural identity learning environments; and introducing requirements for Annual Quality Improvement Plans for all ELCC facilities.

The Action Plan includes several specific plans that will set them on the path to achieving these objectives:

- Document and outline criteria for the Early Learning Centre Designation; develop a “change management plan” to engage operators in the transition to the new designation; establish guidelines for Parent Advisory Boards.
- Work with post-secondary institutions to develop standards of best practice for the Centres of Excellence (demonstration sites for innovative practices in quality, pedagogy, and inclusion/diversity).
- Develop agreements with school districts to establish the Centres of Excellence, and use the Centres of Excellence to promote public awareness of high quality ELCC programs.

In January 2018, the Liberal government announced that families earning less than \$37,500 annually would be provided with free childcare.

With respect to the criteria being assessed by this report, the Action Plan promises to enhance quality indicators in the following ways:

Availability
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increase infant/toddler spaces by 10% (200 new spaces), 60% within the Anglophone sector and 40% within the Francophone sector.• Develop an online Child Care Registry, an interactive resource that provides information on vacancies and wait lists to allow parents to identify spaces and assess quality.
Affordability
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop a low-fee policy with greater focus on low-income and middle-income families with an income below \$80,000. This will be achieved through sustainable operational funding to Early Learning Centres. It is anticipated that by 2019-2020, 75% of children will be registered in an Early Learning Centre, all of which will benefit from lower fees (65% of those children will be from low-income and middle-income families).• An Infant Operator Grant will be available to offset the operational costs of infant child care; will provide \$10/occupied infant space/day.
Working Conditions
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• In each of the seven Centres of Excellence across the province:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Professional learning opportunities will be offered in alignment with the English and Francophone ELCC curriculum frameworks.• Mentoring and workshop programs for educators will be developed.• The 90-hour course “Introduction to Early Childhood Education” will be made available to every ECE working in a licensed ELCC facility and will be the minimum training requirement for every educator working in an Early Learning Centre. To achieve this:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Early Learning Specialists and Consultants will be hired; they will act as mentors and coaches and promote professional development opportunities.• A professional development fund will be established through an RFP process.
Auspice
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Not mentioned
Inclusion, Equity, Diversity
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• All Early Learning Centres will be required to implement an inclusion policy. The province will partner with the Association for Community Living to develop inclusion practices. It is anticipated that 80% of all facilities in the Anglophone and Francophone sectors will have an inclusion policy in place by 2020.• Guidelines for language acquisition and cultural identity learning environments will be developed for Francophone and Acadian services, in cooperation with the Association francophone des parents du Nouveau-Brunswick.

Other

- Requirements will be introduced for Annual Quality Improvement Plans for all ELCC facilities. These plans are required for facilities applying for a Quality Improvement Grant.

It should also be noted that the Action Plan extends beyond 2019/2020. By 2030, the province has promised \$4.7 million for one-time Quality Improvement Grants, \$7.5 million in annual Quality Grants, support for wage increases for ECEs, and free child care for families with an annual gross income under \$37,500.

What is innovative about the New Brunswick Action Plan?

The Action Plan goes much further than most other provinces and territories. The province has committed to implementing a system, including long-term provincial funding, to increase quality, affordability, accessibility, and inclusion.



Bilateral Agreement on Early Learning and Child Care for Ontario

The following analysis reflects the commitments and actions of the previous Liberal government.

On June 7, 2018, there was a change of government. During the campaign, the Progressive Conservative party promised to implement an Ontario Childcare Rebate of up to 75% of child care expenses, determined on a sliding scale (up to \$6,750 per child up to age 6).¹⁸ However, a recent study on childcare affordability in Ontario, which analyzes the rebate as one of six policy options, concludes that “it would have very negative effects for low-income families” (Cleveland, Krashinsky and Colley, 2018). The following analysis reflects the commitments and actions of the previous Liberal government.

Note: There is a unique role for municipal governments in Ontario. The province funds 47 local service system managers, who are responsible for planning and managing child care services, administering fee subsidies, and allocating additional resources.

Ontario At-a-Glance	
Spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regulated centre-based spaces are available for 29.1% of children 0-5 years (2016)¹⁹ Full-day Junior Kindergarten (4-year-olds) and Senior Kindergarten (5-year-olds) is available for all, though not compulsory
Fees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Full-time daily fees in licensed centres (2015): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Infants - \$57 Toddlers - \$48 Preschool - \$42 Median full-time monthly fees in Toronto (2017): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Infant: \$1,758 Toddlers: \$1,354 Preschool: \$1,212
Auspice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 22% of regulated child care for children aged 0-12 is for-profit (2016) Ontario is unique in that municipal and local governments operate some regulated spaces (approximately 6% in 2014)
Wages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Median gross hourly wages of program staff: \$17.29 (2012) Median gross hourly wages of program directors: \$22.50 (2012)

¹⁸ They estimate that the cost of such a rebate is around \$389 million annually (Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario, 2018).

¹⁹ All provinces and territories also provide regulated home child care. However, an age breakdown (0-5, 6-12) is not available. In 2016, there were enough regulated spaces (including centres and home child care) in Ontario to cover 21.3% of children aged 0-12.

Provincial Allocations (2015-2016)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fee subsidies: \$739,911,506 • One-time funding • Capital for communities \$8,274,822
Total spending on regulated child care: \$1,169,784,899	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capital for schools \$828,645 • French language schools \$4,321,084 • Recurring funding • Operating funding \$305,597,980 • Special needs resourcing \$104,374,241 • Other funding \$6,476,621

Recent Initiatives in Ontario

There have been a number of new initiatives since 2010:

- The roll-out of full-day kindergarten for 4- and 5-year-olds (fully implemented in 2014/15).
- The creation of the *Child Care and Early Years Act* (2014), which includes updated licensing and regulations. It also names *How Does Learning Happen?* as the provincial guide for programming and pedagogy.

On June 6, 2017, the province released *Ontario's Renewed Early Years and Child Care Policy Framework* (Government of Ontario, 2017). This framework guides the province's five-year action plan, *Towards Universally Accessible Child Care: Ontario's Five-Year Action Plan*, released in 2017. Under the five-year plan, the province commits to doubling the capacity of licensed child care for children aged 0-4, with a focus on the public and not-for-profit sectors. The seven priority action areas of the plan include:

1. Increasing access
 - Increased support for access to licensed child care for children aged 0-4.
 - Mixed Growth Expansion Plan includes investments in operating and capital funding, prioritizing the non-for-profit sector.
 - Creation of an Innovation Fund that supports growth in the not-for-profit sector, and for services in under-served communities and irregular hours.
2. Ensuring affordability
 - Launching an Affordability Strategy.
3. Establishing an Early Years Workforce Strategy
 - Province will fund two professional learning events per year.
 - Continue with the ECE Qualifications Upgrade Program and Wage Enhancement Grant.

4. Determining a provincial definition of quality in early years
5. Developing an approach to inclusion
6. Creating an outcomes and measurement strategy
7. Increasing public awareness of Ontario's early years and child care system
 - Create an online hub for access information, services, and tools.
 - Creation of a new visual identity for Ontario's child care family programs.

Funding in support of the plan was introduced in the 2017 budget, including \$200 million for fee subsidies and \$1.6 billion to build new spaces.

In the March 2018 budget, the Liberal government announced a substantial investment of \$2.2 billion in ELCC. The majority of this investment (\$930 million) is for free preschool for children aged 2.5-4, earmarked to begin in 2020/21. The \$2.2 billion investment also includes \$330 million for on-reserve child care services; \$162.5 million in operating funding over the next three years to support home child care and fee subsidies for children of other ages; \$30 million towards the Innovation Fund; and a new schedule to enhance ECE wages (Government of Ontario, Minister of Finance, 2018).

Although advocates have called these commitments to ELCC in Ontario “game-changing,” it remains to be seen whether the new government will follow through with the plan (Monsebraaten & Rushowy, 2018).

As outlined in the Action Plan, two priority areas are: (1) increasing access, affordability, and inclusivity to high-quality child care, especially for families in need, and (2) ensuring quality early learning opportunities, with consideration for those in need.



ONTARIO'S ACTION PLAN

	Year 1:	Year 2:	Year 3:	Total:
Federal transfers	\$144,960,100	\$144,836,900	\$144,836,900	\$434,633,900

The Action Plan will use federal funding to build on the initiatives of *Towards Universally Accessible Child Care: Ontario's Five-Year Action Plan*. However, it should be noted that the province has made several new announcements since the release of the Action Plan, so there are some modifications (indicated throughout).

