



Non-Standard Work and Child Care in Canada: A Challenge for Parents, Policy Makers, and Child Care Provision

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Non-standard Work and Child Care in Canada: A Challenge for Parents, Policy Makers, and Child Care Provision

Executive Summary

This research report describes and contextualizes the challenges experienced by 1.5 million Canadian parents of preschool-aged children who work non-standard hours. It proposes a broad range of recommendations to promote stable, high quality child care to meet their needs. It will be of interest to researchers, policy makers, service planners, child care professionals, and employers as well as those concerned with work-family issues. We undertook this report upon the request of Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) under its Innovations Initiative to inform future developments in early learning and child care.

This multi-faceted research project had multiple objectives and components. Our goals were:

- To better understand the scope and nature of parents' non-standard work hours in Canada and the factors associated with these work arrangements;
- To examine how mothers' non-standard work schedules affect their use of familial and non-familial child care arrangements for their children 1–5 years of age;
- To learn how parents who work non-standard hours piece together combinations of care arrangements (i.e., child care packages) to meet their needs, and to identify the unique challenges these parents face accessing high quality regulated child care services;
- To update our understanding of current provincial and territorial initiatives, policies, and funding that influence the supply of non-standard hours child care across Canada;
- To use the available information to provide our best estimate of how many centres and regulated homes currently provide non-standard hours care (i.e., care that takes place outside of Mondays–Fridays from approximately 7 am to 6 pm, including evenings, overnight, and weekend care); and

- To learn from selected child care services about the factors that affect their capacity to provide non-standard hours and flexible child care and that are important to expand and sustain non-standard hours child care service options.

To meet these objectives, we:

- Undertook an extensive review of the literature on non-standard work, non-standard work schedules, and non-standard child care;
- Worked collaboratively with Statistics Canada to analyze data from the 2017 General Social Survey on Families to learn about the prevalence and nature of non-standard work hours by parents of young children and how it relates to children's care arrangements;
- Interviewed 20 parents who work non-standard hours who spoke in detail about their lived experience managing atypical, often irregular work schedules that were often subject to change. They also spoke about the challenges they face finding and maintaining the combinations of child care arrangements they use to meet their family's needs;
- Conducted a current scan of federal and provincial/territorial policies, initiatives,

and funding that affect non-standard hours child care provision; and

- Interviewed key informants about seven unique programs that have provided non-standard hours child care in order to learn about their experiences, successes, and challenges.

We undertook this project to inform policy development, research, and practice to better address the subpopulation of families in which parents work non-standard hours. It is important to note that – like most other Canadian families – parents who work non-standard hours face challenges finding accessible, affordable, high quality child care that supports them as parents and contributes to their children's development. We argue that to successfully address their needs, as well as the needs of other sub-groups, Canada's mixed model of early learning and child care services must undergo systematic and transformational changes.

Any attempt to meet the needs of families in which parents work non-standard hours inevitably leads to serious consideration of broader questions about children's rights and needs, as well as the critical role of child care policy for gender equity and social inclusion. While these issues were outside the formal scope of this report, we found them to be ever-present.

Context

Three political-socio-economic contexts are essential backdrops for this report. The first is that high quality early learning and child care (ELCC) services are scarce, unavailable, and simply unaffordable for many families in Canada [1-3]. The second context is that new opportunities to change ELCC policies have been opened by the 2017 Multilateral Early Learning and Child Care Framework, the ensuing bilateral agreements with each province and territory,¹ and the Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care Frameworks. The Multilateral Framework highlights the importance of quality, accessibility, affordability, flexibility, and inclusivity in early learning and child care to meet key economic and social policy goals. These goals include ensuring that “all children can experience the enriching environment of quality early learning and child care so they can reach their full potential” [4]. The bilateral agreements provide new opportunities for provinces and territories to better address unmet needs through new initiatives and funding. The third context is a changing economy and labour market in which more Canadians have non-standard and

precarious work, which means a growing number of parents find themselves working “unsocial work hours” that are out of step with the rhythms of family life, social life, and children’s normal activities.

Our report focuses on one dimension of non-standard work: non-standard work hours. Non-standard work hours often accompany other forms of non-standard work, such as temporary, contract, or seasonal work; part-time work; or own-account self-employment, which includes the growing incidence of “gig workers”. Non-standard work hours include regular evening and night shifts, weekend hours, rotating shifts (which may include days, evenings, nights, weekends or any combination of them), and irregular or on-call hours. Sometimes these arrangements are called “flexible work schedules”, but unless employees have control over the scheduling of their work, non-standard hours can be anything but flexible for them. Additionally, irregular hours and shift changes that are not known in advance almost always play havoc with family life and child care arrangements.

Our mixed-methods project drew on a range of sources: secondary literature, primary analysis

¹ The Government of Québec supports the general principles of the Multilateral Framework but intends to remain solely responsible for early learning and child care within its jurisdiction. It received its share of the federal funding and will continue to invest in programs and services for families and children in Québec. Beginning in 1997, Québec implemented far-reaching childcare policy reforms that have resulted in much greater access for parents and lower fees than anywhere else in Canada.

of national statistical data, qualitative interviews, policy analysis, and case studies. Our detailed description of the external context and lived experiences of parents of young children who work non-standard hours underscores long-standing concerns about the importance of a comprehensive approach to planning early learning and child care policy and services.

Lessons learned

Lessons from research on non-standard work/work schedules

There is now an extensive and important body of research on non-standard work, precarious employment, and non-standard work schedules. Our review of the literature confirms that non-standard work is a longstanding, persistent, and increasing feature of the Canadian economy. Non-standard work is a complex concept with a number of dimensions, of which non-standard work schedules is only one. Some jobs may be non-standard only because they require non-standard work hours, otherwise providing employment on a full-time, permanent basis. More often, however, non-standard work hours are associated with one or more other dimensions of non-standard work. This can increase the likelihood of

income and job insecurity, lower incomes, and potential exclusion from social protections such as Employment Insurance – factors that constitute precarious employment.

Statistics Canada data show that close to 30% of employed Canadians worked something other than a regular day shift in 2016-2017. They also show that most people who work non-standard hours have irregular or rotating shifts, with changes to work shifts that may occur with little advance notice. Canadians who work non-standard hours have a variety of different professional and demographic backgrounds. The non-standard hours workforce includes a growing number of professionals, especially in health care and protective services, along with people working in retail sales, manufacturing, primary industries, accommodation and food services, and transport industries. The literature also affirms that Canada's non-standard workers are more likely to be women, parents, younger in age, racialized and recent immigrants, Indigenous, and to have less formal education and lower incomes than workers with standard employment.

Lessons from research on non-standard work hours and child care

Parents' non-standard work hours profoundly affect child care patterns for young children, and typically result in more complex, less

stable combinations of care arrangements — referred to as “child care packages”— to cover parents’ work hours. These packages may include tag-team parenting among couples, family and kin care, child care centres, and regulated or unregulated home child care providers, as well as a mix of all these types. U.S. research suggests that parents who work non-standard hours, particularly those with low income, often experience a “child care scramble” [5], which is characterized by inconsistent and poorer quality child care arrangements. A key observation is that parents who work non-standard hours face particular challenges finding and affording regulated centre-based care. Low-income parents, and especially single mothers, often cannot secure a child care space or a subsidy to reduce child care costs. Although many non-standard hours child care issues are unique, these parents share much in common with most Canadian families. They all must find and afford child care in an environment where fees are high and the distribution of child care services is uneven and inadequate, creating what are sometimes referred to as “child care deserts”[6].

Lessons from recent statistics on families, non-standard work schedules, and child care

Our analysis of 2017 GSS data confirms that 1.5 million parents of young children in Canada

currently work non-standard schedules. In fact, at least one parent worked a non-standard schedule in 39% of families with one or more children under 6 years of age. Approximately 27% of working mothers with young children, and 27% of working fathers with young children had non-standard work hours in 2016-2017. Mothers and fathers who worked non-standard schedules were similar: about 17% of both groups worked a regular evening or night shift, 36–37% worked rotating shifts, and 41–42% had irregular shifts or worked on call. Mothers who worked non-standard schedules were more likely to have temporary, seasonal, or contract work and/or to work part-time hours than fathers who worked non-standard hours, indicating that mothers had a higher degree of precarious employment. Our analyses also confirmed that mothers who work non-standard schedules tend to be younger, less well-educated, and have lower individual and family incomes than mothers who work standard daytime hours. Interestingly, the number of children in the family and the age of the youngest child did not seem to be related to whether mothers worked standard versus non-standard hours.

Child care patterns are quite different when mothers work non-standard hours. To begin with, mothers who work non-standard schedules are less likely to use non-parental child care for their youngest child age 1-5 (perhaps because many rely on tag-team

parenting or can work at home). Furthermore, when they do use non-parental child care, mothers who work non-standard hours are more likely to use it on an irregular or occasional basis. Overall, 68% of mothers with young children who work standard hours used a *regular* care arrangement compared to less than half of mothers who work non-standard hours. Mothers who work standard hours are more likely to use a licensed child care centre or preschool program as their main method of care compared to mothers who work non-standard hours (52% compared to 36%); mothers who work non-standard hours were much more likely to rely on care by a relative. Similar proportions of both groups used care in another's home, which may have been provided by a relative or a licensed or unlicensed home care provider. The data did not allow us to estimate the number of families who use multiple care arrangements to cover their work hours from the current data. We were also unable to determine the stability of care arrangements that young children and their parents experienced.

Lessons from interviewing parents who work non-standard schedules

Interviews with parents of young children who work non-standard schedules provided rich insights into the challenges they face in their daily lives – often compounded by changing work schedules for one or both parents.

Although we interviewed a small and non-representative sample of Canadians, the interviews confirmed that simply focusing on the nature of the mothers' non-standard work schedule does not capture the full experience of non-standard work. We learned that to fully appreciate the complexity of parents' lived experiences we must also consider whether a parent works a regular number of hours per week; whether one or both parents work full time, part time, or short hours; and whether work schedules are predictable and known in advance. Importantly, family life was the most complicated when both parents had non-standard work schedules or when a single parent had a rotating schedule or irregular work hours.

All the families we interviewed use complex child care packages that must respond to unexpected changes and circumstances. In addition, parents with two or more children often have different care packages for each child. Half the couples use tag-team child care (shared between parents/partners) as their main care method, but they typically require support from a relative as well. Additionally, in many cases the mother dropped down to part-time employment to make the arrangement work and be sustainable. Relatives (typically grandparents) were less often the main care arrangement but were the essential glue in many families: they provide transportation to and from care, provide regular care as part of a

child care mix, and most importantly, they provide the backup care parents need when their schedules change, or when tag-team arrangements do not align.

Parents spoke movingly and emotionally about the challenges they experienced and the practical difficulties that resulted from their lack of other child care options. They stressed the problem of not being able to access child care centres because the hours did not fully work, there was no space, or because they could not afford the fees. All the parents we interviewed were concerned about the high cost and scarce availability of non-familial child care (whether regulated, unregulated, a babysitter, or nanny) and many mothers struggled with the reality that most of their wages would be going to child care. Several parents explained that they did not qualify for a fee subsidy despite being unable to afford the child care fee, especially for two young children. Several mothers spoke about the consequences they and their children faced because of child care problems caused by non-standard work hours. These included leaving a career they had trained for, turning down a desired promotion, being stressed from trying to keep tag-team parenting going, over-relying on relatives and creating family tension, and not being able to have their child benefit from early childhood education. The few single mothers we interviewed gave clear examples of how child care was crucial for them to be

able to be employed and to provide stable, supportive education and care for their children.

In addition to the problems of high cost and limited access to child care, parents described the problem of the “lock in”. “Lock in” is when child care providers (especially centres, but also home child care providers) expect a commitment to regular daily/weekly participation, fixed hours, and accompanying fees. This causes issues when the parents’ own work hours are neither regular nor consistent. Many parents also reported that finding appropriate caregivers was very challenging. Only one parent used regulated home child care; others were left to search continually for unregulated home child care, sometimes resorting to Facebook or Kijiji.

One of the interesting findings from the parent interviews was that regulated centre-based child care still benefits parents, even when it does not fully fit their work schedules. In many cases, centre-based care provided a stable anchor that parents and children could rely on, which reduced stress and made it easier to organize wrap-around care arrangements. As well, parents who work non-standard hours said they desired the benefits of quality ELCC for their children, especially in light of the ever-shifting arrangements many of them experienced. Overall, it is clear from the interviews that regulated child care services

were a precious element of family support and became even more so when they were even slightly flexible with their opening or closing hours.

Lessons from the environmental scan of policies and activities

Our environmental scan of federal/provincial/territorial policies, initiatives, and services provides a current picture of developments in this area. Although we found that provision of child care at non-standard times including weekends remains very limited, there seems to be more recognition and interest in this issue by provinces and territories than there was even five years ago. For example, several jurisdictions have recently introduced initiatives or declared their interest in doing so. Nevertheless, these policies remain partial, modest, and disparate.

Five provinces/territories (Newfoundland and Labrador, PEI, Québec, Ontario, and Alberta) reported specific initiatives on non-standard hours child care. Three of them had incorporated plans to address this issue in their first phase Multilateral Framework Agreement Action Plans. Nine provinces have specific regulations or policies for non-standard hours child care, and seven provinces/territories identified additional or specific funding of some kind associated with non-standard hours child care. While these are

promising developments, the actual provision of non-standard hours regulated child care remains very low.

There is no inventory or cross-Canada data on the prevalence of non-standard hours services. Based on available data, we attempted to estimate the extent of non-standard hours regulated child care that is currently available. We were cautious when creating our estimate since jurisdictions vary in the amount and type of data they have available, as well as how they define non-standard hours care. Our best estimate based on the data from nine jurisdictions is that fewer than 2% of child care centres provide some form of non-standard hours care. Furthermore, the majority of these centres provide *slightly non-standard hours*, where provision is slightly extended to include some early morning or evening hours but generally not before 6:00 am or later than 8:00 pm. Our estimate of the availability of non-standard hours child care in regulated child care homes is more uneven and is based on data from only four jurisdictions. The other nine jurisdictions either do not have any data available or do not have any provision in home child care. Among the provinces that report non-standard hours child care in child care homes, British Columbia reported that 5% of regulated homes provide non-standard hours child care at night and Ontario reported that 7% of child care homes offer overnight care. In Québec, officials reported that very little non-

standard hours child care is in home child care, despite the substantial supply of regulated home care in that province. In the Yukon, approximately 9% of regulated homes provide non-standard hours care. Manitoba and Saskatchewan officials indicated that most non-standard hours child care is in home child care, but specific numbers were not available.

One development we noted is that all provinces and territories now have online information that lists regulated child care services. Some have developed province-wide information through surveys and/or licensing processes that allow them to estimate the provision of non-standard hours child care. Similarly, in six provinces, information about services that provide non-standard hours child care is publicly available online, although parents or others may have to search service-by-service to find it. This suggests that there could be considerable progress in making information about non-standard hours child care services more available to parents, which could help them find services that offer non-standard hours in their community where they are available. Of course, such online lists will only be useful if they are specific, current, and accessible. Information about regulated home child care provision remains an unresolved concern, which limits access to this form of care, as well as the opportunity to assess improvements in its provision.

We are optimistic that, based on the environmental scan, there appears to be provincial/territorial interest in tackling this issue. Despite varied approaches, definitions, and remedies across provinces/territories, better information, collaboration, data, and research about initiatives, successes, and challenges in providing non-standard hours care would be valuable. A consistent, Canada-wide approach to collecting data and ongoing information would allow the provinces and territories to better address these issues. For example, it could help them address parents' unmet needs for non-standard hours child care, the challenges providers have in sustaining such services, and the extent to which current initiatives are effective in providing actual on-the-ground changes for families and children.

Lessons from services offering extended hours and flexible child care

Our analysis of seven child care services across the country (including one that operated for more than 23 years but has now closed) confirms that funding and support from governments, employers, and unions is crucial to establishing non-standard hours services and to sustaining them over time. Pilot project funding sparked the initial development of three of the seven services, but the withdrawal of such funding, as well as other changes in

provincial policies, can result in destabilizing the programs. As a result, programs must either reduce their capacity to serve parents and children or risk the demise of the service. In addition to financial considerations, key informants identified additional administrative and human resource burdens, especially when efforts are made to permit flexible use by parents with irregular schedules.

Administrators also noted challenges in recruiting and retaining staff for evening hours. Some key informants identified particular challenges in the provision of non-standard hours care in home child care or for short-term care in the child's home. These included difficulty retaining providers, as well as the financial challenges caused by guaranteeing a minimum number of hours per week to providers or by guaranteeing flexibility in the small home environment.

It should be noted that successful non-standard hours programs that operated for a number of years tended to be part of well-established, larger centres or agencies with considerable experience and dedicated leadership in the management of child care and related services. It is also noteworthy that all the programs we profiled benefited from either additional funding sources or significant contributions that defrayed operating costs. Nevertheless, even these centres/organizations have found it

challenging to meet families' needs while maintaining the quality of care to which they are committed.

Much remains unknown

There are many important unanswered questions that require more in-depth research on parents' non-standard work and child care provision, including longitudinal research and well-designed quantitative and qualitative studies. Specifically, we still do not fully understand why parents of young children work non-standard hours, including to what degree they take up this work because of job demands, or as a way to share parenting with a partner, or because they cannot find or afford quality regulated child care in which they are confident. How many mothers in low- and modest-income families would change from part-time work or non-standard hours work to full-time work if licensed child care was available and affordable? How many would use licensed home child care if it were more available and easier to access in their community? We also need to know more about the long-term consequences for women, for families and for children when employment and care are so challenging.

In addition, more research is needed on the specifics of non-standard work schedules,

including effective human resource management strategies that reduce the extent to which parents are subjected to shift changes with little advance notice or control over their work hours. We also need more research about the relationship between non-standard hours and other forms of non-standard work, including who has access and who is excluded from labour rights, protections, and social benefits such as Employment Insurance. Finally, many questions remain for child care providers and policy makers, including a deeper understanding of how policies, practices and funding can better support the provision of flexible, high quality child care.

We underscore that unless specific efforts are made to collect consistent and timely information across jurisdictions about policies, funding, and service provision, our understanding of child care provision across Canada will remain frustratingly incomplete. Researchers and policy makers need consistent, recurring information to benchmark where we are and to assess the effectiveness of new initiatives and policies. Such information is also important for monitoring how public monies are spent and whether improvements are being made in line with the Multilateral Framework Agreement and the bilateral agreements that have been developed. Some provinces have developed initiatives and funding to support some non-standard hours care provision, yet we simply do not know how

many services are providing non-standard hours care. We also do not know how much non-standard hours they are providing or to how many children, let alone how many regulated home caregivers provide extended hours or weekend care. This also means that it is impossible to gauge how many families who require non-standard hours care can access these services and how many families have unmet needs.

Key takeaways from the project

We have noted that the issue of non-standard hours child care has been studied before in Canada. Our project, however, has identified several new “takeaways” or useful learnings from the five research approaches we employed. Some of these have practical potential for policy action, further research, data collection and analysis, and debate.

We note that:

1. The term “non-standard hours” is broad and imprecise. The way it is currently used limits our understanding of parents’ work schedules and needs, as well as the nature of “non-standard hours” service provision. We suggest

that a more fine-grained approach will be helpful. It is clear that child care— even if it is well-resourced— can accommodate some non-standard work schedules much more easily than others. The spectrum of services offered ranges from mildly to extremely non-standard. Similarly, family needs are not well understood, but appear to range from services that could provide slightly extended hours or weekend child care, which are easier to sustain, to overnight and late-night care, which are more difficult to finance and sustain.

2. We also observe that it is important to distinguish between “flexible” child care and non-standard hours child care, because although they are related, they are not identical. “Flexibility” generally means that child care arrangements can change or be arranged “on demand”; this may apply to both standard hours and non-standard hours child care. Flexibility creates significant issues for service providers with regard to staffing and administration, yet many parents need child care flexibility in order to work. It is noteworthy that the service providers we interviewed for this project were prepared to go to some lengths to provide flexible child care, as well as to provide non-standard hours care to

meet family and community needs despite the challenges this presented.

3. Our research demonstrates that we need to better understand the relationship between parents’ work, family composition, and need and their desire for child care. Both parent interviews and key informants for the profiles told us that a family with a parent who works non-standard hours may or may not need or want non-standard hours child care services, depending on their available options.
4. We learned that parents who need non-standard hours child care can benefit from having access to reliable, regular hours child care to serve as a solid anchor in their child care package. Both the research literature and parent interviews showed how this anchor can stabilize families’ daily experiences and provide children with a quality early childhood education.
5. This was the first research project that analyzed Statistics Canada data on parents’ non-standard work as part of an exploration of non-standard hours child care. While the data provide many interesting new findings about who is doing what kind of work, they do not provide information that is specific

enough to answer more detailed questions. We need this more detailed information to develop good policies and provisions. In particular, there are no data about parents' weekend work and the nature of shift rotations and irregular schedules. Additionally, we do not know the extent to which parents are informed about schedule changes in advance and have any flexibility. We also lack information about how parents use tag-team care in couples and about how they use child care packages, which appear to be common circumstances, based on the literature and interviews. Thus, we need an agenda for different data and research to develop the right policy and services, in the right places, and for the right populations.

6. Based on the parents we interviewed for this project, the patchwork nature of non-standard provision (i.e., relying on a shifting package of provision) appears to be even more widespread than we would have predicted. This finding is important because this kind of constant balancing act places stress on families, particularly on mothers, and creates challenging circumstances for young children, for whom continuity of care is critically important.

7. Although there is active policy movement and experimentation underway at the provincial/territorial level, there is no coordination or overall evaluation of models, successes, or challenges. Similarly, we were told that there is little sharing of information or coordination for the purpose of better service provision among service providers, even within a province.
8. Finally, we wish to highlight the astute observation of one key informant from an exemplary centre profile. When we asked the informant what their "success" was attributable to, she replied: "It's not so much about success, but rather having survived." This observation is supported by the reality that the non-standard hours child care file includes many non-successes that did not survive or ceased to provide non-standard hours child care.

Broader observations

Our research on parents' non-standard work and non-standard work schedules also highlights some important questions for policy makers and for Canadian society more broadly. The first relates to the growth of non-standard and precarious work. A growing number of Canadians, especially parents, find themselves

working “unsocial work hours” that are out of step with the rhythms of family life, social life, and children’s normal activities. International agreements and analyses identify both non-standard work hours and precarious work as critical policy issues related to workers’ rights and to the provision and maintenance of decent work. These dimensions of working life are critically important for individuals and families, and impact both income security and parents’ ability to combine work and family responsibilities. Finally, the relationship between non-standard work and early learning and child care clearly has profound effects on social justice, particularly for women, Indigenous people and reconciliation, and marginalized Canadians.

All these concerns are apparent when considering families with young children. These families depend on economic, personal, and community resources on a daily basis to ensure that their children’s early years are secure, stable, and provide positive and stimulating experiences that enhance their development and well-being. There are ongoing concerns about the availability and costs of high quality, regulated early childhood education and care services across Canada. There is also now increasing interest and concern about how the lack of policy and program development regarding parents’ non-standard work hours may result in even more challenges to children’s access to quality early

learning and child care. Additionally, the lack of policy and program development may pose further obstacles to women’s economic security.

For all these reasons it is important to consider whether and how public policies and workplace practices can better protect parent-workers as well as all other workers. These policies and practices should aim to protect workers from the most harmful aspects of precarious work and improve their access to work arrangements that would allow them to have a balanced family life. Such policies should consider what kinds of work are essential to be performed during non-standard hours and how non-standard work schedules could be better managed for employees, clients/customers, and organizations. These policies should also incorporate enhanced protections and equity under labour provisions as well as accommodations of family status under Human Rights provisions. Finally, they should include changes to labour standards that provide parents and other caregivers with the statutory right to request more flexible work arrangements, as has been implemented in the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, several U.S. states and most recently in the Canada Labour Code. Changes to workplace practices, especially those involving advance notice of shift changes whenever possible, is also critical.

A second broader concern relates to the question: *What is best for children* with regard to parents' non-standard work hours and schedules? We note that neither the federal funder of the project nor our research team initially recognized this question as a central or explicit consideration, yet during the project several key informants and reviewers identified it as an important issue that should be considered and addressed in a much more comprehensive way. To consider this topic more broadly and in more depth would certainly require additional research and debate about how children's needs can, and should, be better balanced with workplace demands.

A final and fundamental concern is the need for major reforms in early learning and child care policy to address the issues of accessibility, affordability, quality, flexibility, and inclusion in general. Our analysis clearly demonstrates that partial measures to improve child care provision in a mixed market of care are not sufficient. Partial measures result in many families and children being excluded from access to the kinds of early learning and child care experiences that are so important to support families and promote children's early development. While steps to improve access to non-standard hours care for a limited number of families may help some, such efforts must be part of much broader improvements to Canada's child care policies and programs.

This research project is not the first to emphasize the futility of attempting to address the particularly difficult child care needs of parents who work non-standard hours outside ELCC system reform. As one researcher observed, "It is like trying to serve dessert before the meat-and-potatoes part of the meal". To effectively provide the non-standard hours child care that this paper has considered, Canada's early learning and child care needs to be transformed into a planned, publicly-funded, responsive system. Under the current system, it is not just challenging, but essentially impossible to address the unique, varied needs of the non-standard hours workforce in a meaningful way. In the final analysis, even creative efforts to address families' needs, while potentially beneficial for a small number of families, are no substitute for the kind of systemic, transformative changes that are needed.

Recommendations

Many features of a revised ELCC policy that would help all Canadian families access and afford high-quality early learning and child care services will also help parents with non-standard work hours. We nevertheless have proposed specific recommendations that flow from a focus on the child care needs of parents who work non-standard hours.

We recognize that there is no quick or universal fix to the challenges parents face when they work non-standard hours in a country where child care services are neither accessible nor affordable for most families. This is especially true for parents whose schedules are irregular or change with little advance notice. Some of our recommendations relate to how important it is to decrease the likelihood that parents will have inconsistent, “unsocial” work schedules, especially in cases where changes in shifts are not provided in advance. Additionally, we affirm our conviction that policy initiatives and program changes in early childhood settings must be rooted in high quality care for children that promotes consistent and stable relationships with staff and other children and provides stimulating, appropriate care that responds to children’s knowledge, interests, and capacities.

We look forward to ongoing discussions with policy makers, child care professionals, and parents to develop and sustain high quality programs and services that will better meet the needs of parents and children who cannot access them under current conditions.

Our first recommendations focus on steps to promote discussion and dialogue with and among policy makers and child care providers. The goal of these discussions is to promote shared learning and an active process of policy and program change. These are followed by a broader set of recommendations.

We recommend that within six months:

- **Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC)** provide funding to support one or a series of roundtables/planning groups of policy makers at the provincial/territorial and municipal levels, where appropriate. The objective of these meetings will be to share information from this project, assess needs, and develop plans to implement and evaluate specific efforts to (i) increase the supply of affordable non-standard hours child care in centres and in regulated family day care homes, and (ii) monitor policy developments, take up, and sustainability.

- ESDC provide resources for collaborative work in the form of roundtables or meetings that bring together service providers who deliver successful non-standard hours child care so they can share their experiences, knowledge, best practices, and challenges. These meetings will help practitioners improve the provision of non-standard hours child care and allow them to share their knowledge with policy makers.
- A working group including policy makers and community experts receive funds to advance this work, and to promote policy and practice guidelines.

Further, we recommend that:

The Government of Canada

- Build upon, sustain, strengthen and extend the Multilateral Framework Agreement so it supports and promotes access to affordable, high-quality regulated child care for all children and parents including parents who work non-standard hours.
- Work with the ESDC Minister's Expert Panel on ELCC and other federal departments such as Women and Gender Equality, the Public Health Agency, and Labour, along with other community experts and representatives. The collaborative efforts should examine child care needs and use the best available evidence to recommend ways to better meet the goals of the Multilateral Framework on Early Learning and Child Care.
- Work with provinces/territories, Indigenous communities, and Statistics Canada to establish research, data and evaluation agendas on the needs and provision of early learning and child care that include the issue of child care for non-standard hours workers.
- Facilitate research and policy development that aligns with International Labour Organization (ILO) Framework conditions that are associated with the various dimensions of decent work, including combining work, family, and personal life.
- Share with provinces/territories information and resources relevant to newly enacted changes to the Canada Labour Code under Bills C-63 and C-86. This includes regulations and training materials that enhance protections for workers and would benefit parents and non-standard hours workers.
- Comprehensively study and analyze child care needs, parental employment and

involvement in education/training, and child care use patterns to better understand current issues and inform policy planning.

- Analyze the extent to which women's involvement in non-standard work, and the lack of non-standard hours child care affects women – e.g., by contributing to the maternal wage gap and to limited career advancement; to difficulties combining work and family; and to additional unpaid work and stress as a result of limited child care options.

Provincial/territorial governments

- Develop policies, in collaboration with the federal government and other provinces/territories, that build systems to make high quality, regulated early childhood education and care more accessible and affordable to parents with non-standard as well as standard schedules. These policies should ensure that all families who need or want care can find appropriate, affordable, accessible, high quality services when and where they need them.
- Review and analyze each jurisdiction's approach to non-standard hours child care and develop additional plans to meet unmet needs; develop ongoing systems to

evaluate initiatives in this area including take-up rates by services, sustainable operations of non-standard hours provision, and the reduction of impediments to expanding non-standard hours operation in centres and regulated child care home.

- Develop plans for inter-provincial/territorial collaboration and better sharing of information, data, and research on non-standard hours child care.
- Develop/expand and sustain provision of public funding to child care services that provide extended hours child care. These funding provisions must recognize the actual cost of operating non-standard hours services to make them widely available to programs within a publicly planned approach.
- Provide parents with readily accessible information, including searchable, updated lists of regulated centres and home child care providers online and in print. These lists should include information about regulated child care services that offer non-standard hours/flexible child care, and involve municipalities, local regions, and community organizations where appropriate.

Provincial/territorial Ministries of Labour

- Recognize the prevalence of non-standard and precarious work, and review workplace policies and labour protections to ensure that workers with non-standard employment are not disadvantaged in their labour rights, pay equity, and parental leave.
- Improve labour standards so that in most cases workers' schedules cannot be arbitrarily changed with short notice.

Employers

- Use effective human resource management practices that recognize human rights requirements for accommodating family status and consider the needs of workers who are parents when implementing workplace arrangements and policies such as scheduling (including overtime), advance notice of shift changes, and the provision of flexible work arrangements.
- Develop workplace policies that are specifically designed to address the

issues that parents face with regard to non-standard hours. This work should be in collaboration with relevant unions and other workplace groups and should recognize there are instances where non-standard hours work is needed.

The research community

- Collaborate with federal/provincial/territorial governments to develop methods for collecting reliable, consistent data in each province and across Canada. This data should focus on child care services and the impacts of child care policies on families, children, and specific subpopulations, including parents who work non-standard hours.
- Develop policy-relevant research that aims to enhance knowledge on topics related to families, children, and employment, including non-standard work hours and child care

Le travail atypique et les services de garde au Canada: Un défi pour les parents, pour les décideurs et pour l'offre de services de garde à l'enfance

Résumé

Le présent rapport de recherche décrit et contextualise les difficultés auxquelles font face 1,5 million de parents canadiens qui ont des enfants d'âge préscolaire et qui travaillent à des heures non usuelles. On y formule un éventail de recommandations pour promouvoir des services de garde stables et de qualité élevée afin de répondre aux besoins de ces parents. Notre rapport intéressera les chercheur.e.s, les décideurs, les planificateurs de services, les professionnel.le.s en services de garde, les employeurs et toutes celles et tous ceux qui sont interpellés par les enjeux relatifs au travail et à la famille. Nous avons mené cette recherche à la demande d'Emploi et Développement social Canada (EDSC) dans le cadre de son initiative Innovations afin d'éclairer les futurs politiques et programmes d'apprentissage et de garde des jeunes enfants (AGJE).

Notre recherche à plusieurs volets visait de nombreux objectifs. Nous voulions:

- Mieux comprendre la portée et la nature des horaires de travail non usuels des parents au Canada et les facteurs associés à ces régimes de travail;
- Examiner comment les horaires de travail non usuels des mères influencent leur recours à des membres de la famille ou à des services de garde non parentaux pour prendre soin de leurs enfants âgés d'un à cinq ans;
- Savoir comment les parents qui travaillent à des heures non usuelles conjuguent un assortiment de modes de garde variés pour répondre à leurs besoins et recenser les difficultés uniques de ces parents pour accéder à des services de garde réglementés et de qualité élevée;
- Mettre à jour notre compréhension de l'incidence des initiatives, des politiques et des programmes de financement en vigueur dans les provinces et les territoires sur l'offre de services de garde à horaires atypiques au Canada;

- Utiliser les données disponibles afin de déterminer le plus précisément possible combien de garderies et de services de garde en milieu familial réglementés offrent des services à des heures atypiques (c'est-à-dire à des moments autres que du lundi au vendredi plus ou moins de 7 h à 18 h ou en soirée, la nuit et les fins de semaine);
- Apprendre d'un certain nombre de centres de la petite enfance et de garderies sélectionnés quels sont les facteurs qui ont une incidence sur leur capacité à offrir des services flexibles et à des heures non usuelles et qui sont importants pour accroître le nombre de services de garde atypiques et en assurer la viabilité.

Afin d'atteindre ces objectifs, nous avons procédé comme suit:

- Nous avons réalisé une revue exhaustive de la documentation et des ouvrages sur le travail atypique, les horaires de travail non usuels et les services de garde atypiques;
- Nous avons travaillé de concert avec Statistique Canada à l'analyse des données de l'Enquête sociale générale (ESG) sur la famille de 2017 afin de connaître l'étendue et la nature des horaires de travail non usuels des parents

de jeunes enfants et d'en comprendre la relation avec les différents modes de garde utilisés.

- Nous avons interviewé vingt parents qui travaillent à des heures non usuelles. Ils nous ont décrit en détail comment ils composaient avec leurs heures de travail atypiques, souvent irrégulières et sujettes à changer à tout moment. Ils ont également parlé de la difficulté qu'ils ont à trouver, à agencer et à conserver l'assortiment de modes de garde variés qu'ils utilisent pour répondre aux besoins de leur famille;
- Nous avons fait le survol des politiques, des initiatives et des programmes de financement provinciaux et territoriaux qui ont une incidence sur l'offre et la prestation de services de garde à horaire atypique;
- Nous avons réalisé des entrevues auprès d'informatrices et d'informateurs clés à propos de sept centres de la petite enfance et garderies uniques qui ont fourni des services de garde à des heures non usuelles afin qu'ils nous décrivent leurs expériences, leurs succès et les difficultés rencontrées.

Nous avons entrepris cette recherche afin d'étayer les politiques, la recherche et les

pratiques en la matière et de mieux répondre aux besoins des sous-populations de familles dont les parents travaillent à des heures non usuelles. Il est important de souligner qu'à l'instar de la majorité des autres parents canadiens, les parents qui ont des horaires de travail atypiques peinent à trouver des services de garde accessibles, abordables et de qualité élevée en mesure de les appuyer en tant que parent et de soutenir le développement de leurs enfants. Nous faisons valoir que pour répondre efficacement à leurs besoins ainsi qu'aux besoins d'autres sous-groupes, les politiques et les programmes du modèle mixte en matière d'apprentissage et de garde des jeunes enfants au Canada doivent être transformés de façon systématique et profonde. Au pays, l'accès à des services de garde de qualité élevée est hors de la portée d'un trop grand nombre de familles de jeunes enfants.

Toute tentative de répondre aux besoins des familles dont les parents travaillent à des heures non usuelles oblige inévitablement à une réflexion sérieuse entourant des questions plus vastes au sujet des droits des enfants et de leurs besoins ainsi que du rôle critique des

politiques de services de garde au chapitre de l'égalité des genres et de l'inclusion sociale. Bien que ces questions aient été hors de la portée officielle de notre étude, leur omniprésence s'est imposée.

