

News release - February 4, 2026

New report shows much progress in child care – and more effort needed

Today the [Childcare Resource and Research Unit](#) released a new information-packed report on Canadian child care. *Early Childhood Education and Care in Canada 2024/2025* comes just before the second phase of building Canada's \$10 a day child care program begins on April 1. Its detailed information makes it particularly timely for assessing accomplishments to date and shaping future directions.

The data compiled for the report show major successes since 2021 and 2022, when all provinces and territories received historic ongoing five year federal funding to design and implement their own plans for meeting common goals and principles.

It also shows that continued work is needed if the key goals – such as strengthening Canada's economy, supporting women's equality, and ensuring all children have the best start in life – are to be met.

Four years into system building, there have been numerous provincial and territorial improvements for families, children, and the child care workforce. The report outlines positive steps on affordability, access (expansion of supply), workforce issues, and public funding.

Nevertheless, important issues that still need to be addressed are evident in all areas.

Key findings

- All provinces and territories have substantially dropped parent fees – some more than others. Several jurisdictions no longer provide fee subsidies to assist individual low-income families, and a number allow parents to be charged additional fees for “extras” such as meals, waitlists, or outings.
- Licensed spaces have expanded substantially. However, both the number of children with employed mothers and mothers' workforce participation continue to increase across all age groups. This, together with much-reduced parent fees, has created pressure not only for expansion but better distributed expansion. Infant spaces, for example, represent only 6% of all centre spaces Canada-wide.
- The number of child care centres has increased substantially under CWELCC, as have active licensed family child care homes, which had been declining for a decade.
- Multiple provincial and territorial initiatives have aimed at addressing workforce recruitment and retention problems that impede expansion and impact quality. Eight jurisdictions now have wage grids, six contribute to staff benefits, and ten have a certification process. However, data showing how effective these measures have been are not available.
- The report shows that despite governments' commitments to primarily not-for-profit expansion, for-profits account for the bulk of expansion, particularly with regard to full-day child care. This shows considerable variation in implementation by

province/territory. For example, new and expanded for-profits can receive operating funding in seven jurisdictions, and can receive capital funding in three. For-profit spaces represent more than 40% of net full-day growth in seven jurisdictions.

- Full school-day four- and five-year-old kindergarten has become part of Canada's child care landscape. Eight jurisdictions offer full-day kindergarten to all five-year-olds, and two offer it to all four-year-olds. The use and provision patterns of regulated child care are significantly impacted by how kindergarten is provided.

The 464 page report covers many additional aspects of early learning and child care policy and provision including Indigenous ELCC, parental leave, workforce, parent fees, program requirements, licensing, and more, Canada-wide.

The federal government announced the Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care plan (known as CWELCC or \$10 a day child care) in the April 2021 budget. Provinces and territories, which are responsible for delivering social programs in Canada, signed on to a first round of five year agreements, along with substantial ongoing federal funding in 2021 and 2022. New five year agreements have been reached with all jurisdictions but Ontario and Alberta, who have new one year agreements; all new agreements begin April 1, 2026.

Report and resources

[*Early Childhood Education and Care in Canada 2024/2025*](#)

[*Key Findings from Early Childhood Education and Care in Canada 2024/2025: Summary and Analysis*](#) (available in English and French)

[Backgrounder](#) on *ECEC in Canada* reports

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