Affordability and Availability²⁰

- **\$100 million in each of the three years** to regulated child care services, including:
 - At least \$80 million/year to increase subsidies and/or community- based capital for services for children under 6.
 - Up to \$20 million/year to support system access to affordable child care based on local priorities.
- **\$39.9 million in each of the three years** to support the creation of 100 more Ontario Early Years Child and Family Centres.²¹

Working Conditions

- **\$5 million in each of the three years** to provide access to quality training and professional development opportunities, including:
- \$2 million to increase the number of students supported through the ECE Qualifications Upgrade Program.
- \$3 million to develop six new Regional Centres of Excellence.²²

Auspice

- *Towards Universally Accessible Child Care: Ontario's Five-Year Action Plan* notes that not-for-profit services will be a priority in terms of increased support. The Liberal government identified a priority to direct new municipal funds to non-profits, a stipulation that was removed by the incoming Conservative government after they took office.

²⁰ For the Action Plan, it makes sense to consider these two categories together since the plan does not give specific details.

²¹ The Ministry of Education currently funds four child and family programs: Ontario Early Years Centres, Parenting and Family Literacy Centres, Child Care Resource Centres, and Better Beginnings, Better Futures. These four services will be integrated into Early Years Child and Family Centres – also known as Early Ontario Centres, effective January 1, 2018. These centres are “one-stop shops” that provide a variety services and connections at no cost to parents, including drop-in services, targeted outreach activities for parents and caregivers, early learning and development, and connections for family (Government of Ontario, 2016). Also effective January 1, 2018, funding for municipalities to act as the service system managers for these programs, similar to other ELCC services.

²² The Centres of Excellence for Early Years and Child Care will “support transformational change, and signal both the provincial and federal government commitment to long-term professional learning across the early years sector.” The Action Plan specifies that six Centres will be established in 2018, but more recent announcements from the provincial government indicate that only three Centres are planned: (1) Provincial, (2) Francophone, and (3) Indigenous (Government of Ontario Ministry of Education, 2017).

Inclusion, Equity, Diversity

- The Ontario Early Years Centres will be specifically targeted to families in need, including newcomers to Ontario, teen parents, and low-income families. The Centres will “improve child and family outcomes related to mental health and well-being, early learning and development, social inclusion” and more.

Other

- N/A

What is innovative about the Ontario Action Plan?

The Action Plan describes several initiatives as innovative, including full-day kindergarten; the Ontario Early Years Child and Family Centres; and the Regional Centres of Excellence that will support high-quality educational and training opportunities. The province was also innovating at the provincial level, using funds to support new initiatives like free child care for preschoolers.



Bilateral Agreement on Early Learning and Child Care for Manitoba

Manitoba At-a-Glance	
Spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regulated centre-based spaces are available for 23.8% of children aged 0-5 (2016)²³ Kindergarten is available to 5-year-olds and is non-compulsory
Fees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Centres that receive funding from the provincial government have provincially-mandated maximum fees (effective July 1 2013). For children who receive care 4-10 hours per day in regulated services, the daily maximum fees are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Infants: \$30 in centres; \$22.20 in regulated homes Preschool (includes toddlers): \$20.80 in centres; \$18.20 in homes Median full-time monthly fees in Winnipeg (2017): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Infant: \$651 Toddlers: \$451 Preschool: \$451
Auspice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5% of regulated child care is for-profit (2016)
Wages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Median gross hourly wages of program staff: \$16.00 (2012) Median gross hourly wages of program directors: \$24.70 (2012)
Provincial Allocations (2015-2016)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fee subsidies: \$30,246,000 One-time funding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capital grants \$2,831,000 Recurring funding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Operating grants \$111,052,000 (includes all training, recruitment and retention grants, and pension and retirement supports) Special needs grants \$12,509,000
Total spending on regulated child care:	<p>\$156,638,000</p>

²³ All provinces and territories also provide regulated home child care, but an age breakdown (0-5, 6-12) is not available. In 2016, there were enough regulated spaces (including centres and home child care) in Manitoba to cover 17.9% of children aged 0-12.

Recent Initiatives in Manitoba

Over the past several years, the province has had a number of five-year plans: *Manitoba's Five-Year Plan for Child Care (2002-2007)*; *Family Choices: Manitoba's Five Year Agenda for Early Learning and Child Care (2008-2013)*; and *Family Choices: Manitoba's Plan to Expand Early Learning and Child Care (2014-2019)* (Government of Manitoba, 2014).

In March 2015, the province established the Manitoba ELCC Commission:

In order to move towards implementing a universally accessible system capable of growing to meet the needs of all families looking for a licensed child care space, inclusive of centre- and home-based child care services (Flanagan & Beach, 2016).

Additionally, in the Fall of 2015, the province promised to invest in the creation of 12,000 new ELCC spaces by 2021.

The work of this Commission resulted in the latest developments in Manitoba's ELCC Program, which has five pillars:

1. Supporting New and Newly Funded Affordable and Accessible Child Care Spaces
2. Building Sector Capacity and Stability
3. Rural and Northern Strategy
4. Diversity and Inclusion
5. Community Engagement and Public Reporting

Several components of this strategy were announced in 2017, including a commitment of \$6,181,500 for 15 community-based capital projects that will create up to 739 new licensed spaces and an annual operating grant increase for more than 300 home-based, licensed child care providers.

MANITOBA'S ACTION PLAN

	Year 1:	Year 2:	Year 3:	Total:
Federal transfers	\$15,621,272	\$15,609,534	\$15,609,534	\$46,840,340

The Action Plan uses federal investments to support and build on the five pillars of the province's ELCC Program. These investments will result in the following initiatives in the province:

Affordability and Availability²⁴

- **\$28 million over three years (\$6,142,972/\$13,261,449/\$8,679,832)** for new and newly-funded, affordable and accessible spaces:
 - This includes piloting an enhanced capital funding approach, which will direct funding to major capital projects to create new licensed ELCC spaces, specifically in underserved communities. This will be done in partnership with the Manitoba Housing and Renewal Corporation. The goal is to create up to 750 new spaces, 20% of them infant spaces and the other 80% preschool and nursery spaces. It is anticipated this will result in 10 new projects.²⁵
 - It also includes subsidizing operational funding for expansion spaces. The goal is to provide new funding to 650 spaces that have been created in the past several years, but have yet to receive operational funding. 20% of these will be infant spaces; 80% preschool and nursery. It is expected to include 94 new spaces supporting the French-language community.
- **\$2.2 million over three years (\$352,662/\$827,987/\$1,011,981)** for the Rural and Northern Strategy:
 - Create new spaces in isolated communities through a pilot group child care home project. These projects will operate as “hybrid” licensed facilities by combining features of a group child care home and a child care centre. These hybrid facilities will be offered operational funding and could result in 15 new facilities serving up to 240 children.
 - Provide new block funding grants for rural and Northern centres with over 40 spaces (up to \$2,000/month), allowing them to offset high operational costs.
 - See below regarding workplace-based investment under Rural and Northern Strategy.

²⁴ For the Action Plan, it makes sense to consider these two categories together, since much of the funding is directed at creating and supporting affordable spaces.

²⁵ On April 6, 2018, the province announced that bilateral funding would be used to create 780 new spaces through new construction at schools and in communities, as well as additional funding for 621 licensed spaces at 63 child care centres (Government of Manitoba, 2018).

Working Conditions

- **\$1.24 million over three years (\$706,502/\$285,781/243,173)** to build sector capacity and stability by investing in the workforce:
 - Establish an online learning platform (a “living textbook”) to facilitate independent study, workshops, and formal training programs like Child Care Assistant and ECE programs. This resource will be provided for free to all users.
 - Pilot core professional development training on inclusive programming by training 100 facilitators in an early intervention model. These facilitators will in turn each train three ELCC centres per year and provide ongoing consultation in inclusive programming.
 - Partner with a community organization to launch a province-wide online board governance training initiative. This will build capacity in the administration and governance of non-profit centres. Online training modules will be established.
 - Pilot a mentorship program to support licensed home-based providers.
- As part of the Rural and Northern Strategy (see above), the province will also pilot a competency-based assessment program for rural and Northern communities. This will allow participants to be certified as ECE II based on demonstrated skills and knowledge.

Auspice

- Nothing specified.

Inclusion, Equity, Diversity

- **\$10.6 million over three years (\$200,000/\$5,223,000/\$5,223,000)** for Diversity and Inclusion initiatives:
 - Piloting a dual stream service and funding approach. This will replace the “one-size-fits-all” Inclusive Support Program, which only provides grants to licensed facilities to hire additional staff (and does not necessarily result in inclusion). The new dual-stream model will allow for an array of interventions/funding, including additional staff as well as equipment grants, room modifications, and more. This new model will also include a new specialized inclusion support team that will allow for coordination and planning with other service providers.
 - Provide grants to community service organizations to hire ECEs. This could include organizations that are providing parents with therapy, counselling, skills development; their children will receive on-site high-quality child care at no cost.

Other

- **\$4.7 million over three years (\$408,500/\$21,859,217/\$17,170,487)** for community engagement and public reporting. This will include the creation of a Minister’s Advisory Committee to provide advice and feedback on bilateral initiatives. It will also include updates to the province’s information technology systems.