Contexte

Trois contextes politico-socio-économiques sont des toiles de fond essentielles au présent rapport. Le premier : les services éducatifs et de garde à l'enfance de qualité élevée sont rares, peu accessibles et carrément inabordables pour de nombreuses familles au Canada [1-3]. Le deuxième: le Cadre multilatéral sur l'apprentissage et la garde des jeunes enfants de 2017, les ententes bilatérales intervenues avec chaque province et chaque territoire qui ont suivi² et le Cadre d'apprentissage et de garde des jeunes enfants autochtones ouvrent tous la porte à des modifications aux politiques publiques en matière de services de garde. Le Cadre multilatéral insiste sur l'importance de la qualité, de l'accessibilité, de l'abordabilité, de la flexibilité et de l'inclusivité des services de garde afin d'atteindre des objectifs clés sur le plan économique et social; ces objectifs étant

² Le gouvernement du Québec est favorable aux principes généraux du Cadre multilatéral, mais il entend demeurer seul responsable de l'apprentissage et de la garde des jeunes enfants sur son territoire. Il recevra sa part du financement fédéral et continuera d'investir dans des programmes et des services aux familles et aux enfants au Québec. En 1997, le Québec a lancé une réforme en profondeur de sa politique de services de garde, une réforme qui a eu pour effet d'accroître substantiellement l'accès des familles aux services de garde et de réduire les frais de garde comme nulle part ailleurs au Canada.

que « tous les enfants profitent [de l'environnement] de services d'apprentissage et de garde des jeunes enfants de bonne qualité afin de pouvoir [s'épanouir pleinement] » [4]. Les ententes bilatérales, quant à elles, offrent aux provinces et aux territoires de nouvelles perspectives pour mieux répondre aux besoins non comblés des familles en leur accordant de nouveaux fonds pour lancer de nouvelles initiatives. Le troisième contexte: l'économie et le marché du travail en mutation. Un nombre croissant de Canadiens et de Canadiennes ont un travail atypique et précaire de sorte qu'un plus grand nombre de parents ont des horaires de travail « asociaux », c'est-à-dire incompatibles avec le rythme de la vie de famille, de la vie sociale et des activités normales des enfants.

Notre rapport se penche plus précisément sur une dimension du travail atypique: les heures de travail non usuelles, lesquelles sont souvent associées à d'autres régimes de travail atypiques, comme le travail temporaire, à forfait ou saisonnier; le travail à temps partiel; ou le travail à son propre compte (travail autonome), ce qui comprend les « travailleurs à la pige » en nombre grandissant. Les heures de travail non usuelles incluent les quarts réguliers de travail de soir et de nuit, le travail de fin de semaine, le travail en rotation (jour, soir, nuit, fin de semaine ou une combinaison des quatre) et les heures irrégulières ou sur appel. Ces différentes formules sont parfois

appelées « horaires de travail flexibles », mais à moins que les employées exercent un contrôle sur leur horaire, les heures de travail non usuelles sont tout autres que flexibles pour eux. De plus, lorsque les heures irrégulières et les modifications de quarts de travail ne sont pas connues d'avance, la vie familiale et l'organisation des services de garde sont presque toujours perturbées.

Notre recherche à approches multiples s'appuie sur un éventail de sources: la documentation secondaire, une analyse originale de nouvelles données statistiques, des entrevues qualitatives, une analyse des politiques publiques et des études de cas. Notre description détaillée du contexte externe et de l'expérience concrète de parents de jeunes enfants qui travaillent à des heures non usuelles met en évidence des préoccupations de longue date entourant l'importance d'une approche intégrée au chapitre de l'élaboration des politiques et de la planification de l'apprentissage et de la garde des jeunes enfants.

Leçons apprises

Leçons tirées de la documentation sur le travail atypique et les horaires de travail non usuels

Il existe maintenant beaucoup d'études et de recherches sur le travail atypique, l'emploi précaire et les horaires de travail non usuels. Notre analyse documentaire confirme que le travail atypique est une caractéristique persistante de l'économie canadienne qui existe depuis longtemps et qui prend de l'ampleur. Le travail atypique est un concept complexe qui comporte plusieurs dimensions et les horaires de travail non usuels n'en sont qu'un aspect. Certains emplois peuvent être atypiques simplement à cause de leurs heures de travail non usuelles, étant pour le reste, par ailleurs, à temps plein et permanents. Mais le plus souvent, les heures de travail non usuelles sont associées à plusieurs autres dimensions du travail atypique, augmentant ainsi la probabilité d'insécurité économique, de précarité du travail, de faibles revenus et d'exclusion des programmes de protection sociale, comme l'assurance-emploi — autant de facteurs inhérents à la précarité d'emploi.

Les données de Statistique Canada indiquent qu'en 2016-2017 le régime de travail de près de 30 pour cent des travailleuses et travailleurs canadiens était autre que le quart régulier de

travail de jour. Ces données indiquent aussi que la plupart des personnes qui ont un horaire de travail atypique travaillent à des heures irrégulières et ont des quarts rotatifs et des horaires qui peuvent changer sans grand préavis. Les antécédents professionnels et les réalités démographiques de celles et de ceux qui travaillent à des heures non usuelles varient. Cette main-d'œuvre compte un nombre croissant de professionnel.le.s, surtout dans le secteur de la santé et des services de protection, et de personnes œuvrant dans les secteurs de la vente au détail, de la fabrication, des industries primaires, de l'hébergement, de l'alimentation et des industries du transport. La documentation indique également que les travailleur.se.s occupant des emplois atypiques au Canada sont plus susceptibles d'être des femmes, des parents, d'être jeunes, racisés, d'immigration récente, autochtones et moins scolarisés, et d'avoir un revenu inférieur à celui de personnes occupant un emploi typique.

Leçons tirées de la documentation sur les horaires de travail atypiques des parents et les services de garde

Les heures de travail non usuelles des parents influencent considérablement la configuration des services de garde de leurs jeunes enfants. Elles nécessitent habituellement une combinaison complexe de solutions plus ou moins stables afin de couvrir les heures de

travail des parents. Cet assortiment de modes de garde variés peut inclure les deux parents qui se relaient pour prendre soin de leurs enfants, un membre de la famille qui s'occupe des enfants, la garderie ou un service de garde en milieu familial réglementé ou non réglementé ou encore, une combinaison de toutes ces formules. Des recherches menées aux États-Unis indiquent que les parents qui travaillent à des heures non usuelles, surtout les parents à faible revenu, sont souvent entraînés dans un « tourbillon » [5] de services de garde tous plus instables les uns que les autres et de piètre qualité.

Un constat important est que les parents qui travaillent à des heures atypiques ont des difficultés particulières lorsqu'il s'agit de trouver une place en garderie et pour en supporter le coût. Les parents à faible revenu, et surtout les mères seules, sont souvent incapables d'obtenir une place ou la subvention dont ils ont besoin pour en réduire le coût. Même si bon nombre des problèmes qu'ils ont à faire garder leurs enfants à cause de leurs horaires de travail atypiques leur sont propres, ces parents ont beaucoup en commun avec la plupart des parents canadiens. Ils ont tous besoin de trouver un service de garde de qualité à prix abordable dans un contexte où les frais de garde sont élevés et les services répartis de façon inégale et inadéquate. On parle parfois des « déserts de services de garde » [6].

Leçons tirées de notre analyse originale de données statistiques récentes sur les familles, les horaires de travail non usuels et les services de garde

Notre analyse des données de l'Enquête sociale générale (ESG) confirme que 1,5 million de parents de jeunes enfants au Canada travaillent présentement à des heures non usuelles. En fait, au moins un parent a un horaire de travail atypique dans 39 pour cent des familles ayant un ou plusieurs enfants âgés de moins de six ans. En 2016-2017, environ 27 pour cent des mères et 27 pour cent des pères ayant de jeunes enfants travaillaient à des heures non usuelles. Les mères et les pères qui travaillaient à des heures non usuelles avaient un profil assez semblable. Environ 17 pour cent des mères et des pères travaillaient un quart régulier de travail de soir ou de nuit, 36 pour cent des mères et 37 pour cent des pères travaillaient un quart de travail rotatif et 41 pour cent des mères et 42 pour cent des pères travaillaient un quart irrégulier de travail ou sur appel. Les mères qui travaillaient à des heures non usuelles étaient plus susceptibles que les pères d'occuper un emploi temporaire, saisonnier ou contractuel ou de travailler à temps partiel, ce qui indique une plus grande précarité d'emploi chez celles-ci. Notre analyse confirme aussi que les mères qui travaillent à des heures non usuelles ont tendance à être plus jeunes et moins scolarisées et à avoir un revenu personnel et

familial moins élevé que les femmes qui travaillent à des heures usuelles le jour. Il est intéressant de noter que le nombre d'enfants dans une famille et l'âge du plus jeune ne semblent pas être reliés au fait que les mères travaillent à des heures usuelles versus à des heures non usuelles.

La configuration des services de garde est assez différente lorsque les mères travaillent à des heures non usuelles. Pour commencer, il est moins probable que les mères qui travaillent à des heures non usuelles aient recours à un service de garde non parental pour leur enfant le plus jeune âgé de 1 à 5 ans (il se peut que ce soit parce que les deux parents se relaient pour prendre soin des enfants ou parce que les mères travaillent à partir de la maison). De plus, lorsqu'elles utilisent un service de garde non parental, les mères qui travaillent à des heures non usuelles sont plus susceptibles d'y avoir recours sur une base irrégulière et seulement occasionnellement. Dans l'ensemble, 68 pour cent des mères qui ont de jeunes enfants et travaillent à des heures usuelles utilisent un service de garde *régulier* (c'est-à-dire planifié et selon un horaire déterminé) à comparer à moins de la moitié des mères qui travaillent à des heures non usuelles. Il est plus probable que les mères qui travaillent à des heures usuelles utilisent un service de garde en garderie ou un jardin d'enfants comme mode de garde principal que les mères qui travaillent

à des heures non usuelles (52 pour cent à comparer à 36 pour cent). Et les mères qui travaillent à des heures non usuelles sont beaucoup plus susceptibles, quant à elles, de compter sur un membre de leur famille pour prendre soin de leurs enfants. Sensiblement le même pourcentage de mères des deux groupes faisait garder leurs enfants en milieu familial, soit par un membre de leur famille ou dans un service de garde en milieu familial réglementé ou non. Les données ne nous ont pas permis d'évaluer le nombre de familles qui utilisent plusieurs options pour couvrir leurs heures de travail. Il ne nous a pas été possible non plus de déterminer la stabilité des diverses options utilisées par les parents pour faire garder leurs enfants.

Leçons tirées des entrevues réalisées auprès des parents qui ont des horaires de travail atypiques.

Les entrevues menées auprès des parents qui ont de jeunes enfants et travaillent à des heures atypiques nous ont éclairées sur les difficultés auxquelles font face ces familles quotidiennement, des difficultés souvent exacerbées par des horaires de travail qui changent pour un ou pour les deux parents. Bien que nous n'ayons interviewé qu'un petit échantillon de parents non représentatif de la population canadienne, nos entrevues nous ont confirmé que se limiter à la seule nature des horaires de travail atypiques des mères ne

permet pas de dégager une vue d'ensemble du travail atypique. Nous avons appris que pour comprendre pleinement la complexité du vécu des parents, il faut aussi voir si les parents travaillent un nombre régulier d'heures par semaine, si un seul parent ou les deux travaillent à temps plein, à temps partiel ou quelques heures seulement; et si les horaires de travail sont prévisibles et connus d'avance. Il est important de noter que l'organisation de la vie familiale est la plus compliquée quand les deux parents travaillent à des heures non usuelles ou quand un des parents a un horaire de travail rotatif ou travaille à des heures irrégulières.

Toutes les familles que nous avons interviewées utilisaient un assortiment complexe de modes de garde qui doivent répondre à des situations et des changements imprévus. Sans compter que les parents qui ont deux enfants ou plus ont souvent recours à une combinaison de solutions variables pour chaque enfant. Pour la moitié des couples, l'option de garde principale consiste à ce que les parents se relaient pour s'occuper des enfants (responsabilité partagée par les parents). Cependant, ils ont habituellement aussi besoin du soutien d'un membre de leur famille. Aussi, dans bien des cas, la mère opte pour un emploi à temps partiel de manière à ce que la solution trouvée fonctionne et soit viable à long terme. Faire garder les enfants par un membre de la famille (souvent les grands-

parents) est rarement l'option de garde principale, mais les grands-parents ou d'autres membres de la famille sont souvent un entre-deux essentiel pour beaucoup de parents : ils transportent les enfants aller-retour au service de garde, s'occupent d'une des plages de garde et, plus important, ils assurent la relève nécessaire quand les horaires de travail des parents changent ou que leurs horaires ne permettent pas aux parents de se relayer.

Les parents ont décrit avec émotion et de façon poignante les difficultés auxquelles ils font face et les problèmes d'ordre pratique qu'ils rencontrent à cause du manque d'options pour la garde de leurs enfants. Ils ont souligné l'inaccessibilité à la garderie en raison des heures d'ouverture incompatibles ou du manque de places ou des tarifs trop élevés pour leurs moyens. La pénurie et le coût élevé des services de garde non parentaux (réglementés ou non, gardiennes ou bonnes d'enfants) préoccupaient tous les parents que nous avons interviewés, et beaucoup de mères se désolaient que la presque totalité de leur rémunération sert à payer les frais de garde. Plusieurs parents ont expliqué ne pas être admissibles aux subventions pour frais de garde malgré qu'ils n'aient pas les moyens de payer le coût de la garderie, surtout pour deux jeunes enfants. Plusieurs mères ont parlé des problèmes et des conséquences pour elles et pour leurs enfants de ne pas trouver de services de garde à cause de leurs heures de

travail non usuelles. Elles ont dit devoir abandonner une carrière pour laquelle elles ont fait des études et refuser des promotions désirées. Elles ont parlé du stress d'agencer la garde à relai avec leur partenaire et de leur trop grande dépendance aux membres de leur famille et des tensions qui s'ensuivent. Elles ont regretté que leur enfant ne puisse pas profiter des bienfaits de fréquenter un service d'éducation préscolaire. Les quelques mères seules que nous avons interviewées ont fourni des exemples concrets de l'importance des services de garde pour leur permettre de travailler et de fournir à leurs enfants la stabilité, une bonne éducation et les soins dont ils ont besoin.

Outre les problèmes du coût élevé des services de garde et de leur accès limité, les parents ont décrit le problème de la « rigidité », c'est-à-dire lorsque le fournisseur du service de garde (plus particulièrement les garderies, mais également les services de garde en milieu familial) s'attend à une fréquentation régulière tous les jours et chaque semaine et à des heures fixes, et en exige le paiement correspondant. Ces exigences sont problématiques lorsque les heures de travail du parent ne sont ni régulières ni constantes. Beaucoup de parents ont également souligné qu'il était extrêmement difficile de trouver des responsables de garde en milieu familial qui convenaient. Un seul parent utilisait un service de garde en milieu familial réglementé, les autres devaient se

résoudre à chercher sans arrêt, parfois sur Facebook ou Kijiji, des personnes pour garder leurs enfants.

Un constat intéressant qui se dégage des entrevues avec les parents est que la garderie comporte des avantages pour les parents même lorsque les heures d'ouverture ne sont pas complètement compatibles avec leurs horaires de travail. Dans bien des cas, la garderie est le pôle d'ancrage stable dont dépendent les parents et les enfants, un pôle qui réduit le stress et facilite l'organisation des autres modes de garde nécessaires pour pallier les heures manquantes. Aussi, les parents qui travaillent à des heures non usuelles ont dit qu'ils voulaient pour leurs enfants les retombées positives d'un service de garde de qualité, surtout considérant les réaménagements constants auxquels beaucoup doivent s'adonner. Dans l'ensemble, nos entrevues démontrent clairement que les services de garde réglementés sont un élément précieux de soutien familial et qu'ils le sont d'autant plus lorsque leurs heures d'ouverture et de fermeture sont légèrement flexibles.

Leçons tirées de l'examen des politiques et des initiatives des provinces et des territoires en matière de services de garde

Notre examen des politiques, des initiatives et des services à l'échelle fédérale, provinciale et territoriale dresse le portrait actuel des avancées dans ce domaine. Même si nous avons trouvé que l'offre de services de garde à des heures atypiques, y compris en fin de semaine, demeure très rare, les provinces et les territoires semblent reconnaître les besoins à cet égard et s'y intéresser davantage que cinq ans auparavant. Par exemple, plusieurs provinces et territoires viennent de lancer des initiatives en matière de services de garde atypiques ou ont indiqué leur volonté de le faire. Néanmoins, les politiques demeurent incomplètes, limitées et disparates.

Cinq provinces (Terre-Neuve-et-Labrador, Île-du-Prince-Édouard, Québec, Ontario et Alberta) nous ont rapporté avoir des initiatives pour soutenir les services de garde offrant des horaires atypiques. Trois d'entre elles ont intégré des mesures pour répondre à ces besoins dans leurs plans d'action de la première phase du Cadre multilatéral sur l'apprentissage et la garde des jeunes enfants. Neuf provinces ont des règlements et des politiques s'appliquant aux services de garde à horaires non usuels et, dans sept provinces et territoires, il existe une forme ou une autre de financement additionnel ou spécial pour

soutenir les services de garde qui ont des heures d'ouverture atypiques. Il reste que même si ces avancées sont prometteuses, l'offre de services de garde réglementés à des heures non usuelles demeure extrêmement limitée.

Il n'existe pas d'inventaire des services de garde à horaires non usuels au Canada et leur nombre est inconnu. Toutefois, en nous appuyant sur les données disponibles, nous avons tenté de déterminer le nombre de services de garde réglementés qui offrent présentement au pays des services à horaire atypique. Nous avons été prudentes dans nos estimations puisque les données des provinces et des territoires sur le nombre et le type de services varient de même que leurs définitions de services de garde à horaires non usuels. Selon nos meilleures estimations basées sur les données de neuf provinces et territoires, moins de deux pour cent de garderies offrent une forme ou une autre de services de garde à des heures non usuelles. De plus, la majorité d'entre elles n'offre que des *horaires légèrement atypiques*, à savoir elles prolongent quelque peu leurs heures d'ouverture, soit le matin ou en fin de journée, mais habituellement pas plus tôt que six heures et pas plus tard que vingt heures. Notre estimation du nombre de services de garde en familial réglementés offrant des horaires atypiques fluctue davantage, s'appuyant sur les données provenant de quatre provinces et

territoires seulement. Pour les neuf autres provinces et territoires, il n'y a pas de données à cet égard ou aucun service de garde en milieu familial réglementé. Parmi les provinces qui ont rapporté avoir des services de garde en milieu familial réglementés offrant des services à des heures atypiques, la Colombie-Britannique a indiqué que 5 pour cent de ces services offraient des horaires atypiques en soirée et l'Ontario a indiqué que 7 pour cent offraient des services la nuit. Au Québec, les fonctionnaires ont rapporté que très peu de services de garde en milieu familial réglementés étaient ouverts à des heures atypiques malgré l'offre substantielle de ce mode de garde dans la province. Au Yukon, environ 9 pour cent des services de garde en milieu familial réglementés ont des heures d'ouverture atypiques. Les fonctionnaires du Manitoba et de la Saskatchewan ont indiqué que la plupart des services de garde à horaires atypiques étaient offerts en milieu familial, mais les provinces n'avaient pas de chiffres précis.

Nous avons observé que toutes les provinces et tous les territoires diffusent maintenant en ligne une liste des services de garde réglementés offerts sur leur territoire. Dans certains endroits, des renseignements sont colligés au moyen d'une enquête provinciale ou territoriale sur l'offre de services de garde à horaires non usuels ou des données sont recueillies dans le cadre du processus de

délivrance des permis. Aussi, dans six provinces, l'information sur les services de garde ouverts à des heures non usuelles est diffusée en ligne, mais il faut parfois faire une recherche service par service pour trouver ces renseignements. On voit donc que la situation pourrait être considérablement améliorée afin de faciliter l'accès à l'information sur les services de garde à horaires atypiques et d'aider les parents à trouver de tels services dans leur milieu lorsqu'ils existent. Évidemment, ces listes sur Internet seront utiles dans la mesure où elles sont exactes, à jour et facilement accessibles. Le peu d'information sur l'offre de services de garde en milieu familial réglementés demeure un problème non résolu qui restreint l'accès à ce mode de garde et limite la possibilité d'évaluer l'amélioration des services qui y sont offerts.

Nous avons bon espoir toutefois, en fonction de notre survol des politiques et des activités à l'échelle du pays en matière de services de garde, que les provinces et les territoires entendent prendre des mesures pour régler ce problème. Malgré les différences d'approches, de définitions et de solutions d'une province et d'un territoire à l'autre, avoir plus d'information, de collaboration, de données et de recherche sur les initiatives entourant la garde d'enfants à horaires atypiques, ses succès et ses difficultés serait fort utile. Une approche uniforme et systématique pour la collecte de données et d'informations à l'échelle du

Canada permettrait aux provinces et aux territoires d'améliorer le traitement de ces questions. Par exemple, ce type d'approche les aiderait (i) à répondre aux besoins de services de garde à horaires non usuels non comblés des parents (ii) à soutenir les services de garde dans leurs efforts pour ouvrir à des heures non usuels et (iii) à déterminer dans quelle mesure les initiatives en cours sont efficaces pour apporter les changements sur le terrain dont ont besoin les familles et les enfants.

Leçons tirées de l'analyse des profils des services de garde offrant des horaires prolongés et des services flexibles.

Notre analyse de sept services de garde au pays (dont un avait offert le service pendant plus de 23 ans, mais qui a fermé ses portes) confirme que le financement et le soutien des gouvernements, des employeurs et des syndicats sont essentiels pour mettre sur pied des services de garde à horaires atypiques et les maintenir au fil du temps. Des projets pilotes subventionnés sont ce qui a donné naissance à trois des sept initiatives examinées, mais l'arrêt du financement ainsi que d'autres modifications aux politiques provinciales ont pu avoir pour effet de fragiliser ces services, soit en réduisant leur capacité à servir les parents et les enfants soit en mettant à risque la viabilité du service. Outre les considérations financières, nos informatrices et informateurs clés ont souligné le fardeau

administratif et les défis en matière de ressources humaines qui s'ajoutent lorsque l'on sert plus d'enfants et de familles, surtout si on aspire à une plus grande flexibilité pour accommoder les parents qui travaillent à des heures non usuelles. Les gestionnaires ont également souligné des problèmes de recrutement et de rétention du personnel pour les quarts de soirée. Quelques-unes de nos informatrices clés ont soulevé des problèmes propres à l'offre de services à horaires non usuels en milieu familial ou de services à court terme au domicile de l'enfant. En voici quelques exemples : la difficulté de conserver les responsables de garde, les coûts pour assurer un nombre minimum d'heures par semaine aux responsables de garde et la difficulté de garantir la flexibilité dans un petit milieu familial.

Il est à noter que les services de garde à horaires atypiques offerts avec succès pendant plusieurs années avaient tendance à être offerts dans une garderie ou un centre de la petite enfance bien établi et très expérimenté en gestion de services de garde et de services connexes, et ils avaient une direction attitrée. Il faut également mentionner que les sept services examinés ont tous eu accès à des sources de financement additionnelles ou à des contributions importantes pour payer leurs coûts de fonctionnement. Néanmoins, même ces garderies et centres de la petite enfance ont eu du mal à répondre aux besoins des

familles tout en maintenant la qualité de soins qu'ils étaient déterminés à offrir.

Beaucoup d'inconnues

De nombreuses questions demeurent sans réponse entourant le travail atypique des parents et les services de garde, des questions qui doivent être étudiées à fond notamment dans le cadre d'une recherche longitudinale et d'études quantitatives et qualitatives bien conçues et rigoureuses. Plus précisément, nous ne comprenons pas au juste pourquoi les parents de jeunes enfants travaillent à des heures non usuelles, y compris dans quelle mesure ils le font à cause des exigences de leur emploi ou comme solution leur permettant de se relayer entre parents pour la garde des enfants ou parce qu'ils ne trouvent pas ou n'ont pas les moyens de payer un service de garde réglementé de bonne qualité auquel ils ont confiance. Combien de mères de familles à faible et moyen revenu, au lieu de travailler à temps partiel ou à des heures non usuelles, opteraient pour un travail à temps plein si elles avaient accès à un service de garde réglementé de qualité et abordable? Combien confieraient leurs enfants à des services de garde en milieu familial réglementés ou titulaires d'un permis s'ils étaient plus nombreux et plus facilement accessibles dans

leur milieu? Nous devons aussi connaître les conséquences à long terme pour les femmes, les familles et les enfants lorsque travailler et faire garder les enfants est si difficile.

De plus, il faut faire plus de recherche sur des aspects précis du travail atypique. Notamment, il faut se pencher sur des stratégies de gestion des ressources humaines efficaces qui évitent les changements de quarts de travail sans grand préavis ou donnent aux parents une certaine maîtrise sur leurs heures de travail. Nous devons également examiner à fond les liens entre les heures de travail non usuelles et d'autres formes de travail atypique, notamment voir quels travailleurs et travailleuses bénéficient ou ne bénéficient pas de droits dans le domaine du travail, de mesures de protection et d'avantages sociaux, comme l'assurance-emploi. Enfin, de nombreuses questions demeurent pour les fournisseurs des services de garde et les décideurs. Notamment, il faut mieux comprendre comment les politiques, les pratiques et les programmes de financement peuvent soutenir plus efficacement l'offre de services de garde flexibles et de qualité élevée.

Nous insistons sur le fait que faute d'efforts ciblés pour recueillir de façon systématique et en temps opportun des données dans les provinces et les territoires sur les politiques, les programmes de financement et l'offre de services, notre compréhension de l'offre de

services de garde au Canada demeurera incomplète et source de frustration. Les chercheur.e.s et les décisionnaires ont besoin de données cohérentes et récurrentes afin de déterminer d'où l'on part et d'évaluer l'efficacité des nouvelles initiatives et politiques. Cette information est importante pour faire le suivi des dépenses publiques et vérifier si les améliorations apportées sont conformes aux dispositions du Cadre multilatéral et des ententes bilatérales intervenues avec les provinces et les territoires. Certaines provinces ont lancé des initiatives et des programmes de financement visant à soutenir les services de garde qui ont des heures d'ouverture non usuelles, mais on ne sait tout simplement pas combien de services de garde le font. Nous ne savons pas non plus l'étendue des horaires non usuels, c'est-à-dire combien d'heures sont offertes, ni combien d'enfants en bénéficient, et nous ne savons pas non plus combien de responsables de services de garde en milieu familial réglementés proposent des horaires prolongés ou leurs services en fin de semaine. C'est donc dire qu'il n'est pas possible de déterminer le nombre de familles ayant besoin de services de garde à des heures atypiques qui peuvent avoir accès à ces services ni le nombre de familles dont les besoins ne sont pas comblés.

Certains constats importants à retenir de cette étude

Nous avons noté que la question des services de garde à horaires atypiques a déjà été étudiée au Canada. Toutefois, notre recherche, grâce aux cinq approches employées, a permis de dégager plusieurs nouveaux constats importants ou enseignements utiles dont certains peuvent servir concrètement à l'élaboration des politiques publiques, à de futures recherches, à la collecte et l'analyse de données et à alimenter le débat.

Nous soulignons que:

1. L'expression « heures non usuelles ou atypiques » est d'acception vaste et imprécise. La signification qu'on lui donne présentement limite notre compréhension des horaires de travail, des besoins des parents et de la nature de l'offre de services de garde « à horaires atypiques ». Nous faisons valoir qu'une approche plus fine serait utile. Il est clair que les services de garde – même s'ils sont bien soutenus – peuvent répondre plus facilement à certains régimes de travail atypiques qu'à d'autres. L'éventail de services de garde offerts varie de « modérément

atypique » à « très atypique » et, dans le même ordre d'idées, les besoins des familles varient de services de garde aux heures d'ouverture légèrement prolongées ou ouverts la fin de semaine – ce qui est plus facile à maintenir – jusqu'aux services de garde ouverts la nuit ou tard en soirée – ce qui est plus difficile à financer et à maintenir.

2. Nous constatons également qu'il est important de faire la distinction entre un service de garde « flexible » et un service de garde « à horaire atypique », car même si les deux concepts sont apparentés, ils ne sont pas identiques. Par « flexibilité », on entend généralement que les modalités du service peuvent changer ou être adaptées « sur demande », ce qui peut s'appliquer à la fois à un service de garde à horaire typique et à un service de garde à horaire atypique. La flexibilité engendre d'importants problèmes pour les fournisseurs de services sur le plan du personnel et de la gestion. Il reste que de nombreux parents ont besoin de services de garde flexibles afin de travailler. Il est à noter que les fournisseurs de services interviewés dans le cadre de notre étude étaient disposés à faire des efforts pour fournir des services de garde flexibles de même qu'à offrir des heures d'ouverture non

usuelles de manière à mieux répondre aux besoins des familles et de leur collectivité.

3. Notre recherche démontre que nous devons mieux comprendre la relation entre le travail des parents, la composition de la famille et le besoin et leur désir d'un service de garde. Nos entrevues avec les parents ainsi qu'avec nos informatrices clés pour la préparation des profils de services de garde nous ont dit qu'une famille dont un parent travaille à des heures non usuelles, dépendamment des options dont elle dispose pour la garde des enfants, n'a pas nécessairement besoin d'un service de garde à horaire atypique et n'en désire peut-être pas, ou le contraire.
4. Nous avons appris que les parents qui ont besoin de services de garde à horaires atypiques peuvent aussi bénéficier de l'accès à un service de garde fiable à horaire régulier comme pôle d'ancrage à leur « assortiment de modes de garde ». Notre analyse de la documentation et nos entrevues avec les parents ont démontré que ce pôle d'ancrage permet de stabiliser les expériences quotidiennes des familles et fournit aux enfants un programme éducatif de bonne qualité.

5. Cette étude est la première à analyser les données de Statistique Canada sur le travail atypique des parents dans le cadre d'une exploration des services de garde offerts à des heures d'ouverture non usuelles. Même si les données permettent de dégager de nombreux constats intéressants à propos des personnes et du type d'emploi qu'elles occupent, elles ne fournissent pas de renseignements suffisamment précis pour répondre à des questions plus pointues. Or ces renseignements plus pointus sont nécessaires pour élaborer de bonnes politiques publiques et mettre en œuvre des modèles de prestation efficaces. Plus précisément, il n'y a pas de données sur le travail de fin de semaine des parents ni sur la nature des quarts de travail rotatifs et des horaires irréguliers. De plus, nous ne savons pas dans quelle mesure les parents sont informés d'avance de leurs changements d'horaire et s'ils bénéficient d'un peu de souplesse. Nous manquons aussi d'information sur la manière dont les parents coordonnent la garde à relai de leurs enfants et comment ils utilisent leur « assortiment de modes de garde ». Or, la garde à relai et les formules de garde multiples sont fréquentes d'après la documentation et nos entrevues. Par conséquent, nous avons besoin d'un programme de collecte de données et de recherche qui permettra d'élaborer des politiques et de créer des services bien adaptés, aux bons endroits, et pour les populations visées.
6. Selon les propos des parents interviewés, le recours à un assortiment de modes de garde fragmentés semble encore plus répandu que prévu au départ. Ce constat est important, car ce jeu constant d'équilibre et de conciliation entraîne un stress pour les familles, notamment pour les mères, et crée des conditions difficiles pour les jeunes enfants chez qui la continuité des soins est d'une importance primordiale.
7. Nous notons qu'à l'échelle des provinces et des territoires, on met en place des politiques et on lance des projets pilotes, mais que les travaux ne sont pas coordonnés et qu'il n'y a pas d'évaluation globale des modèles à l'essai, de leur succès ou des problèmes rencontrés. Dans le même ordre d'idées, on nous a dit qu'en général il y a peu d'échange de renseignements ou de coordination entre les fournisseurs de services aux fins d'améliorer l'offre de services, et ce, même au sein d'une même province.

8. Enfin, soulignons le commentaire perspicace d'une de nos observatrices averties tiré d'un des profils de nos garderies exemplaires. Lorsque nous lui avons demandé à quoi était attribuable le succès de cette garderie, voici sa réponse : « Ce n'est pas tellement une question de succès, mais plutôt une question d'avoir survécu ». Ce commentaire traduit le fait que le dossier des services de garde à horaires non usuels compte de nombreux « non-succès », c'est-à-dire des programmes qui n'ont pas survécu ou des services qui ont mis fin au volet de leurs « heures non usuelles ».

atypiques et le travail précaire sont des enjeux fondamentaux en matière de politiques publiques; ils sont associés aux droits des travailleurs et à l'offre et au maintien « d'emplois décents ». Ces dimensions de la vie professionnelle sont d'une importance cruciale pour les individus et les familles. Elles ont des répercussions sur la sécurité du revenu et sur la capacité des parents à concilier leurs responsabilités professionnelles et familiales. Finalement, la relation entre le travail atypique et l'apprentissage et la garde des jeunes enfants a clairement de profondes répercussions sur les questions de justice sociale, notamment pour les femmes, pour les Autochtones et la réconciliation, et pour les personnes marginalisées.

Observations générales

Notre recherche sur le travail atypique et les heures de travail non usuelles des parents met également en relief des enjeux importants pour les décisionnaires et la société canadienne en général. Notre première observation porte sur la croissance du travail atypique et précaire. Un nombre croissant de Canadiennes et de Canadiens, surtout des parents, se retrouvent à travailler à des « heures asociales », c'est-à-dire à des heures qui sont incompatibles avec le rythme de la vie de famille, de la vie sociale et des activités normales des enfants. Les accords internationaux et les recherches sur le sujet indiquent que les horaires de travail

Ces préoccupations sont évidentes lorsque l'on considère les familles qui ont de jeunes enfants. Ces familles ont recours quotidiennement à des ressources financières, personnelles et communautaires pour s'assurer que leurs enfants vivent leur petite enfance en sécurité dans un environnement stable, positif, stimulant et propice à leur développement et leur mieux-être. L'accès à des services éducatifs et de garde à l'enfance de bonne qualité et réglementés au Canada et le coût de ces services sont des préoccupations persistantes au Canada. Aujourd'hui, on craint de plus en plus que le manque de politiques publiques et de programmes entourant le travail atypique des

parents ne rende encore plus difficile l'accès à des services de garde à l'enfance de bonne qualité et de plus, ne crée d'autres obstacles à la sécurité économique des femmes.

Pour toutes ces raisons, il est important de considérer dans quelle mesure et de quelle façon les politiques publiques et les pratiques en milieu de travail peuvent mieux protéger les parents-travailleurs ainsi que tous les autres travailleurs et travailleuses. Ces politiques et ces pratiques devraient viser à protéger les travailleuses et les travailleurs contre les aspects les plus nocifs du travail précaire et à améliorer l'accès à des régimes de travail leur permettant d'avoir une vie familiale équilibrée. Elles devraient prendre en considération les types d'emplois qui doivent être exécutés à des heures non usuelles et comment faire pour mieux gérer les horaires de travail atypiques dans l'intérêt des employé.e.s, de la clientèle et des organisations. Ces politiques devraient également inclure des mesures de protection et d'équité améliorées au chapitre des codes du travail ainsi que des mesures tenant compte de la situation familiale au chapitre des droits de la personne. Enfin, elles devraient prévoir des modifications aux normes du travail qui permettent aux parents et autres fournisseurs de soins en vertu de la loi de demander un régime de travail plus flexible, comme c'est le cas actuellement au Royaume-Uni, en Australie, en Nouvelle-Zélande, dans quelques États des États-Unis, et plus récemment dans le Code

canadien du travail. Il est essentiel de modifier certaines pratiques en milieu de travail, notamment celle qui porte sur les avis préalables de changement de quart de travail lorsque possible.

Une deuxième préoccupation générale renvoie à la question suivante : qu'est-ce qui est le mieux pour les *enfants* lorsque leurs parents travaillent à des heures non usuelles ou ont des horaires de travail atypiques? Soulignons que ni l'organisme fédéral subventionnaire de cette recherche ni les membres de notre équipe de recherche n'ont désigné au départ cette question comme centrale ou devant être expressément abordée dans le cadre de l'étude. Or, en cours de recherche, plusieurs de nos informatrices et informateurs clés et réviseur.e.s l'ont soulevée en tant qu'enjeu important à considérer et examiner plus globalement. Pour examiner cette question plus globalement et de façon approfondie, il faudra assurément faire d'autres recherches et discuter des différentes façons de mieux concilier les besoins des familles et des enfants et les exigences du milieu de travail.

Une dernière préoccupation fondamentale porte sur la nécessité de réformer en profondeur les politiques en matière d'apprentissage et de garde des jeunes enfants afin de s'attaquer globalement aux problèmes d'accessibilité, d'abordabilité, de qualité, de flexibilité et d'inclusivité. Notre analyse

démontre sans équivoque que des mesures partielles pour améliorer l'offre de services de garde dans un marché mixte comme celui du Canada ne suffisent pas. Les mesures partielles ont pour résultat que de nombreuses familles et enfants n'ont pas accès aux programmes d'apprentissage et de garde des jeunes enfants si importants pour soutenir les familles et promouvoir le développement des enfants durant la petite enfance. Les mesures pour améliorer l'accès à des services de garde à horaires atypiques à un nombre limité de familles en aident sans doute certaines, mais ces initiatives doivent faire partie d'un éventail beaucoup plus vaste de mesures visant à améliorer les politiques et les programmes de garde d'enfants au Canada.

