



# MOVING FROM PRIVATE TO PUBLIC PROCESSES

A SERIES ON CREATING CHILD CARE IN CANADA

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Childcare Resource and Research Unit  
January 2022

## Publications in this series

- 1 [\*How child care services are created in Canada\*](#) (January 2022)
- 2 [\*Building capacity in the non-profit child care sector\*](#) (February 2022)
- 3 [\*Municipal roles in child care contribute to accessibility\*](#)  
(February 2022)
- 4 [\*How publicly delivered child care services contribute to accessibility\*](#)  
(February 2022)
- 5 [\*Assessing child care needs and forecasting demand\*](#) (March 2022)
- 6 [\*Developing non-standard hours child care\*](#) (March 2022)
- 8 [\*More than spaces: Creating universal child care in Norway\*](#)  
(April 2022)



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## SERIES OVERVIEW

One of the characteristics of Canadian child care provision is that the supply of child care services is too limited to meet demand, unevenly distributed and inequitable in terms of location. Child care spaces are in short supply, especially for some age, language and cultural groups and for some parents, such as non-standard hour workers, Indigenous peoples, newcomers to Canada, and families in low income and rural communities.

A primary reason for this is that “creating” and expanding child care services in Canada has mostly relied on the market – treated as a private responsibility. Typically, governments play regulatory, supporting and occasionally funding and facilitating roles, while the initiators of Canadian child care services have primarily been large and small non-profit “third sector” groups, and large and small child care businesses.

This private approach is in contrast to public processes where a government body takes responsibility for ensuring that child care services are developed where and when they are needed – a more publicly managed, planned, intentional and integrated approach based on greater public responsibility for ensuring the availability and determining the characteristics and distribution of regulated child care.

The evidence shows it is unlikely that an adequate supply of accessible, equitable and well distributed child care services can be built in a timely manner without substantial public management of the process. International analysis shows that countries with universal child care systems have developed child care services through public processes that ensure services are created where and when they are needed, similar to development of other community infrastructure – schools, roads or sewers.

Thus, as Canada begins to fulfill a historic commitment to build a universal early learning and child care system, the challenge of limited, uneven, inequitable child care availability must be tackled systemically as a matter of public responsibility. This will require provincial/territorial expansion strategies supported by sufficient, well-directed capital

funding. Expansion strategies designed by each province/territory would include targets, timetables and priority areas – for example, child care for underserved groups or communities.

This series, *Moving from private to public processes: A series on creating child care in Canada* (2022) includes an overview paper and eight short topical papers covering some aspects of designing effective child care expansion strategies. The series is based on a longer publication, [\*Moving from private to public processes to create child care in Canada\*](#) (2020), by the Childcare Resource and Research Unit, and has been revised and re-developed in this more accessible series format to reflect current Canada-wide policy developments.

## CONTRIBUTING AUTHORS

This series has been a joint effort with contributing authors collaborating on various aspects of the project. The paper on the Norway case study was authored solely by Jane Beach.

**Martha Friendly** is the Executive Director of the Childcare Resource and Research Unit and an early learning and child care policy researcher. She was responsible for the overall conception of the project, writing the overview and collaborating on a number of sections.

**Jane Beach** is an independent researcher on ELCC. In addition to contributing conceptual direction to the project, she was responsible for the Norway chapter, which draws on her recent hands-on experience studying ELCC in Norway.

**Sophia Mohamed** is a research officer with the Childcare Resource and Research Unit with special interest in the ECEC workforce. She contributed to the public child care section and collaborated on the project overall.

**Laurel Rothman** is a specialist on child and family poverty. She was responsible for the section on non-profit capacity building, as well as collaborating on the planning, municipal and needs assessment section, drawing on her work in the City of Toronto Planning Department.

**Rachel Vickerson** is a research officer with the Childcare Resource and Research Unit. She took responsibility for the non-standard hours section, as well as contributing to a number of the others.

**Carol Ann Young** was Senior Social Planner with the City of Vancouver Social Policy and Projects department. Her expertise was key to the material on land use planning, demand forecasting, the section on planning and in other elements of the report.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many thanks to colleagues in the child care community who helped shape the initial direction of this project—thinking through how child care “accessibility” fits with equitable access, affordability and the child care workforce—and how all these fit with the idea of building a system of quality child care for all going forward. Huge thanks to the many others in the child care community and government who were more than generous with their time and knowledge, willing to be interviewed and to answer questions about their programs. A big thank you to Tegan Nguyen and the CRRU team who went the extra mile to revise the original paper and produce this more accessible and up to date series of papers.

Many thanks to the Canadian Union of Postal Workers for funding the study tour to Norway and related research activities upon which the Norway paper is based. Special thanks to Tove Mogstad Slinde in the Norwegian Ministry of Research and Evaluation for her generous input and tremendous expertise shared with Jane Beach, author of the Norway paper.

Finally, we very much appreciate the financial contribution for funding for the original project from the Government of Canada’s Innovations Initiative, Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC).

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