What is innovative about Manitoba's Action Plan?

The Action Plan does not specifically mention innovation, but there are several provincial initiatives that are unique to the province, including grants to community organizations to hire ECEs and the online board governance training initiative to enhance the capacity of non-profit operators.



Bilateral Agreement on Early Learning and Child Care for Saskatchewan

Saskatchewan At-a-Glance	
Spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regulated centre-based spaces are available for 13.7% of children 0-5 (2016)²⁶ Kindergarten is non-compulsory and available for a range of ages, including for vulnerable 3- and 4-year-olds
Fees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Median full-time monthly fees in Saskatoon (2017): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Infant: \$900 Toddlers: \$790 Preschool: \$710
Auspice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2% of regulated child care is for-profit (2016) Only not-for-profit centres are eligible for public funding of any kind, including fee subsidies
Wages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Median gross hourly wages of program staff: \$14.92 (2012) Median gross hourly wages of program directors: \$22.14 (2012)
Provincial Allocations (2015-2016) Total spending on regulated child care: \$64,488,160	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fee subsidies: \$14,292,355 One-time funding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development funding (various start-up and capital grants) \$812,852 Capital \$0 Enriched Learning Environment Grants \$66,666 Equipment – family child care homes \$171,104 Recurring funding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Early Childhood Services Grants \$40,215,830 Teen Student Child Care Centre Support \$2,632,260 Nutrition – family child care homes \$897,873 Inclusion grants \$5,399,220 Other \$934,572 Early Childhood Training \$931,288

²⁶ All provinces/territories also provide regulated home child care but an age breakdown (0-5, 6-12) is not available. In 2016, there were regulated spaces (including centres and home child care) in Saskatchewan to cover 8.4% of children aged 0-12.

Recent Initiatives in Saskatchewan

The province's *Early Years Plan* was released in 2016, and guides the province's ELCC strategy into 2020. This plan resulted from extensive consultation that began in the fall of 2014. The *Early Years Plan* was also informed by the *Education Sector Strategic Plan*, the *Saskatchewan Disability Strategy*, the *Mental Health and Addictions Plan*, and the *Saskatchewan Poverty Reduction Strategy* (Government of Saskatchewan, 2016).

The *Early Years Plan* has five pillars:

1. Healthy Beginnings
2. Early Learning
3. Child Care
4. Strong Families, Healthy Children
5. Community Planning and Alignment

There are a number of goals and objectives relating to ELCC in each of these priorities:

- Early Learning: educating parents on choosing quality early learning programs for their child; increasing availability of early learning opportunities; supporting early learning environments to be culturally inclusive; enhancing quality by encouraging programs to use a play-based approach; and enhancing opportunities for training and qualifications of workers.
- Child Care: making it easier for parents to find local child care and early learning programs; supporting parent knowledge and choice, including enhancing access; developing innovative child care partnerships with schools; and strengthening the child care sector.
- Strong Families, Healthy Children: supporting children who are unique learners or experiencing disability.
- Community Planning and Alignment: providing information to families about the importance of early years and services available to them; supporting smoother transitions; improving access to services for vulnerable children; and planning programs and services to meet the needs of children and families based on data and research.

As the Action Plan indicates, these priorities align with the parameters of how federal funding is to be used. Using the funds available under the BA, Saskatchewan will invest in four priority areas: (1) inclusivity of children experiencing disabilities; (2) minority language inclusion of Francophone children; (3) increased access to programs for families; and (4) quality-focused initiatives.

SASKATCHEWAN'S ACTION PLAN

	Year 1:	Year 2:	Year 3:	Total:
Federal transfers	\$13,848,167	\$13,837,957	\$13,837,957	\$41,524,081

Availability

- **In years 1-3, \$6.71 million/\$6.65 million/\$6.65 million** to create 2,515 new child care spaces in the province by 2020. This will increase access to regulated child care to 20% of children aged 5 and under:
 - 950 new licensed centre spaces, beginning with providing capital costs for 750 new spaces in 2017/2018 and another 200 in 2018/2019. The province will use a data-informed approach to allocate new spaces. The province will also consider how it might implement flexible child care arrangements.
 - 65 Francophone spaces (see below).
 - 1,500 new licensed group and family child care home spaces (500 per year), supported through a 50% increase to nutrition and equipment grants.
 - Due to the significant expansion of licensed child care that federal investments represent, the province will focus on making the licensing system more efficient by implementing a new licensing and monitoring system and hiring additional staff to support monitoring. This will also allow the province to collect data related to quality and develop a reporting measure related to innovation.

Affordability

- Nothing specific about subsidies, but the expansion of licensed child care spaces will make subsidized spaces more accessible to families.

Working Conditions

- Staff training is identified as a priority, and although the amount targeted to training is not specified, it will come out of the **\$4.663 million/\$1.645 million/\$1.810 million in years 1-3** that is earmarked for quality improvements (other initiatives to come out of this amount are described below in “Other”). Staff training initiatives include:
 - Education and training that allows staff to meet the needs of children experiencing disability.
 - Train directors in human resource management so they can communicate and model effective practices with staff and support the hallmarks of quality training (this will address problems with recruitment and retention).
 - Provide training to staff as part of the adoption of the *Play and Exploration: Early Learning Program Guide*.

Auspice

- In Saskatchewan, for-profits are not eligible to receive any kind of public funding.

Inclusion, Equity, Diversity

- **In years 1-3, \$1.99 million/\$5.27 million/\$5.105 million** to pilot preschool opportunities for children experiencing disability (Saskatchewan Citizen Consultation Team, 2014):
 - Funding for inclusion supports in rural and remote communities.
 - Introducing the Early Learning Intensive Support Pilot in Regina and Saskatoon, which will be available to children with intensive needs who require a significant level of support to participate in early learning programs (specifically, Prekindergarten programs).
 - Contracting with community-based organizations to provide coordination and supports to Regina and Saskatoon to assist in customizing supports for children and families based on individual needs.
- **In years 1-3, \$0.485 million/\$0.273 million/\$0.273 million** to expand Francophone early learning and child care:
 - Develop 65 licensed child care spaces in Francophone schools (representing a 23% increase).
 - Build curriculum and foundational documents in French language.

Other

- As part of the investments in quality improvement (see above, under Working Conditions), the province will:
 - Support and sustain the growth of the licensed child care sector by highlighting opportunities for residents to enter into the field, with a specific focus on new licensed family child care home providers.
 - Support parent understanding of what to look for in quality care and make it easier for parents to find ELCC programs.
 - Provide a one-time grant for licensed facilities (centres and homes) to purchase equipment and resources to implement the *Play and Exploration: Early Learning Program Guide*.
 - Provide a one-time grant to support active play, based on the *Canadian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines for the Early Years*.
 - Provide literacy supports for children with limited access to early learning programs.

What is innovative about the Saskatchewan Action Plan?

The province identifies two of its initiatives as innovative: the pilot programs to support children experiencing disability and a new monitoring system that makes child care licensing more efficient and effective. The former is innovative because it focuses on coordination and supports among different community groups and providers (eg. schools and child care centres), helping to “break down silos” between the different programs that support early learning.

The latter is innovative because the province currently uses a “generalized approach” to child care licensing. However, the province will introduce a new “risk-based approach,” which aligns with quality concerns. This will allow for greater focus on centres that struggle with compliance, working to improve quality in those spaces.



Bilateral Agreement on Early Learning and Child Care for Alberta

Alberta At-a-Glance	
Spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regulated centre-based spaces are available for 21.8% of children aged 0-5 (2016)²⁷ Kindergarten is not compulsory though the vast majority of 5-year-olds attend
Fees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mean average monthly fees in centres, province-wide (2016): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Infants - \$884 12 months - 19 months - \$938 19 months - 3 years - \$864 3 years - 4.5 years - \$828 4.5+ years - \$796 Median monthly full-time fees in Calgary (2017): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Infant: \$1,250 Toddlers: \$1,050 Preschool: \$1,000
Auspice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 58% of regulated child care for children 0-12 years is for-profit (2016)
Wages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Median gross hourly wages of program staff: \$15.33 (2012) Median gross hourly wages of program directors: \$20 (2012)
Provincial Allocations (2015-2016) Total spending on regulated child care: \$263,844,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fee subsidies: \$139,302,000 One-time funding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff certification \$972,000 Recurring funding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accreditation \$101,182,000 Infant care incentive \$8,000,000 Specialized child care (including inclusive) \$5,782,000 Family day home agency contracts \$6,806,867 Northern Allowance \$2,169,000 Other related funding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Home visitation \$9,896,000 Parent Link centres \$26,210,000 Kin Child Care \$2,200,000

²⁷ All provinces and territories also provide regulated home child care. However, an age breakdown (0-5, 6-12) is not available. In 2016, there were enough regulated spaces (including centres and home child care) in Alberta to cover 16% of children aged 0-12.