La présente étude n'est pas la première à mettre en lumière la futilité de tenter de répondre aux besoins de garde particulièrement difficiles à combler des parents qui travaillent à des heures non usuelles sans procéder à une réforme de l'ensemble du système d'apprentissage et de garde des jeunes enfants. Pour citer une chercheuse: « C'est comme essayer de servir le dessert avant le mets principal ». Afin de fournir efficacement les services de garde à horaires atypiques dont il est question dans le présent rapport, l'apprentissage et la garde des jeunes enfants au Canada doivent s'inscrire dans un véritable système planifié, financé à même les fonds publics et répondant aux

besoins de la population. En vertu du système en place, il est non seulement difficile, mais pour l'essentiel impossible de répondre de manière concluante aux besoins uniques et variés des personnes qui travaillent à des heures non usuelles. Pour conclure, même les initiatives novatrices visant à répondre aux besoins des familles, tout en profitant possiblement à un petit nombre d'entre elles, ne peuvent se substituer aux changements systémiques et transformateurs requis.

Recommandations:

Les modifications apportées aux politiques publiques entourant l'apprentissage et la garde des jeunes enfants afin de permettre aux familles canadiennes d'accéder plus facilement à des services éducatifs et de garde à l'enfance de qualité et abordables aideront aussi les parents qui travaillent à des heures non usuelles. Néanmoins, nous formulons des recommandations visant spécifiquement les besoins de services de garde des parents qui travaillent à des horaires atypiques.

Nous reconnaissons qu'il n'existe pas de solution facile et uniforme pour régler les problèmes des parents qui travaillent à des heures non usuelles dans un pays où les services de garde sont ni accessibles ni abordables pour la plupart des familles. C'est particulièrement le cas des parents dont les

heures de travail sont irrégulières ou changent sans grand préavis. Certaines de nos recommandations portent sur l'importance de réduire la probabilité pour des parents de se retrouver avec un horaire de travail irrégulier « asocial », surtout lorsque les changements de quarts de travail ne sont pas connus d'avance. En outre, nous réitérons qu'il est impératif selon nous que les initiatives stratégiques et les nouveaux programmes soient ancrés dans des services de garde de bonne qualité qui (i) favorisent des relations constantes et stables entre les enfants et le personnel et les autres enfants (ii) fournissent un milieu stimulant et des soins adaptés aux enfants et (iii) répondent à leur niveau de connaissances, leurs intérêts et leurs capacités.

Nous poursuivons avec plaisir la discussion avec les décideurs, les professionnels du milieu des services de garde et les parents afin de mettre sur pied et soutenir des programmes et des services de bonne qualité, aptes à mieux répondre aux besoins des parents et des enfants qui n'y ont pas accès dans les conditions actuelles.

Nos premières recommandations portent plus précisément sur des mesures visant à promouvoir la discussion et le dialogue avec et entre les décideurs et les fournisseurs de services de garde à l'enfance. Le but de ces discussions est de favoriser le partage des connaissances et un processus de

changement dynamique en matière de politiques et de programmes. Elles sont suivies de recommandations générales.

Nous recommandons que dans un délai de six mois:

- **Emploi et Développement Social Canada (EDSC)** consente des fonds pour la tenue d'une ou de plusieurs tables rondes/groupes de planification réunissant des décideurs aux échelles provinciale, territoriale et municipale le cas échéant. Le but de ces rencontres sera de partager l'information recueillie au cours de la présente recherche, d'évaluer les besoins et d'élaborer des plans pour mettre en œuvre et évaluer des initiatives particulières visant à (i) accroître l'offre de services à horaires non usuels et à coût abordable en garderie et en service de garde en milieu familial réglementé et (ii) à surveiller l'évolution des politiques, la participation et la viabilité.
- EDSC fournisse les ressources nécessaires à la collaboration des différents acteurs sous forme de tables rondes ou de rencontres réunissant des organisations (garderies, agences ou centres de la petite enfance) offrant avec succès des services de garde à des heures atypiques afin qu'ils puissent

partager leurs expériences, leur savoir, leurs pratiques exemplaires, ainsi qu'échanger sur les difficultés rencontrées. Ces rencontres aideront les praticien.ne.s à accroître l'offre de services de garde à heures non usuelles et leur permettront de partager leur savoir avec les décisionnaires.

- Un groupe de travail composé de décisionnaires et d'expert.e.s issus du milieu reçoit des fonds pour faire avancer ces travaux et mettre de l'avant des lignes directrices sur le plan des politiques et des pratiques.

De plus, nous recommandons que

Le gouvernement du Canada

- S'appuie sur le Cadre multilatéral, le finance, le renforce et l'étende afin qu'il soutienne et favorise l'accès à des services de garde réglementés de bonne qualité et abordables pour tous les enfants et parents, y compris les parents qui travaillent à des heures non usuelles.
- Travaille de concert avec le groupe d'expertes sur l'apprentissage et la garde des jeunes enfants du ministre de l'EDSC et avec d'autres ministères, comme Femmes et Égalité des genres Canada (FEGC), l'Agence de la santé publique du

Canada et le ministère du Travail, ainsi qu'avec d'autres expert.e.s et représentant.e.s de la communauté à l'examen des besoins en matière de garde d'enfants et utilise les données les plus probantes disponibles pour recommander les façons les plus efficaces d'atteindre les objectifs du Cadre multilatéral sur l'apprentissage et la garde des jeunes enfants.

- Travaille de concert avec les provinces et les territoires, les communautés autochtones et Statistique Canada à l'élaboration d'un programme de recherche et de collecte de données et à l'évaluation des besoins en matière d'apprentissage et de garde des jeunes enfants et des services offerts, y compris l'enjeu des services de garde pour les parents qui ont des horaires de travail atypiques.
- Facilite la recherche et l'élaboration de politiques publiques qui correspondent aux dispositions du Cadre stratégique de l'Organisation internationale du travail sur le travail décent, notamment la conciliation travail, famille et vie personnelle.
- Partage avec les provinces et les territoires l'information et la documentation pertinentes aux récentes

modifications apportées au Code canadien du travail en vertu des projets de loi C-63 et C-86. Cela comprend les règlements et le matériel pédagogique pour améliorer les mesures de protection qui seraient bénéfiques pour les parents et les personnes qui ont des horaires de travail non usuels.

- Étudie et examine de façon globale et complète les besoins en matière de garde d'enfants, l'emploi des parents, leur participation à des programmes d'études/formation et les habitudes d'utilisation des services de garde afin de mieux comprendre les enjeux actuels et d'éclairer la planification stratégique.
- Analyse dans quelle mesure le travail atypique chez les femmes et la pénurie de garderies et de services de garde en milieu familial ouverts à des heures non usuels affectent les femmes, par exemple en contribuant (i) à l'écart salarial des mères et à leurs possibilités de promotion restreintes (ii) à leurs difficultés de concilier travail et famille et (iii) à leur surcroît de travail non rémunéré et de stress en raison de leurs options limitées pour faire garder leurs enfants.

Les gouvernements provinciaux et territoriaux

- Qu'ils élaborent en collaboration avec le gouvernement fédéral et d'autres provinces et territoires des politiques permettant de bâtir un système rendant les services de garde réglementés et de qualité plus accessibles et abordables pour les parents qui travaillent à des heures non usuelles, ainsi que pour ceux qui ont des horaires de travail typiques. Ces politiques devraient faire en sorte que toutes les familles désireuses d'utiliser un service de garde en trouvent un approprié, accessible, de bonne qualité et abordable au moment où elles le veulent et à l'endroit où elles en ont besoin.
- Qu'ils passent en revue et examinent leurs approches en matière de services de garde à horaire atypique et produisent d'autres plans pour répondre aux besoins non comblés; qu'ils mettent en place des mécanismes permanents pour évaluer leurs initiatives dans ce domaine, notamment le taux de participation par service et les modes de fonctionnement viables pour les heures de service non usuels; et qu'ils réduisent les entraves aux heures d'ouverture atypiques en garderie et garde en milieu familial réglementée.

- Qu'ils élaborent des plans pour favoriser la collaboration entre provinces et territoires et un meilleur partage d'informations, de données et de recherches entourant les services de garde à horaires atypiques.
- Qu'ils mettent en place/étendent et soutiennent sur une base récurrente les programmes de financement destinés aux services de garde dont les heures d'ouverture et les services sont prolongés. Ces programmes de financement doivent tenir compte du véritable coût d'offrir des services de garde à des heures non usuelles, ils doivent être largement accessibles et s'inscrire dans une approche planifiée et publique.
- Qu'ils fournissent aux parents des renseignements aisément accessibles, y compris des listes à jour consultables (en ligne et imprimées) des garderies et des services de garde en milieu familial réglementés dans leur province ou territoire. Ces listes devraient comprendre des renseignements sur les services de garde réglementés qui offrent des services à des heures non usuelles et des services de garde flexibles et faire mention, le cas échéant, de leur association avec des municipalités, des administrations régionales et des organismes communautaires.

Les ministères du Travail provinciaux et territoriaux

- Qu'ils reconnaissent l'existence accrue du travail atypique et précaire et examinent les politiques en milieu de travail et les mesures de protection pour s'assurer que les travailleurs et travailleuses qui occupent des emplois atypiques ne sont pas désavantagés au chapitre de leurs droits du travail, de l'équité salariale et des congés parentaux.
- Qu'ils renforcent les normes du travail de manière à ce que, dans la plupart des cas, les horaires de travail ne puissent pas être modifiés de façon arbitraire et sans grand préavis.

Les employeurs

- Qu'ils appliquent des pratiques de gestion des ressources humaines exemplaires et respectueuses des droits de la personne en tenant compte de la situation familiale de leurs employé.e.s et qu'ils prennent en compte les besoins des travailleurs et des travailleuses qui sont des parents lorsqu'ils déterminent leurs régimes de travail et leurs politiques: horaires de travail (y compris les heures supplémentaires), préavis pour les changements de quarts et modalités de travail souples.

- Qu'ils élaborent des politiques en milieu de travail visant à répondre aux problèmes auxquels font face les parents qui doivent travailler à des heures non usuelles. Ce travail devrait se faire en collaboration avec les syndicats concernés et d'autres comités dans le milieu de travail et il devrait être reconnu que certaines situations et circonstances exigent des horaires de travail atypiques.

La communauté de la recherche

- Qu'elle collabore avec le gouvernement fédéral et les gouvernements provinciaux et territoriaux à l'élaboration d'une méthodologie de collecte de données fiables et cohérentes dans chaque province et partout au Canada. Ces données devraient viser expressément les services de garde et les répercussions des politiques publiques sur les familles, les enfants et sur certaines sous-populations en particulier, notamment les parents qui travaillent à des heures non usuelles.
- Qu'elle mène des recherches pertinentes à la prise de décisions stratégiques afin d'accroître les connaissances sur des sujets liés aux familles, aux enfants et à l'emploi, y compris les heures de travail atypiques et les services de garde à horaires non usuels.



CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Finding and affording regulated child care services is a challenge for many parents in Canada and is even more challenging for the increasing number of parents who have non-standard work hours. *Non-standard work schedules* can include regular evening or night shifts, rotating shifts, weekends, irregular schedules where individuals are on-call, and more. Such schedules can present unique complications for parents who require reliable and affordable child care for their young children. These challenges are multiplied when work is precarious, which can result in insecurity about the availability of work as well as the adequacy of family income. Even more difficulties can occur when parents do not know their work schedules in advance, have little choice over their schedules, or have few affordable care options available in their community.

This research report examines non-standard work and child care in Canada. Through quantitative and qualitative data, as well as through policy and program analysis, we present an overview of the challenges associated with child care when parents are employed outside the ‘standard’ working day.

Non-standard work hours have been identified as a critical dimension of job quality, with important implications for people’s health, well-being and marital stability [7-11]. Non-standard hours can disrupt and limit the time spent together as a family, which may negatively

affect children’s development and behavior [7-10]. “Unsocial work hours”, as Europeans describe them, conflict with the rhythms of daily life, especially for children, undermining the quality of family life and efforts to reconcile work and family responsibilities.

Contemporary families are complex, and their child care needs, practices, and solutions vary according to family circumstances. Some parents may benefit by spending more individual time with their children by off-shifting their work schedules, in part to reduce the financial costs and difficulties of finding

appropriate non-parental child care; however, research shows that parents generally work non-standard hours because of the nature of the work and employer requirements, rather than by choice. Additionally, tag-team parenting arrangements caused by off-shifting are not without their own costs [12].

One of the critical issues related to non-standard work hours is the availability of affordable and consistent child care arrangements. Such arrangements allow parents to work productively and to earn an adequate income while providing children with stable quality care that stimulates and supports their development. For vulnerable families and individuals with limited income and resources, however, the disadvantages of non-standard work are particularly notable. In her seminal investigation of the effects of shift work on family life, Harriet Presser noted that non-standard work schedules are especially detrimental to mothers with low levels of education, who are more likely to work non-standard schedules that result in “complex childcare arrangements involving multiple providers and informal caregivers” [11, 13]. These arrangements are particularly likely to break down, putting job stability and children’s well-being in jeopardy.

Our original analysis of Statistics Canada data finds that working non-standard hours is common among parents of young children. In

2016–2017, more than one in four mothers and fathers of young children (about 1.5 million parents) worked regular evening or night shifts, a rotating shift, or irregular hours. While the care crisis for parents with non-standard hours is becoming increasingly visible, it has been a Canadian reality for many decades, yet is most often treated as a private trouble rather than a public issue. As a result, parents are left on their own to secure the best child care they can. This is particularly difficult due to the wider issues that already constrain the availability and affordability of high-quality early childhood care. Under these circumstances, what do such parents do for their children while they are at work? And what policies and services could make a positive and substantial difference, given that all indications are that non-standard hours work is likely to continue or increase in the foreseeable future?

Today in Canada, a significant number of parents of young children must work in a labour force that is insensitive – and often blind – to their parenting responsibilities. They are often required to make hard choices about breadwinning and caregiving. A frequent result is that parents’ work hours are challenging for their families and their children. In this report, we accept parental non-standard work hours as a reality; however, we acknowledge that this defers larger questions. For example, is it good for children to have parents who work nights,

rotating shifts, weekends, and more? Is it good for children to be in child care programs in the evening or overnight? While setting aside these questions, we acknowledge that they must be raised and answered by public policy. In the meantime, we can draw on the population health approach of harm reduction. Today, the fact is that non-standard work hours are common among parents of young children, and therefore non-standard hours child care must be tackled.

Coordinated policy and funding changes are clearly necessary to ensure that Canadian children and parents have access to early learning and child care services. Licensed and regulated care provided in a child care centre or a regulated family home is expensive and scarce. There are licensed child care spaces for only 30% of Canadian children under the age of 12 years [14]. Fees for full-time care for young children are high outside of Québec and can cost over \$18,000/year per child in some cities [15]. Close to half of all Canadian children (44%) live in child care ‘deserts’ where services are not accessible at any price [6]. While many parents can have difficulties finding and affording regulated child care, it is dramatically

more difficult for parents who need care outside of standard hours.

In order to better support families and children’s development, the federal government developed two Early Learning and Child Care Framework agreements in 2017 and 2018 to guide policy and program development and announced new spending of \$7.5 billion over 11 years in order to “support and create more high-quality, affordable child care across the country” [4].

The 2017 Multilateral Early Learning and Child Care Framework was followed by three-year bilateral agreements with each province and territory³. This led to the development of action plans in alignment with the Framework’s guiding principles as well as a long-term vision “where all children can experience the enriching environment of quality early learning and child care so they can reach their full potential” (p. 6).

The Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care Framework, which was co-developed with First Nations, Métis and Inuit partners, is supported by a budget of \$1.7 billion over 11 years and recognizes the distinct aspirations and early learning and child care priorities of Indigenous

³ The Government of Québec supports the general principles of the Multilateral Framework but intends to remain solely responsible for early learning and child care within its jurisdiction. It will receive its share of the federal funding and will continue to invest in programs and services for families and children in Québec.

children, families and communities. Both Frameworks highlight the importance of quality, accessibility, affordability, flexibility and inclusivity in early learning and child care, including care for families who need non-standard hours child care. To help develop these frameworks, the federal government dedicated \$95 million over 10 years to provinces and territories and to Indigenous communities to close data gaps and undertake research to ensure policy decisions are based on evidence. The federal government further dedicated \$100 million to foster innovative practices to respond to current and emerging issues. The current research was commissioned specifically for this purpose.

Renewed federal attention and funding has been welcomed by provinces and territories, as well as by researchers, advocates and the child care sector. It has long been recognized that federal arrangements play a key role in Canada's child care landscape. Although provinces, territories, and Indigenous communities have legislative and funding jurisdiction, the federal government can play a major role in providing leadership, as it has in other social programs under provincial jurisdiction. Support at the federal level also leads to additional funding and encourages coordinated data collection and public reporting of expenditures.

Project goals

Our multi-faceted, multi-method research project has multiple objectives. Its central goals are:

- To generate new knowledge about Canadian parents' work arrangements and work schedules. This includes estimates of the number and proportion of parents of young children who work non-standard hours and a profile of their characteristics.
- To better understand the lived experiences and challenges of families with young children when one or both parents work non-standard hours. We address this through open-ended interviews with parents who discussed their primary mode of child care and their child care packages, among other concerns.
- To identify what is known about non-standard work, non-standard work hours, and non-standard hours child care in Canada. (Note that non-standard work hours is closely connected to non-standard work, but the two are not identical.) To achieve this goal, we synthesize the existing academic and non-academic literature. Throughout the report, we focus on the child care use

patterns and needs of parents with non-standard work schedules, undertaken through gender-based plus (GBA+) analysis.

- To update and summarize current provincial and territorial policies, initiatives and funding arrangements that influence the supply of non-standard hours child care in centres and regulated home child care.
- To learn from the field about regulated services that currently offer non-standard hours child care or have done so in the past. We conducted selected case studies to identify factors that are important for programs to provide non-standard hours care and be sustainable.

We undertook this project in order to develop recommendations to inform policy development, research, and practice. Ultimately, we aim to promote serious discussion about how to best meet the needs of families with young children when parents work non-standard hours. To achieve these goals, we must consider children's rights and

needs, as well as the critical role of child care policy for gender equity and social inclusion. At the same time, we must take into consideration economic and social priorities and recognize how labour standards and social protections could be used to reduce the potential negative impacts of precarious work.⁴ Finally, we use this research to produce short- and longer-term recommendations, including action for the federal government (ESDC and other departments), provincial/territorial governments, and municipal service managers and other stakeholders, as well as to identify an agenda for non-standard hours child care research in Canada.

Key terms and concepts

To aid in understanding some of the complex and inter-related ideas in this report, we will briefly clarify how the following terms are used in Canadian research and policy analysis: Non-standard hours; non-standard work; precarious work; non-standard hours child care and flexible child care.

⁴ For reasons of scope, this report does not focus on employment legislation and human rights legislation regarding family accommodation requirements. The important issue of employment standards legislation and employer's obligations to accommodate family caregiving, exemplified in the ground-breaking Fiona Johnstone case and many subsequent files, merits its own in-depth treatment. We refer readers to an overview: V16. Vanier Institute of the Family. *Family caregiving in Canada: A fact of life and a human right*. Ottawa: Vanier Institute of the Family; 2016. Available from: <https://vanierinstitute.ca/download/11771/16>.

Non-standard hours

We use non-standard hours to refer to the specific issue of how work hours are scheduled on a daily, weekly, or longer-term basis. In contrast to work that is scheduled consistently Monday-Friday, between 8:00 am and 6:00 pm, non-standard hours schedules typically include:

- regular evening shifts (generally ending before midnight and often by 10 pm)
- regular night shifts (extending past midnight) e.g., 7:00 pm – 3:00 am or 11:00 pm – 7:00 am
- rotating shifts (which may include any combination of days, evenings and nights), usually for a two- or three-week rotation
- split shifts, which may include several hours in the morning and several in the afternoon
- irregular hours – more variable schedules, including on-call, often with limited advance notice
- weekend work – whether as part of a regular, consistent schedule or a rotation.

In general, there are two methods for assessing non-standard hours. The first method is to obtain specific information about daily work start and end times through a time diary. The second method, which is more common, is to survey people using the terms listed above. (A detailed discussion of non-standard hours is presented in Chapter Two.) In many studies, all variations other than regular day shifts are lumped together as ‘shift work’. Non-standard hours refers to individuals working full or part time and is often presumed to apply mostly to people who are organizationally employed, although the same concepts can be applied to those who are self-employed.

An important aspect of non-standard hours work is the amount of notice that workers receive about schedule changes. In the U.S., 74% of hourly workers who are of childbearing age work jobs where their weekly hours vary. Recent U.S. studies show that many of these hourly workers receive little advance notice of changes in weekly hours, which affects both their income and their need for child care. Sixty-nine percent of mothers with children who are 12 years and younger report weekly fluctuations in hours and close to one-third of that group get one week or less advance notice of their weekly hours and schedule [17]. An important lesson learned by our team, particularly through in-depth interviews with parents who work non-standard hours, is that

unpredictability and lack of advance notice about work schedules is particularly stressful since child care needs are also affected by variable and unpredictable work schedules. (See Chapter Four.)

Non-standard work

In Canadian research, non-standard work refers to forms of work that contrast with permanent full-time positions in an organization. The term came into use in the early 1990s when the Economic Council of Canada issued a report on *Good Jobs, Bad Jobs* [18]. Cranford, Vosko and Zukewich [19] report that four main situations are identified as comprising non-standard work in contrast to “the norm of a full-time, full-year, permanent paid job”.

These are:

- part-time employment,
- temporary employment (including term or contract work, seasonal employment, casual or intermittent employment, and work for a temporary agency),
- own-account self-employment (a self-employed person with no employees), and
- multiple job holding.

These forms of work are not mutually exclusive. A recent analysis of labour force data revealed that both temporary employees and the self-employed are more likely to work part-time than permanent employees [20].

Readers should note that some researchers consider non-standard hours as a type of non-standard work, while others treat it as a dimension of a broader conceptualization of non-standard work that includes both these alternate forms of work and non-standard schedules. The two are related, but different. In some situations, for example, a person may be employed full-time on an ongoing basis but have a non-standard work schedule. It is believed, however, that non-standard forms of employment are more likely to include non-standard work hours, especially when work is low-waged.

Precarious work

Researchers and policy groups in Europe and Canada have made a distinction between non-standard work (forms) and precarious work or precarious employment as a status. The distinction is that precarious employment is associated with vulnerability and insecurity, whereas non-standard work does not necessarily share these qualities.

Four dimensions central to precarious employment are:

- Job insecurity (the degree of certainty of continued employment);
- Lack of control over working conditions, wages and the pace of work – lack of control is often associated with the lack of a trade union or collective representation;
- Whether the worker is covered under regulatory protection (labour standards, Employment Insurance, etc.); and
- Low income and/or insecure/variable income.

One can easily see that some forms of non-standard work such as temporary work, being on call, and own-account self-employment are closely associated with precarity. More recent accounts from gig workers, who lack control over their wages and working conditions, have emphasized their precarity and prompted discussion of how such workers can be treated more fairly under reformed labour standards that protect precarious workers. (See, for example, the final report of the Law Commission of Ontario (2012) on *Vulnerable workers and precarious work*.^[21])

Non-standard hours child care (“flexible” child care)

The term flexible child care is sometimes used interchangeably with non-standard hours child care; however, flexible child care can have its own unique meaning. For example, when programs make special arrangements for children who do not attend on a regular basis or when they accommodate changes in parents’ work schedules, it falls under the category of flexible child care. The majority of child care centres and half-day preschool programs have set hours and cater primarily to children who attend every day on a regular basis. Given typical starting and closing hours (Mondays-Fridays, roughly 7:00 am to 6:00 pm for full-day programs), non-standard hours provision may include:

- Slightly non-standard (extended) hours (6:00 am to 8:00 pm)
- Earlier morning and/or later night hours (5:00 am to 12:00 am)
- Very late night, overnight care (12:00 am onwards)
- Weekends (anytime on Saturday or Sunday)
- Seasonal care, which may include any of the above options

- On-request participation (including emergency care, flexible scheduling, special arrangements, or drop-in care.)

Information about the extent to which non-standard hours care options are available across Canada in licensed child care centres and regulated family child care homes is not collected in a systematic or consistent way, which makes it difficult to estimate the extent of provision and the degree of unmet needs. For this project, we tried to determine how many child care centres in Canada provide non-standard or flexible care as part of an environmental scan. We obtained information from each province and territory along with performing on-line searches. With numerous caveats about the reliability and completeness of the information available, our best estimate is that no more than two percent of child care centres offer any form of non-standard child care. Readers are referred to Chapter Five for more detailed information.

Contexts framing this study

Current contexts framing this study and our analysis include:

- Concerns about the uneven and limited availability of regulated, affordable, high quality, and inclusive early learning and child care;
- The opportunities and challenges that constrain current efforts to expand and improve child care provision including a shortage of qualified early childhood educators and trained and supported home child care providers operating with a license or through a licensed agency;
- Continuing debates and policy reversals in some provinces that frame public policy responses as either cash or care, as well as policy changes that destabilize child care provision;
- Continuing and increasing concerns about the future of work, including projections of growth in unstable, precarious employment;
- Lack of progress in addressing gender equity, including appreciation that child care policies have profound implications for women as parents and as workers; and
- Social justice concerns when access to high quality, affordable child care continues to be the least available to vulnerable families and children, regardless of parents' efforts to be employed and/or continue their education or training in order to provide for their children and enhance their development.

We pursue these ideas in the chapters that follow and reiterate that many of the challenges faced by parents who work non-standard hours could be addressed through a comprehensive approach to policy development and public funding that supports equitable access to high quality early education and care for all children in Canada.

A chief reason this study on non-standard hours work and child care is timely is related to gender equity. Given recent growth in women's labour force participation, most mothers now work for pay – about 70% of mothers of children under age two, 77% of mothers of children aged three to five years, and more than 80% of mothers of school-aged children [14]. Women assume a disproportionate share of many kinds of non-standard work and continue to carry heavier care burdens in the home [22]. Furthermore, the “spread of more precarious forms of employment is gendered” [19].

Finding affordable, available, high quality and inclusive child care has been a social problem for decades, negatively affecting women's equality and economic opportunities [23]. Recent analyses by Statistics Canada confirm that the employment gap between men and women is greater in cities with high child care fees [24].

This also results in increased stress on young families, and a failure to ensure all children have opportunities to benefit from early learning and child care services [23]. Work-family stress has long been identified as a challenge for employed mothers, one that is exacerbated by non-standard work. Thus, gender-sensitive analysis (including separately considering mothers' and fathers' work) is essential.

Equally important are concerns about how precarious work is distributed among Canadians. Evidence suggests that white men predominate in 'good jobs', and that recent immigrants and women of all racial/ethnic groups are over-represented in 'bad jobs', which have atypical hours [25, 26]. Indigenous peoples face further systemic economic gaps. Thus, precarious and non-standard work must be tackled through an intersectional lens, since diversity and inclusion are deeply implicated in the stratified Canadian labour market. Fundamentally, many non-standard workers are young, and have young children. Despite this prevalence, the public image of the 'Standard Employment Relationship' still reigns: this is one of many instances where public perception lags behind social reality. Thus, it is exceptionally timely to investigate the relationship between parents, non-standard work, and child care. Canada is not alone in confronting this challenge. In the U.S., about one in five workers is employed in either

permanent or rotating non-standard hours positions, and about one-third of these workers are parents of young children [27]. Some of the member states of the European Union are also concerned about parents with non-standard work [28].

Organization of this report

This report is written in seven chapters. Following this Introduction, Chapter Two presents a literature review on non-standard work, non-standard hours, and non-standard child care, primarily focusing on Canada while also drawing on international evidence. Chapter Three offers original analysis of the 2017 General Social Survey on Families. It outlines what we know about the prevalence and nature of non-standard work hours among parents of young children in Canada. It also explores what we know about mothers and fathers with non-standard work, with a focus

on how mothers' non-standard work schedules relate to child care use when the youngest child is aged one to five years. The voices and stories of mothers and one father make up Chapter Four, which looks closely and qualitatively at the experiences of different families with non-standard work. Chapter Five provides an inventory of early learning and child care policies including financing, with a focus on non-standard hours care. It also covers the available information on the extent of non-standard hours care service provision in regulated settings. A series of case studies of child care programs that offer, or have tried to offer, non-standard hours care is found in Chapter Six, allowing us to better understand what makes programs successful and what mitigates against their success. Finally, we propose practical and evidence-based recommendations in Chapter Seven. A bibliography and related appendices are found at the end of the report.



CHAPTER TWO

Non-Standard Work and Non-Standard Child Care: What Does the Literature Say?

This chapter reviews a wide range of Canadian and international literature to establish some common understandings about the prevalence and nature of non-standard work, workers, and work hours, and the availability of non-standard hours child care. In Canada, the term 'non-standard work' became widespread in the early 1990s to refer to jobs that differed from the traditional post-WW II employment model of the archetypal male breadwinner. In recent decades, under extensive economic restructuring, the concept of non-standard work has become more complex. Today, as the Introduction outlines, the term refers to an exceptionally broad phenomenon, which includes employment status, working conditions, and especially non-standard and atypical work hours. The first half of this chapter reviews both non-standard work as a broader concept and non-standard work hours as a specific dimension of non-standard work. In considering gender and other demographic factors, it describes what is known about the Canadian women and men who have non-standard work and non-standard hours. It offers an in-depth review of the literature in order to develop a full picture of non-standard work. The second half of the chapter considers the diverse ways that working parents with non-standard work hours accommodate their child care needs, drawing on international and Canadian literature.

Historically, the model of employment in Canada that has been taken-for-granted is one where a worker has one employer, works full-time from Monday to Friday, works year-round on the employer's premises, enjoys extensive statutory benefits and entitlements, and expects to be employed indefinitely [19]. This model has two important components: first, that it is a 'good job' in terms of quality and permanence, and second, that it has typical

work hours. The reality for many Canadian workers is quite different. In recent years, more than one in four workers (28%, or 4.1 million people) perform non-standard work [25], where *non-standard* is defined as anything that is not full-time, permanent work). Many people who perform non-standard work are parents. More than a decade ago, three in ten workers with non-standard hours (30.7%) had children under the age of fifteen [29]. The term working time

mosaic describes parents' alternating shifts, work nights, early mornings, weekends, and/or have multiple jobs [30]. These work schedules, also referred to as unsocial working hours, raise serious challenges for work-family integration and especially for child care arrangements. European and American researchers have shown that such work hours have negative effects on employees' perceptions of their work-life balance and increase their perceptions of conflict between work and family [10, 11, 30].

Within North America, research has been slow to address the plight of non-standard workers in general, and particularly of those who are parents. There are a few notable exceptions where research has focused on the challenges facing Canadian parents with non-standard work. First, the Childcare Resource and Research Unit (CRRU) raised the issue of non-standard work and child care as far back as 1994 as part of an ongoing effort to bring attention to the lack of affordable and effective child care in Canada [31]. This work culminated in a comprehensive paper published in 2015 that addressed the problem of non-standard work and child care, provided an overview of the topic, and highlighted the urgent need for further research in this area [32]. Additional research has examined specific sub-areas of this topic, such as non-standard work and child care in Québec (e.g., Albanese & Farr (2012), Gingras (2012) and Rochette & Deslauriers

(2003)) [33-35] and self-employment and child care challenges (Hilbrecht & Lero, 2014) [36].

Non-standard work

Non-standard work in Canada: Dimensions and history

Non-standard work is primarily characterized by what it is *not*. A review of definitions reveals that most authors approach the definition inversely, by beginning with standard work and creating contrasts against this model. As discussed in the Introduction, standard work is assumed to be performed by a permanent, full-time employee, Monday to Friday, in a consistent eight-hour daytime shift, between the hours of 8:00 am to 6:00 pm. Many studies of non-standard workers focus on people who work part time or who have temporary, seasonal or irregular/casual work. In the Standard Employment model, standard work hours are assigned in a stable and predictable schedule of roughly 40 hours per week [25, 37]. It is worth noting that the vision of a 'standard' work day is nation-specific. Both Canada and the U.S. consider 9:00 am to 5:00 pm to be normal, but in France, for example, researchers assume working hours are from 8:00 am to 6:00 or 7:00 pm [38].

Work can be considered non-standard along many different dimensions [39]. These dimensions can include employment status, security, annual patterns of work, notice of schedule changes, etc. In ‘good jobs’ workers have job security, decent pay and benefits, as well as some measure of control over their work process [40]. For example, workers in ‘good jobs’ can be certain of continuing employment, with jobs that have a defined schedule, and employment security. Some workers may have employment insurance, regulatory protection, and even be part of a union. Some have control over their working conditions and pace of work and can be paid enough to support themselves and their dependents. In contrast, non-standard jobs often do not provide many of these benefits. This can make non-standard work precarious, as addressed in Table 2.1.

As outlined in the beginning of this chapter, non-standard work is a broad phenomenon that considers variables related to employment *status* and work *hours*. In the discussion that follows, we first elaborate on the factors from Table 2.1 that are relevant to non-standard work as a matter of employment status, and then elaborate on the factors associated with non-standard work as it relates to work hours.

Table 2.1 Non-Standard Work Status and Work Hours Variables

	Standard	Non-standard
WORK STATUS FACTORS		
Employment Status	Full-time	Part-time or short hours (fewer than 20 per week)
Organizational vs. self-employment	Organizationally employed	Self-employed (own account)
Employment pattern	Full year	Part-year (e.g., seasonal) On call, casual, intermittent
Employment tenure /security	Secure, ongoing	Temporary or contract work Short-term or gig
Employment Insurance	Usually eligible	May or may not be eligible
Days off	Saturday and Sunday	Non-consecutive; irregular, at least some on weekdays
Number of jobs held	One	More than one
WORK HOURS FACTORS		
Start/end times	Regular	Irregular
Daily schedule	Within 8:00 am to 6:00 pm	Outside 8:00 am to 6:00 pm
Weekly schedule	Regular daytimes, Monday to Friday	Rotating shifts or irregular hours including evenings, nights, and/or weekends
Shift length	Eight consecutive hours	More or less than eight consecutive hours
Advance notice of work schedule	Provided at least one week in advance	No minimum notice

Three decades ago, young men and women (ages 15–24) were the main demographic group performing non-standard work. As a result, these young adults were the ones who

experienced the costs of working unstable and low-status jobs. Today, it is generally observed that non-standard work is widespread and deeply entrenched in our society [24], even

though some observers wrongly claim that “only a handful of sectors are responsible” [41] for the growth of employment that is associated with precarious work.

The effects of non-standard work have become increasingly visible, in part because they now affect the professional sector, as well as the service and manufacturing sectors [41]. Additionally, the growing presence of online, technologically mediated work platforms (such as Uber and Skip the Dishes) has increased the number of gig workers, which has increased the general awareness of non-standard work [42]. More generally, the labour market is being rapidly restructured in many ways. For example, there has been an increase in customized, just-in-time purchasing and delivery, as well as new roles for artificial intelligence in the workplace. These changes, as well as many others, can affect both work and work hours.

Very little research has focused on the work-family implications for parents who must manage both non-standard employment and child care in Canada. What is clear is that low-wage workers are more likely to work non-standard, unpredictable shifts, and that their child care choices are “deeply constrained by work schedules” [32]. The effects of non-standard employment on work-family arrangements are also highly gendered. Research demonstrates that mothers’ work

schedules influence child care use patterns much more than fathers’ schedules [34, 35, 43].

Non-standard workers

When we look closely at who performs non-standard work and who works non-standard hours, we see unequal representation by gender, age, education, immigration status, racialization, Indigeneity, income, and family status; however, a more nuanced understanding of how each of these socio-demographic factors relates to particular forms of non-standard work is required.

Women are more likely than men to have non-standard work (such as part-time work, or contract work), as well as generally lower quality jobs [44]. Due to occupational segregation, women are over-represented in the service sector, and in positions with less work-time flexibility, fewer benefits, lower pay, and poorer prospects for advancement [44]. Women are also more likely to do temporary work and have historically comprised the majority (70%) of part-time shift workers and more than one-third (37%) of full-time shift workers [20, 29]. Among full-time shift workers, women are more likely than men to work rotating or evening shifts [29]. The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives [45] estimates that 608,000 women currently work part-time, either because they have no choice or due to caregiving duties. Part-time work is paid

significantly less than full-time work, and the wage gap between full-time and part-time work is also gendered; women who work part-time earn 57% less than full-time wages while men earn 47% less [46].

Non-standard work schedules often have psychological and interpersonal consequences. Canadian research finds that shift workers report lower levels of satisfaction with their work-life balance [29]. Shift work and other atypical hours can cause workers to feel rushed and strained in their off-time and cause them to sacrifice their leisure time in order to fit in family activities or child care [47]. Mothers are particularly likely to experience 'contaminated' leisure time than fathers, since they spend more time multitasking with unpaid work, housework and child care when they are at home, unlike fathers who more often enjoy 'pure' leisure [47]. For mothers who perform non-standard work, this second shift [48] further reduces their already limited time to recharge, as they manage and coordinate the household and perform most of the unpaid household work [49]. As a result, many of the costs of non-standard work, such as low pay, low benefits, and negative effects on quality of life, are exacerbated for women with children and male partners.

The research indicates that young adults, particularly young women between the ages of 18 to 29 are more likely to work jobs with

irregular scheduling and few or limited opportunities for advancement [44]. Furthermore, people who work weekend, evening or night shifts, or who have mixed schedules, generally have less education and income than people who work standard hours and are more likely to be young [11].

Education appears to be related to certain aspects of non-standard work and lower job quality. Statistics Canada data show that workers with a high school diploma or less have a greater probability of working lower paying jobs that do not offer schedule flexibility or benefits [44]. For example, workers with only a high school education have a higher likelihood of working only part-time [41]. Some forms of non-standard work, such as "gig" work, however, claim to employ people with higher-than-average levels of education [50]. Additionally, increasing numbers of younger Canadians with higher levels of education are engaging in non-standard work [41].

Immigrants are more likely than Canadian-born employees to work part-time hours involuntarily, and this is especially true for those who have immigrated within the last five years [51]. Immigrants who are members of racialized communities (i.e., non-white or 'visible minorities') are significantly more likely than white immigrants to earn less than Canadian-born workers, making it more likely that they are engaged in non-standard work [51].

Studies of racialized immigrant women in Toronto find they are more likely to perform low-wage work with irregular schedules due to a lack of alternatives [52], and that they tend to earn lower pay overall than other workers [46]. Many visible minorities in Canada find employment with technologically mediated platforms: in the Toronto area, visible minorities comprise more than half (54%) of the gig workforce [50].

Racialized women are increasingly pushed into jobs that are on-call or temporary and are often subjected to unappealing or coercive tactics from their employers because of the barriers they face in finding employment elsewhere [53]. Such racialized employment segregation can also have negative health effects [53].

There are also important economic gaps between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians, including both in labour force participation rates and income. As a consequence of colonialism and on-going systemic inequity, many First Nations, Métis and Inuit Canadians experience increased economic vulnerability, barriers to education, and discrimination in the labour market. Indigenous peoples are over-represented in low paying jobs, have higher unemployment rates, and lower educational attainment than non-Indigenous Canadians [54]. First Nations (both on- and off-reserve), Inuit and Métis

populations face deeply rooted systemic barriers to inclusion in the workforce.

Low-income Canadians, particularly those who have limited education and job skills, may have limited options other than non-standard work. However, low income may also result from “choosing” non-standard work, since non-standard work often tends to be low paying. On average, Canadian non-standard workers earn just 57% of standard work wages (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development [55]). Those who do temporary work, work on contracts, or pick up on-call shifts (among other variable scheduling options) also experience lulls in work availability during which their income can drop sharply [56]. Lower-paid workers are also at increased risk of working non-standard jobs, since employers of lower-paid workers are increasingly moving to reduce advanced scheduling and to impose other elements of non-standard work [57]. Strazdins et al. [11] observed that disadvantaged families in which parents are unskilled or poorly educated were more likely to face the combination of low income and non-standard work schedules.

Family status also matters. Three out of four Canadian couples with a child under the age of six are dual earners, meaning both parents work at some time during the week [58]. In about half of all dual-earner parent couples at least one adult performs non-standard work [12]. In

both Canada and the U.S., a considerable proportion of parents in families with young children have non-standard work and/or non-standard hours work (current data are presented in Chapter Three). In contrast, in some countries, particularly those in Europe, the different organization of their labour markets and cultural attitudes, such as in the Netherlands, results in much lower rates of non-standard work among parents [28, 38, 59, 60].

In sum, non-standard work is a longstanding, persistent, and increasing feature of the Canadian economy and affects different Canadians differently. Forms of non-standard work are variable, and prevalence rates vary across countries. In Canada, non-standard workers are more likely to be women, parents, young adults, racialized and recent immigrants, Indigenous persons, and to have less formal education and earn lower incomes overall.

Non-standard work and non-standard hours

Non-standard work status (forms) and non-standard work hours (shown in Table 2.1) are distinct, yet often over-lapping. A person who works nights or weekends has a non-standard schedule, or what the European Union calls ‘unsocial hours’ [30]. Non-standard hours always indicates non-standard work, but non-standard work does not necessarily imply unsocial hours. As Halfon and Friendly explain, “work

that takes place during non-standard hours is not necessarily precarious and may still be full-time permanent work with the associated benefits” [32]. Where parents have both non-standard work and unsocial hours, their child care and related work-family challenges mount. A close look at the forms of non-standard work is helpful in mapping the landscape.

Non-standard work refers to any form of employment other than full-time, permanent employment. It includes on-call or casual work, including gig work; part-time work; temporary, contract, or seasonal work; and self-employment (particularly own-account self-employment where a person works on their own and is often not incorporated). On-call and casual work are common features of non-standard employment status. On-call workers must be available on short notice, often less than 24 hours ahead of a shift [61]. If a worker is guaranteed a minimum number of shifts (even with little or no advance notice), we consider this on-call work.

Casual work is similar to on-call work; however, casual workers have even less security, since their shift times can fluctuate because shifts are offered solely based on the employer’s needs [61]. Therefore, although both casual and on-call workers must be available for work whenever needed, casual workers have even less secure hours and income. Casual workers can be given zero-hours contracts, which do

not guarantee any hours within a pay period but do require workers to be constantly ready to pick up shifts [62]. Because work hours are highly unpredictable for casual workers, they must try to balance “boom and bust” cycles of work availability. As a result, they may take on heavy workloads at some points as a precaution since they may receive no work later. Employers hold significant control over the ongoing allocation of hours in zero-hours contracts, which makes casual workers vulnerable to exploitation. Some zero-hours contract workers report taking on shifts even when overworked, because they are afraid that their employer may withhold future work out of retaliation if they turn down shifts [62].

Part-time work is non-standard work [39, 58] and the number of part-time workers is growing in Canada. While some people choose part-time hours, others, who would prefer full-time hours, work part-time since it is their only option [57, 58]. Working part-time often results in a loss of protections and benefits, including reduced eligibility for Employment Insurance. Parents often find child care providers reluctant to enroll a child for part-time hours.

Seasonal work is another form of non-standard work. Many industries annually hire workers for a short and intensive season. This work may be full-time or part-time, with regular or irregular hours, and is followed by lay-offs during the industry’s slow season [56]. Agricultural workers

are a prime example [63]. Farmworkers, fishers, fish plant workers, and those involved in tourism make up the archetypical model of seasonal work, but there are others. For example, educational assistants (EAs) work full time in the public school system during the school year but lose their positions and income during the summer months. Retail work that intensifies in December is another example. Seasonal workers face pressure to accept irregular scheduling and demanding hours to maximize their chances of securing work with the same employer the next year.

Temporary workers, like seasonal workers, fill a position for a given period of time; however, the timing is usually unpredictable or part of a recurring cycle. Temporary workers work regular or irregular hours for an agreed-upon period. During this time, however, they have less control over their hours as well as fewer options than permanent employees. Temporary workers also do not gain seniority as they continue to work for a company the way that permanent employees do. As a result, they have less control over their future hours than permanent employees who tend to gain more control over their schedule over time [64].

Temporary work includes limited-term, non-renewable contracts and other short-term forms of work. Contract work involves regular or irregular work hours over a fixed period of time, after which the contract may or may not

be renewed [50]. Contract workers can lose their jobs more easily than people with permanent work positions since their employer can simply allow their contract to lapse. Freelance work is contract work that tends to be short-term or project-based, and also includes piece-work, such as creating and selling a single story or photo (for examples, see LexisNexis (2017) [65]). Freelance workers may be less likely to undertake long-term contracts and may pursue multiple forms of work over the same period [66].

Gigs are a newly prominent sub-set of short-term work. Gig workers complete tasks for individual clients, facilitated by online platforms that provide a structure for workers and clients to communicate [42]. A representative example is Uber, an online platform through which independent drivers choose their own hours by logging on whenever they would like to work. Online platforms allow workers to choose their hours with relative flexibility and independence. Workers' choices, however, are often constrained by the timing of when their services are most in demand, as well as the platform's regulations and needs [67]. Gig work hours are unstable and lack any guarantees. Recent legal challenges have been launched to clarify the status of gig workers; drivers for Skip the Dishes, for example, argue that they are employees and not contractors [68].

Self-employment is another form of non-standard work distinguished by status, which may or may not have non-standard hours. Self-employment is the larger and more established category into which the new gig economy falls. Self-employed people may work standard hours; more commonly, however, they work unpredictable and fluctuating hours based on the periods of demand within their occupation [41]. Both the time demands and income from self-employment can be precarious and variable, posing problems for those who seek self-employment as a means of achieving greater work-life balance [36, 56]. As a result, the work hours associated with self-employment are likely to include non-standard hours at least part of the time in order to meet demands and maximize revenue. Among self-employed workers, those who are unincorporated and who work alone are considered to have the most precarious employment.

Non-standard hours (sometimes referred to as shift work) is any shift of eight consecutive hours either partly or entirely outside standard daytime hours of 8:00 am to 6:00 pm [31]. For example, a morning shift that begins at 6:00 am and a regularly scheduled night shift from 12:00 am to 8:00 am are both examples of non-standard shift work. A split shift divides an eight-hour shift into two distinct work periods with unpaid hours between. Split shifts are particularly common for people who work in transportation as well as those working in

home care, where they check on clients twice per day [61]. Ironically, early childhood educators who work in programs for school-age children regularly work split shifts [69]. Split shifts often carry extra burdens for workers, such as the increased time and money spent on travelling to and from their workplace twice each day, instead of once. Rotating shift schedules regularly alternate between different eight-hour blocks, such as morning, day, evening or nighttime shifts [70]. Workers in some industries may work rotating shifts of up to 12 hours [37]. Williams found that “In 2005, rotating shifts and irregular schedules were the most common types of shift work, accounting for 2.3 million full-time workers, even though these are considered among the most difficult shifts because the body cannot properly adjust to the sleep pattern changes, [and] rotating child care is difficult to find” [29].

Any required work performed on the weekend (Saturday or Sunday) constitutes non-standard work hours (for examples, see Begall, Mills & Ganzeboom and Enchautegui [71, 72]). Weekend hours are obligatory in certain occupations; for example, weekend work is common in the healthcare sector, where staff must provide care every day of the week. It is also common in retail, food services, recreation, accommodation and other sectors.

Overtime refers to work that exceeds an eight-hour shift, or results in working more than 40

hours in a week [37]. Overtime occurs in employment where eight-hour shifts daily and 40 hours weekly are the norm, and where overtime hours are typically paid a higher rate. Overtime is distinct from scheduled long shifts of more than eight hours. It is also distinct from shift rotations that concentrate monthly days off into a single week rather than spreading them out across weeks (e.g., [73]). Overtime may be occasional or frequent.

Taking work hours and scheduling into consideration is particularly important when discussing the impacts of non-standard work. Irregular work schedules, which can vary from day to day or week to week, have considerable effects on parents of young children. Irregular scheduling includes work hours that vary due to casual, short-term, temporary or contract work [44, 56]. Such schedules are often caused by ‘just-in-time’ scheduling by employers, where work hours can change monthly, weekly or even daily [72]. The literature strongly suggests that irregular scheduling is particularly problematic for mothers’ ability to organize child care [74].

Many workers receive little or no advance notice of their work schedules and must cope with last-minute changes to their work times and/or total number of hours [46]. We define ‘lack of advance notice’ as anything less than one week’s advance notification of scheduled hours (modeled on Hennessy & Tranjan [66]).

Provincial employment standards permit employers to provide very little notice to employees. Lack of advance notice requires workers to be constantly available to their employer [74]. The parents we interviewed for this project stressed how much scheduling uncertainties negatively impacted their ability to plan for non-familial child care (See Chapter Four) and the non-standard hours child care service providers interviewed for our profiles (Chapter Six) described, the flexibility this requires is associated with particular challenges for service provision. Overall, non-standard hours is a very important dimension of non-standard work.

Non-Standard Hours Child Care

Overview

Researchers recognize that parental care is the foundation around which all care is organized. Because of this, they refer to any other forms of care in their studies as *non-parental care*. (See, for example, work by Statistics Canada: Bushnik [75], and Sinha [76]). The amount of non-parental care in Canada has been increasing for decades. According to Statistics Canada's 2019 Survey on Early Learning and Child Care Arrangements, almost 60% of children under

the age of six participated in some form of non-parental child care in 2019. Although slightly less than one quarter of children under the age of 1 were in non-parental care, the proportion of children who participated in some form of formal or informal child care was about two thirds for children age 1 to 3 (68%) and 65% for 4 and 5-year olds [77].

In addition to care from parents, children can receive care from other kin (particularly grandparents) as well as from a wide range of non-kin providers: regulated and licensed child care centres or family homes, unlicensed care outside the child's home (e.g. unregulated care, friends, or neighbors), care in the child's home (from babysitters, nannies, friends, or neighbors), and more. To bring analytic clarity to the range of options, we categorize non-familial child care as regulated or unregulated, and paid or unpaid (i.e., commodified or non-commodified care). Regulated child care is any care that is licensed or regulated by legislation.

'Early learning and child care' most often refers to regulated child care, which is also called

'formal care' in American studies.⁵ Care provided by immediate family and kin, as well as by nannies, babysitters, friends, and neighbors, is unregulated and American studies often refer to it as informal care or private care. Commodified care is purchased by, or on behalf of, parents. Regulated care, as well as care by babysitters and nannies, is

commodified in Canada, whereas care offered by kin may or may not be commodified. Among non-commodified possibilities, parents may share child care with friends or neighbors by trading time or by making agreements that fall outside of the market economy [78]. See Table 2.2 for a typology of child care categories.

Table 2.2 Typology of Non-Familial Care

	REGULATED CHILD CARE ("formal")	UNREGULATED CHILD CARE ("informal")
PAID SERVICES (commodified)	Child care centres Half-day preschools Regulated child care homes Parents may pay full fees or receive some fee subsidy.	Care provided in the child's home (e.g., babysitters or nannies) Care provided outside the child's home (unregulated family home care) This may include care by relatives or friends, who are paid.
SERVICES WITHOUT A FEE (non-commodified)	Junior kindergarten Senior kindergarten Public school These educational services are not designed to accommodate parental employment	Kin, relatives, grandparents Friends Self or sibling care

⁵Early learning and child care and formal care simply refer to child care that is regulated; they do not distinguish between settings where educators are trained and qualified from settings where they are not. As a result, if a service is categorized as 'early learning and child care', it does not mean that it provides care that is educational or aimed at the child's level of development. The naming conventions also do not inform us about the nature of the job of the educator. For example, they do not provide any information about their wages, benefits or working conditions. The way we categorize care in this report is based on its organizational and institutional characteristics. It is also worth noting that different types of care may affect children's development and well-being differently. These considerations, however, are outside the scope of the present study.

Regulated care plays a uniquely important role for parents and children since it is the most stable and reliable form of care. It also provides the safest settings for children since it has public oversight, compared to unregulated care, which does not. It offers the best chance that children will receive high quality early learning and care from trained early childhood educators, thus providing the most developmentally appropriate service. It is also the primary form of care that is eligible for public fee subsidies that directly reduce the costs for parents.⁶ The National Council of Welfare once observed that although many social programs support families, child care is the “backbone” of them all [80]. Nevertheless, in most of Canada regulated child care is scarce: there is a licensed child care space in Canada for less than 30% of children aged 0 to 5 years [14]. In Canada, 776,000 children live in neighborhoods that are considered child care ‘deserts,’ where regulated services are not accessible [6]. Outside of large cities in Québec, no families in Canada live where there is a reliable balance in the supply and demand of accessible, affordable, regulated child care. In this environment, parents working non-standard hours face daunting challenges in accessing regulated care.

In the U.S., studies find that parents who work non-standard hours in the low-wage labour market face a “nearly insurmountable obstacle to formal child care,” namely the mismatch between work schedules and centre hours [5]. American research finds, therefore, that children whose mothers work non-standard hours rarely use centre-based regulated care [81]. Research suggests that parents with non-standard work schedules simply cannot use standard, regulated child care as their only mode of care [82, 83]. As discussed in Chapters 3 and 4, in Canada, some parents who work non-standard hours and who can find and afford regulated child care programs may use it specifically for the educational and social benefits it provides and/or an important anchor in a more complex package of child care arrangements.

Regulated child care that is covered under Québec’s publicly-funded reduced contribution policy is more affordable than anywhere else in Canada or North America [14, 15]. Québec spends more on child care than any other province. It invests in child care as part of a multi-pronged strategy to support families, combat poverty, and promote women’s equality [84-88], all of which have positively affected parents. Nevertheless, researchers

⁶ Other forms of receipted care, whether regulated or not (e.g. summer camps), can be subsidized through the federal Child Care Expense Deduction on parents’ income tax, in cases where parents are eligible.

find non-standard hours child care is scarce even in Québec, where mothers still express gratitude for their 'luck' in finding regulated child care [33].

A family's ability to access regulated child care and other services is strongly related to their socioeconomic status. Parents with lower socioeconomic status (e.g. with lower income and lower education levels) are less likely to enroll their children in regulated child care compared to parents with higher socioeconomic status [43]. Even in Québec and the relatively generous welfare states of Western Europe, the benefits of government spending on social policy disproportionately accrue to the middle- and upper-class relative to other social groups [12, 89, 90]. Sociologists refer to this phenomenon as the 'Matthew Effect'. This can lead to families with lower socioeconomic status receiving the least support, while families who are already more advantaged receive more support. Since parents who work non-standard hours often have lower incomes, they may suffer the compound effects of non-standard work and lower socioeconomic status. As a result, it is even more difficult to consider parental 'preferences' when it comes to employment decisions and child care arrangements.

Child care packages and non-standard work

Parents who are employed or involved in training/education must coordinate their employment and learning hours and care for their children.⁷ In many households with children, families rely on more than one care arrangement to cover their needs. Researchers call this packaging care [91] and also refer to care packages [92, 93]. A care package approach is particularly relevant to families in which one or both parents have non-standard or irregular work schedules. All Canadian families, not just those with non-standard employment or hours, could need more than one mode of care in their care package.

Non-standard work schedules have implications for the type(s) of child care arrangements that are used, as well as for their number and stability. Three different types of child care packages emerge from the literature on parents and non-standard employment. The first and most prevalent type relies on the *parent tag-team* or *off-shifting*, where one or both co-parents cover work and family demands by adjusting their employment [10, 12, 90]. Parents may off-shift because they are pushed to adapt to job requirements, pulled by

⁷ Parents may also seek early learning and child care services to support and enhance child development, but these motivations are not a focus of this report.

a desire for more involved parenting, or are simultaneously pushed and pulled [12].

The second model is *family and kin care* and revolves around care that is provided by relatives who are not the child's parents. Such care is often provided by grandparents and female relatives, who supply unregulated and generally non-commodified care while parents work or study. In the U.S., nearly half of low-income single parents who have non-standard work schedules use care from other relatives. This is the same rate that mothers who live with a partner use other-parent care [72].

The third model is based on *non-familial care*. This is a broad category that includes regulated as well as unregulated care, which may be paid for or provided for free. When parents have access to regulated care, particularly centre-based care, it can provide an anchor that covers many – although rarely all – of a family's care needs. One of the important insights from the parents we interviewed is how regulated centre-based care is extremely helpful to families with non-standard work: it provides a core of reliable services around which families can arrange additional care for non-standard hours. (See Chapter Four.)

When non-familial care is unregulated and involves multiple providers and informal caregivers, it is at a high risk of breaking down

and threatening job stability [13]. In the U.S., this has been called a “child care scramble” [5]. Researchers Morsy and Rothstein argue that “for young children, mothers with non-standard schedules must make inconsistent and poorer quality child care arrangements: because they cannot enroll children in high-quality centers that require predictable drop-off and pick-up times, they make last-minute arrangements with friends or relatives” [17]. They further point out that in many U.S. states, parents who work irregular and variable schedules lose eligibility for child care subsidies.

A care package does not assemble itself: it takes ongoing labour to organize, plan, and maintain a set of care arrangements. The more complex the package, the greater the degree of ‘emotional labour’ required to manage it, and this work is generally performed by mothers who ‘project manage’ their child care arrangements [94]. Studies have shown that non-standard schedules are associated with increased child care complexity and decreased continuity [95]. American researchers Presser and Ward [13] found that employed mothers with lower education levels are especially likely to work non-standard schedules and to have “complex child care arrangements involving multiple providers and informal caregivers” (p. 4). In several studies, researchers conclude that in most cases child care is not arranged around the employment needs of mothers, but rather that mothers’ employment opportunities

are arranged around the availability of child care [5, 83, 93, 94]. All of this means that the elements in a care package change as employment changes, families grow, children age, and the health and the availability of kin fluctuate. Care packages can be thought of as time-limited and conditional arrangements that hold for a period until being replaced by the next package.

Assembling a satisfactory care package is the most challenging for lone parents who work non-standard hours when kin (especially grandparents) are unavailable. Thus, the structure of care packages systematically differs for standard and non-standard hours workers, for lone- and two-parent families, and by families' ability to pay for care. Packages may also vary by micro-level factors, such as family preferences and values, as well as by geography and cultural commitments (including language of instruction, pedagogy, and more). Recent American research concludes that, in particular, just-in-time work schedules are closely associated with increased complexity in child care packages, greater use of informal care arrangements (including grandparents, friends, or babysitters), and higher rates of children's self-

care without supervision from a mature caregiver [96].

Regulated child care services offering non-standard hours: International research

In response to parent needs associated with non-standard hours employment, some regulated child care centres and homes have opted to offer extended hours care. In liberal welfare states like Canada and the U.S., such initiatives are generally small-scale and local: there is no provincial or national policy mandating extended hours access.⁸

What would it look like to extend hours or provide flexible regulated child care? The Dutch Leiden Inventory for Flexible Child Care [97] defines non-standard care as care that includes some combination of the following options:

- care that begins before 8:00 am
- a variable morning start time
- a variable evening departure time
- evening meals

⁸ The 2017 federal Multilateral Early Learning and Child Care Framework makes families with non-standard work one of its funding priorities. See discussion in Chapters 1 and 5.

- attendance for a varying number of days each week
- attendance on different (half-) days each week
- no fixed drop-off or pick-up schedule
- attendance less than four half-days per week
- weekend care
- overnight care

Together, these include care provided at non-standard hours, extended hours options, and care with flexibility.

In Europe, outside the Nordic countries, non-standard hours child care is limited. As in Canada, extended hours regulated child care has many additional operating costs. As a result, extended hours services are unsustainable for programs and unaffordable for parents in areas where public funding is low. De Schipper's team [97] found that in order to offer more flexible child care for parents, more caregivers were needed to do all the shifts, and more scheduling of both children and caregivers was needed.

Internationally, the best access to extended hours regulated care is in Finland, where — since 1972 — parents have a statutory entitlement to 24-hour 'day and night care.' Yet,

despite this entitlement, just 60% of municipalities in Finland actually provide flexible care, and access is especially weak in rural areas [98]. Despite these challenges, about seven percent of children in Finland attend non-standard hours care services, usually in public child care centres [59]. Even in egalitarian Finland, lone-parent families and lower educated parents are over-represented among families using flexibly scheduled and extended hours child care services [98, 99].

Finland's 'day and night care' is the most robust and inclusive version of non-standard hours child care. More moderate levels of flexibility, such as opening slightly earlier or closing slightly later, also qualify as extended hours care. As such, non-standard hours child care can refer to a wide range of times where care is available, as noted in the Introduction. Still, even by the most inclusive definition, non-standard hours regulated care is rare. One 2015 nationally representative American study found two percent of child care centres offered evening care, three percent offered weekend care, and six percent provided offered overnight care [100]. In contrast, among kin who provide unpaid care to family members, 82% report they are open to providing care anytime during evenings, overnight, or weekends.

In sum, child care outside of 'normal' weekday hours is a challenge for all countries. Definitions of non-standard hours child care

vary, in part because work patterns vary across countries. Some countries have done more to ensure parents with non-standard hours have access to child care services.

Non-standard hours child care in Canada

We can think of non-standard child hours care as being on a spectrum with ‘mildly’ non-standard care at one end and ‘very’ extended child care on the other. Mildly non-standard care may be as simple as extending opening or closing times for an hour or two, while very extended child care may include overnight care where children sleep on site. Research has shown that “even very small amounts of flexibility” can have far-reaching positive effects for parents who are trying to coordinate child care and employment [79].

In this report, we consider regulated child care as non-standard if it meets at least one of the following criteria:

REGULATED NON-STANDARD HOURS CHILD CARE

- Slightly non-standard (extended) hours (6:00 am to 8:00 pm)
- Earlier morning, later night hours (5:00 am to 12:00 am)

- Very late night, overnight (12:00 am onwards)
- Weekends (anytime on Saturday or Sunday)
- Seasonal (generally for summer and harvest times)
- On-request participation (including emergency, flexible scheduling, by special arrangements, or drop-in care.)

As discussed in Chapter Five, each province and territory explicitly or implicitly defines standard and non-standard hours child care differently. In part for that reason, comparable, consistent Canadian data on the extent to which non-standard hours, regulated child care is available are lacking. What we can say, based on the environmental scan presented in Chapter Five, is similar to what Halfon and Friendly observed in 2015. Today, as then, there is very little regulated child care in the evenings, overnight or on a rotating or on-call basis to address the needs of children whose parents work non-standard hours, even using our very inclusive definition of that term.

Funding realities are a key reason why there is so little regulated non-standard hours child care. The funding regime that supports regulated care in all the provinces and territories compels care facilities to maximize

revenue by operating at full capacity with full-time children [32, 101]. As confirmed in the case studies of child care services in Chapter Six, from the perspective of facility management, offering non-standard hours care causes significant human resource and funding challenges. The attendance of children is inconsistent, and the intensity of their use is variable, both of which have revenue implications. It is also very difficult to program for small numbers of children, with varying attendance, in widely mixed-age groups [82]. Most important is the absence of supportive infrastructure and funding that is needed to create and sustain non-standard hours programs. Thus, “current child care policy, especially funding arrangements for services and parents, usually make it difficult or impossible - financially and otherwise - for most child care services to meet non-standard schedules” [32].

Statistics Canada has recently surveyed parents about their use of early learning and child care arrangements. They found that 41% of parents choose their child care arrangement based on its hours, which is nearly identical to the share of parents (41%) who chose it based on cost and affordability [77]. Eight percent of parents report problems finding care that suits their work or study schedules. The same survey found that close to one in ten parents of children aged 0 to 5 years changed their work

schedule because they had difficulty finding child care, while seven percent worked fewer hours and six percent postponed their return to work. This provides more evidence that having difficulties finding child care can affect parents’ ability to work.

In sum, many Canadian parents must find ways to care for their young children while they work non-standard hours. To meet their needs, parents assemble care packages. The most common models include some combination of tag-team sharing between two parents, relying on kin and family members, and using non-familial care (which may be regulated or unregulated). Care package options vary between different family types – by the presence or absence of a second parent for off-shifting, kin who can reliably provide care, and the availability and affordability of non-familial care services, such as regulated child care centres and family homes. We estimate that less than two percent of Canada’s licensed child care centres offer some form of non-standard care, which is most often slightly extended hours. Although early learning and child care facilities rarely offer non-standard hours, they nevertheless provide a core of reliable services around which families can arrange other modes of care. Research shows that even very small changes in service hours and flexible policies can have large positive effects on parents.



CHAPTER THREE

Current Canadian Statistics on Non-Standard Work Schedules and Child Care Use

While it is recognized that many parents in Canada face challenges finding and affording high quality early learning and child care, little is known about the specific difficulties parents who work non-standard or irregular hours face, or what child care arrangements they actually use. Policy makers and child care professionals need this information to plan child care services to ensure that all children have equitable access to early learning programs that enhance their development and support parents in their dual earning and caring roles.

This chapter uses recent national data to answer some key questions:

- How many parents of young children have non-standard work hours?
- What is the nature of their work schedules and work arrangements?
- Are non-standard work hours more common for parents with low incomes, potentially compounding the difficulties they may have affording high quality non-parental care?
- What type of child care arrangements do parents use and how do they differ when mothers work non-standard versus standard hours? Are there differences in

the extent to which mothers use care in a licensed child care centre? Care in their own home or another's home? Care by a relative or non-relative?

The statistics provided in this chapter are based on Statistics Canada's 2017 General Social Survey on Families. These data provide a broad overview of the issues, which is important for benchmarking and planning, but they cannot answer other important questions: Why do parents work non-standard hours? In how many couples do parents deliberately choose to work non-standard hours to share parenting? How many parents work non-standard hours because child care is not available or affordable? Alternatively, how many parents have little choice but to work

non-standard hours given their chosen careers or the work available in their community? The available data also does not allow us to understand the consequences these work arrangements have for family life or children's development and well-being. In-depth studies are the best way to address these objectives, since they can provide more insight into parents' lived experiences in these circumstances. (See Chapter Four of this report for an analysis of interviews with parents whose stories provide a richer perspective.) Longitudinal research designed to address these concerns is also required.

This chapter is divided into three parts. The first provides information about the prevalence and nature of non-standard work schedules among parents of young children in Canada. This first section includes data about families as well as information about mothers and fathers separately, including an analysis of how non-standard work schedules relate to other dimensions of atypical or non-standard work. The second section provides more detailed information about mothers who work non-standard hours and comparisons between mothers who work standard hours and those who work non-standard hours. Two studies in Québec demonstrate that mothers' work schedules have a stronger influence on child care arrangements than fathers' schedules [34, 35], which supports our decision to examine mothers' work schedules and characteristics in

depth. The third section analyses how mothers' non-standard work schedules relate to child care use for the youngest child in the family, aged one to five years.

Methods

This chapter is based on original analyses of data from Statistics Canada's 2017 General Social Survey (GSS) – Family, which are the most recent data collected from a representative sample of Canadian households in the ten provinces. The General Social Survey on Families is conducted approximately every five years and includes socio-demographic indicators and questions that address a variety of topics related to family life including family structure, family formation and divorce, parental leave, and fertility intentions. Sections of the 2017 GSS provided data that allowed us to analyze parental work schedules and child care use in the last year, although it was not designed for this purpose. The following analyses are based on a subsample of GSS respondents who are a parent in a household with at least one child age 0–5 years old who lives in the household full time. Our selected subsample of 2004 Canadian households provides weighted estimates that apply to almost 3,410,000 families with at least one child under six years of age. We analyzed the

child care arrangements used for the youngest child in the family, age 1–5, as reported by the responding parent.⁹

The Prevalence and Nature of Non-Standard Work Among Parents with Young Children

Non-standard work schedules and families with young children

In 2016–2017 at least one parent worked a non-standard schedule in 39% of all families with one or more children under six years of age (1,318,600 families). While both parents worked standard hours in over half (56%) of dual-earner couples with young children, at least one parent worked non-standard hours in more than four in ten (44%) dual-earner couples, including 9.1% in which both parents worked non-standard hours. In dual-earner couples where only one parent worked non-standard hours, 51.1% of the time it was the father who worked non-standard hours, and in the remaining 48.9% it was the mother. Single

mothers with young children were slightly more likely to work non-standard hours than married mothers with young children, but the difference was not statistically significant.

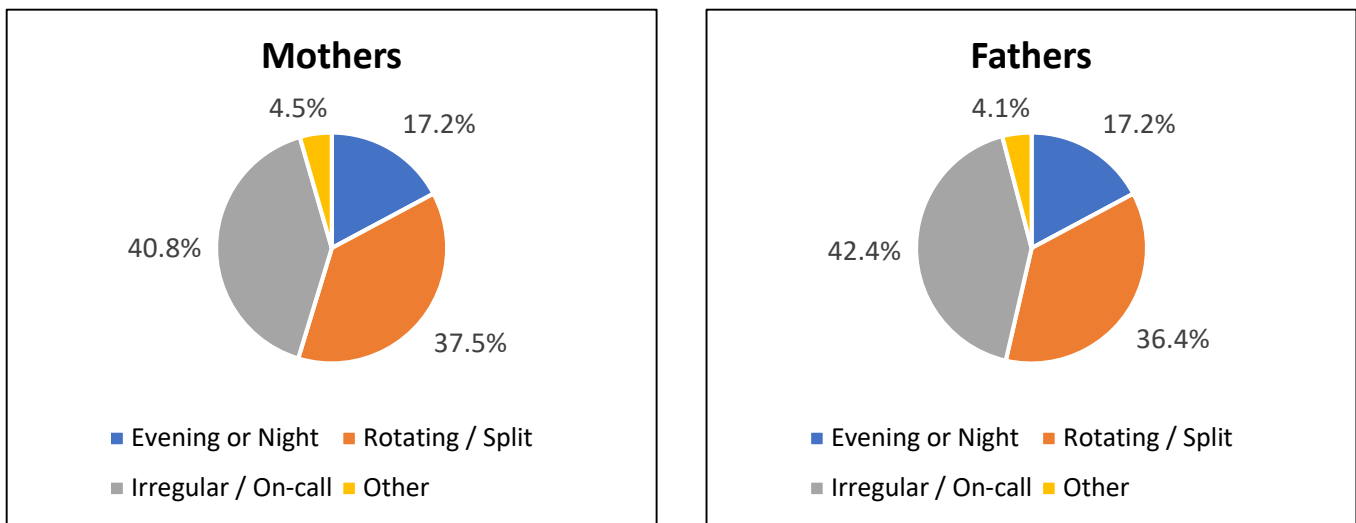
Non-standard work schedules of mothers vs. fathers

Most parents of young children were working at a job or business in 2016–2017, including 75.4% of mothers and 95.9% of fathers. In total, more than 1.5 million parents of young children worked non-standard hours – almost 695,100 mothers and about 842,200 fathers. Roughly equal proportions of employed mothers (27.1%) and fathers (27.4%) had non-standard work schedules.

Interestingly, similar proportions of mothers and fathers had each of the different types of non-standard work schedules: about 17% of both mothers and fathers worked a regular evening or night shift, 36–37% worked rotating shifts, and 41–42% had irregular shifts or worked on-call (see Table 3.1). It is notable that approximately three-quarters of parents who have non-standard hours have schedules that vary from day to day or week to week, which has profound implications for parents' child care options.

⁹ For more information about the 2017 GSS, see Statistics Canada, General Social Survey – Family, Detailed information for 2017 (Cycle 31) available at <http://www23.statcan.gc.ca/imdb/p2SV.pl?Function=getSurvey&SDDS=4501>

Figure 3.1 Both Mothers and Fathers Who Work Non-Standard Schedules are Likely to Work Rotating Shifts or Irregular Hours



Based on data from respondents and spouses who were employed at a job or business in the 12 months prior to being surveyed and who worked non-standard hours (N= 2,565,358 mothers and 3,073,665 fathers; 27.1% of employed mothers and 27.4% of employed fathers).

Source: General Social Survey 2017

How non-standard work schedules relate to other forms of work

Although similar proportions of mothers and fathers work non-standard schedules and their distribution across types of schedules is strikingly similar, non-standard work hours are associated with very different patterns of work for mothers and fathers. We found substantial differences between mothers and fathers in the extent to which they have permanent versus temporary/seasonal or contract work, their usual weekly hours of work, their distribution by occupation, and whether they are self- or organizationally-employed.¹⁰

Differences in mothers' and fathers' employment

When we compare data for all parents who were employed in a job or business, the differences between mothers' and fathers' employment are evident. Mothers were less likely to have permanent/ongoing employment and were twice as likely to have jobs that were temporary, seasonal or for a limited contract

than fathers (14.5% of mothers and less than 7% of fathers). Similar proportions of mothers and fathers were self-employed (13% and 16%, respectively), but, as discussed below, there were significant differences in the proportion of self-employed mothers and fathers who worked standard vs. non-standard hours. The largest difference between mothers and fathers was in the number of hours they usually worked per week. Very few fathers (less than 3%) worked part time, while 18% worked long hours (more than 45 hours per week). In contrast, almost 24% of employed mothers with young children worked part time, including 10% who worked short hours (fewer than 20 hours per week). Finally, we noted differences in occupations among mothers and fathers that mirror gender differences in occupational segregation more generally. Substantially more mothers than fathers were employed in health occupations and in those related to education, law, social and governmental services. Mothers were also more likely to work in business, finance and administration, and in sales and services.

¹⁰ No information was collected about whether self-employed parents were business owners with other employees or were unincorporated, working on their own with no other employees. Own-account self-employed individuals are more often women and are known to have less stable employment income. We also do not know how many self-employed mothers work from home – a circumstance that can affect whether they are likely to use non-parental child care.

Mothers' and fathers' work schedules related to other aspects of employment

Table 3.1 and Figure 3.2 summarize the differences in how mothers' and fathers' work schedules relate to other aspects of their employment. Mothers who worked non-standard hours were significantly more likely than mothers who worked standard hours to be self-employed, to have non-permanent positions, and to work part time. Fathers who worked non-standard hours were slightly more likely to be self-employed and to have non-permanent positions in comparison to their standard hours counterparts. However, the differences were small and not statistically significant.