Recent Initiatives in Alberta

In March 2017, the province initiated a new approach to child care that is centred on the development of ELCC Centres, supported with a budgetary promise of \$10 million over three years. The centrepiece of the ELCC Centre approach is a fee cap of \$25/day. The ELCC Centre approach also focuses on creating spaces, enhancing quality, addressing gaps in the current system, and enhancing program evaluation:

- Offer flexible care for parents who work shifts and part-time, and in accessible settings that include co-location with other public buildings.
- Implement the early learning child care curriculum *Play, Participation, and Possibilities*.
- Support children with diverse needs.
- Collaborate with other service organizations to support knowledge about cultural diversity and language acquisition, recognition of Indigenous children, provision of parenting resources and support, and support for vulnerable families who are in need.

Not all centres use this approach. As a result, there is some variation based on local and community needs. The first phase of this approach is to transform 13 existing child care programs into ELCC Centres, and to create 9 new ELCC Centres (Government of Alberta, 2018).

ALBERTA'S ACTION PLAN

After this initial pilot project of 22 centres, the province will expand the ELCC Centre approach to include 100 more centres (82 of these are existing programs, and 18 new centres will be added) (Government of Alberta, 2018).

The province plans to use federal funding to expand the ELCC Centre program. The Action Plan specifies that federal contributions will be used to support an estimated **78 ELCC Centres** along with 22 Centres funded by the Government of Alberta. The federal contributions will take the form of operating grants to ELCC Centres. This process has already begun: disbursements for successful applicants began in March 2018.

The Expression of Interest guidelines for potential ELCC Centres provides the most detailed information about what is expected in terms of affordability, accessibility, quality, and inclusivity. Programs that are approved as ELCC Centres must demonstrate the following as conditions of their receipt of operating grants:

- Access: up to \$3,000 per centre for space creation (spaces that are entirely new or the result of increased enrolment). Where feasible, new spaces must be created in communities with shortages, poor early development outcomes, and high community needs; must increase participation of infants and/or children with diverse needs; must be co-located within community buildings and partnered with public institutions; and must be located in a nurturing environment.

- Affordability: parents fees must be capped at \$25/day; child care subsidy and accreditation programs must be available.
- Quality: ELCC Centres must implement the *ELCC Curriculum Framework*; must support on-site professional development that enables full participation of all children including those with diverse needs; and must encourage parents to engage in a quality assurance process. It is also suggested that ELCC Centres introduce wage floors, although this is optional (and funded by the province).
- Improvements: Expressions of Interest must include one or more improvements, depending on local community needs. This could include collaborating with local service organizations, supporting language acquisition or rural child care, and offering flexible hours.
- Other: Selected ELCC Centres must participate in evaluations and a learning community with other sites; share financial records; and conform to other provincial requirements around branding.



Federal transfers	Year 1: \$45,630,673	Year 2: \$45,593,076	Year 3: \$45,593,076	Total: \$136,816,825
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Availability
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approximately \$9.98 million in each of the three years to support availability and accessibility, including creating new spaces, improving enrollment, and serving children with special/varying needs. It is estimated that 3,000 new spaces will be created.
Affordability
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approximately \$23.19 million in each of the three years to support affordability, specifically by capping parent fees at \$25/day. This will support family needs such as flexible/extended hours, infant/toddler spaces, rural spaces, and support for children with diverse needs. It is estimated that up to 4,500 children will benefit.
Auspice
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Action Plan briefly notes that the Expression of Interest process will invite grant proposals from not-for-profit organizations that currently operate, or propose to operate, a licensed day care program, but gives no further specifics on this point.
Inclusion, Equity, Diversity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The money spent on enhancing availability and affordability (above) includes services for children and families with diverse and flexible needs. Approximately \$4.79 million in each of the three years to implement the ELCC curriculum framework <i>Play, Participation, and Possibilities</i> and inclusive child care practices for children with diverse needs. It is estimated that 4,500 children will benefit. Approximately \$6.04 million in each of the three years to support improvements, such as flexibility and inclusivity (as set out in the Expression of Interest Guide), linguistic diversity, and language acquisition. It is estimated that 4,500 children will benefit: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and implement a French language version of the online Child Care Orientation course Support the curriculum framework for Francophone child care practitioners
Other
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approximately \$1.6 million in each of the three years for administrative costs.

What is innovative about the Alberta Action Plan?

The Action Plan identifies several elements of the ELCC Centre program that they claim reflect their commitment to innovative approaches, including the widespread adoption of the *ELCC Curriculum Framework*; on-site coaching models designed to improve staff competencies; community hub models of child care and parent programs; and on-site coaching to improve compliance to regulations and the promotion of quality.

Bilateral Agreement on Early Learning and Child Care for British Columbia

British Columbia At-a-Glance	
Spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regulated centre-based spaces are available for 24.1% of children aged 0-5 (2016)²⁸ Full-day Kindergarten is available but not compulsory for 5-year-olds
Fees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Median monthly centre fees, province-wide (2015/16): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Infants - \$1000 Toddlers - \$953 Preschool - \$755 Median full-time monthly fees in Vancouver (2017): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Infant: \$1,360 Toddlers: \$1,292 Preschool: \$950
Auspice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 49% of regulated child care is for-profit (2016)
Wages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Median gross hourly wages of program staff: \$17 (2012) Median gross hourly wages of program directors: \$20.83 (2012)
Provincial Allocations (2015-2016) Total spending on regulated child care: \$231,401,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fee subsidies: \$80,690,000 One-time funding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Major capital \$6,330,000 Minor capital \$382,000 Recurring funding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Child Care Operating Fund \$85,745,000 Supporting Child Development Program \$58,254,000 Other related funding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Child Care Resource and Referral \$9,821,000 Child care fee subsidies in unregulated child care \$28,350,000

²⁸ All provinces and territories also provide regulated home child care. However, an age breakdown (0-5, 6-12) is not available. In 2016, there were enough regulated spaces (including centres and home child care) in British Columbia to cover 18.4% of children aged 0-12.

Recent Initiatives in British Columbia

There have been some shifts in the ELCC landscape. In 2017, the province committed to the implementation of a universal child care plan over ten years that "provides affordable, accessible and high-quality care and early learning to every child whose family wants or needs it - starting with infant/toddler programs, before gradually expanding".

Since signing the BA and making their Action Plan publicly available, the province released *Child Care British Columbia: Caring for Kids, Lifting Up Families: The Path to Universal Child Care* (Government of British Columbia, 2018a). The report explains that the province will:

Move from the current patchwork of programs and services – delivered with limited accountability and regulation, and with fees that are out of reach for many families – towards universal child care that is affordable and available for any family that wants or needs it.

This plan includes child care that is inclusive, culturally responsive, flexible, safe, and accountable. The 2018 provincial budget earmarks \$1 billion for child care (Government of British Columbia, 2018b):

- Starting in April 2018, parents will be eligible for fee reductions of up to \$350/month for group infant/toddler care; \$200/month for family infant/toddler care; \$100/month for group care for ages 3-Kindergarten; \$60/month for family care for ages 3-Kindergarten. This applies to licensed care only, and the child care provider must opt in to the fee reduction program to receive funding (Child Care Operating Funding program).
- Starting in September 2018, a child care benefit to help reduce fees. Families with incomes up to \$111,000 may be eligible. This will start with licensed infant/toddler care in 2018/19, and 3-5-year-old care will be phased in starting in 2019.
- \$237 million over three years to increase access to licensed child care, including the creation of 22,000 new licensed spaces. This will be done through the expansion and redesign of the Child Care Major Capital program. Cost-sharing partnerships with non-profits, municipalities, and public sector agencies will be pursued.
- The Child Care Minor Capital program will also be expanded to provide 6,200 spaces with funding each year to repair facilities or equipment, or to support relocation costs.
- In 2019/2020, enhanced funding will be available to encourage licensed providers to extend business hours to evenings and weekends.
- The Ministry of Children and Family Development will examine partnerships with the Ministry of Education and school districts to explore co-location of child care facilities with schools.
- Start-up grants will be available to license-not-required providers looking to become licensed.
- Additional funding will be provided to hire Licensing Officers.
- The Ministry of Education will update the *British Columbia Early Learning Framework*.

BRITISH COLUMBIA'S ACTION PLAN

The province will use federal funds to enhance accessibility by increasing the number of spaces; increase affordability, beginning with infant/toddler care; improve quality by supporting training and professional development of ECEs; and promoting equity through targeted investments in underserved communities.