While a large majority of fathers worked full time, fathers who worked non-standard hours were both more likely to work part time and more likely to work long hours (more than 45 hours per week). Our analyses suggest that non-standard work schedules are more strongly associated with other aspects of non-standard work for mothers than for fathers and are associated in ways that result in mothers experiencing greater precarity. These precarious work patterns can potentially have negative implications for mothers' attachment to the labour force, their earnings and opportunities for career advancement, and their eligibility for employer-provided benefits and Employment Insurance benefits.

Table 3.1 Distribution of Employed Mothers and Fathers with at Least One Child Age 0-5 Years, Across Employment Categories by Standard vs. Non-Standard Work Schedules, Canada, 2017

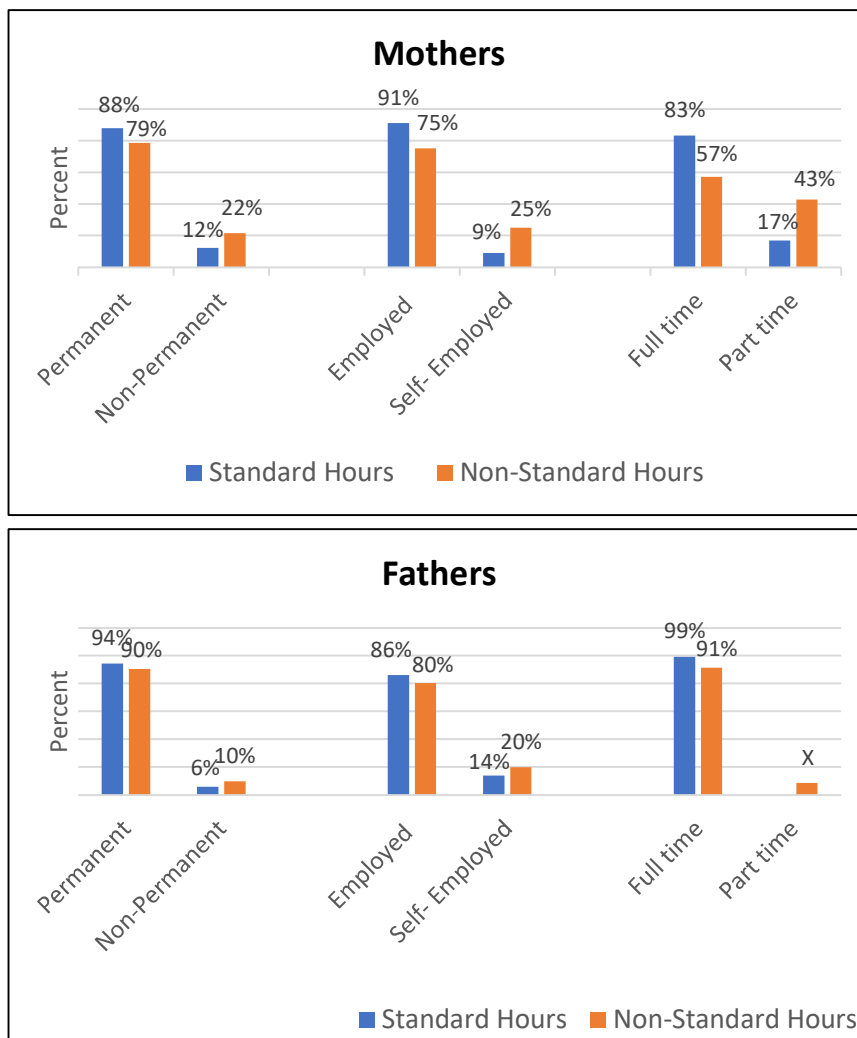
	Standard Work Hours %	Non- Standard Hours %		Standard Work Hours %	Non- Standard Hours %
MOTHERS			FATHERS		
Terms of Employment	*		Terms of Employment	NS	
Permanent	87.8	78.6	Permanent	94.2	90.4
Temporary/ Seasonal/Contract	12.2	21.5 ^E	Temporary/ Seasonal/Contract	5.8 ^E	9.7 ^E
Class of Worker	**		Class of Worker	NS	
Employed	91.0	75.1	Employed	86.0	80.2
Self-employed	9.0	24.9	Self-employed	14.0	19.8
Usual Hours Worked	***		Usual Hours Worked	***	
Part time (< 30 hrs/wk)	16.8	42.8	Part time (< 30 hrs/wk)	X	8.6 ^E
< 20 hrs	6.3	21.4	< 20 hrs		
20 – 29 hrs	10.5	21.5	20 – 29 hrs		
Full time (≥ 30 hrs/wk)	83.2	57.2	Full time (≥ 30 hrs/wk)		
30 – 45 hrs	80.0	49.4	30 – 45 hrs	83.9	66.7
> 45 hrs	3.3 ^E	7.8	> 45 hrs	15.3	24.7
Occupation (Selected)	***		Occupation (Selected)	***	
Management	4.6	X	Management	13.1	11.2 ^E
Business, finance, admin	23.0	9.5	Business, finance, admin	13.5	X
Natural & applied sciences and related occupations	4.9 ^E	X	Natural & applied sciences and related occupations	20.2	4.6 ^E
Health occupations	14.7	30.0	Health occupations	X	8.6 ^E
Educ, law, social and gov't services	32.4	10.4 ^E	Education, law, social and govt services	7.9	9.6 ^E
Sales and service	16.2	33.6	Sales and service	11.8	21.0 ^E
			Trades, transport, Equip't operators, etc.	22.8	20.8
			Manufacturing / utilities	5.3 ^E	10.4 ^E

* p < .05 ** p < .01 *** p < .001. NS Non-significant

E Use with caution X Suppressed to meet the confidentiality requirements of the Statistics Act

Based on weighted data from 1,364,389 mothers and 1,606,822 fathers who had worked at a job or business in the last week or the last year and were survey respondents. Numbers may not total 100.0 due to rounding. Source: General Social Survey 2017

Figure 3.2 Distribution of Mothers' and Fathers' Employment by Standard or Non-Standard Work Schedule in Families with at Least One Child 0–5 Years of Age, Canada, 2017



The percentage of fathers employed part time is too small to be reported under the confidentiality requirements of the Statistics Act

Source: General Social Survey 2017

It is worth noting that 40% of mothers who worked non-standard hours had occupations related to health care, education, law, or social or government services – occupations that can directly impact the quality of care and service available to individuals and families; another third were employed in sales and services.

Fathers who worked non-standard hours were most likely to have occupations in sales and service or in trades, transport, or equipment operations. Fathers and mothers who worked non-standard hours were less likely than their standard hours counterparts to have occupations in business, finance and administration, and in the natural and applied sciences and related fields.

- 17% worked regular evenings or nights, 38% worked rotating shifts, and 41% had irregular hours.¹¹
- 22% had non-permanent work: temporary, seasonal, or contract jobs.
- Almost one quarter of mothers (24%) who had non-standard work schedules worked part-time.

How else can we describe these mothers? In what other ways do mothers who work standard and non-standard hours differ? What individual and family characteristics should we consider when comparing child care arrangements used by mothers who work non-standard rather than standard hours jobs?

We first examined individual characteristics (maternal age, marital/partner status, education, whether born in Canada, whether mothers reported they are a visible minority or are Indigenous, province, urban-rural locations, and family income). There were no significant differences between mothers who worked standard versus non-standard hours with respect to marital/partner status, birthplace, Indigenous or visible minority status, province, or urban-rural location. Even though there was

A profile of mothers of young children who work non-standard hours

In the previous section, we established that 27% of mothers who worked at a job or business worked non-standard hours. We also noted that among this group:

¹¹ Rotating shifts and irregular hours might include evening or overnight shifts. Unfortunately, no information was collected about weekend work.

substantial variation within each group – both included highly educated professionals as well as individuals with lower education and recognized job skills – mothers who worked non-standard hours tended to be younger and had lower levels of education compared to mothers who worked standard hours jobs (see Table 3.2). Mothers who worked non-standard hours also had lower individual incomes and lower family incomes than their standard hours counterparts. This outcome is likely associated with their lower education, greater likelihood of working part-time, and the nature of many

occupations that have non-standard hours and/or non-permanent positions. Family income is also an important factor to consider on its own, since low- and modest-income families are known to be less likely to use child care centres and are more likely to have less stable care arrangements compared to higher income families. These differences are at least partially shaped by the serious constraints lower income families face in paying for child care, as well as the limited availability of child care subsidies and affordable child care options outside of Québec.

Table 3.2 Sociodemographic Characteristics of Mothers with at Least One Child 0-5 Years of Age, by Mothers' Work Schedule

Mothers with a Child 0–5 Years Old	Mother's Work Schedule		Significantly Different
	Standard Work Hours	Non-standard Work Hours	
Weighted N	1,870,276	695,083	
SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS	%	%	
Married/Partnered			NS
Partnered	95.3	92.1	
Lone Parent	4.7 ^E	7.9 ^E	
Age			*
Less than 25	3.8 ^E	8.1 ^E	
25 to 29	15.0	20.5	
30 to 34	35.3	31.6	
35 and more	46.0	39.8	
Birthplace			NS
Canada	72.7	69.7	
Other	27.3	30.3	
Province (Region) (Sum 100% across)			NS
Atlantic	69.3	30.7	
Québec	77.4	22.6	
Ontario	74.6	25.4	
Prairie	68.6	31.4	
British Columbia	67.7	32.3	
Education Level			***
High school or less	15.1	23.3	
Postsecondary less than BA	34.4	38.0	
BA and Above	50.4	38.7	

Table 3.2 Sociodemographic Characteristics of Mothers with at Least One Child 0-5 Years of Age, by Mothers' Work Schedule (continued)

Mothers with a Child 0–5 Years Old	Mother's Work Schedule		Significantly Different
	Standard Work Hours	Non-standard Work Hours	
Family Income *			***
Less than \$40,000	6.7	9.7 ^E	
\$40,000 to \$59,999	9.9	17.0	
\$60,000 to \$79,999	12.4	16.3	
\$80,000 to \$99,999	16.1	14.8	
\$100,000 to \$119,999	14.6	14.7	
\$120,000 to \$139,999	12.8	8.9 ^E	
\$140,000 or more	27.4	18.6	
Adjusted Family Income *			***
Income Quartile 1	17.4	28.8	
Income Quartile 2	27.0	30.8	
Income Quartile 3	29.1	21.9	
Income Quartile 4	26.5	18.6	

E Use with caution

Source: General Social Survey 2017

We made a second set of comparisons to determine if there were differences in family composition between mothers who worked standard versus non-standard hours. We considered the age of the youngest child in the household, the number of children younger than six years of age in the household, and whether there were any school-age children (6-12 years of age) in the home. Our results

show virtually no differences in family composition between mothers who worked standard versus non-standard hours jobs. This finding allows us to more confidently interpret the differences in child care patterns associated with work schedules that are presented in the next section. Table 3.3 is provided for information.

Table 3.3 Composition of Families with at Least One Child Age 0-5 Years, by Mothers' Work Schedule

Mothers with a Child 0-5 Years Old	Mother's Work Schedule		Significantly Different
	Standard Work Hours	Non-standard Work Hours	
Weighted N	1,870,276	695,083	
CHILD CHARACTERISTICS	%	%	
Age of Youngest Child in Household 0-5			NS
0	27.4	24.3	
1	22.4	26.6	
2	18.5	16.0	
3	15.6	17.6	
4	16.2	15.5	
5	27.4	24.3	
Additional Children 0-5 in Household			NS
Only one child 0-5 in household	70.4	70.8	
More than one child 0-5 in household	29.6	29.2	
Children 0-5 AND 6-12 in Household			NS
Child 0-5 AND 6-12	34.6	36.4	
Child 0-5 only	65.4	63.6	

Source: General Social Survey 2017

In summary, while mothers who work standard versus non-standard hours jobs were similar in many ways, there were some important and significant differences between the two groups. Mothers who work non-standard hours were significantly more likely to have less formal education and a lower family income than mothers who work standard hours jobs.

These factors were directly related to the nature of their employment, which is more likely to be non-permanent and part-time when mothers work non-standard hours. This study did not include other aspects of employment that are important to consider when thinking about hourly, casual, and precarious workers, such as less job security, lower job quality, and

reduced access to employer and/or government-provided benefits.¹² Whether mothers “choose” to work non-standard hours as a way to combine work and care or as a way to limit relying on child care that is costly or perhaps perceived to not be of good quality – or alternatively whether mothers’ ‘choices’ among jobs are constrained by their education, skills, or the nature of the employment available to them could not be determined using GSS data. It is likely that both push and pull factors affect mothers’ “choices”, as is evident in the interviews with parents that are summarized in Chapter Four.

How mothers’ non-standard work schedules affect child care

Are there differences in child care use patterns that are associated with mothers’ work schedules?¹³ To answer this question, we examined parents’ responses when asked about the arrangements they made in the last 12 months “for their child to be looked after because of work or any other reason”...“excluding babysitting or care provided by the other parent”.¹⁴ Since many mothers of infants under one year of age were on maternity or parental leave or taking a period of time off before returning to the labour force, we limited analysis to information

¹² No information was collected about whether workers had control over their work schedules or typically knew their work schedules in advance.

¹³ Readers are reminded that other aspects of mothers’ employment contribute to differences we found in the patterns of child care arrangements presented in this section. For example, whether mothers work full-time, part-time or short hours, as well as other characteristics such as maternal education, family income, and the availability of alternative child care options can all have an effect.

¹⁴ Readers should note that the wording of the question could result in descriptions of child care used while parents were working, studying, volunteering or for other reasons. The exclusion of care by the other parent is also important to note, as research indicates that a substantial proportion of families use shared parent care (tag-team parenting, or care that fits off-shifted work schedules in two-parent families) when mothers work non-standard hours.

provided about the youngest child in the family 1–5 years of age.¹⁵

Our preliminary examination of the data showed that the age distribution of children ages 1–5 was similar for mothers who worked standard daytime hours and for mothers who worked any other schedule. Roughly half of each group had a youngest child one or two years of age and half had a youngest child age 3–5. Where possible, we provide information for these two groups separately.

The following information is based on parents' reports of:

- Whether or not they made an arrangement for their child's care, and if so, whether it was an arrangement for care on a regular basis or on an irregular or occasional basis;
- The main reason parents did not make an arrangement for care for their child or did not make a regular arrangement;
- The main method of care used for their child;¹⁶

- Whether parents paid for their main method of care; and
- The main reason the parent gave for using their main method of care.

Arranging for child care

There was a significant difference in the extent to which mothers who work standard versus non-standard work hours reported making a child care arrangement for their youngest child. Additionally, there was a significant difference in whether the arrangement was for use on a regular vs. an irregular or occasional basis, as shown in Table 3.4. Mothers who work non-standard hours were less likely to make a child care arrangement (excluding care by another parent or occasional babysitting) than mothers who worked standard hours. Mothers who worked non-standard hours were also considerably less likely to use their child care arrangement on a regular basis. Specifically, almost 79% of mothers who work standard hours reported having made a child care arrangement for their youngest child age 1–5 years, and 86% of those mothers used some mode of child care on a regular basis.

¹⁵ Roughly 14% of mothers who worked standard hours and 11% of mothers who worked non-standard hours also had an infant under one year of age. In a large majority of these families, no non-parental child care arrangement was used for that child.

¹⁶ Regrettably, only one method of care was obtained. Previous research indicates that parents will often use more than one method of care (a care package), particularly when parents work non-standard schedules.

In comparison, a slightly smaller proportion of mothers (71.6%) who worked non-standard hours made a child care arrangement for their youngest child age 1–5 years, but when they did, just under two-thirds used care on a regular basis, and about a third (33.9%) used care on an irregular or occasional basis. This difference in patterns of care use was highly statistically significant. Overall, 68% of mothers

with young children who work standard hours used a *regular* care arrangement compared to less than half (47.1%) of mothers who work non-standard hours. Similar significant differences were noted when comparisons were made between families with a youngest child age 1–2 and a youngest child 3–5 years of age.¹⁷

Table 3.4 Nature of Child Care Arrangements Made for Youngest Child Age 1-5 Years, by Age Group and Mothers' Work Schedule

	Mother Works Standard Hours %	Mother Works Non-Standard Hours %	Significantly Different
Youngest child age 1–5 years			***
Regular arrangement	68.0	47.1	
Irregular/occasional	10.7	24.2	
No care arrangement made	21.3	28.7	
Youngest child age 1 or 2 years			***
Regular arrangement	59.8	40.4	
Irregular/occasional	12.3	28.2	
No care arrangement made	27.8	31.4	
Youngest child age 3, 4 or 5 years			***
Regular arrangement	73.6	52.3	
Irregular/occasional	10.9	23.1	
No care arrangement made	15.6	24.6	

*** $p < .001$

Source: General Social Survey 2017

¹⁷ In 2016-2017 almost 46% of working parents of four- and five-year olds reported that their child attended kindergarten. The proportion of parents who reported using both kindergarten and some form of child care was estimated to be 82% for four-year-olds and 73% for five-year olds. Small sample sizes do not allow us to perform more in-depth analyses of the type of care parents used for these children or the proportion of parents who felt they had no need for a child care arrangement to supplement their child's time in kindergarten.

Parents' reasons for not using a child care arrangement and for not using care on a regular basis

Parents who reported that they did not use a child care arrangement were asked the main reason they did not use child care. Parents decided not to use a child care arrangement (i.e., any care other than by a parent or occasional babysitting) for a variety of reasons, including that they either preferred not to, or they could cover their child care needs themselves. Overall, most parents who did not use child care reported that it was either because a parent was on maternity, parental, or paternity leave; because one of the parents wished to stay at home with the child; or because they didn't need or didn't want to use a child care arrangement. These reasons applied to 93.3% of mothers who worked standard hours and 71.7% of mothers who worked non-standard hours who did not use a child care arrangement. These reasons and others are reported by significantly different proportions of mothers within the two groups (mothers who worked standard versus non-standard hours). The main difference was that when the mother worked standard hours parents more often reported that they did not use a care arrangement because the mother (or father) was on leave. Other reasons for not using child care, such as a shortage of child care spaces, location, cost, or the fact that work or school schedules were variable or

unpredictable, were given by too few parents to be reported separately for these subpopulations.

Parents who reported that they made an irregular or occasional child care arrangement also were asked their main reason for doing so. In families where mothers worked standard hours, just over 63% of parents reported that either one parent was on leave or wished to stay at home with the child or that they did not need or want a child care arrangement. When mothers worked non-standard hours, 56% of parents reported these same reasons, while 20% of parents reported that they did not use a care arrangement on a regular basis because the cost of child care was too high.

What is the main method of child care parents use?

Parents who reported that they made a child care arrangement were asked a series of follow-up questions about the main method they used, which we summarize below. We found significant differences in the extent to which mothers who worked standard versus non-standard hours used care provided in a licensed group care program¹⁸, and whether they relied on care by a relative or non-relative (see Table 3.5 and Figure 3.3). Unfortunately, we are not able to reliably estimate the proportion of young children participating in a licensed or regulated home child care arrangement vs unregulated arrangements. While parents reported whether they believed unrelated caregivers who provided care in another home were licensed, it is not at all clear what criteria parents used when answering this question. Moreover, external data suggests that the numbers based on parents' reports overestimate what may be true. This circumstance is similar to one recently reported by Varmuza, Perlman, and

White [102] based on parents' responses to the 2011 GSS compared to data from a government of Ontario estimate of child care usage from a survey of regulated home child care agencies.

¹⁸ Whether the program was licensed or not is based on parents' reports. Since most preschools, day care centres and before and after school programs are licensed, we accept this estimate.

Table 3.5 Child Care Arrangements Used in the Last Year for the Youngest Child Age 1–5 Years Old, by Mothers' Work Schedule

Mothers with a Youngest Child 1–5 years old	Mother's Work Schedule		Significantly Different
	Standard Work Hours %	Non-Standard Work Hours %	
CHILD CARE FOR YOUNGEST CHILD 1–5			
Arranged Child Care *			
Arranged child care	78.8	71.6	
Did not arrange child care	21.2	28.4	
Frequency of Child Care Use ***			
Regular Basis	86.4	66.1	
Irregular or Occasional Basis	13.6	33.9	
Main Child Care Arrangement *			
In the child's home ⁺	10.1	22.3 ^E	
A home daycare ⁺	30.5	32.8	
A preschool centre or a nursery school	4.7 ^E	X	
A daycare centre	42.2	30.6	
Before or after school program	5.5 ^E	X	
A different type of child care	7.0	8.6 ^E	
Use of Group Care **			
Group care arrangement (child care centre, a preschool or before and after school program)	52.4	36.3	
Non-Group care arrangement	47.6	63.7	
Who is the Care Provider **			
A relative	28.5	48.4	
A non-relative	71.5	51.6	
Paid for Child Care *			
Paid for child care	87.1	77.5	
Did not pay for child care	12.9	22.5 ^E	

⁺ Provided by either a relative or an unrelated person, both regulated/licensed or not regulated/licensed

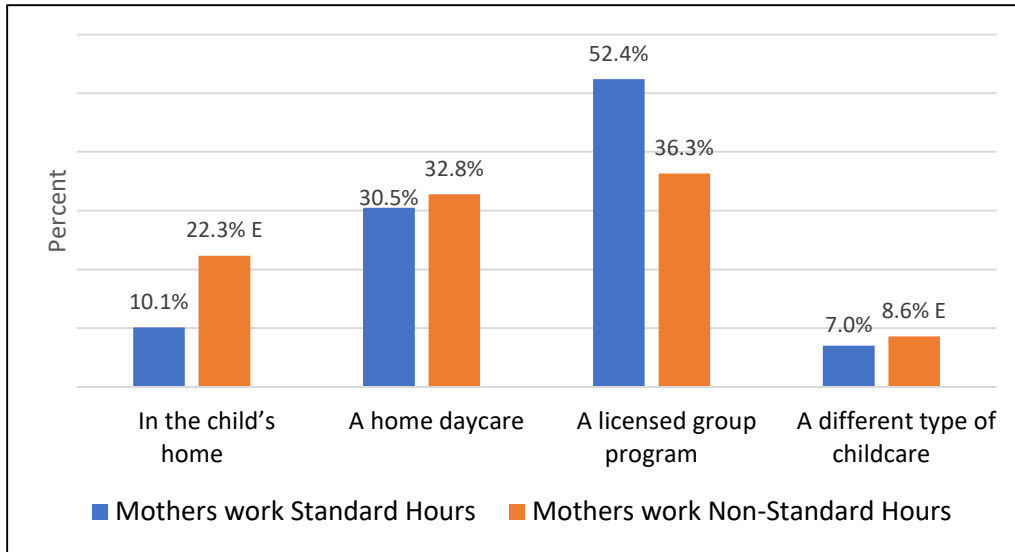
* p < .05 ** p < .01 *** p < .001

^E Use with caution X Suppressed to meet the confidentiality requirements of the Statistics Act

Note: Percentages for frequency of child care use, main child care arrangement, group care, care by a relative and whether care is paid or not are calculated based on the number of families who reported making a child care arrangement.

Source: General Social Survey 2017

Figure 3.3 Main Child Care Arrangement for Youngest Child, Age 1-5 Years



Source: General Social Survey 2017

Data apply to families who used some form of non-parental child care.

** Note:

- Care in the child's home may be provided by a relative or an unrelated person
- Care in a home daycare (another home) may be provided by a relative or an unrelated person and may be regulated or unregulated.
- Licensed group programs include daycare centres, half-day preschools or nursery schools and organized before- and after-school programs

When we performed separate analyses for when the youngest child is 1–2 years old or 3–5 years old we found similar patterns to the data presented for children 1–5 years old. A smaller proportion of mothers made child care arrangements for children under three than for children ages 3–5 years among both groups. Even so, significant differences in the proportion of parents who used a regular care arrangement versus irregular or occasional care remained evident (see Table 3.6).

When we compared the main method of care used when the youngest child was 1–2 years of age, we either did not find significant differences, or we could not perform the calculations because of the small number of children whose mothers worked non-standard hours in the different subcategories. Our analyses based on families whose youngest child was 3–5 years old mirrored those for families whose youngest child was 1–5 years of age.

Table 3.6 Child Care Arrangements Used in the Last Year for the Youngest Child Age 1-2 and 3-5 Years, by Mothers' Work Schedule

CHILD CARE FOR YOUNGEST CHILD 1-2				CHILD CARE FOR YOUNGEST CHILD 3-5					
		Mother's Work Schedule				Mother's Work Schedule			
		Standard Work Hours	Non-Standard Work Hours			Standard Work Hours	Non-Standard Work Hours		
Arranged Child Care		%	%	NS	Arranged Child Care	%	%	*	
Arranged child care		72.4	69.1		Arranged child care	84.5	75.7		
Did not arrange child care		27.6	30.9		Did not arrange child care	15.5	24.8		
Frequency of Child Care Use				***	Frequency of Child Care Use				***
Regular basis		82.9	58.9		Regular basis	87.1	69.4		
Irregular or occasional basis		17.1	41.1		Irregular or occasional basis	12.9	30.6		
Main Child Care Arrangement				NS	Main Child Care Arrangement				***
In the child's home		12.2	X		In the child's home	7.9 ^E	22.6 ^E		
A home daycare		36.4	34.0		A home daycare	27.4	33.9		
A preschool/nursery school					A preschool/nursery school	5.8 ^E	X		
A daycare		41.3	40.0		A daycare	42.5	25.7 ^E		
Before or after school program					Before or after school program	9.7	X		
A different type of child care		6.5 ^E	X		A different type of child care	6.7 ^E	11.0 ^E		
Group Child Care Arrangement				NS	Group Child Care Arrangement				*
Group care arrangement		44.9	42.1 ^E		Group care arrangement	58.0	32.6		
Non-group care arrangement		55.1	57.9		Non-group care arrangement	42.0	67.4		
Who is the Care Provider				NS	Who is the Care Provider				**
A relative		29.1	44.9 ^E		A relative	25.8	49.3		
A non-relative		70.9	55.1 ^E		A non-relative	74.2	50.7		
Paid for Child Care				NS	Paid for Child Care				*
Paid for child care		85.6	X		Paid for child care	89.6	73.7		
Did not pay for child care		14.4	X		Did not pay for child care	10.4	26.3 ^E		

^E Use with caution X Suppressed to meet the confidentiality requirements of the Statistics Act

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

Note: Percentages for frequency of child care use, main child care arrangement, group care, care by a relative and whether care is paid or not are calculated based on the number of families who reported making a child care arrangement.

Source: General Social Survey 2017

Reason for using the main type of child care

Parents who reported having made a child care arrangement were asked what their main reason was for choosing their main method of care rather than a different one. We note that many factors contribute to why parents use a particular type(s) of child care for their children – some factors reflect their values and needs, others reflect their perceptions of the options available, and still others reflect constraints given their hours, location, and what they can afford. Table 3.7 indicates a statistical difference in the main reason given by parents when mothers work standard versus non-standard hours. To interpret these findings, however, we must consider the proportion of both groups who made a care arrangement, as well as the differences in what types of care they used. Overall, parents were strongly

influenced by how trustworthy the care provider was. This was especially true for mothers who worked non-standard hours who relied more often on a relative or home child care provider. Parents were also strongly influenced by the location and cost of care, and the perceived quality of the care program or provider. Unexpectedly, very few parents in this sample reported the hours of operation as their main reason for using the main care method. We interpret this finding by suggesting that a) parents already considered their work schedules when deciding whether to make a non-parental arrangement and what type of care to use, and b) they prioritized other reasons, given the options that were reasonably available.¹⁹ (We refer readers to Chapter Four of this report for a discussion of the complex reasons that affect parents' use of particular child care types and packages.)

¹⁹ Small cell sizes preclude more extensive analysis.

Table 3.7 Main Reason Given by Parents for Using Their Main Child Care Arrangement for Their Youngest Child Aged 1–5 Years, by Mother’s Work Schedule

Mothers with a Youngest Child 1–5 years old	Mother’s Work Schedule		Significantly Different
	Standard Work Hours %	Non-Standard Work Hours %	
Main Reason Chose Child Care Type			*
Location (close to work, home, school, etc.)	23.6	15.3 ^E	
Affordable cost	10.4	10.6 ^E	
Hours of operation	3.3 ^E	X	
Care by someone trustworthy (family/ friend)	17.0	32.9	
My other children go (have gone) there	3.7 ^E	X	
Was recommended by someone	7.0	X	
It is safe	4.6 ^E	X	
Only option available	7.3	7.3 ^E	
Learning program	6.4 ^E	X	
For the child's socialization	3.8 ^E	X	
Low child-adult ratio/more staff/1:1 time	2.8 ^E	X	
Other	10.0	6.3 ^E	

^E Use with caution

X Suppressed to meet the confidentiality requirements of the Statistics Act

* $p < .05$

Note: Percentages are calculated based on the number of families who reported making a non-parental child care arrangement in the previous 12 months.

Source: General Social Survey 2017

Preference for alternative care arrangement

It is challenging to analyze parent preferences because the criteria used by parents when responding to this question are often unclear. Some parents may express their preference from among a restricted array of currently available options, while others might answer with their ideal preference in mind, however realistic or unrealistic that might be. Still others might express a preference for one parent, usually the mother, to be at home full-time even though that parent is currently working. Thus, we must interpret parent preference data cautiously.

Among those parents who made a child care arrangement, somewhat fewer than one in four said they would prefer to use a different method of care than the one they were using, if given a choice. The difference between mothers who worked standard hours and those who worked non-standard hours was small, but statistically significant ($p < .05$). Among both groups of mothers combined, the main reason for not using their preferred form of care was either that no places were available (30%) or the cost was too high (23.6%). Roughly 21% had another (unspecified) reason for not using their preferred form of care.

Summary

In this chapter we estimated the prevalence and nature of non-standard work hours among parents of young children in Canada. We also explored factors associated with mothers working non-standard schedules and examined how non-standard schedules (along with other forms of non-standard work) affect parents' use of child care arrangements. Our main findings are as follows:

- Non-standard work schedules are common among parents of young children. Roughly 27% of mothers and 27% of fathers in families with at least one child under six years of age had a non-standard schedule in 2016-2017.
- Mothers and fathers who have non-standard work schedules have similar patterns: slightly more than one in six (17%) worked a regular evening or overnight shift. Rotating schedules and irregular hours are much more common, and together account for almost three quarters of parents' non-standard work schedules. Such schedules are likely to have profound impacts on parents' child care needs and use patterns.

- Working a non-standard schedule is more closely associated with other forms of non-standard and precarious work among mothers than fathers. Mothers who work non-standard hours are more likely to have temporary, seasonal or contract work, to be self-employed, and to work part-time than mothers who worked standard hours.
- A disproportionate share of mothers who have non-standard work have jobs in the health and social care sector, or in education, community, and government services in both professional and non-professional roles. We make note of this point because unstable child care and parental stress can affect parents' work performance and absenteeism and these occupations, by their nature, directly impact the quality of care and service available to individuals and families.
- Mothers who work non-standard hours and those who work standard hours are similar in many respects; however, as a group, mothers who work non-standard hours were younger, have less education, and had lower individual and family incomes than mothers who worked standard hours. Lower family income complicates the challenges parents are likely to have finding and paying for suitable child care arrangements.
- Our analyses revealed substantial differences in child care patterns related to mothers' work schedules. When we considered child care used for the youngest child in the family (1–5 years of age), we found that when mothers worked non-standard hours:
 - They are less likely to make non-parental care arrangements and much less likely to make regular arrangements for care, since they rely more typically on irregular or occasional care (68% of mothers who worked standard hours used a regular care arrangement compared to 47% of mothers who worked non-standard hours);
 - They are less likely to use a licensed group care arrangement for their child (a child care centre, preschool or before- or after-school program): 52% of mothers who work standard hours used a licensed group care program compared to 36% of mothers who worked non-standard hours;
 - They are more likely to use care provided in their own home;
 - They are more likely to have a relative provide care; and

- They are equally as likely as mothers who work standard hours to use a care arrangement in another home – although whether the provider is licensed or affiliated with a home child care agency, which provides some assurance of quality, could not be determined.

Given the data available, it was more difficult to interpret parents' reasons for using the particular type of care they used and the extent to which they preferred to use an alternative method. About one in four parents who used some form of child care expressed a preference for a different form of care than the one they were currently using, with both groups (mothers who work standard hours and those who work non-standard hours) reporting that availability and cost were the main reasons for

not using their preferred type of care. Cost also seemed to be a bigger barrier to using a care arrangement on a regular basis for mothers who work non-standard hours.

To fully understand why parents use the arrangements they do or are unable to use a preferred arrangement would require multivariate analyses and additional data that were not available in this dataset, as well as a larger sample size since many factors affect child care patterns. In addition, qualitative research can help uncover the complexities of how work and child care decisions are related. We refer readers to Chapter Four for our findings based on interviews with parents who worked a variety of non-standard work schedules and who shared their insights, experiences, and challenges.



CHAPTER FOUR

“I’m in kind of a dilemma” – Parents Speak About Non-Standard Work and Child Care Challenges

This chapter highlights the practical and systemic struggles experienced by a sample of Canadian families in which one or both parents work non-standard hours. Through 20 interviews, we can see the complexity of their lives and the significant challenges parents have experienced finding and arranging child care that aligns with their work. The qualitative data from these interviews complement the literature review and survey data we presented in Chapters Two and Three. The mothers we interviewed described the significant challenges they experienced in order to ensure their children were well cared for. These mothers typically relied on a mix of different child care arrangements or “packages” on any given day, week, or month. As one of them explained in an understated way: *“I’m in kind of a dilemma.”* These stories reveal the financial, practical, and emotional struggles of hard-working parents who are doing the best they can to provide their children with the best start in life.

Throughout the interviews, it quickly became evident that the challenges of non-standard work and child care extend far beyond accommodating early morning, late night, weekend, or overnight care. The parents we interviewed (many of whom had a post-secondary degree or diploma) were working in increasingly precarious jobs, whereas existing social policies (including child care) were designed for full-time, permanent employment arrangements. Parents with unstable and/or unpredictable work were most vulnerable when it came to organizing child care.

Most Canadian parents struggle with the cost and availability of high-quality child care. Parents with non-standard work hours, however, faced additional challenges because of their rotating and irregular work schedules that require frequent changes and accommodations, often with little to no advance notice. These parents found committing to consistent hours in child care arrangements to be impractical and too costly because they didn’t know how much work, if any, they would be able to get in the next several weeks, let alone when the work would be scheduled (which days of the week, what

times of the day, etc.). Most mothers, except the few lucky individuals with higher incomes, expressed ongoing frustration with the impossibility of “balancing” paid work with child care when work did not follow a permanent, consistent, 9–5 schedule.

Methodology

We conducted 20 semi-structured interviews with a purposely sampled group of parents, which included 19 mothers and one father. Families with at least one preschool-aged child (less than six years old)²⁰ and one parent employed in non-standard work were eligible. We recruited parents through online networking forums (Facebook and Kijiji), through our research team’s existing personal and professional networks (union representatives and contacts with non-standard hours centre directors), and by word of mouth. We conducted the interviews over the telephone over a month-long period (March 2019) and we transcribed them immediately. These interviews evolved into conversations about the complex circumstances that influence child care decisions. After transcribing the interviews, we sent follow-up

emails to obtain any missing information or additional data that we required. The interview schedule is attached in the Appendices.

Our Sample

Although our sample was not representative of the population of Canadian parents who work non-standard hours, we were able to recruit participants with diverse backgrounds, family characteristics, and employment patterns. Participants ranged in age from 27–46 years old with an average age of 35. Five of the participants were single mothers. Eight participants had only one child under age five, seven participants had two children under age five (including two participants who were also pregnant at the time of the interview), and four participants had three or more children. Twelve of the 20 respondents had after-tax family incomes of \$50,000 – \$100,000. Three participants (all single mothers) fell into a low-income bracket (<\$30,000) and five participants (all partnered) had an after-tax family income of more than \$100,000. We recruited at least one parent from each province in Canada, except Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia. We were unable to

²⁰ The only exception is one single mother who was specifically recruited because she relied on non-standard hours, regulated centre-based child care since the time her children were infants. At the time of the interview her children were 7 and 11 years of age.

recruit parents from the territories, although we did include one Inuit family living in northern Québec. All couples were heterosexual.

Participants came mainly from urban areas of various sizes. Sixteen participants lived in cities/towns with populations between 50,000 and 400,000, and only one participant was from a major metropolitan area with a population greater than 2 million. The remaining three participants came from communities with a population of less than 3,000 (including one participant living on an acreage). Fifteen of the interviewed parents had obtained a university degree and three had college diplomas; only two participants had only a high school education (including one who was currently pursuing a college diploma). Finally, while most participants identified as both white and Canadian-born, two participants identified as Indigenous and one participant had immigrated to Canada in the past ten years. One francophone parent was interviewed primarily in French.

Parents' paid work

A key insight that the interviews revealed was that simply focusing on the nature of the parents' non-standard work schedule did not capture the full experience of non-standard work. For each participant, it is essential to consider whether the parent works a regular number of hours per week, whether she/he works full time, part-time, or short hours (< 20 hours per week), and whether work schedules are predictable and known in advance. The lived experiences of the parents we interviewed were further complicated if their spouse/partner also had non-standard work. This was the case for nine of the 15 dual-earner couples in our sample.

Table 4.1 describes each parent's occupation, their employment status (full- or part-time), their work schedule, and whether their work hours were predictable and known at least one month in advance. In cases where parents had partners, we noted whether both parents were engaged in non-standard work in the final column.

Our sample included parents in a variety of occupations. Notably, 14 of the 19 mothers we interviewed were employed in the health and social care sector, including four nurses, a doctor, a midwife, a respiratory therapist, a social worker, a personal support worker, and a

supervisor of a child care program. The other participants were office administrators, accommodation and food service workers, a journalist, and a consultant. Thirteen participants (including all five single mothers and the one father) worked full time while the other seven participants worked part time. Four of the mothers who worked part time had short hours, typically working 15–20 hours per week that fit around their husband’s or child’s schedule). One father, who was the husband of one of the mothers we interviewed, also worked short hours.

Among the 20 parents interviewed, seven did not know their schedules at least one month in advance (including three of the five single mothers), even if their employment was stable otherwise. For single mothers, not being able to predict their schedule increased their vulnerability since they did not have a co-parent to fill in any gaps in child care that could not be scheduled ahead of time.

Table 4.1 Participants' Occupation and Nature of Non-Standard Work

	OCCUPATION	WORK STATUS	WORK SCHEDULE	WORK PREDICTABLE/ KNOWN IN ADVANCE?	BOTH PARENTS NON-STANDARD?
1	Nurse	Full Time	Rotating Shifts	Yes	Yes
2	Catering	Part Time, Short hours	Regular Weekends	No	Yes
3	Respiratory Therapist	Part time, Short hours	Rotating Shifts	Yes	Yes
4	Construction Oversight	Full time	Compressed week (8:00 am – 6:00 pm, every other Friday off)	Yes	No
5	Office Admin	Part time, Short hours	10:00 am – 2:00 pm Monday – Friday	Yes	No
6	Office Admin	Full Time (2 Part Time jobs)	Rotating Early (7:00 am) and Late (9:00 am) starts Monday – Friday, Finishes between 2:00 pm and 8:00 pm, Plus Regular Weekends	Yes	N/A
7	Social Worker	Part Time, Short hours	Regular Evenings	Yes	Yes
8	Doctor	Full Time	Rotating Shifts, On Call	Yes	Yes
9	Domestic Assistant	Full Time, Self-employed	9:00 am – 2:00 pm, Plus Regular Weekends	No	N/A
10	Student, Bartender	Full Time	Regular Weekends, Regular Evenings	No	N/A
11	Nurse	Full Time	Regular Evenings	Yes	Yes
12	Nurse	Part Time	Rotating Shifts	Yes	Yes
13	Customer Service	Part Time	Regular Evenings	No	Yes
14	Police Dispatcher	Full Time	Rotating Shifts	Yes	N/A
15	Child care Supervisor	Full Time	8:00 am – 6:00 pm, plus Regular Weekends, Regular Evenings	Yes	Yes
16	Journalist	Full Time	5:00 am – 2:00 pm, Monday – Friday	Yes	No
17	Nurse	Part Time	Regular Nights, Regular Weekends	Yes	No
18	Midwife	Full Time	On Call, Regular Weekends	No	No
19*	Consultant	Full Time	Regular Evenings, Regular Weekends, Frequent Travel	No	No
20	Personal Support Worker	Full Time	Regular Evenings, Regular Weekends, Regular Nights	No	N/A

* Interviewed father

In nine of the 15 couples, one of the parents did not know their work schedule one month in advance. For all the families interviewed, unpredictable schedules were a problem that mothers became responsible for solving. In these cases, mothers could not commit themselves to stable, ongoing paid employment or child care, since they often had to be available with very little notice to care for children. As one mother explained:

He's on call 24/7 for his job. He's in emergency response. In the past two years, I used to be on evenings for the longest time. So child care was an issue for me when he would travel and when I would be at work in the evenings – because most daycares close at 6:00.

Through the interviews it became apparent that parents' work schedules are complex. Each family's situation was different, as work varied on multiple dimensions, including the amount of work, the timing of work, and the predictability of work. In addition to their concerns about finding and affording child care, all participants expressed significant concerns about the short-term and long-term financial security of their families. Parents spoke about their extreme efforts to maximize their children's well-being by providing a stable, secure life, even under very challenging circumstances. Each parent and family spoke to the complicated calculations and decisions required to maximize earnings and job security,

ensure their child(ren) were well cared for, and manage the stress created by neither work nor child care being consistent and secure.

In some cases, these calculations resulted in mothers reducing their work hours; this was the case for four mothers at the time of our interviews. When the cost of child care exceeded the earning potential of a parent, families reduced the paid work of that parent to less than 20 hours a week to accommodate child care. It was typically the mother who reduced her paid work, though one husband had also made this accommodation. Therefore, a lack of flexible and affordable child care directly affected women's employment, earnings, and career opportunities, with which the mothers we interviewed often expressed their disappointment. All parents, except one single mother, maximized their paid work opportunities and arranged their child care around their work rather than the other way around. In one case, a mother made the difficult decision to temporarily withdraw from the labour force and reduce her and her son's standard of living in order to spend more time with her young son. She later returned to work, being careful to schedule her work around his kindergarten hours. In every other case, parents organized their child care around their work opportunities.

Child care packages

All participants used a combination of different types of child care to meet their needs. These combinations varied and shifted depending on each parents' work schedule, the availability of and cost of regulated or unregulated non-familial child care, whether extended family were available and willing to help, and family composition. Single parents working non-standard hours often had the most complex packages. Furthermore, many families required different child care packages for each of their children, especially when an older child attended kindergarten or school.

As discussed in Chapter Two, we categorized each family's primary mode of child care as: 1) tag-team parenting/care, 2) non-familial care, or 3) family (kin) care. The tag-team model occurs when parents off-shift work and care with one another, thus this category inherently excludes single-parent families. Non-familial care is any ongoing child care arrangement that is provided by people who are not family or friends, including all regulated and unregulated child care, public kindergarten, and in-home nannies/babysitters. Finally, family care occurs when extended family (typically grandparents)

provide regular child care on a daily, ongoing basis.

Some families who rely on non-familial care experience unstable care, which is sometimes referred to as a "scramble". In this sample, however, families who relied primarily on non-familial child care often had the most stable child care packages (e.g., having the same care package for three months). These families, particularly those in regulated settings, had the assurance that child care was covered between *x* and *y* hours every day.

We found that eight families relied primarily on the tag-team model of care as their main method, 10 families relied on non-familial care, and two families relied on regular care provided by family members. However, *all* used at least two, if not three modes of care. Many two-parent families used tag-team care as part of their package. Single parents did not have that option, since they did not have a partner with whom they could coordinate work and care. Table 4.2 outlines the primary care arrangements used by the parents in our sample, as well as whether their child care packages were stable or unstable.

Table 4.2 Primary Child Care Arrangement for Interviewed Families

Two-Parent Families (N=15)		
PRIMARY TYPE OF CHILD CARE	STABLE	UNSTABLE
Tag team	5	3
Non-familial	5	1
Family	1	0
Single-Parent Families (N=5)		
PRIMARY TYPE OF CHILD CARE	STABLE	UNSTABLE
Non-familial	2	2
Family	0	1

Three overarching findings stand out:

- Relying on a tag-team child care arrangement was as common as non-familial care for two-parent families, although it was less stable.
- Only two families relied on extended family as their main child care arrangement, even though family was almost always a key component in holding child care packages together (see discussion below), and
- About one-third of the families had unstable child care arrangements (four of the 15 two-parent families and three of the five single-parent families).

It is important to note that the sample drawn upon in this study is not representative of Canadian parents, due to small size and purposive sampling (see Methodology section).

Tag team parenting and care

Many couples used tag-team parenting to solve the challenges involved in combining non-standard work and child care. Parents attempted to schedule their work and child care responsibilities so that one parent could care for the children (unpaid work) while the other worked outside the home (paid work). Unsurprisingly, the tag-team model did not work when both parents in a couple worked non-standard schedules. In these cases, it was

simply impossible to ensure both parents' non-standard schedules aligned in a way that made tag-team parenting possible, especially when one or both parents had unpredictable schedules. For example, one mother was very aware that the tag-team model she and her husband were planning to use when she went back to work full-time would not likely be a long-term solution:

....so my husband is going to be off for my day shifts, so we don't need care on those days, or my night shifts, so I'll basically go into work for my first night shift and not sleep. Because before I had kids, I would nap before my night. So, I'll just not sleep. If I can get a break at work, I will nap on my break and just drink a lot of coffee. Which, you know, a lot of people do this. I can probably squeak in a little nap when my son naps, but that doesn't always happen, so we'll just pray that it always happens. And then between my night shifts, that's when I really need to sleep, so that's when we really need someone.

In five of the eight tag-teaming families, one parent reduced her/his work schedule dramatically to be more available to care for the children (in four families it was the mother and in one it was the father). As mentioned previously, this typically meant mothers had to make undesired career sacrifices to accommodate child care. However, these sacrifices did mostly solve the child care

dilemma: tag-teaming parents when one parent was the primary caregiver (scheduling part-time work around the full-time working parent) seemed much more stable than tag-teaming when both parents worked more than 20 hours per week.

It's important to note that all but one tag-teaming family still relied on extended family support to make tag-teaming possible. This was even the case for tag-teaming families where one of the parents worked short hours. As one mother *without* family support (whose husband reduced his work to short hours to care for their son) put it:

I think the people who have the sweetest deal are the people who have parents that live in the same city or close by. I think a lot of nurses and doctors on their way to work, they just drop the kids off at their parents' house... family is really helpful... they're like really flexible, free child care that loves your child almost as much as you do or more so. Like you can't buy that help, you can't.

The other seven tag-teaming families regularly relied on grandmothers for child care support. For the tag-teaming mothers with short hours, having a grandmother who was willing to help with child care was the only reason they could continue with a career at all. Where work was unpredictable, grandmothers played a key role as "back up" child care support, often dropping

their own commitments to care for their grandchildren.²¹

Family as the “glue”

Table 4.2 shows that for the 20 families we interviewed, most parents did not rely on extended family as their primary care arrangement. Through the interviews, however, we learned that 18 of the 20 families included family as an essential component of their child care package, even if it was not the primary component. Grandparents not only acted as the “glue” that kept the tag-team model afloat; they kept almost every child care package afloat.²² They would pick up or drop off the children, cover care for an hour here or there when parents’ shifts did not align, provide care one evening each week, or provide care for an hour after school every day.

Grandparents played significant roles in sustaining the primary child care packages whether they were tag-team or non-familial care packages. Two participants reported that they had moved from another province to be closer to their extended families to have more child care support. In these cases, both parents

made career/income sacrifices to make this move:

Well, when we had our daughter, we actually lived in Nova Scotia, and we had zero family out there. So we found that very difficult ... so when our daughter was 10 months old, we decided we needed to move home and be closer to family, because we couldn’t do it without a little bit of support. So we moved back to New Brunswick, and we bought a house and settled here. So I have my family here. My parents are both retired, so they help out quite a bit with our daughter, and they live fairly close.

Another mother spoke about how difficult it was for her and her husband to make the decision to move closer to family for help with child care given how well her husband’s business was doing:

Mainly having my parents here, because I knew it [child care] was going to be a headache. So then we really wanted our family support. It was a big deal because his [husband’s] company was doing really good there...so it was a big decision to make, but we wanted our kids to have family around them, and I wanted me to have some support.

²¹ Mothers often described feeling like a burden when they had to ask their own parents for help with child care.

²² The two families that did not rely on family support for child care had no family living within a few hours’ drive.

One participant summed up the child care struggle as being a “whole family affair” for parents of young children who have non-standard work:

My mother and my husband’s mother step in when child care is needed, also his father and his sister and my sister definitely do as well. So it [child care] is kind of a whole family affair. I have a lot of colleagues who don’t have that support and it is very stressful for them.

Non-familial child care

Only six of the families interviewed relied exclusively on familial child care arrangements such as tag-team parenting and extended family care. The remaining 14 families relied on non-familial child care as part of their child care package. Eight families used regulated centre-based child care programs, one family used regulated home child care, and one relied on kindergarten. Six families used unregulated home child care and one used informal babysitters in the child’s home. It is worth noting that parents who used non-familial care outside the child’s home had to coordinate who would transport the child to and from care as part of the package. Again, it is important to

remember that because of our sampling method, the participants we interviewed are not a representative sample of parents who work non-standard hours. More parents in our sample used centre-based care than we might expect in a representative sample.

Difficulties and barriers to finding and using quality care

The fact that most of the families we interviewed relied on tag-team parenting and family care does not mean that they did not want high quality, non-familial care; in fact, the opposite was true. Most families wanted to be able to provide their children with stable, high quality care experiences, but they were simply not available and/or affordable. Only a few purposefully recruited²³ participants were fortunate enough to have access to flexible and/or non-standard hours regulated child care. Mothers spoke extensively about the “headache” of finding child care and the prohibitive cost of care, which often amounted to most of their own wages. They also discussed how fragile the child care

²³ We specifically sought out parents who had access to flexible and/or non-standard hours regulated child care to participate in this study. We contacted supervisors/directors of centres that provide this service, and even then, this was only two of our participants.

arrangements that were not offered in stable, regulated child care centres could be. The underlying tone was one of immense frustration with little sense of agency that they could do anything about it. Understandably, they funneled their limited energy and efforts towards finding an arrangement that would meet their immediate child care needs rather than tackling the broader social inequities that a lack of child care presents for them. Several mothers scoffed at the idea that regulated, centre-based child care could ever be affordable and accessible, let alone flexible enough to meet their unique needs.

High cost and limited access

All the parents we interviewed expressed concern about the high cost and scarce availability of non-familial child care, whether it was regulated, unregulated, or provided by a babysitter or nanny. Most mothers immediately ruled out regulated child care (typically the costliest form of care) as a possibility because it would cost them most of their wages:

...we would never find day care for that [non-standard schedule] and if we did find somebody, then it would probably cost us the amount that I would be getting from working.

Furthermore, centre-based care did not cover all hours of care required for most of the families we interviewed. Therefore, they would

have to pay additional costs on top of regulated care unless they had family who were willing and able to provide additional care for free. High costs and logistics were significant barriers to using non-familial arrangements. The one father we interviewed described his family's predicament:

I think it's around, the one lady she quoted us, I think it was \$8.00 per hour per child, so that would have been \$16.00 an hour. My wife is only making \$12.00, so that's the problem too, right? I understand child care providers need to make money and it is to make a living. You have to pay money, but when you're only making a little above minimum wage yourself, it's kind of tough to go that road. Like, there's no incentive to go to work if you just work to pay child care.

One middle-class mother of three children actually paid more for child care than she was earning, and so she had to pick up extra shifts to offset this cost. For her, this temporary arrangement was necessary to keep her job.

I was paying \$2,700.00 a month, which meant I had to work extra shifts to make up the extra cost of daycare, just so that I could work my regular shifts. Like, it was just crazy. It's convoluted. I had to put them in daycare to be able to work, but I had to work extra to be able to justify the cost of daycare. Even at the level of income that I'm at.

Several families faced the additional barrier of not qualifying for a fee subsidy and yet not being able to afford regulated child care services – even if they were able to find a space:

I think they have to understand that it doesn't matter how much money you make; child care is a huge expense. Like many people out there are working just to afford child care.

Most concerning are single, low-income parents who could access neither a subsidy nor a regulated space. For example, one very low-income single mother spoke about her frustration at not being able to access a subsidy or a space for her two-year-old son:

I couldn't really put him in any kind of daycare because daycare would have been \$15,000 for the year. And that's like way more than I would be making, so it was definitely challenging to figure out how to organize everything.

Finding child care

The other significant barrier is finding a child care “space”. One well-educated mother who could afford to pay for a regulated child care space²⁴ had put her name on several waiting lists prior to her child’s birth. She half-joked

that her son would be a teenager before a space became available:

We'll probably never get into a Vancouver daycare. Like maybe when he's 17 or something... we'll come off a wait list.

Many families turned to social media or other online networking platforms to find non-familial care that could accommodate their needs. As one mother described:

I go on Facebook and I say what I'm looking for [child care] and people start tagging other people... But when you talk to these people, they're like “I already got kids, I already got kids.” They've already got everything they can handle.

Furthermore, parents reported that it was incredibly difficult to find a child care provider who could accommodate their schedules – even in the unregulated sector:

We posted looking for a nanny. We posted looking for somebody to accommodate shift work schedules... So we had people replying, and despite me saying with these 6:15 am drop offs and 7:30 pm pick-ups, we had lots of people responding saying you know “I'm

²⁴ It is important to recognize that discussing child care “spaces” is conceptually limited. Children require high quality care experiences, not just physical spaces to be put in. However, this is the language that parents used and so we reflect this language here.

available 8:00–5:00” ... Okay well, that is exactly not what I asked for, but thanks.

Relying on social media to find child care is highly problematic, since it has no oversight, and opportunities depend on who you know and how well connected you are. It also became apparent that unregulated child care arrangements were very unstable in general. Only one family relied primarily on an unregulated home care provider for ongoing, full-time care.²⁵ In all other cases, unregulated providers would care for children one day a week or on a case by case basis.

The “lock in”

For parents to secure non-familial child care they must commit to paying weekly long-term fees in child care centres/homes, or wages for private providers for regular care. As we know from Chapter Three, many parents do not have predictable, consistent work schedules that would normally be associated with “locked in” child care arrangements. Without full-time, permanent work that predictably falls within a standard working day, most families could not commit to, or afford, long-term, continuing care arrangements. Even the fortunate parents who knew their schedules weeks in advance, mainly

those working rotating shifts, rarely needed care on the same days or evenings each week. For example, one mother, a nurse working rotating shifts, remarked:

But the trouble was when we were looking at licensed daycare centres and homes...I talked to Little Tykes [home child care agency], but for someone his age they only take them if they can commit to two days a week: the same two days every week. So if I needed a Tuesday and a Thursday, that would only benefit me every other month. So, it doesn’t really make sense. I would basically have to take on full time care for one day a week.

Another family required full-time care every other week, with little to no care on the weeks in-between. For this mother, committing to a fixed child care schedule was impossible; she never knew when or for how long her husband would be away, and therefore she couldn’t know when child care would be needed:

I guess, normally, if we had set hours, we would be able to find set daycare and go from there. Like, it would be home daycare, which I think we would need that early in the morning, then we would just have a Monday–Friday or Monday–Wednesday. Say “we need daycare

²⁵ In another case, the family’s plan was to use an unregulated provider, but the provider quit less than a week before the mother was to go back to work from maternity leave. For now, the mother has reduced her hours significantly so that she and her husband can tag team.

those days,” and pay for it. But it’s just so sporadic... like, I wouldn’t want to pay for that daycare all the time just in case he was to travel, because sometimes he’s gone three weeks of the month and other times its three months before he travels. So, I think it would be either for us to have set hours so we know what we’re doing, or, ideally, have somebody that we can just call on sporadically. But a professional daycare doesn’t do that.

A solution noted in a few rare cases is for providers to allow families to partner with other families through sharing a child care space. In these situations, families agree how to divide the time and costs of the full-time child care space amongst themselves. Three mothers (one quoted below) described space sharing as the only solution to their lack of flexible child care:

They allowed us to do half days if there was somebody else looking for half days and we could split that full-time spot. ... Because they said if there wasn’t, we would be required to pay for the full-time spot, because they need to have that spot paid for. We could have it if someone else was willing to cover the other half, like they needed the morning spot. But it worked out that they did, so luckily we were able to do that.

In this way, families were required not only to lock-in with the child care centre, but also to

lock in with other families. Unfortunately, space-sharing rarely seemed to work out long-term for the families we interviewed. Most parents did not know another family with whom they could share a space, let alone have employment schedules that worked for both families. The arrangement often broke down, as in the case of one mother, who explained:

But in the regulated centre we found it very difficult, because we had to share a full-time spot. I think we shared it with another nurse so they got to choose the four days of the week that they wanted, and we would just take whatever else they didn’t want. But oftentimes they would choose the four days that weren’t holidays or something, but then we would still have to pay for that week, even though there was no chance of her going. So we kind of got tired of that.

Consequences for parents and children

Having non-standard work and patching together child care for young children took a toll on the families we interviewed. All interviewees talked about how stressful it was for them to constantly arrange child care around non-standard work schedules. Parents who did not have stable, secure, predictable work rarely had stable, predictable child care, and this caused a great deal of strain on their family life. The economic and emotional stress of not knowing what the next month or two might look like was particularly pronounced for single mothers who were solely responsible for both child care and work. These mothers had to constantly perform at a very high level. They worked full-time outside the home, organized child care for their children, cared for their children, and made contingency plans in case any piece of their complex child care-work arrangement changed at the last minute. Even the single mother who chose to decrease her paid work to spend more time with her son constantly worried about whether she would be able to pay for his swimming lessons and

tutoring, as well as whether her current employers would keep her employed.

Tag-team parenting provided a slightly better option for couples in that they had a partner with whom to share the work/child care burden. The stress of trying to “balance” everything, however, was also hard on marriages/partnerships. As one tag-teaming mother put it “we [she and her husband] *are like ships passing through the night*”.²⁶ Every tag-teaming parent identified with this sentiment, especially those in couples where both parents worked more than 30 hours a week. Finding time for both parents to spend with one another, with or without their children, was a major motivating factor for mothers who made the decision to reduce their paid work, typically down to short hours. The cost of care and the difficulty finding it were also motivating factors.

The families that had access to stable, regulated, usually centre-based, child care experienced the least stress. In fact, every family that had access to centre-based care in our sample had “stable” child care arrangements. These families still included other care arrangements in their care packages, but centre-based care acted as the

²⁶ This parent followed up with the researchers to inform us that she and her husband had decided to put their two children into regulated child care and take out a line of credit to cover the cost. This decision was prompted by mutual agreement that the tag-team model of child care was too much of a strain on their family and marriage.

central pillar around which they organized the other arrangements. The other key consequence of non-standard work and few child care options are the effects they have on children. Parents are not the only ones who experience stress and strain when they cannot access stable child care. Young children, who require consistency for a sense of security, are moved around between different caregivers and different settings. One mother, whose child was in a regulated centre, stated that her child's experience of child care was the key reason she wanted to be part of this study:

And I think the one reason I really wanted to speak to you was because we talk about care and then we talk about taking care and watching, like babysitting, and then we talk about proper care as education for children. And here I'm in kind of a dilemma. I could have my daughter going to an [unregulated] home day care or a babysitter or something which has longer hours...I'm sure there are arrangements like that. But I can tell you that it wouldn't be proper educational care and for me it's not fair for my daughter to not be able to enjoy proper care, proper education, just because my work hours don't work for her.

Similarly, a single mother spoke about how badly she wanted her son to go to a child care centre, but could not send him due to the high fees:

I believed that it was so good for his development just to be, you know, not sitting at home with an elderly grandparent watching TV all day. Just to be like learning and with other kids and stuff.

Gender equity?

As we noted repeatedly throughout this chapter, it was mothers who typically made career sacrifices to accommodate child care responsibilities. Examples include a nurse shifting from full-time to a part-time casual position, mothers changing occupations in the pursuit of a more predictable or flexible schedule, and some who put their career on hold altogether. In 11 of the 20 families we interviewed, the mother had reduced or changed her paid work to some degree because of an inability to find or afford child care for her children. This included mothers reducing their work hours to be part-time, taking a lower paying job that was more flexible, and switching from a career for which she was qualified. There was only one family where the father made the same sacrifice. One mother stated:

I would love to have a full-time position. You know, I want to further myself in my career. I want to have benefits of my own. So, there's a lot of like different avenues of progressing in

my profession that I don't think I will be able to attain until later in my life, unfortunately... but that is the sacrifice of having children, I guess... We are realizing that I'm not going to be able to return to full time, which is a little bit stressful financially, because we were hoping this was short term, or at least until they went to school or something... Unless one of us gets a 9:00–5:00 job, then I don't think it would ever be worth-while or even feasible for us to both work full time at this stage... so I will probably end up working this part-time casual status until our children are old enough that they can get themselves up and get themselves ready for school.

Another mother described how difficult it was going to be for her to pass up a rare opportunity at work because she didn't have a viable child care option:

I am next in line to be promoted to full time, because the full-time woman is going to be retiring in the fall. I'm next in line, but the full-time position starts at 5:45 in the morning. So, my child care is nil at that time. If [husband] is on compressed weekends, he's not off until 7:00 and I'd be Monday through Friday, then. Like, I would be full-time Monday to Friday, that consistent shift. The dream job - and I don't know if I'd ever be able to take it, because of child care. None of the day cares in town have that early a drop off.

One single mother who had trained in law enforcement described how painful it was to give up her desired career in order to take a job in a different field that could better accommodate her child care needs:

I had to give back my badge and that hurt, actually, cause I bled to get it... literallyso for me personally, it was hard to deal with that way... but my family always comes first.

A professional mother with a unique skill set spoke about how her hard work and years of education became obsolete when she had to drop down to casual status at the hospital due to a lack of appropriate child care:

Yeah, I have two university degrees and I've worked really hard. I've also specialized in my career to work in the operating room and in a paediatric clinic, and I definitely am limited professionally - quite significantly - by our child care limitations, because of the jobs that my husband and I have.

When one participant was asked if child care availability had impacted her career, she answered:

Oh, major! I went from being on the executive track in the government, like on my way to being an assistant deputy minister, to being a registered nurse in a clinical role.

There was only one family where the mother indicated that her husband, who was also an educated professional, had significantly reduced his workload to care for their child. Clearly, these interviews reinforce the fact that the lack of affordable, flexible, high quality child care affects women, children, and families, and results in broader economic and social consequences beyond those at the individual level.

What might help? Access to regulated care even if it doesn't cover all hours of care, reducing child care costs, and help finding flexible, good care

One of the most interesting and unexpected findings from the interview data was how helpful licensed, centre-based, “standard” hours child care was for families who worked non-standard hours. Even though these centres typically operated from 7:30 am – 6:00 pm, which didn't match many of the parents' work schedules, they provided a foundation of dependable care. Regulated child care was predictable and reliable in a way that family

care, neighbors, babysitters, and unlicensed home child care arrangements were not. While unlicensed providers may be flexible in terms of days or hours of care (though still not as flexible as one might expect), several participants shared worrying stories about a provider abruptly quitting or shutting down due to illness, disability, or for other personal reasons. If the provider had even a minor illness, such as a cold or flu, families would be left without care at the last minute. Other parents found that home care providers who they thought would be more flexible were not able to consistently meet their care needs (e.g., rotating days, early mornings, weekends, week on/week off, etc.).

Repeatedly throughout the interviews, it became apparent that the biggest predictor of stability in our small sample was having access to regulated, usually centre-based, care. This care was guaranteed through its very structure – it would be open between X and Y hours. While one teacher may be ill, there was a team of people who could step in and the setting remained the same. Having this guaranteed care allowed parents to put wrap-around care in place– an hour or two here or there around the hours of regulated care. This is where grandparents and extended family were particularly helpful, since they could fill in gaps for short periods of time. This approach was less of a burden for extended families than providing full-time care, and as a result, was

more sustainable over time. As one mother put it:

...My mom is still working and taking care of my grandparents. I don't feel like I should ask her to watch the baby unless it's absolutely necessary. And I know, I can see, she loves being around the baby, it puts her in a great mood, it's a distraction from my grandparents and from work. But at the same time, I know how much work it is when it goes on for, like, more than two hours.

For another single mother with sporadic family support, access to a child care program made the difference between working and providing for her family or relying on social assistance. When the child care centre could not meet all her needs, it was possible for her to occasionally ask her parents to “watch” her kids, but she knew she could not expect her parents to provide the primary child care:

Sometimes I feel like I'm a burden - because they're busy, and they have their own life. And I have to get them to watch my kids at times, and I can't imagine having to get them to watch my kids every day. I know people that have got their grandma or grandpa watching their kids every single day while they're working, and I couldn't imagine having to do that, because my parents would probably just say “no way.” Like, they do help me, but they're getting old.

It's also worth noting that, even for families who could rely on grandparents as the primary care providers, access to some non-familial care was still necessary or desired. Both families we interviewed who relied primarily on grandparents to care for their children had their child enrolled in non-familial child care at least one day per week.

Conclusion

The obvious conclusion from our interviews is that working non-standard hours, particularly irregular hours, and raising young children is very difficult for Canadian families. Every family we interviewed used a unique combination of familial and non-familial child care. Their child care arrangements were always shifting in response to many factors that they may or may not have any control over, such as changing work hours, illness of a child/parent/ provider/ grandparent, school closures and professional development (PD) days, a new baby, etc. Tag-teaming parents had little room for error if schedules didn't align and often sacrificed time together as a family to make this child care arrangement work. Relying exclusively on extended family to provide care was not practically possible for any interviewed family. When grandparents were the primary care provider, parents often felt like (and

arguably sometimes were) a burden on the grandparents in a way that strained their relationship.

Parents who had access to regulated centre-based care, particularly care that offered some version of non-standard hours such as early opening, weekend care, or late closing, were the best off. These families had reliable, predictable care that they could plan their lives around. Unfortunately, however, such care has a cost, and for low-income families, as well as many middle-income families, any regulated care was not economically realistic. It was

simply too expensive and hard to find. Only one parent – who we specifically recruited for this study – was low income, had a subsidy, and had access to a non-standard hours child care program. She knew how lucky she was, and she has been a parent at the centre for over a decade now. She was able to go to college while working full-time and being a single mother of two boys. For her, the staff at the child care centre are her family. When we asked her what she would have done without access to the non-standard hours child care centre, her immediate response was: *“I would be lost”*.



CHAPTER FIVE

Provincial/Territorial Scan of Non-Standard Hours Child Care Policies and Activities

This chapter presents the results of an environmental scan we conducted to gather relevant information about regulated non-standard hours child care in Canada. This chapter includes data and information about provincial/territorial policies, initiatives, and funding, and the prevalence of non-standard hours child care. We also describe the development of early learning and child care initiatives at the national level involving both the federal and provincial/territorial governments. In addition, the environmental scan was intended to help identify examples of feasible and sustainable non-standard hours options in centres and regulated home child care to further knowledge about models of non-standard hours child care that could be expanded or developed to meet parents' and children's needs. Profiles of seven such child care services are included in Chapter Six.

Methodology

This environmental scan included:

- a) A review of the bilateral agreements between each province/territory and the Government of Canada under the 2017 Multilateral Framework Agreement on Early Learning and Child Care;
- b) An online review of provincial/territorial policies, regulations, funding, and publicly available information such as online search tools that could positively or negatively affect the provision and use of non-standard hours child care;
- c) A questionnaire sent to child care officials responsible for early learning and child care in each province/territory. All provinces/territories returned information. (The questionnaire is included in Appendix B.)

- d) Follow-ups by telephone or email with selected provinces/territories to clarify or elaborate on their data and information about non-standard hours child care; and
- e) An online search of regulated child care services in each province/territory using available tools to determine the extent to which non-standard hours child care is provided, to identify specific examples of non-standard hours services, and to assess the usability of the tools that parents can use to seek non-standard hours child care.

All information was collected between March and August of 2019.

For the purposes of this project, we considered non-standard hours child care to include any of the following:

- Slightly non-standard (extended) hours (6:00 am to 8:00 pm)
- Earlier morning, later night hours (5:00 am to 12:00 am)
- Very late night, overnight care (12:00 am onwards)
- Weekends (anytime on Saturday or Sunday)

- On request participation (including emergency, flexible scheduling, special arrangements, or drop-in care.)

Our Findings

Non-standard hours child care policy and provision across Canada: Limited provision, many initiatives

None of Canada's 13 provinces and territories have a comprehensive policy or program to ensure access to non-standard hours child care – none, in fact, ensure access to child care of any kind. Provinces/territories primarily rely on private non-profit and for-profit child care providers to meet the demand for both standard and non-standard hours child care. There have been, however, a number of relevant administrative, regulatory, and funding changes since a similar environmental scan of provincial/territorial policies and initiatives was conducted in 2015.

In 2015, Halfon and Friendly reported that “there is very little regulated child care available in the evening, on weekends, overnight or on a rotating or on-call basis to meet the schedules of non-standard hours workers who need care for their children” and “... no inventory of such services” [32]. Based on our 2019 scan, we confirm that there is still very little regulated child care available during

non-standard work hours and no cross-Canada inventory of such services. Nevertheless, there is greater awareness of the issue and more provincial/territorial activity on non-standard hours child care in 2019 than there was five years ago.

The scan conducted for the 2015 study, which used telephone interviews with provincial/territorial officials responsible for child care, did not find any noteworthy policies or initiatives for non-standard hours care. It concluded that, “in most cases, little was known about the demand, prevalence and issues for non-standard hours child care...while several officials indicated that they thought there was little to no demand for non-standard hours child care” [32]. In contrast, our current environmental scan suggests that there is greater recognition of the need for child care “flexibility” and that there are a number of new or enhanced non-standard hours child care initiatives in provinces/territories. The following sections provide information about non-standard hours policy initiatives including regulations, funding, public information, and knowledge about the issue by provinces/territories.

Summarizing these developments, we observe that:

- “Flexibility” is one of the five principles of the federal Multilateral Framework

Agreement on Early Learning and Child Care agreed to by provinces/territories. Three jurisdictions have identified non-standard hours child care in the Action Plans that were developed subsequent to this agreement;

- Nine jurisdictions have a specific definition of non-standard hours child care, although one of these is a de facto definition;
- Nine jurisdictions report specific regulations or policies for non-standard hours child care, although the nature and specificity of these regulations and policies vary significantly;
- Seven provinces/territories identify additional or specific funding of some kind that is associated with non-standard hours child care. In two provinces, funding can be directly attributed to the federal/provincial agreement, although these initiatives were underway before the bilateral agreements were signed;
- Five provinces/territories reported specific initiatives on non-standard hours child care;
- Four jurisdictions reported research - either their own or academic research or a

broader review - that focused on non-standard hours child care;

- Twelve jurisdictions can identify regulated services that provide non-standard hours child care, although different approaches are used across Canada to identify and report public information about these services;
- All jurisdictions now have online information listing regulated child care services;
- In six provinces, information is publicly available online about which specific services provide non-standard hours child care. To find non-standard hours care, however, parents may have to search service-by-service; and
- While there is no inventory or cross-Canada data about the prevalence of non-standard child care services, some information is available or can at least be roughly estimated in nine jurisdictions.

The following sections discuss these summary points in more detail. The tables in each section include specific details about provincial/territorial features and initiatives.

The federal government, the Multilateral Framework on Early Learning and Child Care, federal funding, and provincial/territorial Action Plans

In Canada, child care policy and provision is mainly a provincial/territorial responsibility, however, the federal government can, and often has, played a key role. Thus, this environmental scan considers the role and initiatives of the Government of Canada with respect to non-standard child care provision.

After a decade of disengagement at the federal level, the Liberal government revisited the child care file shortly after their election in 2015. As part of their election platform, the federal Liberals committed to developing a National Framework on Early Learning and Child Care in collaboration with the provinces/territories who have the primary constitutional responsibility for child care. This collaboration led to the Multilateral Framework Agreement (MFA) on Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC), which was announced on June 12, 2017. In the first phase of this agreement, the federal government allocated \$1.2 billion to

provinces/territories to cover three years (2017–2020) of funding to improve ELCC services as defined in each jurisdiction's Action Plan.²⁷ The federal government has committed to providing funding through 2028, with each phase being defined by new three-year bilateral agreements. The MFA "sets the foundation for collaboration...each jurisdiction has the responsibility to develop systems that best respond to the needs and priorities of their communities" [103]. The government has negotiated separate agreements and funding with Indigenous communities under an Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care Framework.

Five principles (quality, accessibility, affordability, flexibility, and inclusivity) form the basis for child care developments under the MFA and were agreed to by provinces/territories. The MFA defines these as:

- **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, as well as harder-to-serve populations;

- **Inclusivity:** ELCC programs will give consideration to families and children who are "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."

A progress report released by the federal government in August 2019 covered the initial period of ELCC activities. This report notes that, "While there is good progress being made, the results of the agreements will become more evident in the second and third year of the agreements"[4]. Three provinces specified initiatives on "flexible" non-standard hours child care in the first phase of their MFA Action Plans, although Alberta began its initiative before the MFA, and PEI's initiative preceded their bilateral agreement.