Federal transfers	Year 1: \$51,036,249	Year 2: \$50,993,994	Year 3: \$50,993,994	Total: \$153,024,237
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Availability

- **In year 1, \$13.7 million** in new capital grants to “create innovative partnerships with not-for-profit organizations or municipalities to establish new infant/toddler spaces in highest areas of need,” with a focus on establishing centres near public sector institutions like schools or hospitals. Up to \$1 million per project will be provided, and organizations/municipalities in receipt of funding will be required to cover one-third of the capital costs of new spaces. The services may then also be eligible for additional operational funding. The selection of recipients will be prioritized for vulnerable or underserved communities. It is estimated that 1,370 infant/toddler spaces will be created.²⁹

Affordability

- **\$30 million per year in years 2 and 3** for Early Care and Learning Prototype Sites. Operational Grants will be provided so that infant/toddler fees can be reduced. These fees account for approximately 20% of the median child care fees for infant/toddler care in the province. The sites will be both new programs – see above under Availability – and existing non-profits. They will represent both urban and rural settings and prioritize vulnerable and underserved communities. It is estimated that 1,786 children will have access to low-cost care. For about 900 of those children, there will be no cost at all (based on sliding scale of income). These prototypes will serve as models for the future expansion of a universal child care system in the province.

²⁹ This funding will accompany the provincial amount of \$237 million over three years to the Child Care Major Capital program.

Working Conditions

- **In year 1, \$16.3 million** to support recruitment and retention of ECEs. This will take the form of one-time funding to the ECE Bursary Program to support enhanced training grants, to promote advanced training, and to support professional development. Funding will be administered over several years. The province will also pilot the use of grants to child care operators to use for incidental expense such as staff training or backfilling staff during periods of training. The funding will include flexible initiatives like providing ECE students with support for travel expenses. It is expected that 4,000 ECEs will access these supports.

Auspice

- The expansion of capital and operating grants detailed above will be targeted to not-for-profit organizations

Inclusion, Equity, Diversity

- **\$10 million per year in each of the three years** to expand culturally-based Indigenous child care. These funds will be directed to the existing system that provides Aboriginal Head Start (AHS) programs. The funding will enhance on-reserve AHS to implement full-day programs in some communities (\$3.5 million) and create 13 new urban AHS programs (\$6.5 million). It is estimated that 590 families will benefit in total.
- **\$10 million per year in each of the three years** to enhance the Supported Child Development Programs for children with special needs, as well as the Aboriginal Child Development Programs. It is estimated that this will increase access for 1,428 children, thereby eliminating the waitlist for these programs.

Other

- **\$1 million annually for three years** in enhanced funding for Young Parent Programs (YPPs). These programs provide child care located at or near secondary schools. The mechanism for this funding is a targeted enhancement to the Child Care Subsidy Program. YPP participants will therefore see their subsidy increase to \$1,500 (from \$1,000) per month. This will preserve existing YPPs and all others to open or re-open.

What is innovative about BC's Action Plan?

With a \$1 billion investment promised in the 2018 budget, the province is moving towards a system of universal child care. Federal and provincial funding for ELCC allows the province to “lay out several new ways of doing things,” including partnering with public sector organizations (part of the capital funding expansion); targeting operational grants to prototype sites; increasing flexibility in ECE training funds; and expanding Indigenous child care programs.

Bilateral Agreement on Early Learning and Child Care for Yukon Territory

Yukon At-a-Glance	
Spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regulated centre-based spaces are available for 31.4% of children aged 0-5 (2016)³⁰ Full-day and half-day kindergarten programs available to 5-year-olds but they are not compulsory
Fees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Average monthly fees for centres (2016-2017): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Infants - \$796 Toddlers - \$709 Preschool - \$693
Auspice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 65% of regulated child care for 0-12 year-olds is for-profit (2016)
Wages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NA
Provincial Allocations (2015-2016)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fee subsidies: \$1,801,000 One-time funding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> NA Recurring funding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Direct Operating Grant \$3,984,000 Supports to children with special needs \$470,000 Other related funding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whitehorse Child Development Centre \$2,306,571
Total spending on regulated child care: \$6,255,000	

Recent Initiatives in Yukon Territory

Geographic remoteness is cited as the source of many ELCC challenges in the territory, including retention of trained staff, costs of food and supplies, and resources required to maintain and operate licensed child care centres. As of October 2017, three communities were without licensed child care services.

In the summer of 2017, the Department of Health and Social Services embarked on a consultation with stakeholder groups and First Nation governments to identify priorities for ELCC.³¹ There were a

³⁰ All provinces and territories also provide regulated home child care. However, an age breakdown (0-5, 6-12) is not available. In 2016, there were enough regulated spaces (including centres and home child care) to cover 22% of children aged 0-12.

³¹ This consultation will be ongoing as funding is rolled out.

number of common priorities identified, including increasing quality, accessibility, affordability, inclusivity, and flexibility, and keeping programs and services as community-centred as possible.

The Action Plan will address four main areas: (1) quality of ELCC through training, (2) affordability and accessibility, (3) innovation, and (4) inclusive ELCC programs.

YUKON TERRITORY'S ACTION PLAN

	Year 1:	Year 2:	Year 3:	Total:
Federal transfers	\$2,391,493	\$2,391,156	\$2,391,156	\$7,173,805

Availability and Affordability³²

- **\$4,317,112 over three years** to improve affordability and accessibility:
 - \$3,212,112 over three years to increase the Direct Operating Grant. It is anticipated that this will stabilize parent fees for 864 children and make rural programs sustainable. It is also anticipated that this money will create 19 new infant spaces.
 - \$450,000 over three years for the Enhancement Fund, which provides funding to licensed programs to meet regulatory requirements for health and safety (expected to support 100% of centres in remaining operational).
 - \$75,000 over three years for the Grandparent Grant. This will take the form of an increase to the Child Care Subsidy to support grandparents using accessible and affordable ELCC.
 - \$60,000 over three years for the Start Up Fund, which provides a set amount of funding to new programs for health and safety requirements. This funding is expected to create two new centres and approximately 30 ELCC spaces.
 - \$222,200 over three years to fund nine flexible child care spaces, accessible year-round, in Whitehorse, Watson Lake, and Dawson City for children whose parents are attending or accessing addictions treatment. This amount also includes funding for inclusivity and equity, and First Nation Government Funding (see below).

³² Given the way the Action Plan is laid out, it makes sense to consider these two categories together.

Working Conditions

- **\$650,000 over three years** to improve quality through training:
 - \$60,000 over three years allocated to an annual professional development training event to provide an opportunity for ECEs to share best practices, access training/development opportunities, and take information back to their colleagues (approximately 132 ECEs will benefit).
 - \$100,000 over three years for Education Bursaries for current and future ECEs (10 students will benefit).
 - \$270,000 over three years to Yukon College to provide additional early childhood instructor support for students in rural Yukon communities, which will support students taking web-based courses towards their ECE diploma (expected to add eight ECE diploma graduates per year).
 - The remainder of this funding will be used to implement a new curriculum.

Auspice

- Nothing specific mentioned.

Inclusion, Equity, Diversity

- **\$1,150,000 over three years** to provide inclusive child care programs:
 - \$1,110,000 over three years for the Supportive Child Care Program and Programming for Licensed Child Care Centres. This funding can take the form of supports for one-to-one services, reduced ratios, specialized equipment, and training for staff (expected to benefit five children with challenging behaviours).
 - \$40,000 over three years for *Ages and Stages Online and Training*, a developmental screening tool. Funding will be allocated to train licensed ECEs in the questionnaire, and to make appropriate referrals and provide supports. This tool will be available online for free to all families.
 - \$280,000 over three years for the Enrichment Fund, which provides one-time funding to licensed programs to purchase culturally and developmentally appropriate toys aimed at increasing quality and inclusivity.
 - \$30,000 over three years for a feasibility study, undertaken by the Association Franco-Yukonnaise, on increasing French language ELCC spaces. In the short term, this money will also support the creation of at least 30 additional French language child care spaces.
 - \$210,000 over three years to provide one-time funding for First Nation Governments to better understand ELCC needs, and to better position First Nations Governments to apply for additional funding.
 - \$210,000 over three years to implement the Handle with Care project, which will equip ECEs and parents to deal with attachment issues, mental health concerns, and to create an environment that responds to a child's unique needs.

Other

- \$220,000 will be allocated over three years to develop culturally appropriate for children aged 0-5. It is expected that 100% of centres will implement this curriculum.
- \$360,000 over three years for administration, including the preparation of reports, audits, and evaluations.

What is innovative about the Yukon Action Plan?

The territory is addressing some challenges through the implementation of unusual mechanisms in the ELCC field, including a Grandparent Grant; services for parents who are accessing addictions services; and the Handle with Care program.



Bilateral Agreement on Early Learning and Child Care for Northwest Territories

Northwest Territories At-a-Glance	
Spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regulated centre-based spaces are available for 26.9% of children aged 0-5 (2016)³³ Kindergarten is not compulsory for 5-year-olds though they are entitled to it; Junior Kindergarten for 4-year-olds was introduced in 2017-2018
Fees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Centre-based monthly fees vary widely (2014): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Infants – from free to \$1380 Preschool – from free to \$1170
Auspice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 0% of child care is for-profit (2016)
Wages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NA
Provincial Allocations (2015-2016) Total spending on regulated child care: \$4,487,276	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fee subsidies are provided through Income Assistance. There is no child care subsidy available. One-time funding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Start-up contributions \$52,321 Recurring funding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Operational contributions \$2,265,829 Rent and mortgage contributions \$105,805 Minor health and safety renovations \$133,279 Healthy Children Initiative \$1,641,042 Small Community Initiative \$289,000

Recent Initiatives in the Northwest Territories

Due to geographic remoteness, high rates of vulnerability among children and single-parent families, and variable demand and supply of services, delivering high-quality ELCC programs is challenging.

In 2013, the Government of Northwest Territories released a 10-year framework for early childhood development called *Right from the Start* (Government of Northwest Territories, 2014). Since then, two more development frameworks and Action Plans were released in June 2017 (Government of

³³ All provinces and territories also provide regulated home child care. However, an age breakdown (0-5, 6-12) is not available. In 2016, there were enough regulated spaces (including centres and home child care) to cover 22.2% of children aged 0-12.

Northwest Territories, 2017). In particular, the *Early Childhood Development Action Plan, 2017-2020* includes commitments to maternal and child health care services, early intervention programs, and early childhood programming.

Since the release of *Right from the Start*, a number of changes were implemented, including:

- A grant to increase the income of workers and offer an incentive to attract new professionals to the ECE workforce.
- Scholarships to offset the costs of attending full-time, on-site diploma, or degree programs in the field of early childhood development.
- Attendance-based funding through the Early Childhood Program Funding model for all licensed early childhood programs as well as a significant increase in funding for infant and special needs spaces.
- Junior kindergarten for all four-year-olds.

The *2017-2020* Action Plan also identifies a number of ongoing targets:

- The ongoing infrastructure needs of junior kindergarten.
- Appropriate space within schools and other government buildings that could be used for 0-3 years programming.
- Infrastructure needs within every community.

Finally, the *2017-2020* Action Plan commits to the implementation of universal day care, a recommendation that was approved by the 18th Legislative Assembly based on the 2015 report *Feasibility Study of Universal, Affordable Daycare in the Northwest Territories* (McCuaig et al., 2015).³⁴

NORTHWEST TERRITORIES ACTION PLAN

The Action Plan identifies four priority areas: (1) supporting the delivery of high-quality ELCC experiences, (2) carrying out culturally-relevant professional development and training for all staff working in licensed early childhood programs, (3) increasing the number of qualified early childhood development professionals in licensed programs, and (4) supporting access to ELCC opportunities in all communities.

Specifically, federal investments will be used to improve quality and access, with particular consideration for small communities, including those that are currently without any licensed early childhood programs.

³⁴ An action plan for universal child care will be drafted in 2017-2018 and implemented in 2018-2020.

Federal transfers	Year 1: \$2,453,191	Year 2: \$2,452,801	Year 3: \$2,452,801	Total: \$7,358,793
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Availability

- **In years 1-3, \$25,000/\$140,000/\$60,000** to engage with communities to identify gaps and opportunities for ELCC options, with a particular focus on the eleven communities with no licensed early childhood programs.
- **In years 1-3, \$800,000/\$800,000/\$800,000** for centre-based program funding:
 - Centre-based programs with out-of-school spaces to address the need for such services created by the implementation of junior kindergarten (i.e. before and after school care and care on professional development days for 4- and 5-year-olds).
 - Increased funding to preschool spaces (2-5-year-olds), with the intention of creating new spaces and supporting existing spaces. This funding will be for operational and maintenance costs.
- **In years 1-3, \$100,000/\$130,000/\$120,000** to create new spaces. This will be application-based funding for the purchase of supplies, materials, and other costs incurred when setting up a new licensed program or re-profiling spaces (i.e. preschool to infant).

Affordability

- **In years 1-3, \$75,000/\$155,000/\$130,000** to assist existing licensed centre-based early childhood programs and family day homes with the cost of health and safety repairs and maintenance. All licensed programs that require such funding to maintain licensing will receive up to \$10,000 per program. This will allow programs to make improvements without increasing parent fees.
- **In years 1-3, \$90,000/\$80,000/\$90,000** for a Provider Enhancement Grant, which will allow centre-based programs to purchase or replace equipment. This will also allow programs to make improvements without increasing parent fees.

Working Conditions

- **In years 1-3, \$120,191/\$517,801/\$538,551** for Professional Development and Training. This will include a variety of ongoing and flexible training opportunities, such as online courses, on-the-job training, and more. It will also create two early childhood positions within the Department of Education, Culture and Employment.
- **In years 1-3, \$499,500/\$520,500/\$492,250** to create post-secondary learning opportunities. Specifically, this will support the delivery of a full-time face-to-face two-year diploma program in Early Childhood Care and Learning at Aurora College.
- **In years 1-3, \$15,000/\$80,000/\$100,000** for scholarships for students pursuing post-secondary education in early childhood development

Auspice

- All licensed child care is not-for-profit.

Inclusion, Equity, Diversity

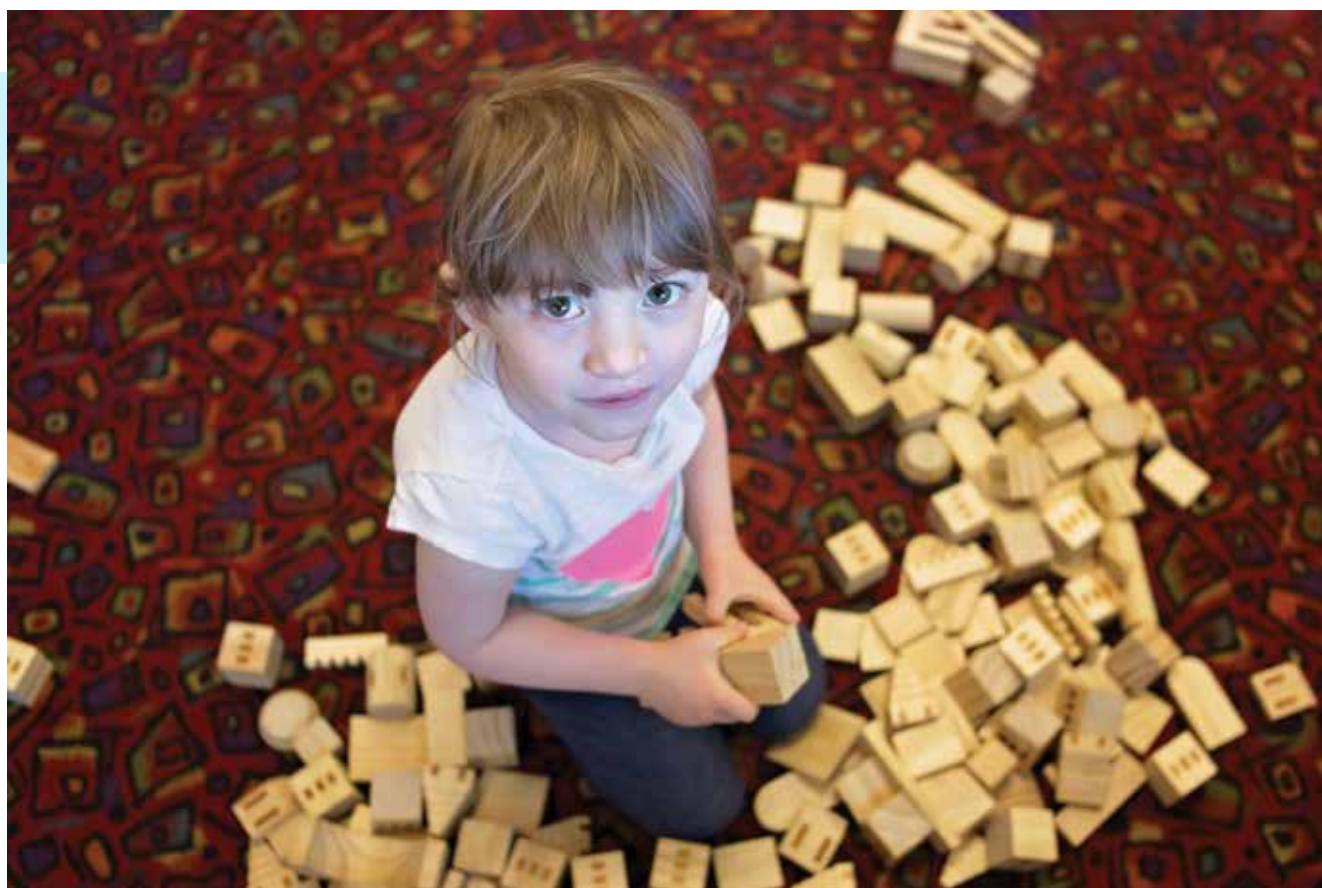
- In years 1-3, **\$50,000/\$50,000/\$60,000** for cultural resource development and distribution, including music, books, and play materials that reflect Indigenous languages, beliefs, and culture. Francophone resources will also be provided.