²⁷ Québec was not required to develop an Action Plan.

Table 5.1 Non-Standard Hours Initiatives Specified in Provincial/Territorial Action Plans Under the 2017 Multilateral Framework Agreement on Early Learning and Child Care

Province/Territory	Relevant Initiatives Specified in Action Plans
PE	To create spaces for children whose parents work non-standard hours and/or work seasonally
NS	To subsidize costs for families who require part-time or flexible care
AB	To identify flexible/extended hours as part of an Action Plan item with \$25/day pilots

Provincial/territorial non-standard hours child care initiatives

Four provinces/territories said they were supporting or developing new non-standard hours initiatives. Two of these jurisdictions, PEI and Alberta, had included non-standard hours initiatives in their Action Plans, with PEI specifying several actions in response to our environmental scan questions. The other two jurisdictions were Nova Scotia and Québec, with Québec being the only province/territory that was not required to develop an Action Plan under the MFA. The discrepancy between the initiatives reported by Nova Scotia and Québec and the Action Plans reported by PEI and Alberta may be due to how actions are

specified in the Action Plan. The actions in the Action Plan can vary in scale and may or may not be specific initiatives. Some provincial initiatives began before the jurisdiction's Action Plan was developed, so responders may not have included them as new or anticipated initiatives.

In addition, officials in two other provinces indicated that there may be potential for such initiatives. For example, British Columbia identified that non-standard hours child care is included in the province's broad plan for child care reform, which has been underway for several years, but that a specific initiative has not yet been put into action. Further details about provincial/territorial initiatives can be found in Table 5.2.

Research on non-standard hours child care

When we asked provinces/territories whether any specific research on non-standard hours child care had been conducted, four jurisdictions (PEI, Québec, Ontario, and Alberta) identified specific research. Alberta cited an academic researcher's project about non-standard hours and identified an evaluation of the province's \$25 per day pilot projects, which

included non-standard hours child care as an element. A fifth province, Nova Scotia, stated that non-standard hours had emerged as an issue in a more general policy review. New Brunswick mentioned a review that identified the presence of non-standard hours/seasonal industries, such as fishing and other rural industries, which are likely to require non-standard provision of child care. Table 5.2 provides details about recent/current research that is relevant to non-standard hours child care.

Table 5.2 Have There Been Specific Non-Standard Hours (N-SH) Initiatives in the Province/Territory in the Last Five Years? Is There Any Current or Recent Research on Non-Standard Hours Child Care in the Province/Territory?

PROVINCE / TERRITORY	SPECIFIC INITIATIVES?	CURRENT OR RECENT RESEARCH?
NL	<p>Yes - Currently working on draft policies for services that are requesting N-SH.</p> <p>Of interest - Considering policies that require prospective licensees to submit documents that demonstrate their need for hours outside of standard hours, with statements on how it will be marketed.</p>	No
PE	<p>Yes - Working with provincial public health care organizations that operate 24/7 to define their staff's child care needs, and to explore partnering with child care providers to respond to those needs. Potential partnerships with private sector employers that operate 24/7 will be pursued as well.</p>	<p>Yes – A community group was funded to explore child care needs and will present their recommendations to Government.</p> <p>Workplace surveys will be conducted in the 24/7 public sector within next 3–6 months. Considering doing the same with private sector employers.</p>

Table 5.2 Have There Been Specific Non-Standard Hours (N-SH) Initiatives in the Province/Territory in the Last Five Years? Is There Any Current or Recent Research on Non-Standard Hours Child Care in the Province/Territory? (continued)

PROVINCE / TERRITORY	SPECIFIC INITIATIVES?	CURRENT OR RECENT RESEARCH?
NS	Yes - A regulatory framework review is underway and, although it is not specific to N-SH, it may have an impact.	Yes - In 2015 N-SH child care needs were identified through consultations with families in the provincial government's child care review
NB	No	No, but officials are aware that some communities, such as fishing and farming, have higher need for N-SH care
QC	<p>Yes –</p> <p>a) New N-SH pilot projects are receiving \$3.5 million over three years, and submitted proposals to the government in October, 2018.</p> <p>b) There are 2,500 new funded spaces as of March 2019; priority will be given to families needing N-SH.</p> <p>c) Since 2016 there has been new funding for on-call child care and a new allowance to encourage part-time child care.</p> <p>The allowance for NS-H has been increased and the minimum occupancy rate needed to be eligible for the allowance has been lowered.</p>	<p>Yes - see https://www.mfa.gouv.qc.ca/fr/services-de-garde/portrait/evaluation-nouvelles-places-clienteles-Particular/Pages/index.aspx</p> <p>Examination of need for N-SH care: Institut de la statistique Québec (ISQ) data – See https://www.mfa.gouv.qc.ca/fr/services-de-garde/portrait/enquetes-isq-eusg/Pages/index.aspx</p> <p>A new childcare needs survey focusing on atypical needs is imminent, with results expected in 2021.</p>
ON	<p>Yes - As of April 2019, municipalities "have the option to work with service providers to offer respite child care" in EarlyON Child and Family Centres. Respite child care is defined as short-term/occasional care and may be funded. It is required to meet the requirements of child care legislation/regulation.</p> <p>New legislation in 2015 identifies service options including "options that address varied working hours and arrangements."</p>	<p>Yes - The province identified:</p> <p>Halfon, S. and M. Friendly. 2015. <i>Work around the clock: A snapshot of non-standard hours child care in Canada</i>. Childcare Resource and Research Unit.</p>

Table 5.2 Have There Been Specific Non-Standard Hours (N-SH) Initiatives in the Province/Territory in the Last Five Years? Is There Any Current or Recent Research on Non-Standard Hours Child Care in the Province/Territory? (continued)

PROVINCE / TERRITORY	SPECIFIC INITIATIVES?	CURRENT OR RECENT RESEARCH?
MB	No ²⁸	No
SK	No	No
AB	Yes - A number of Alberta's 122 operationally funded pilot project centres include flexible or extended hours child care as a service option.	Yes, a University of Alberta PhD candidate is carrying out an extensive research project on NS-H care. A three-year evaluation is being conducted on the operationally funded pilot projects as well.
BC	No - Not at this time, but the N-SH needs of families are identified in the government's Childcare BC Plan.	No
NU	No	No
NT	No	No
YT	No - Not currently but potentially, since there is a need for families who have seasonal and/or N-SH work.	No

²⁸ Provincial/territorial officials were asked about "recent or current" N-SH initiatives, so longer-term initiatives may not be reflected in this table.

Provincial and territorial definitions of non-standard hours child care

In the environmental scan, we asked each jurisdiction whether they use a specific definition of non-standard hours child care. Nine provinces/territories use or have adopted a definition of non-standard hours child care; Newfoundland and Labrador's definition is a de facto definition, since standard hours are defined in their legislation. The approaches used across jurisdictions, as well as the nature and specificity of their definitions are extremely varied. The definitions of seven jurisdictions specify the hours of the day or days of the week in various ways. Other jurisdictions include the number of consecutive hours a child may be in child care in their definition, and two jurisdictions define several distinct categories of non-standard hours child care. Québec, for example, uses five categories in its definition of "special child care". Table 5.3 provides detailed information about the definitions of non-standard hours child care that are used across Canada.

Table 5.3 Does the Province/Territory Have a Specific Definition of Non-Standard Hours Child Care?

PROVINCE/TERRITORY	YES/NO	DEFINITION
NL	Not specifically, but “standard” hours are legislated.	Non-standard hours are defined de facto as services outside Newfoundland’s specified standard hours of 6:30 am to 8:30 pm.
PE	Yes	Non-standard hours are defined as regulated centre-based or home child care provided outside the hours of 7:00 am to 5:00 pm, Monday to Friday.
NS	Yes	Extended Hours Child Care is defined as a full-day, part-day or school-age program licensed to provide day care up to 18 hours per day, under the following circumstances: (i) in operation for more than 12 hours per day; or (ii) in operation past 6:30 pm; or (iii) in operation during the weekend
NB	Yes	Extended hours services are defined as any services provided by a licensed facility after it has provided 12 consecutive hours of services or after it has provided services for five days in a week. Overnight services are defined as services provided by a licensed facility between 8:00 pm and 6:00 am.
QC	Yes, but times/hours are not specified.	“Mode de garde particulier” (special child care) is defined using five categories: evening, night, weekend, on-call, half-day and part-time. Under Québec’s funding scheme, Centres de la petite enfance (CPE) and garderies are funded to provide care for 10 hours per day.
ON	No	There is no specific definition of non-standard hours care. Under the legislation, however, temporary care/supervision of a child may be provided for a continuous period of up to 24 hours. Licensees are responsible for setting the times and days they offer their services.

Table 5.3 Does the Province/Territory Have a Specific Definition of Non-Standard Hours Child Care? (continued)

PROVINCE/TERRITORY	YES/NO	DEFINITION
MB	Yes. There is one definition in policy and one in the legislation.	<p>In policy, extended hours child care is defined as including evening care for a minimum of four hours between 6:00 pm and 12:00 am or overnight care from 8:00 pm one day to 6 am the following day.</p> <p>In legislation, there is no definition of non-standard hours care in centres. Centres are permitted to provide care for 24 hours per day if there is community need for it. In home (family) child care and group Family Child Care (FCC) homes, overnight care is defined by legislation as care between 8:00 pm one day and 6:00 am the next day.</p>
SK	Yes, but times/hours are not specified	Defined as extended hours and 24-hour child care.
AB	Yes	<p>For the purpose of fee subsidy, extended hours care is defined as care outside of 6:00 am to 6:00 pm, Monday to Friday. In home child care, extended hours care is also defined as care outside of 6:00 am to 6:00 pm, Monday to Friday</p> <p>In policy, overnight care is defined as care that is provided between 12:01 am and 5:00 am.</p>
BC	Yes	Non-standard hours care is any care provided before 6:00 am or after 7:00 pm.
NU	No	There is no non-standard hours child care.
NT	No	There is no non-standard hours child care.
YT	No	While there is no specific definition, there are a few specific detailed regulations by age group.

Additional federal and provincial funding for non-standard hours child care

Seven of the 13 jurisdictions report that they now provide some kind of additional funding to encourage or support non-standard hours child care. Three of these jurisdictions, Québec, PEI and Nova Scotia, reported recent new funding arrangements. Québec recently initiated funding, which began in 2016. PEI followed up its MFA Action Plan with a specific grant offer in 2019 to stimulate the development of seasonal child care services. As well, Nova Scotia began providing parent fee subsidies to non-standard hours services, as specified in its MFA Action Plan. Like other aspects of non-standard hours child care, the way additional funding is used across provinces/territories is quite varied. In some cases, the additional funding is used for start-up funds. In others, funds may be used to increase flexibility in the use of fee subsidies, or to add to care providers' operational funding, as Manitoba has done for many years. For this environmental scan, we did not request the start dates for increased funding. We do know, however, that five of the seven jurisdictions that now offer additional funds have been providing them for some time (e.g., since 2007

in the case of New Brunswick). See Table 5.4 for specific provincial/territorial details.

Policies and regulations pertaining to non-standard hours child care

Some jurisdictions noted that non-standard hours child care can be restricted by regulations that are not specifically intended to restrict its development. For example, in Ontario the municipal fire, building, and zoning regulations that all licensed child care centres are required to follow could restrict non-standard hours child care.

Nine jurisdictions identified specific regulations or policies pertaining to or defining aspects of non-standard hours child care. PEI, which has a substantial non-standard hours initiative underway, noted that specific regulations or policies are possible in the future "as non-standard hours child care becomes more widespread" (see Table 5.4). Again, regulations and policies vary substantially across jurisdictions in their approach, scope and intention.

There is wide variation in the extent to which, and the ways in which, regulations and policies in each jurisdiction may restrict the operation

or development of non-standard hours child care. These policies or regulations range from requiring specific permission from a provincial official in order to operate, to detailed regulations about arrangements for sleeping and bathing during night time hours. Six provinces require that a service operating during non-standard hours must either receive permission to operate from an official or notify licensing officials of their non-standard hours operations as a condition of licensing. In Manitoba there is a requirement that any inspections for the purpose of licensing a

service for non-standard hours must occur during non-standard hours. As of 2014, however, two provinces have changed regulations or policies that previously limited or prohibited services providing child care during night time hours, so that operation during night time hours is now permitted.

Centres and regulated home child care are often treated differently. In several instances, regulations applied to one type of care but not the other.

Table 5.4 Are There Any Regulations, Funding Programs, or Policies Specific to Non-Standard Hours Child Care? Have There Been Any Changes to These in the Last Five Years?

PROVINCE / TERRITORY	REGULATIONS/POLICIES	SPECIFIC OR ADDITIONAL FUNDING
NL	Yes - As of 2017, new legislation allows operators to request in writing hours of operation other than the standard hours legislated (6:30 am to 8:30 pm). These requests must be approved by the Minister.	No
PE	No - While there is nothing in the current regulations that specifically restricts non-standard hours, the expectation is that as non-standard hours become more common, some parts of the regulations may require fuller definition.	<p>Yes - Under the Canada-PEI Bilateral Agreement, grant funding became available to support extended hours, and to help centres respond to seasonal demands.</p> <p>Extended Hours: For this grant, “extended hours” are defined as hours additional to those on the current license. Centres could extend licensed hours to times between 5:00 am to 9:00 pm, Sunday to Saturday. Funding is provided for operational costs that are the result of extending hours. Early Years Centres in area with high demand for extended hours are eligible to receive funds for additional EYC designated spaces.</p> <p>Seasonal: Early Years Centres in areas with a strong seasonal employment market and/or strong demand for extended hours were allocated funds for additional EYC-designated spaces to create flexibility to respond to seasonal demand.</p>
NS	Yes - Regulations/policies have specific standards for N-SH; N-SH is a condition of licensing	No

Table 5.4 Are There Any Regulations, Funding Programs, or Policies Specific to Non-Standard Hours Child Care? Have There Been Any Changes to These in the Last Five Years? (continued)

PROVINCE / TERRITORY	REGULATIONS/POLICIES	SPECIFIC OR ADDITIONAL FUNDING
NB	<p>No – currently there are no specific regulations. Regulation changes in 2014 allowed centres to stay open past 9:00 pm.</p> <p>Operators must apply to provide N-SH.</p>	<p>Yes - Since 2007 there is funding for services to add extended/overnight services:</p> <p>Centres - \$7,500 per facility for a minimum of eight new spaces;</p> <p>After-school only - \$5,000 per facility for a minimum of eight new spaces;</p> <p>Home child care - \$5,000 per facility for a minimum of 3 new spaces</p>
QC	<p>Yes - regulations specify that Centres de la petite enfance (CPEs) and funded garderies²⁹ must be open from at least 7:00 am to 6:00 pm. There are no specified times for home child care.</p> <p>CPEs and funded garderies are required to provide a maximum of 10 hours of child care per day.</p> <p>Child care may take place in any of the following time periods: 7:00 am to 6:00 pm, 6:00 pm to 12:00 am, or 12:00 am to 6:00 am.</p> <p>In centres, a child cannot be present for more than 48 consecutive hours.</p>	<p>Yes - Since 2016 new funding includes on-call child care and a new allowance to encourage part-time child care.</p> <p>The allowance for N-SH care has been increased and the occupancy rate needed to be eligible for the allowance has been lowered.</p> <p>While not specific to N-SH care, the funding policy regarding Reduced Contribution services (operationally funded) can include some N-SH child care provision under the existing funding formula.</p> <p>A centre can offer funded child care for a child for 20 days per four-week period.</p>

²⁹ CPEs (non-profit centres), licensed home child care, some garderies (for-profit centres) and school-age child care are operationally funded in Québec with provincially-set parent fees; there are no individual parent fee subsidies. Parents using an additional category of unfunded (Non-Reduced Contribution) garderies, which do not have set fees, receive a substantial tax rebate from the Québec government.

Table 5.4 Are There Any Regulations, Funding Programs, or Policies Specific to Non-Standard Hours Child Care? Have There Been Any Changes to These in the Last Five Years? (continued)

PROVINCE / TERRITORY	REGULATIONS/POLICIES	SPECIFIC OR ADDITIONAL FUNDING
ON	<p>Yes - New child care legislation from 2014 specifies that child care provision may not exceed 24 continuous hours.</p> <p>As well, under ON Regulation 137/15, child care operators must comply with municipal fire, health/, building, and zoning regulations, which may restrict the possibility of N-SH child care.</p>	No
MB	<p>Yes - Child care services must submit written proposals for providing extended hours to the Director of the ELCC program who may approve them.</p> <p>There must be specific licensing visits regarding space and equipment for N-SH care.</p> <p>Monitoring must be conducted during N-SH operation.</p>	Yes - Additional start-up and operating funds will be provided (Note these funds will be 1.5 times more per session than Manitoba's standard operating funding).
SK	<p>Yes – There are restrictions on the number of hours a child may be cared for in home child care, but no restrictions for child care centres.</p> <p>License holders must notify their consultant to provide N-SH child care.</p>	Yes – There are provisions for additional grant funding if it is requested. It is provided to a limited number of centres since requests for it are seldom received. Occasionally, extended hours funding based on seasonal needs is requested.

Table 5.4 Are There Any Regulations, Funding Programs, or Policies Specific to Non-Standard Hours Child Care? Have There Been Any Changes to These in the Last Five Years? (continued)

PROVINCE / TERRITORY	REGULATIONS/POLICIES	SPECIFIC OR ADDITIONAL FUNDING
AB	<p>Yes - Licensing regulation states “a license holder must not provide overnight child care to children in the program”. Note that licensing regulations do not apply to day homes, or home child care, which are approved, not licensed.</p> <p>The Standards Manual for day homes states a child may not receive care for more than 18 hours within a 24-hour period without prior written notification to the agency.</p> <p>For accommodations that are longer than 18 hours, bedding, sleeping and bathing arrangements are specified.</p>	<p>Yes - Families are approved for an Extended Hours Subsidy at licensed or approved services that offer extended hours. Families can receive an additional \$100 per month if their child is in extended hours care for at least 4 hours per month.</p> <p>Extended hours provision was considered to be a desirable characteristic in the designation of operationally funded \$25/day pilot centres.</p>
BC	<p>Yes - Regulations limit the maximum number of hours a child can be in care to 13 hours per day.</p> <p>There are specific requirements for overnight care including pre-approval from a medical health officer.</p> <p>Licensing categories for occasional child care and child minding are also relevant.</p>	No
NU	No	No
NT	No	No
YT	<p>Yes - There are extensive regulations for both home and centre child care for all age groups, including regulation on adult to child ratios, sleeping arrangements, bedding, and supervision. Regulations also state that staff must be awake at all times.</p> <p>There is the potential for restriction related to ratio requirements (this has not been experienced).</p>	Yes - There is funding in addition to a regular Operating Grant.

Availability of public information on non-standard hours child care

We asked each province/territory several questions about what information on non-standard hours child care is publicly available to help parents identify appropriate services. Twelve of the thirteen³⁰ provinces/territories reported that they are able to identify non-standard hours services through their licensing information, annual surveys, information through self-identification by the operator in a provincial registry, or because the program is required to seek specific approval.

There is considerable variation in the amount and nature of the information each province/territory has about non-standard hours programs. Several jurisdictions separate non-standard hours programs into categories while others only apply a general non-standard ("extended") hours designation.

Information about hours or schedules is usually included in listings in province-/territory-wide online registries or directories, which have been developed relatively recently. For example, British Columbia and

Saskatchewan have online child care search tools with filters that allow parents to identify non-standard hours programs based on different hour or day categories. In five jurisdictions that do not have online search tools with filters, parents can find non-standard hours services by looking up each centre or child care home individually online. See Table 5.5 for more detailed information on public access to information about non-standard hours child care.

³⁰ Note that the 13th jurisdiction, the Northwest Territories, does not have any non-standard hours child care.

Table 5.5 How Available is Information about Non-Standard Hours Child Care Services?

PROVINCE / TERRITORY	CAN THE P/T IDENTIFY N-SH CARE?	IS INFORMATION PUBLICLY AVAILABLE ONLINE?	ONLINE CHILD CARE SEARCH TOOL (WHICH MAY OR MAY NOT INCLUDE NON-STANDARD HOURS INFO)	COMMENTS
NL	Yes, since the Minister must approve it for each centre.	Yes, in each service listing.	Early Learning and Child Care Directory: https://www.childcare.gov.nl.ca/	Online listing for each service includes the hours, days, and months of operation Not searchable by keywords or with filters Based on NL's definition, there are no N-SH services. There are, however, a number of N-SH services based on this project's definition.
PE	Yes, through licensing and through Alternate Hours Funding.	Yes, in each centre listing.	Early Learning and Child Care Registry: https://peichildcareregistry.com/	Online listing for each centre includes N-SH services Not searchable by keywords or with filters
NS	Yes, for centres through their licensing information.	No	Education and Early Childhood Development: https://nsbr-online-services.gov.ns.ca/DCSONline/E/CDS/loadSearchPage.action	Info on N-SH services are not included in directory. Information on N-SH services is publicly available through licensing information, as N-SH is a condition of licensing.

Table 5.5 How Available is Information about Non-Standard Hours Child Care Services? (continued)

PROVINCE / TERRITORY	CAN THE P/T IDENTIFY N-SH CARE?	IS INFORMATION PUBLICLY AVAILABLE ONLINE?	ONLINE CHILD CARE SEARCH TOOL (WHICH MAY OR MAY NOT INCLUDE NON-STANDARD HOURS INFO)	COMMENTS
NB	Yes, since centres must apply to be able to provide N-SH services.	No	Facility Search: https://www.nbed.nb.ca/parentportal/en/search/elc/	Information on N-SH is not included in the directory. The province can identify N-SH services, because centres are required to apply to provide them. NB plans to have an online child care registry on which operators will be able to declare their N-SH provisions.
QC	Yes	No	Childcare Establishment Locator: https://www.mfa.gouv.qc.ca/en/services-de-garde/parents/choix/localisateur/Pages/index.aspx (EN) https://geoegl.msp.gouv.qc.ca/mfa/recherche-simple.php?langue=fr (FR)	Online directory does not include information about N-SH. Links to the websites for services are not provided. A Government report in 2018 includes information from 2014–2015: https://www.mfa.gouv.qc.ca/fr/publication/Documents/Situation_des_CP_E_et_des_garderies-2015.pdf Tables 3.1-3.4
ON	Yes, through the licensing system, which requires operators to list their hours of operation and through an annual operator survey.	Yes, in each service listing.	Find Licensed Child Care: https://www.iaccess.gov.on.ca/LCCWeb/childcare/search.xhtml	The hours and days of service are included in each listing online and operators are required to specify details in handbooks for parents. N-SH are not searchable by keywords or with filters. Province-wide data are available from an annual operator survey (2018). These data are summarized in a provincial government report online.

Table 5.5 How Available is Information about Non-Standard Hours Child Care Services? (continued)

PROVINCE / TERRITORY	CAN THE P/T IDENTIFY N-SH CARE?	IS INFORMATION PUBLICLY AVAILABLE ONLINE?	ONLINE CHILD CARE SEARCH TOOL (WHICH MAY OR MAY NOT INCLUDE NON-STANDARD HOURS INFO)	COMMENTS
MB	Yes, through their licensing information.	Yes for online searches (see comment 1). No for registry searches (see comment 2).	Licensed Child Care Search: https://direct3.gov.mb.ca/daycare/fs/fs.nsf/welcome?openForm&LAN=1 Online Child Care Registry: https://www.gov.mb.ca/fs/childcare/occr/print.index.html	The two tools are: – 1. Online searches, where services are searchable with filters for evenings, overnight, and weekends. One can also perform advanced searches by keywords. (Information from licensing, however, is no longer being updated.) 2. The registry for parents is not searchable with filters, but there are links to each service’s website which may provide N-SH information.
SK	Yes, since N-SH services must notify their consultant.	Yes	Licensed Child Care Facilities in Your Community: https://www.saskatchewan.ca/residents/family-and-social-support/child-care/find-a-child-care-provider-in-my-community	The online directory is searchable by extended hours and 24 hours.
AB	Yes, using the provincial IT system, provincial staff can view centres’ hours and days of operation and see if Extended Hours Subsidies are used.	The information is available if a parent contacts IT staff.	Child care Lookup: http://www.humanservices.alberta.ca/oldfusion/ChildCareLookup.cfm	N-SH information is not included in the online directory.

Table 5.5 How Available is Information about Non-Standard Hours Child Care Services? (continued)

PROVINCE / TERRITORY	CAN THE P/T IDENTIFY N-SH CARE?	IS INFORMATION PUBLICLY AVAILABLE ONLINE?	ONLINE CHILD CARE SEARCH TOOL (WHICH MAY OR MAY NOT INCLUDE NON-STANDARD HOURS INFO)	COMMENTS
BC	Yes, the information is provided by the operator.	Yes	Child Care Map: http://maps.gov.bc.ca/ess/hm/ccf/	There is a mapped directory listing for each centre/home which include five N-SH filters.
NU	Yes, but there are currently no N-SH services.	No	2018–2019 Licensed Childcare Facilities https://gov.nu.ca/sites/default/files/licensed_childcare_facilities_-_eng.pdf	If any N-SH services were operating, territorial officials would know through licensing process.
NT	N/A	N/A	There are no N-SH services in NT. Child Care Inspections: https://www.ece.gov.nt.ca/en/childcare	N-SH services are not included.
YT	Yes, through licensing and the funding process.	No	Yukon Licensed Child Care Centres and Family Day Homes: http://www.hss.gov.yk.ca/pdf/licensedchildcarecentres.pdf	N-SH services are included in the "Age" column in each service's online listing.

How much non-standard hours child care is available?

As we mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, comparable, concrete information on the availability of non-standard hours child care does not exist. The Canada-wide data needed to answer this question reliably have not been collected, and provincial/territorial data are both unevenly available and inconsistent across the 13 jurisdictions. At best, it is possible to roughly estimate the prevalence of non-standard hours services across Canada based on different provincial/territorial methods of identifying such services. It is also important to note that even the best information available about services does not include the number of children enrolled in non-standard hours child care nor the total licensed capacity. At most, the available information indicates the number of centres and regulated child care homes that offer non-standard hours services in each province/territory.

As Table 5.5 shows, most provinces/territories answer "yes" to the question: Can the jurisdiction identify child care services operating during non-standard hours? Table 5.5 also shows, however, that even for the jurisdictions that have this information in some form, the source, specificity, and categories of the information vary substantially across

jurisdictions. For example, Saskatchewan uses two categories of non-standard hours child care (extended hours and 24-hour care), while British Columbia uses five categories and Québec uses six. At the same time, Ontario's information, which comes from both the licensing process and an annual Operator Survey, provides specific hours and days of operation. Further, the level of detail of the information that is available varies. In some jurisdictions, the data on provision by individual regulated home child care providers is especially limited. Thus, given the available data, it is not possible to reliably quantify the provision of non-standard hours child care across Canada at this time.

Despite these limitations, we used the variety of tools that were available for each province/territory to explore this issue. Our objective was to develop at least rough estimates of the provision of non-standard hours services in as many provinces/territories as possible. Given the available resources, this was possible in one way or another for most jurisdictions. In two jurisdictions, provincial/territorial officials provided us with the numbers of non-standard hours services. In others, particularly in Atlantic Canada, we used the links provided in the provincial registries or directories to search for this information on a service-by-service basis. Both British Columbia and Saskatchewan have online search tools with filters that can provide the number of

services based on the jurisdiction's categories, which we were able to use. In several jurisdictions, no usable data were available, and in two of the territories (Nunavut and the Northwest Territories) there is no non-standard hours child care.

For most jurisdictions, however, we were able to use a combination of the available tools to estimate the number of non-standard hours services. We also used these tools to calculate province-wide percentages of the total number of regulated centres and regulated child care homes³¹ that offer some form of non-standard hours care. The percentages we calculated are based on the total number of services, if this information was available, and the estimated number of non-standard hours services, which is a subset of the total number of services.

Tables 5.6 and 5.7 present the available data on the prevalence of non-standard hours child care for each province/territory in whatever form it was available, together with information about the methods we used to obtain it.

For the provinces/territories on which we had adequate information, almost all the non-standard hours services we identified fell into the "slightly" non-standard/slightly extended hours category. Many of these services opened

or closed only half an hour or so outside the "standard" hours definition we use in this project (see page 81). As noted earlier, each province/territory may define non-standard hours child care differently than we do in this project. For example, in the case of Newfoundland and Labrador, the provincial legislated definition of "standard" hours covers 6:30 am to 8:30 pm. Thus, the identification of "non-standard hours" in Table 5.6 is based on our definition, not the province's. We chose to use this project's definition so we could compare the provision of non-standard hours care across jurisdictions as meaningfully as possible.

As noted, the number of available spaces or children participating in non-standard hours services is not available across Canada, nor can it be estimated reliably at a cross-Canada level. The available data refer to the number of centres or regulated child care homes that provide non-standard hours child care, not the number of spaces or children who might use it. As well, from this scan, it appears that most child care services that provide non-standard hours child care also provide child care during standard hours.

³¹ We treated these as separate estimates, since centres and child care homes are on such different scales.

Overall, when considering the question, *how much non-standard hours child care is available?* in jurisdictions where we can use the available data to make rough estimates, the number of centres we estimate to provide "more than slightly non-standard hours" is small. For the seven provinces/territories where we could make this calculation, the proportion of all centres that provide more than slightly non-standard hours care ranges from 0.2% to 2%. There is, however, a wide range in the number of centres that provide non-standard hours care across these seven jurisdictions and the type of non-standard hours care that is most prevalent. For example, in Ontario a relatively substantial number of centres (9.3% of all centres) provide weekend child care, in Québec 14.8% of centres provide "sur appel"³² or "on call" child care, and in PEI 25% of centres provide "slightly" non-standard hours.

Data about the provision of non-standard hours child care in regulated child care homes is even more limited across jurisdictions. In this category, we had usable data for only four jurisdictions. In the remaining nine jurisdictions, either there were no data available or no provision of non-standard hours was identified in home child care, as was the case in Newfoundland and Labrador. Of the

four provinces with provisions in home child care, British Columbia reports that 5% of regulated homes provide non-standard hours child care at night and Ontario reports that 7% of child care homes offer overnight care. The proportion of regulated child care homes that provide "slightly" non-standard hours or weekend care ranges from 12% and 10%, respectively in Ontario, to 1% in Québec. (See Table 5.7.)

In Ontario, according to the province's 2018 Operator Survey and detailed data provided by the provincial government, as many as 9–10% of all services provide some kind of non-standard hours child care. Most of the non-standard hours care provided by centres is weekend care, with home child care providing much of the non-standard hours care overall. In British Columbia, an estimate using the province's online tool shows that 96% of services that offer non-standard hours care are regulated child care homes. Saskatchewan estimates that 65% of non-standard hours care is offered in regulated home child care, while in Newfoundland and Labrador, home child care provides none of the non-standard hours care. Thus, due to the different ways each jurisdiction organizes its data, it is not possible to make either concrete comparisons of the provision of non-standard hours centre-based

³² None of the other provinces use an "on call" category.

and home child care across jurisdictions or a cross-Canada count.

In summary, while the data on the supply of non-standard hours child care are neither strong nor consistent in form or content across jurisdictions, they do demonstrate that there is little non-standard hours child care in Canada. We estimated that fewer than 2% of centres provide anything more than "slightly" non-standard hours care, such as late night or overnight care. While provision is reported to

be as high as 7% in Ontario for overnight care in regulated child care homes, in most other jurisdictions either there is no reliable information about home child care or regulated homes do not offer non-standard hours. In some jurisdictions (Ontario, BC, Saskatchewan and Manitoba) much of the non-standard hours child care is provided in licensed home child care, while in others (Québec, Newfoundland and Labrador and PEI)³⁵, non-standard hours care is offered primarily in centres.

³⁵ In some provinces, including PEI, there is very little regulated home child care, while in others, such as Québec, it forms a substantial percentage of the total regulated child care.

Table 5.6 How Much Centre-Based Non-Standard Hours Care is Available?

PROVINCE / TERRITORY	TOTAL NUMBER OF CENTRES USED FOR CALCULATION	NUMBER OF CENTRES PROVIDING NON-STANDARD HOURS CHILD CARE BY CATEGORY*	PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL CENTRES THAT PROVIDE NON-STANDARD HOURS CHILD CARE BY CATEGORY*	DATA COLLECTION METHOD USED
NL	204	13, all slightly non-standard hours	6% - all slightly non-standard hours	Online listing provides hours, days, and months; Centre-by-centre analysis
PE	71	18 total: 17 slightly non-standard hours, 1 unknown	25% - almost all slightly non-standard hours	Online listing includes N-SH; Centre-by-centre analysis
NS	357	39 total: 35 slightly non-standard hours 4 unknown	11% - mostly slightly non-standard hours	Centre-by-centre analysis
NB	N/A	N/A	N/A	Centre-by-centre analysis was attempted but is incomplete
QC	3,030 (CPEs, funded and unfunded garderies)	49 "sur appel" (on-call), 84 for all other categories	Of the 3,030 centres: 14.8% - "sur appel", All other categories - < 2%	Data available in: https://www.mfa.gouv.qc.ca/fr/publication/Documents/Situation_des_CPE_et_des_garderies-2015.pdf , Table 3.1, 3.4
ON	9,152 - Provincial survey	Data provided by officials - 5,416 centres total: 25 evenings (slightly non-standard hours), 503 weekends, 6 overnight	Data provided by officials - 0.5% - evenings (slightly non-standard hours), 9.3% - weekends, 0.1% - overnight	Data from Licensed Child Care Operations Survey 2019: http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/childcare/EarlyYearsChildCareAnnualReport2018.pdf and data provided by provincial officials

Table 5.6 How Much Centre-Based Non-Standard Hours Care is Available?
(continued)

PROVINCE / TERRITORY	TOTAL NUMBER OF CENTRES USED FOR CALCULATION	NUMBER OF CENTRES PROVIDING NON-STANDARD HOURS CHILD CARE BY CATEGORY*	PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL CENTRES THAT PROVIDE NON-STANDARD HOURS CHILD CARE BY CATEGORY*	DATA COLLECTION METHOD USED
MB	NA	Centres and home child care not categorized separately 25 evenings (slightly non-standard hours), 14 weekends, 3 overnight		Data provided by provincial officials
SK	337	26 total, either extended hours or 24-hour care. Not categorized separately	11% total (no breakdown of categories)	Data from search using Saskatchewan's online tool
AB	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
BC	366	4 total: 1 weekdays after 7:00 pm, 3 weekends	0.02% - after 7:00 pm, 0.08% - weekends	Data from search using British Columbia's online tool
NU	N/A	None	None	
NT	N/A	None	None	
YT	45	1 centre	2%	Online list of services using non-standard hours in the "Age" column

* Categories as described by each province

Table 5.7 How Much Non-Standard Hours Child Care is Available in Regulated Child Care Homes?

PROVINCE / TERRITORY	NUMBER OF REGULATED CHILD CARE HOMES USED IN CALCULATION	NUMBER OF REGULATED CHILD CARE HOMES PROVIDING NON-STANDARD HOURS CHILD CARE	PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL CHILD CARE HOMES THAT PROVIDE NON-STANDARD HOURS CHILD CARE	DATA COLLECTION METHOD USED
NL	153	None	N/A	
PE	1	N/A	N/A	
NS	14	1, slightly non-standard hours	7%	
NB	N/A	N/A	N/A	
QC	N/A	N/A	Home child care agencies (homes N/A) 2% - "Sur appel" 1% - All others	
ON	3,715		Data from provincial survey 12% - evenings (slightly non-standard hours), 10% - weekends, 7% - overnight	Data from Licensed Child Care Operators Survey 2019: http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/childcare/EarlyYearsChildCareAnnualReport2018.pdf
MB	NA	Centres and home child care not broken down 25: evenings (slightly non-standard hours) and 14: weekends, 3: overnight	Officials estimate that most non-standard hours care is in home child care	Data provided by provincial officials

Table 5.7 How Much Non-Standard Hours Child Care is Available in Regulated Child Care Homes? (continued)

PROVINCE / TERRITORY	NUMBER OF REGULATED CHILD CARE HOMES USED IN CALCULATION	NUMBER OF REGULATED CHILD CARE HOMES PROVIDING NON-STANDARD HOURS CHILD CARE	PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL CHILD CARE HOMES THAT PROVIDE NON-STANDARD HOURS CHILD CARE	DATA COLLECTION METHOD USED
SK	223	17	According to Saskatchewan officials, 65% of non-standard hours child care is in home child care	Data from search using Saskatchewan's online tool
AB	NA	N/A	N/A	
BC	298	22 homes offer care on weekdays before 6:00 am, 27 homes offer care on weekdays after 7:00 pm, 16 overnight, 16 statutory holidays, 25 offer care on weekends * (These may overlap)	7% - weekdays before 6:00 am, 9% - weekdays after 7:00 pm, 5% - overnight, 5% - statutory holidays, 8% - weekends	Data from search using British Columbia's online tool Officials noted that the information in the tool is self-reported by the operator
NU	NA	None		
NT	NA	None		
YT	23	2	9%	Online list of services using non-standard hours in the "Age" column

Discussion: What have we learned from the environmental scan?