Other

- In years 1-3, **\$240,000/\$240,000/\$240,000** for program support.

What is innovative about the Northwest Territories' Action Plan?

Citing challenges of geographic remoteness, the Action Plan identifies as innovative ECE training and professional development. The Action Plan promises to offer a range of flexible alternatives that will result in the growth and increased professionalization of the ECE workforce.



Bilateral Agreement on Early Learning and Child Care for Nunavut

Nunavut At-a-Glance	
Spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regulated centre-based spaces are available for 18.3% of children aged 0-5 (2016)³⁵ Kindergarten is not compulsory for 5-year-olds but most attend
Fees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Average daily parent fees, centre-based and full-time (2016): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Infants – \$35.12 Preschoolers (including toddlers) - \$34.95
Auspice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 0% of regulated child care is for-profit (2016)
Wages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NA
Territorial Allocations (2015/2016) Total spending on regulated child care: \$3,655,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fee subsidies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Day Care User Subsidy \$502,200 Young Parents Stay Learning \$170,000 One-time funding \$833,000 Recurring funding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Start-up and operating grants \$2,150,000 Other funding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Healthy Children Initiative \$908,000 DEA-ECE Language/Cultural Funding \$1,000,000

Recent Initiatives in Nunavut

Delivering high quality ELCC programs in Nunavut is challenging due to Nunavut's remoteness and high capital and operating costs. The training and retention of qualified staff and inconsistent services are also barriers. Although high parent fees and access are problems, the Action Plan notes that

Simply providing fee subsidies would do little to address the pervasive system gaps and would not allow the flexibility for ELCC programs to increase accessibility to and quality of their programs.

³⁵ All provinces and territories also provide regulated home child care. However, an age breakdown (0-5, 6-12) is not available. In 2016, there were enough regulated spaces (including centres and home child care) to cover 10.9% of children aged 0-12.

Nunavut's Action Plan

Based on consultations, Nunavut identified five ELCC commitments using federal contributions:

1. To support the healthy development of children by ensuring high quality ELCC programs.
2. To support the training and professional development of the ELCC workforce.
3. To support the delivery of ELCC programming in every community.
4. To acknowledge and recognize the importance of ELCC and ELCC educators.
5. To promote and resource ELCC to enable and support greater use of Inuktitut.

There will be an investment in funding for operations and maintenance, the creation of child care spaces in underserved communities, training and professional development opportunities for the ELCC workforce, and learning and teaching resources in all of Nunavut's official languages.

Availability
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• \$220,000 in each of the three years to fund ELCC centres that have been closed for more than three years.³⁶ Funding will be contingent on ELCC staff participating in financial literacy/management training and the development of a strategic plan.
Affordability
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• \$1,118,250 in each of the three years to provide Operations and Maintenance Top-Up funding for all licensed ELCC centres in Nunavut. Centres must agree to use this money to maintain or lower parent fees in order to be eligible for funding.
Working Conditions
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• \$1,030,000 in each of the three years to provide training:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• In years 1 and 3, a Territory-Wide ELCC Training and Professional Development Session, where one staff person from each ELCC centre shares best practices, identifies common challenges, and accesses professional development• In year 2, the Department of Education will deliver training on financial literacy and management (this is mandatory for re-opened centres; see above).• \$690,000 in each of the three years to fund the development of standardized program materials to support the delivery of consistent, high- quality instruction in ELCC centres. Resources will be available in all official languages.
Auspice
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• All ELCC in Nunavut is run by not-for-profit organizations.
Inclusion, Equity, Diversity
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The training provided to ELCC workers will focus on approaches to program delivery that are inclusive in nature, in keeping with the principles of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit.

³⁶ These centres are located in underserved communities.

What is innovative about Nunavut's Action Plan?

To deal with the challenges of geographic remoteness and the high costs of operation and capital expenses, Nunavut must be innovative in the way it ensures access and quality. Re-opening spaces, and tying this funding to quality commitments, is one such way that Nunavut achieves this goal. Including financial management in ECE training is another innovative way that Nunavut proposes to support the sustainability of ELCC programs.



EVALUATING THE FRAMEWORK, AGREEMENTS, and ACTION PLANS

REASONS FOR OPTIMISM

There are plenty of reasons to be optimistic about this new chapter in the never-ending story of child care in Canada. Most importantly, this is the first time in more than a decade that the federal government, provinces, and territories have come to the table with a view to moving forward on ELCC. It is noteworthy that the federal government has committed to long-term funding, which has been sorely lacking for too many years. As well, the principles outlined in the MELCCf generally align with those that researchers and advocates have identified as key in shaping a universal child care system.

There are a number of interesting features or details of the BAs and provincial and territorial Action Plans.

(1) Adoption of the “Early Years Centres” model and Provincial and Territorial commitments to universal child care

Several provinces and territories have committed to using federal funds to enhance forward-looking initiatives. One such initiative is the use of supply-side funding for services to support high-quality, best practices in programming, and, in some cases, mandated maximum parent fees:

- Prince Edward Island's Preschool Excellence Initiative has created 36 Early Years Centres that must maintain high standards of inclusion and quality as well as a standardized fee structure and salary grid. The province will use federal transfers to create up to five new Early Years Centres.
- New Brunswick will use federal funds for the implementation of Early Learning Centres, planning 300 centres by 2020. The centres will have fee grids and enhanced quality standards.
- Ontario's previous Liberal government committed to free child care for preschoolers.
- Alberta will use federal transfers to expand their pilot program of ELCC Centres, which cap parents fees at \$25/day.
- Manitoba will use federal funds to enhance their Unit Funding approach, whereby centres receiving operational funding must abide by provincial fees.

Other provinces and territories have taken steps forward in recent months. British Columbia, for example, committed to universal child care, beginning with a fee reduction program in April 2018 (Coalition of Child Care Advocates of British Columbia and Early Childhood Educators of British Columbia, 2018). The Northwest Territories has also indicated a commitment to implementing a program of universal child care.

(2) Focus on inclusion and diversity

Inclusivity is one of the main principles identified in the MELCCF. In general, most of the provinces and territories have committed to funding programs and services that will ensure their ELCC programs are inclusive:

- Provinces that are adopting a model similar to Prince Edward Island's Early Years Centres have made inclusion a key requirement of provincial operating funding. For example, all Early Learning Centres in New Brunswick must implement an inclusion policy.
- Nova Scotia will spend approximately \$11.6 million dollars over three years (almost one-third of their total federal transfer) to “imbed inclusion” in ELCC programs, including through hiring a diverse workforce.
- Manitoba will spend \$10.6 million of its federal transfer to support diversity and inclusion initiatives, including grant opportunities for community services, and interventions for vulnerable children and their families.
- Saskatchewan has specifically aligned their Action Plan with the *Saskatchewan Disability Strategy*, and will spend approximately \$12 million dollars supporting children who experience disability.

(3) Innovative approaches to meet unique challenges

Contained within the Action Plans are initiatives designed to address specific challenges provinces and territories face:

- Flexible training and development opportunities for ECE workers. In Manitoba, for example, a “living textbook” will be created to make ECE and Child Care Assistant programs accessible; in Nunavut, funding will be put toward territory-wide professional development workshops that will allow best practices to be disseminated widely.
- The creation of rural spaces and those that provide care during non-standard hours is a priority in provinces like Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland and Labrador, and Manitoba.

WHERE DO THE AGREEMENTS AND PLANS FALL SHORT?

Despite these positive initiatives, the MELCCF and provincial and territorial Action Plans do not currently address some of the broader challenges that confront the organization, financing, and delivery of ELCC. Thus, while some of the patches that make the quilt of ELCC in Canada may get stronger as a result of the MELCCF and BAs, there is much that remains to be done to move the current *patchwork* of services toward a *system of ELCC*. The remaining changes required to support this move are outlined below.

(1) *The commitment to a universal system of ELCC*

Universal entitlement must be the cornerstone of ELCC in Canada. Universal services would rightly position ELCC as “part of building the equal, just Canada we value” and would bring innumerable benefits to children, families, communities, and the Canadian economy (ChildCare2020 Steering Committee, 2014). Universality in ELCC is, as the OECD identified back in 2001, the internationally accepted “best policy practice” and the aspirational norm for most OECD countries (OECD, 2001).

Child Care Now (CCN) and its partners therefore propose that a universal ELCC system be built using a national policy framework that sets overarching goals but allows for provinces and territories to develop their own specific approaches.

One of the key points made by CCN and others is that federal leadership and oversight are required. As the vision document *Child Care in Canada by 2020* explains:

A well-designed national child care program could be structured to fit the brand of federalism that created other national social programs valued by Canadians such as Medicare, and remind us why we have a federal government (ChildCare2020 Steering Committee, 2014).

The MELCCF and BAs go only part of the way towards this kind of system. The MELCCF does not embrace universal access as a goal. Rather, it emphasizes that vulnerable families should be prioritized in the provision of ELCC. As Anderson, Friendly and Ballantyne argue, a universal approach to childcare is shown to be most instrumental in ensuring that all families, including the vulnerable, are included (2016).

Indeed, the term “universal” does not appear anywhere in the MELCCF. Although the focus on inclusion and diversity is to be commended, the language of “targeting” children “more in need,” reflects shades of a needs-based, or welfare-based, approach to child care.

(2) Long-term sustained public funding

A crucial component of a national ELCC strategy must be a long-term sustained funding plan that includes capital funding (to expand the system); operational funding (to sustain services and remunerate workers while keeping parent fees affordable); and funding for data, research, evaluation, innovation, and accountability measures (ChildCare2020 Steering Committee, 2014).

The MELCCF and BAs, once again, go only part of the way towards this goal. Although funding has been promised for 10 years, the amount promised by the federal government is modest and falls short of internationally suggested benchmarks. Consider, for example, the amounts promised in 2005 versus those earmarked in 2017:

- 2017 Multilateral Framework: \$1.2 billion over 3 years
- 2005 Foundations Program: \$5 billion over 5 years

Put another way, the 2017 Framework consists of approximately \$400 million/year. In 2005, the federal government promised to increase funding to \$1.2 billion in the last year of the agreement. The 2017 plan, in other words, amounts to only about a third of the funding that was promised more than a decade earlier. Even when you consider the federal government's total budgetary promises for ELCC announced in 2018—\$7.5 billion over 11 years—the proportionate amounts fail meet the levels established in 2005.

Overall, the annual budgetary allocations do not adequately cover the expansion of affordable quality ELCC and maintenance of funding to cover its costs once established. In the first four years, annual amounts rise only \$10 million, to \$550 million in 2020/2021. To provide a comparison, in 2008, Québec's program alone cost \$1.6 billion.³⁷ Furthermore, economists in British Columbia estimate that it would cost approximately \$1.5 billion to implement a \$10-a-Day Plan in the province (Fairholm & Anderson, 2014). Federal budgetary promises fall far short of meeting ELCC needs across the country. As CCN points out, without adequate funding, “even a strong policy framework cannot deliver” (ChildCare2020 Steering Committee, 2014).

(3) Clear goals for implementation, service targets and timelines for delivery

The MELCCF identifies principles towards which the provinces and territories must agree to work: quality, accessibility, affordability, flexibility, and inclusivity. However, there are no accountability measures to ensure that provinces and territories actually achieve these principles. The only requirement is that provinces and territories “demonstrate progress” towards these goals:

³⁷ It resulted in an estimated \$5.1 billion increase in Québec's GDP (Fortin et al., n.d.).

“There are no Canada-wide goals for implementation, targets and timetables and strategies for ensuring accountability and assessment of progress (ChildCare2020 Steering Committee, 2014).

Provinces and territories are permitted to report on indicators of their choosing, and to determine their own priorities with no obligation to align with the long-term goals expressed as principles in the MELCCF.

(4) The engagement of ELCC stakeholders

It is unclear who was at the table when the MELCCF and BAs were negotiated. There was also little or no consultation or collaboration with ELCC stakeholders, researchers, or civil society organizations. Thus, it is not clear how provincial and territorial priorities were determined. This lack of transparency makes it difficult for parents, advocates, researchers, and practitioners to engage with their governments as they work together towards improved ELCC.

(5) The focus on key quality indicators

The MELCCF makes quality one of its primary principles, along with accessibility, affordability, and inclusivity—all of which themselves are elements of a high-quality system. All The Action Plans make statements on quality programming and services. There are, however, some notable silences on key quality indicators:

Wages and working conditions of the ECE workforce. Generally, each of the Action Plans has a lot to say about recruitment, education, training, and professional development of ECEs. Across the country, millions of dollars are going to be used to develop flexible training programs, new ECE diploma and certificate programs, and bursaries and scholarships that will make ECE programs more accessible to a diverse workforce. Many Action Plans note the how important of a qualified workforce is to the overall quality of ELCC.

However, none of the provinces or territories commit to increase the **wages** and working conditions of ECEs despite research that shows a significant impact on accessibility and **quality**. Prince Edward Island is the only province with a wage grid (the previous Ontario government's plan also made a commitment to a wage grid), although Alberta has new voluntary wage floors for ECEs as part of its Early Learning and Care Centre initiative. In the other provinces and territories, wages for ECEs and other ELCC workers are inadequate. Without appropriate remuneration and benefits, recruitment and retention of qualified workers will remain a problem, and the overall quality of ELCC will suffer.

Auspice. The auspice of ELCC programs varies widely across the country. In Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Nunavut, and the Northwest Territories, 0-5% of spaces are for-profit. At the other end of the scale, anywhere from 62%-72% of spaces in New Brunswick, Yukon, and Newfoundland and Labrador are for-profit. Canada-wide, the average is 30% (Friendly et al, 2018). Research consistently demonstrates that not-for-profit child care is of higher quality (Cleveland, Forer, Hyatt, Japel and Krashinsky, 2007) and can be encouraged through legislation and funding models. Several policy levers can be used to help a province or territory move towards more not-for-profit care, including directing new funding to non-profits only; restricting new licenses to not-for-profits; and resourcing expansion in the public and non-profit sector (Friendly, In press).

Despite this evidence, the MELCCF fails to address the issue of auspice at all. Newfoundland and Labrador earmarked increases in their Child Care Capacity Initiative for not-for-profit community groups; Ontario briefly mentions prioritizing not-for-profit services; Alberta invites submissions for grant proposals for its Early Learning and Care Centres from not-for-profit groups; and British Columbia mentions not-for-profits, but does not give specifics. There is no mention of auspice in the rest of the Action Plans.



CONCLUSION

With the first phase of the MELCCF and BAs in 2017 (in Québec's case, an Asymmetrical Agreement), the never-ending story of ELCC in Canada has entered a new chapter. Is this chapter going to be positive and, potentially, transformative? Are we moving closer to a universal, high-quality, and comprehensive *system* of ELCC, rather than the *patchwork* of services that exist today? At the very least, can the MELCCF help alleviate the child care crisis in Canada and improve the state of ELCC around the country? Most importantly, what can the second phase do better, now that the federal government has finally re-entered the child care arena?

As this report shows, there are some reasons to be optimistic about the future of ELCC. Some provinces and territories have announced plans to move towards universal child care, and the infusion of federal funding under the BAs will play an important role in seeing these plans come to fruition. Other provinces and territories have adopted low-fee and fee-cap policies, and will deliver ELCC services in publicly-managed ways, like Early Years Centres. The agreements reached under the MELCCF promise to enhance inclusivity, diversity, flexibility, and workforce training, all areas of much-needed attention when it comes to the delivery of high-quality ELCC in Canada.

The BAs indicate that ELCC across Canada is more similar than it is different. Although parent fees, regulation and governance, and funding schemes may vary, the gaps in service, unequal access to high-quality ELCC, and the limited nature of public funding characterize child care in all regions of Canada. But, just as the principles of the MELCCF apply to all jurisdictions, the processes to achieve them can also apply to all jurisdictions.

Much expertise has been brought to bear on a vision for a universal, affordable, and high-quality ELCC system in Canada. CCN and its many partners have played a leading role in articulating this vision. As the game-changing report *Child Care in Canada by 2020* lays out, a national ELCC system must be supported by: a national policy framework; a long-term sustained funding plan a robust plan for implementing policy to fulfill the national policy framework; system-building to support the efforts of all; and collaboration among federal and provincial and territorial governments and community experts. Such a system would enhance women's equality, support child development and well-being, encourage school readiness, reduce poverty, support family-work balance, strengthen social integration and inclusion, alleviate the struggles of vulnerable children and families, and foster economic prosperity.

Measured against this vision, the MELCCF and BAs fall short in several important respects:

- They fail to commit the federal, provincial, and territorial governments to a national, *universal system* of ELCC.
- They fail to ensure accountability with respect to the overarching principles of quality, accessibility, affordability, flexibility, and inclusivity.
- They fail to provide adequate funding to operationalize the principles.
- They fail to provide quality indicators, particularly wages for ECE workers.
- They fail to address the crucial issue of auspice.
- They lack transparency, making it difficult for advocates and families to engage in meaningful change.

In the coming years, this next chapter could change significantly as provincial governments change and political priorities shift. As it has in the past, the story of ELCC in Canada will continue to unfold as we enter Phase 2. Advocates like CCN, along with their partners and the broader community of parents, service providers, and researchers will continue to urge all governments to act on ELCC issues in a way that secures rights and opportunities for all children and families.



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