As we noted earlier, none of the provinces or territories has a comprehensive policy or program intended to ensure access to non-standard hours child care. There are, however, some changes of note since the last similar environmental scan of policies and initiatives was conducted in 2015. When we compare the 2015 and 2019 scans, it seems that provinces/territories now have a heightened interest in non-standard hours child care, perhaps stimulated, in part, by the federal government's re-engagement with early learning and child care.

Thus, although the availability of non-standard hours child care has not changed very much over the years – or is virtually unchanged since 2015, we may be better able to address this issue now than in the past. Each province/territory applies different approaches, definitions, categories, and remedies to the Canada-wide issue of non-standard hours child care. This suggests two things. First, it suggests how important better methods of sharing information, collaborating, collecting data and conducting research could be for understanding the successes and the challenges of providing non-standard hours care. Second, it shows that many gaps remain between broad government initiatives and aspirations and actual change in programs and services for families and children who need non-standard hours care.



CHAPTER SIX

Learning from the Field: Profiles of Non-Standard Hours Child Care Programs

In this section, we present seven profiles of non-standard hours child care services. Our goal is to inform policy and practice by illustrating the factors that affect the initiation, provision, and sustainability of these services. We chose child care programs to profile based on several factors including regional diversity, since policy regimes can influence a program's success. We included two long-time non-standard hours services, one in Manitoba and one in Ontario, that had been described in a previous report on non-standard hours child care by Halfon and Friendly (2015). In this report, we provide an update on their recent successes as well as the challenges such programs face, such as shifting demographics and changing funding supports.

We included another Ontario centre that was acquired by a large charitable child care organization when a regional government in Ontario divested its publicly operated child care centres. We also included a hospital-based Alberta centre that operated for many years with and without non-standard hours care, to illustrate the potential impacts of public policy, since this centre experienced significant program and funding support changes over time. The fifth example is a Québec centre—originally part of a pilot project—that at one time operated 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. The sixth example is a long-established centre in rural Prince Edward Island that began offering seasonal child care in 2019 as part of a province-wide initiative. The final example describes an Ontario-based, union-led, multi-site initiative that operated for 23 years. It closed when the population it was designed for aged out, funding arrangements were reduced, and the province introduced full-day kindergarten for all four- and five-year-olds.

The child care services we profiled are:

1. Discovery Children’s Centre, Winnipeg, MB
2. Short-Term Child Care, Andrew Fleck Children’s Services, Ottawa, ON
3. Collegieside Early Learning Centre, Family Day Care Services, Brampton, ON
4. Edmonton Hospital Workers’ Child Care Society, Edmonton, AB
5. Centre de la petite enfance (CPE) les casinours, Montreal, PQ
6. Eastern Kings Child Care Academy, Souris, PEI
7. Canadian Auto Workers (CAW) Community Services, Windsor and Oshawa, ON

Methodology

We researched the publicly available information for each of the sites to develop draft information to begin our analysis. We contacted appropriate key informants³⁴—centre supervisors, executive directors, and other knowledgeable people—and asked them

to verify the information we collected, add to it, and answer additional questions. For the profile of the program that is no longer operating (Canadian Auto Workers Community Services), we contacted several key informants who had direct knowledge of the project. All the key informants we contacted agreed to participate in the project and we conducted semi-structured telephone interviews with each of them for approximately one hour.

Profile 1: Discovery Children’s Centre; Winnipeg, MB

The centre

Discovery Children’s Centre is the largest single site child care centre in Winnipeg, with 222 licensed spaces serving children from 12 weeks to 12 years old. The centre was established in 1976, and in 1996 it began providing the program that includes non-standard hours care until 12:30 am. The centre began a Saturday program two years later in 1998.

³⁴ We include a list of the key informants in Appendix C.

Discovery is located in a previously vacant school building and has programs running in 12 separate rooms. Along with the non-standard hours program, the centre also provides regular full-day child care services, part-day nursery school programs, and after school programs for school-age children. Children who are enrolled in the regular full day child care services can participate in extended hours care after 6:00 pm and on Saturdays. The centre is prepared to be flexible to accommodate full-day children who are not "regulars" in the non-standard hours program for the odd evening here and there.

Discovery Children's Centre is a fully inclusive program that uses an emergent curriculum approach (i.e., the program focuses on responding to each child's interests to create meaningful learning experiences). The centre is committed to ensuring that children have the maximum opportunity to experience the benefits of spending considerable time outdoors and in nature. This has been enhanced through such initiatives as a Forest School and the 150 Gardening Challenge.

The non-standard hours program

Discovery's non-standard hours program provides child care for children age 2–12 years old during the hours of 6:30 am to 12:30 am on Mondays to Fridays, and 6:30 am to 7:30 pm on Saturdays. This part of Discovery's program

is funded for 32 spaces and is licensed for 40 and has an average of 32 different children attending on any given day. It uses two dedicated rooms within the centre and has dedicated staff. These two rooms are exclusively used by the non-standard hours program.

The non-standard hours program has two evening staff shifts, one from 4:30 pm to 12:30 am and one from 1:00 pm to 9:00 pm and has day and night supervisors. The evening supervisor typically does administrative work after the children go to bed; the non-standard hours program requires double the administration of the regular day time program.

Executive Director Ron Blatz describes the non-standard hours program as "a little more relaxed" with mixed age groups that create a familial feeling. The program maintains the emergent curriculum approach that is used in other Discovery programs and offers children considerable free time, as well as outdoor and nature-focused activities when appropriate.

The centre has "regular" and "casual" users. "Regular" parents are required to register specifically for the non-standard hours program and must commit to a minimum of two days per week, or at least four evenings or Saturdays per month. "Regular" parents are guaranteed child care during the times they request, if they request them by the Friday of

the week before and commit to paying for at least two days per week even if they do not use the program. "Casual" parents who use the non-standard hours program are not asked to commit to any amount of usage but cannot be guaranteed the hours they request. If the centre is unable to accommodate a request for casual use, parents will be notified by the Friday evening of the week before.

The non-standard hours program was originally targeted to parents working in retail and hospitality employment. The centre is located four blocks away from the largest shopping mall in the province and 10 blocks away from the airport where there are many hotels and restaurants. However, it has turned out to serve a wide variety of families including musicians, bus drivers, police officers, fire fighters, students, military personnel, airline workers, and hospital personnel.

The majority of parents using the program have irregular or rotating shifts. It is estimated that half the families using the program live in the local community while the other half work in the local community, although some parents do drive from the other side of Winnipeg to access the centre.

Opportunities and challenges

The non-standard hours program has been successful for a number of reasons. The most

notable reason is the relatively generous provincial funding that supports it, which takes two forms. First, Manitoba provides operating funds to eligible not-for-profit centres through an operationally funded "unit funding" model. This unit funding is linked to the regulated age-group composition of the program, and to a maximum parent fee set by the provincial government. It also incorporates fee subsidies for eligible families in lieu of the set fee. Second, non-standard hours child care in Manitoba receives one and a half times the regular operating funds for each evening space and double the regular operating funds for weekend care. Thus, it does not need to depend entirely on parent fees to cover the additional costs of operating during non-standard hours. The additional funding was a main factor that contributed to Discovery's original decision to open the non-standard hours spaces. Crucially, the consistent funding means the program has enough staff to attempt to accommodate weekly and last-minute requests, as well as being flexible enough to accommodate on-going changes in families' schedules. The additional funding also supports the substantial increase in additional administrative time that is needed for the non-standard hours program. Discovery has three staff who specifically help with the heavy administration needed to successfully deliver non-standard hours child care to a large number of children and families whose needs

fluctuate on a daily or weekly basis, affecting programming, meals, staffing, and parent fees.

The fact that Discovery Children's Centre is a large operation (with 222 care spaces) helps to support the non-standard hours program, since the program draws on the centre's other resources. Each of Discovery's programs has a dedicated supervisor, including day and night supervisors for the non-standard hours program. For the centre as a whole, this creates a strong core of leadership that is able to deal with challenges.

Although the non-standard hours program is financially sustainable and supported by the size of the centre overall, there are still challenges to providing a flexible non-standard hours service. As noted earlier, the non-standard hours program accounts for the majority of the centre's total administrative time; scheduling care for the "regular" families' as well as the "casual" and part-time families is an on-going task. The program also has more staff than a "standard" program. Staffing is a constant challenge, especially for the 4:30 pm to midnight shift or when staff need to be replaced.

The flexible nature of the program makes some aspects of quality especially difficult to maintain. For example, there may be 65 to 70 different children in one week on different schedules. Thus, Director Blatz noted, it may be

difficult to build meaningful relationships among staff, children, and their families. There are also multiple staff on different shifts, so the program is less consistent in its curriculum and activities than the "standard" hours programs.

The non-standard hours program may be challenging for some children because they are in an environment with different children and different staff, at different times of the day. It may be harder for them to follow routines, as children may be in the program at different times each week. As well, they may not have the opportunity to build strong friendships with a more consistent group of friends. School-age children are a particular concern, as they arrive from a full school day in the evening, go to bed at the centre, and then are woken up to travel home at 12:30 am; the long hours and sleep disruptions may be exhausting for them.

Ron Blatz also noted that provincial government funding has not been increased in more than three years. Thus, it is now a challenge to cover the costs of operating the centre including the heavy-cost non-standard hours program. Like other non-profit centres in Manitoba, Discovery's parent fees are provincially determined. While fixed costs such as rent, supplies, and food have steadily increased, staff have not had a wage increase in more than three years. Therefore, in Manitoba, where the child care industry is

having issues with staff recruitment and retention, the 55-employee Discovery centre is also experiencing financial and staffing challenges.

Profile 2: Short Term Child Care, Andrew Fleck Children's Services; Ottawa, ON

Andrew Fleck Children's Services: The agency

Andrew Fleck Children's Services, first established in 1911 as the Settlement House Day Nursery, is a charitable, not-for-profit, multi-service child care agency in Ottawa. It offers centre-based child care, regulated home child care, school-aged child care, and a variety of other family and child support programs. As well, Andrew Fleck is currently developing the innovative Canadian Centre for Outdoor Play, partnering with the Child and Nature Alliance of Canada and the Healthy Active Living and Obesity Research Group.

Today, in addition to Short-Term Child Care, Andrew Fleck Children's Services includes nine child care centre sites with 45 toddler, 168 preschool-age, 260 kindergarten-age, 478 primary/junior, and 20 junior school-age spaces. The regulated home child care program— an agency model rather than individually-licensed providers, as is all regulated home child care in Ontario— has 120 home child care providers.

The evolution of Short-Term Child Care (STCC)

Andrew Fleck first began providing emergency child care in 1987. Since that time, the non-standard hours program has been through multiple transitions. Andrew Fleck and two other organizations established Short Term Child Care (STCC) as a non-profit corporation. The objective of STCC was to provide emergency care and care for mildly ill children through a network of trained caregivers in the child's home or in regulated child care homes that were supervised by the three agencies. In 1989, STCC was chosen to participate in the Ontario government's Flexible Services Development Project³⁵ and received project funding to join with two other child care agencies in Ottawa to develop "flexible" child

³⁵ The Flexible Services Development Project, established by Ontario's then-Liberal government in 1987, was a series of pilot projects intended to address child care needs in the evenings, overnight and on weekends, when children are ill or parents are experiencing an emergency, as well as in rural communities. The pilot projects were operationally funded to meet these "flexible" child care needs.

care in Ottawa. The provincial government stopped the funding program in 1993, leaving STCC at risk of closure.

Looking for alternatives, STCC turned to a consortium model and partnered with employers and community organizations to fund care services and established the National Capital Region Emergency Child Care Consortium in 1995. The consortium partners could pay a fee to gain access to emergency child care services for their employees/members who would pay a user-fee. Ontario Trillium Foundation funding was secured to help the transition to the new funding model. In 1999, Andrew Fleck took over the STCC program, becoming the sole agency operating the program.

The Short-Term Child Care program

Today STCC provides bilingual temporary, emergency child care by approved and monitored caregivers for children aged three months to 12 years when they are mildly ill, when regular child care arrangements are interrupted, when family emergencies arise, and in several other kinds of non-standard hours child care situations. STCC provides care 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Kim Hiscott, Andrew Fleck's Executive Director, noted that STCC's "flexible" provision meets three distinct needs: a) emergency/unexpected care; b) non-standard or sporadic hours care on a regular

basis; c) non-standard or sporadic hours care on an irregular basis.

The service offers flexible child care to meet working parents' schedules, including care for days, evenings, overnight, and weekends, usually on a temporary, short term basis. Short-Term Child Care screens, trains, and monitors caregivers (who are not technically regulated under Ontario's home child care provisions) who usually provide care in children's own homes. Parents may have the option to have their child placed in a regulated child care home that is supervised by Andrew Fleck Children's Services, but that option is rarely requested.

Employers, organizations, and unions pay an annual access fee to give their employees/members access to the Short-Term Child Care program. Parents using the services are charged a user-fee, which may be subsidized partially or fully by their employer/union.

The STCC program manager works within Andrew Fleck and STCC placement coordinators receive requests and match up families with caregivers. The STCC telephone line is available Monday to Friday from 6:00 am to 8:30 am, Monday to Thursday from 7:00 pm to 9:00 pm, and on Sunday from 7:00 pm to 9:00 pm. Short-Term Child Care provides a unique website link for each participating

organization. Parents may use the link to set up an account and request care online from their account, as well as access any placement forms required. All the program administration, including collecting fees and paying caregivers, is done through the agency.

Parents whose employer/organization/union is participating are charged approximately \$15 per hour and are required to book a minimum of five hours of care. There are no regular parent fee subsidies as the care is not regulated, although the Andrew Fleck agency is a home child care license holder. Some employers pay the hourly rate for their employees, while others only pay the access fee. Access fees are calculated based on the participating organization's number of employees beginning at \$6,000 for up to 200 employees, with an additional fee added for larger employers. Currently, parent-employees from six organizations including the House of Commons, Ottawa Hospital, and Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario use this service. No data have been collected on the personal or family characteristics of the clients using STCC.

In addition to supporting working parents with flexible child care, STCC has trained caregivers who provide weekly early learning and child care sessions at six women's shelters in Ottawa. STCC also provides a service to recruit

caregivers and supply staff for the larger agency and provides child care for events.

Opportunities and challenges

The large size of the Andrew Fleck organization contributes to the sustainability of the program as the large agency can absorb some of STCC's costs. Executive Director Kim Hiscott commented that the non-standard hours program is an asset to the larger agency, as it allows for a larger pool of established employees upon whom the agency can draw for their multiple services. Having several services within one agency can also help with caregiver recruitment; STCC's caregivers benefit from other job opportunities within the agency and have access to additional training opportunities. The in-home care that is provided by STCC may contribute to the program's success because, as Executive Director Hiscott noted, this is the type of care many parents want in an emergency or when their child is ill.

While Andrew Fleck considers STCC to be a sustainable program, there are a number of challenges associated with it. One is the cost to the users: \$15/hour for employees/members of partners and \$20/hour for others. For families outside of the partnering programs, fees can be prohibitively expensive. In other words, affordable, flexible child care is only possible in the current model

because the employer pays a contribution to reduce employees' fees. As Andrew Fleck Children's Services is committed to equity and serving the community broadly, they identify this as a key problem.

In addition, recruiting providers is an on-going challenge both for the STCC program and for the larger agency in the regulated home child care program. The program has tried various approaches to "on call" or flexible child care, including guaranteeing hours to caregivers and signing bonuses to provide both flexibility and access to its employers. Providing child care for Members of Parliament (MP) is especially complex, as an increasing number of providers for MPs require ongoing security clearances. Finally, as Executive Director Hiscott noted, there is a much bigger demand for their services in Ottawa than the STCC can meet.

Profile 3: Collegeside Early Learning Centre, Family Day Care Services; Brampton, ON

Family Day Care Services: The agency

Collegeside Early Learning Centre is part of Family Day Care Services, one of Canada's oldest and largest child care and family

support agencies. Family Day, which began in 1851 as one of the first orphanages in Toronto, became a leader in developing foster care in the 1920s and opened one of Ontario's first day nursery programs in the 1940s. In the 1980s, the nonprofit charitable agency was pioneering regulated home child care in Ontario.

Today, Family Day provides licensed child care for 3,045 children in 70 centres and before- and after-school programs, and for 884 children in regulated home child care offered by 260 providers in Toronto and the Greater Toronto Area. The regulated child care programs are provided in addition to family support services, camp and homework programs for older children, outdoor learning, and research and innovation. Overall, the agency provides support for over 12,000 families with children every year.

Collegeside Early Learning Centre

The Collegeside centre is located on Sheridan College's Brampton campus. The facility was purpose-built in 2005 as one of the Region of Peel's twelve publicly-operated centres. Family Day Care Services acquired it when the Regional government divested its centres in 2012; an agreement was made between Family Day and the Regional authorities that the agency would take over the facility and would continue to operate the night-time child care program.

The centre was first licensed as Family Day-Collegeside in 2014. It now provides child care for eight infants, 15 toddlers, and 32 preschoolers, Monday to Friday from 7:00 am to 11:30 pm, with most of the care provided during regular day time hours. The evening program operates from 1:30 pm to 11:30 pm and provides care for children aged 18 months to 12 years. The Preschool Two or Night Care room is licensed for a multi-age family group of up to 15 children from 3:30 pm to 11:30 pm. The centre is also permitted to run a full-day standard hours program on non-instructional school days for children who regularly attend the night care program.

Collegeside holds one license that covers both the standard and non-standard hours programs, but each program is identified separately on the license. The Night Care program is required to have an Assistant Supervisor on site as well as a Registered Early Childhood Educator (RECE) who specifically works in the Night Care program. The second supervisory staff is needed to ensure there are always two people present for safety reasons. Children may participate in the standard hours program, the non-standard hours program, or both. Based on provincial regulations, children can spend, at most, 11 consecutive hours in child care.

Parents may use the Night Care program flexibly, continuing the Region's approach to

non-standard hours care; the Region facilitates this by allowing parents to use their fee subsidies flexibly. A mix of subsidized and full-fee parents use the program, and many of them are single parents. They come from a variety of workplaces including Pearson International Airport, the local hospital, and a nearby Amazon warehouse. Many of them are also students taking evening classes or mixed day and evening classes at Sheridan College, where the centre is located. While its location on Sheridan's campus is a bit far from residential and commercial communities, it is in a light industrial and warehouse area which is convenient for some families' workplaces. Furthermore, as the key informants noted, some families travel a considerable distance to use the non-standard hours care, as it is in such short supply.

Some parent-users work shift schedules or take classes on a mixed day and evening schedule. The Night Care program has many consistently enrolled children who stay in the program for a long period of time, leaving when they "age out" of the program at 11 years old. Others may leave if their situation changes and they no longer qualify for a child care subsidy. When we asked the key informants about overnight child care, they said that when Family Day Care Services took over the Regional centre it had been providing child care until 11:30 pm, and the question of overnight care did not come up. Overnight care would have

required significantly more resources, such as more staff and more security for the physical site, and the cost to operate the program would have been much higher.

Opportunities and challenges

The key informants from Family Day were Joan Arruda, the outgoing CEO; Diane Daley, the incoming CEO; and Mary Sharifzadeh, the Associate Director of Programs. They noted that when the Regional centre transitioned to Family Day, they were very pleased that no child care spaces were lost within Peel Region. In addition, the agency's considerable experience with home child care makes it knowledgeable about managing potential risks. The agency also liked the Collegieside site because of the location and potential for hiring Sheridan College Early Childhood Educators (ECEs), and because it provided a location for team meetings and professional development opportunities. The location is also surrounded by a very attractive green space, which was a significant benefit.

Financing has been a key challenge for Family Day Care Services in operating the Collegieside centre, including the non-standard hours program. One aspect of this challenge is that the agency could not fully use the physical space to generate income from the Night Care program. It also had to eliminate one of its rooms that had space for 16 preschool-aged

children. Another challenge was caused by the unexpected construction of a new campus building adjacent to the centre. As a result of the construction, the centre had to install security cameras, hire a security guard to escort people to the parking area, and make costly repairs to the facility. Some of the financial challenges, however, are effectively unavoidable given the high costs of delivering a high quality, flexible, night time non-standard hours program. The key informants also identified financial pitfalls associated with meeting parents' needs for flexible child care, on top of the financial issues connected to providing child care at non-standard hours.

The key informants noted that the Region of Peel has helped by covering some of the most challenging costs. The Region recently helped the centre get access to two additional rooms that had been reserved as training sites for Sheridan College, which owns the facility. The Night Care program will soon be able to use these rooms, which should improve the sustainability of the program.

Staffing the centre has been identified as another key challenge, some of which is associated with financing and some of which is not. For example, one reason the centre does not accommodate infants in the non-standard hours program has to do with provincially required adult to child ratios. In mixed age groupings, which are used in the Night Care

program, the required adult to child ratio in Ontario is higher when infants under 18 months are included. The key informants identified this as an issue not because they object to the ratio, but because the financial challenges they already experience would be further increased if they provided care for infants, since the agency needs to cover the costs of non-standard hours care and has limited resources to do so.

While the centre's dedicated staff member for the Night Care program has not "turned over", the key informants identified this lack of turnover as "a matter of luck". They noted that finding staff tends to be an ongoing problem in non-standard hours child care, both on a regular basis and if replacement staff are needed.

When we asked the informants what contributed to the success of the non-standard hours program, they said that it was less that the program was a "success" and more that it had survived. They linked this to both the Region of Peel's involvement when asked to provide support and to Family Day Care Services' strong focus on its mission to support families.

Profile 4: Edmonton Hospital Workers Child Care Society; Edmonton, AB

The organization

The Edmonton Hospital Workers Child Care Society (EHWCCS) was created as a non-profit organization in October of 1981. It was founded by a group of hospital employees who had difficulty finding child care and wanted a centre close to their workplace. Specifically, with reference to non-standard hours, it has been reported that the single mothers of the group had no child care options to meet their needs due to their hospital shifts. The Society's "ability to offer child care for shift working mothers allowed them to be able to fulfill work commitments with the peace of mind of knowing that their children were in a safe, loving environment" (Edmonton Hospital Workers Child Care Society [EHWCCS]). In the late 1980s and 1990s, the EHWCCS offered regular day time child care through a child care centre and coordinated the provision of evening and overnight care through 100 family child care homes serving 250 children [31].

At the time, the centre was located in a house near the Glenrose Hospital in Edmonton. As provincial regulations did not permit night time

care in child care centres, family day homes provided all the non-standard hours child care. Although the majority of families using shift and overnight care were hospital employees who were often single parents, the child care services were not funded by or connected organizationally to the hospital. The family day home program's closure in 2006, which is attributed to financial and administrative challenges, meant that the EHWCCS stopped offering non-standard hours child care.

The Edmonton Hospital Workers Child Care Society centre today

In October of 2018, the EHWCCS once again began to offer non-standard hours child care during evenings and weekends. The centre was included in Alberta's second wave of reduced fee Early Learning and Child Care pilot projects, which offer regular child care and non-standard hours care at \$25/day. The federal government transferred funds to the provincial government to finance Alberta's 2018 Action Plan under the Multilateral Framework on Early Learning and Child Care. This money was put towards operational funding. The federal funds also support increasing the number of spaces available for Short-Term Contingency Child Care at the \$25/day fee. The province may also provide additional financial support for parents using this option (some families have a Family Supports for Children with Disabilities [FSCD] contract).

A volunteer board retains responsibility for the EHWCCS centre. The centre is now centrally located in downtown Edmonton on the main floor of the Glenrose Rehabilitation Hospital. It provides regular hours child care for 27 children aged 12 months to 6 years from 6:45 am to 5:30 pm; this includes two Short-Term spaces in each of the two rooms in addition to the regular full-time children. The centre also provides evening care for up to 10 regular and two Short-Term children from 5:30 pm to 10:30 pm, and evening care on Saturdays and Sundays for up to 12 children. Normally, children may attend the EHWCCS program for a maximum of 10 hours per day, five days per week.

The centre's two rooms are organized by age: one room is for children who are 12 months to three years old, and the other is for children two years old to kindergarten-age. It offers an inclusive program, employing a full-time Special Needs Educational Assistant. The Society's website also notes that its location within a rehabilitation hospital makes it an ideal setting for children who may need to access specific services offered by the hospital.

EHWCCS's Short-Term Contingency Child Care program reserves a limited number of spaces for occasional use by families whose members are receiving treatment at the Glenrose Hospital or for people who work there. In

addition, other parents may need on-demand child care, while some need part-time care for a few evenings a week. The centre tries to accommodate all these family needs.

There are two staff shifts at the care centre to allow the extended hours option to operate. The evening care shift starts at 2:45 pm, which allows parents to drop off their child and begin their hospital shift at 3:00 pm. The morning hospital shift begins at 7:00 am, so the centre needs to open at 6:45 am to allow parents to get to work on time. Although the evening shift at the hospital ends at 11:00 pm, the centre must close at 10:30 pm due to a provincial regulation³⁶ that restricts child care centres from remaining open after 10:30 pm. The centre director noted that while this may work for two-parent families, it does not work for single parents who have no one else to pick up their children.

The centre employs 10 full-time staff including Johanna Tassie, the director, and seven part-time staff. Director Tassie noted that the majority of the staff have Level 3 certification,³⁷ Alberta's maximum ECE qualification level. Additionally, she noted that several of the centre's Level 1 staff, who are only required to do a 50-hour online course, have instead

completed Edmonton's Norquest College Family Day Home Provider training program, which is a full-year course that includes a field placement. As well, the centre supports its staff members enrolling in further ECE education. Some of the part-time evening and weekend staff work full time in other child care centres, so EHWCCS is their second job.

Tassie identified that almost all staff wages had been below \$15/hour when the new provincial minimum wage was introduced two years ago. This is generally the current wage level, supported in part by wage enhancement funding from the provincial government. When Tassie became the centre director, one of her goals was to reduce the high staff turnover. She indicated that she has been able to do this by ensuring a more supportive working environment, for example, by trying to accommodate the staff to reduce their work/family balance issues. In considering the staff's working conditions, she also stated that they "can predict their pay cheques": they are not sent home if enrolment is low on a particular day, which she observed is a common practice in Edmonton child care centres.

³⁶ The provincial government was planning to review this regulation, but this is now uncertain.

³⁷ In Alberta, Level 3 certification requires a two-year ECE diploma. Level 3 is Alberta's highest certification level.

With regard to financing, Glenrose Hospital provides help with occupancy costs in the form of reduced rent and in-kind services such as cleaning and maintenance. As one of Alberta's \$25/day pilot projects, the centre is operationally funded to allow parents to pay the below-market \$25/day fee. In addition, low income families may get a fee subsidy to further reduce their \$25/day fee. The province provides additional aid above the fee subsidy to cover extended hours, but since parents often use more hours than the subsidy provides, the EHWCCS centre sometimes absorbs the additional costs. Tassie noted that when interviewed, there were three subsidized children. As well, the centre receives wage top-ups through Alberta's centre accreditation program but, as the director observed, these funds just flow through to the staff rather than providing operational funding. The Society also fundraises for the centre with a casino.

The centre has a wait list that prioritizes families in a variety of categories, with Glenrose employees having highest priority. Parents no longer have to pay a fee to place their name on the wait list, although paying to be on a wait list is a fairly standard practice in Edmonton.

Opportunities and challenges

One of the challenges Director Tassie described is the substantial workload of

administering a non-standard hours program. Tassie has considerable administrative skill gained through previous employment experiences and education (studying business in Germany before immigrating to Canada, where she then completed an ECE diploma at McEwan College). Her workload at the centre, however, means that she is "never able to catch up on things". She noted that she is missing the administrative support and knowledge base that could help her meet some of the challenges of running a non-standard hours child care program.

The following quote from Director Tassie serves as an example of the administrative challenges of trying to meet parents' and children's needs:

We can accommodate late shift nurses (3:00 pm – 11:00 pm) only on very short notice as they need to drop off their child between 2:30 and 2:45 pm to be on time for their shift. Day time children are picked up between 3:30 and 5:30 pm, so we keep close track of children on any given day and update when parents inform us that their child will not be in so we know if we can fit in another short-term child. This means that it is very rare to have lower [than maximum] numbers in each room. The dynamics change in each room on a daily basis as each new child comes into the room. This experience has emphasized the importance of having qualified educators with ongoing

professional training available as the children present often have complex needs. A side effect of having constant high numbers is the resulting difficulty of facilitating staff planning time (which happens over rest time 12:30 – 2:00 pm) for each room team, as often two educators are needed in the room instead of one, and it's hard to find the money for an extra relief educator).

Additionally, meeting the different needs of the many families who require non-standard hours child care is beyond the centre's scope for various reasons. For example, when single parents work the evening hospital shift that ends at 11:00 pm, they cannot rely on the centre's care because of the provincial regulation that prohibits evening care after 10:30 pm. As a result, the centre is inaccessible to any parents who do not have someone else who can pick up their child if they work an evening hospital shift. The centre also does not meet the needs of parents who work from 7:00 am – 7:00 pm because it is not open late on weekdays, so parents don't even sign up to the wait list.

A third challenge has to do with the substantial needs of some of the children in the program. Due to the situations of some families who are using the hospital's rehabilitation and treatment services, some children are in the child care program seven days a week (which requires special permission from provincial

licensing officials). Tassie also described how Short-Term children may be experiencing considerable family stress or even trauma. For example, they could have a sibling with terminal cancer receiving treatment at the Glenrose Hospital. Thus, the children in the program can be affected by a combination of circumstances and, as a result, the program requires well-qualified staff and a stable environment. Director Tassie emphasized that while the EHWCCS staff team are well-qualified by Alberta's standards and the centre's staff turnover has been reduced, the needs of the children in the program must be the top priority.

Finally, a crucial and significant challenge is that the funding to operate the non-standard hours program and the \$25/day pilot program is short-term; the centre has already been notified by letter that the grant will cease next year. Director Tassie noted that if the centre and the non-standard hours program does not continue, parent fees will rise from \$25/day (roughly \$525/month for all age groups) to \$1,208 per month for infants, \$1,138 for toddlers and \$1,088 for preschool-age children (based on a \$15 minimum wage for all staff).

Profile 5: Centre de la petite enfance (CPE) les casinours; Montreal, QC

The centre's beginnings

Centre de la petite enfance les casinours was originally developed as part of a Québec pilot project on non-standard hours child care that began in 2000. The project included 10 centres de la petite enfance (CPEs, or non-profit child care centres) that were, in certain situations, allowed to operate outside the regulations and received additional funding.

CPE les casinours, one of the 10 pilot project centres, opened at about the same time as the Casino du Montreal. During the Casino's development, a decision was made to provide a child care centre "in order to allow young parents to be available and to reduce the tensions associated with safe and quality child care". [82] The motivation that was identified by the Québec government in 2002 during their evaluation of the project was that casino employees tended to be young people in their child-bearing years. Thus, non-standard hours

child care would help ensure the Casino had a stable workforce during its hours of operation.

When the evaluation of the non-standard hours pilot project was conducted in 2002, CPE les casinours operated 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. It had 80 spaces, including 20 spaces for infants and 20 spaces available for night time child care. Parents were required to reserve their flexible arrangements on a weekly basis. The evaluation noted that only 10 of the children were present on a regular "standard" hours basis, with the other children participating on non-standard hours schedules. There was also a sizeable weekend-user population. According to the evaluation report, two sleeping rooms were used so as not to disrupt the children's sleep: one room accommodated children who spent the night and the other was used for children who left at the end of the evening or during the night.

When CPE les casinours originally opened, it, and the other nine pilot centres, received funding in addition to the regular Québec operational funding that has been available to non-profit CPEs since the late 1990s. The additional funding, however, ceased³⁸ some

³⁸ Additional funding for non-standard hours child care was reintroduced in Québec in 2016. CPE les casinours does not receive this additional funding however, as it is not considered to be a "mode de garde particulier".

years ago when there was a change in government.

The 2002 evaluation report provided considerable details about CPE les casinours and the other pilot non-standard hours services as well as how parents experienced them. It confirmed that use of these services was quite variable, but that the non-standard hours services were important for those parents who relied on them. It also found that the stability of the care and the fact that it was one arrangement, not several, were especially important for parents^[82].

Centre de la petite enfance les casinours today

Today CPE les casinours serves Casino de Montreal employees, employees of Loto-Québec, and parents in Montreal's Sud-Ouest community. It continues to be located in its original location five kilometers, or a nine-minute drive, from the Casino. A shuttle bus continues to transport parents who are Casino employees between the CPE and their workplace.

The centre is now only open from 7:15 am to 7:45 pm Monday through Friday. The operating hours were reduced for the first time in 2003, to 7:00 am to 8:00 pm on weekdays from 24 hours per day/7 days/365 days per year. Aurélie Laly, the CPE's Directrice General (DG),

attributes the reduction in hours to the fact that parents were not using as much non-standard hours child care in the late night and overnight. In general, centre spaces continue to be in high demand: there are currently 500 children on the wait list. Laly noted, however, that parents who have other late night and overnight options, such as a partner who is available to provide care, tend to choose that over the centre. She also noted that the population of Casino employees had aged since the centre originally opened, reducing the number of employees with young children who require care. Now one of the CPE's priority groups for admission is grandparents who are employed at the Casino. In 2015, the CPE again reduced its operating hours by half an hour, from 7:00 am to 8:00 pm on weekdays to its present schedule. The CPE does not provide child care on weekends. Space permitting, children may attend two or three days a week.

Priority for admission to the centre is given to employees of the Casino and Loto-Québec (Loto-Québec is the operator of Casino de Montreal), as well as employees of the CPE. Second priority is given to other families in the community. At the time of the interview in late September 2019, 51 of the enrolled children were from Casino de Montreal and Loto-Québec families and the remaining 29 were from community families. Directrice Laly noted that the CPE's waiting list is reviewed each year to determine the demand from priority families;

the admission policies may be adjusted as a result.

CPE les casinours offers 80 licensed spaces including 20 spaces for infants. The remaining spaces are for 1.5- to 5-year-olds.³⁹ It has nine child care rooms, which provide multi-age care, except for the infant room. The centre is a French speaking environment. While it is encouraged that children arrive by 9:30 am, parents may bring their children at any time and pick them up at any time during operating hours. Dinner is served, at an additional fee, to children who are at the centre at 6:00 pm. The CPE includes children with special needs, using a broad definition of special needs.

The CPE has a total staff of 21 employees including the Directrice General; two of the staff work part-time and two work in the office. Staff working with the children work 8.5 hours a day, four days a week in shifts that are scheduled to cover the 12.5 hours the centre is open for each day. The centre strives to hire qualified early childhood educators. Directrice Laly stated that if the centre hires a staff person who lacks the appropriate educational

qualifications, they help them access further training. The CPE's workforce is unionized, as are most CPEs in Québec.

The CPE, like all Québec non-profit centres, is governed by a board of directors. There are seven board positions; five positions are occupied by parents (including one community parent), one is occupied by a staff person at the centre, and one is occupied by a representative of Casino de Montreal.

The CPE is funded to provide child care for 10 hours a day by the regular Québec formula-based funding for non-profit centres. Of the 80 children enrolled at the time of the interview, five were participating for longer than the 10 hours per day; parents using more than 10 hours a day pay a supplementary fee of \$3.00/hour. Otherwise, parents using provincially subsidized child care pay the standard Québec basic daily fee of \$8.25/day. Parents who use a non-subsidized child care service pay considerably more, but may be eligible for a tax credit depending on family income.⁴⁰ From the perspective of the Québec CPE funding rules, CPE les casinours is not

³⁹ In Québec, licensed child care in CPE's and garderies (for-profit centres) covers children 0–4 years old, while 5-year-olds are in full-day kindergarten and in school-age child care outside school hours.

⁴⁰ For further information about Québec child care costs, see http://www.budget.finances.gouv.qc.ca/budget/outils/garde_en.asp

considered to be a "mode de garde particulier", or "special child care", so it does not receive funding in addition to Québec's regular CPE funding.

In addition to provincial funding, the CPE does not pay rent for its premises, since the building is owned by Loto-Québec, which also covers all occupancy costs such as cleaning, maintenance, and "even light bulbs". Directrice Laly observed that at market rent, this is a considerable contribution, noting that the centre's space is a "very good space".

When we asked Directrice Laly whether CPE les casinours experiences any particular challenges, she identified the challenge of "meeting the children's needs for quality child care" and the difficulty of hiring qualified staff to work in the centre's early evening hours.

Profile 6: Eastern Kings Early Childhood Academy; Souris, PE

This profile describes a seasonal child care program that was newly developed by a long-established child care centre. The support and funding for the new seasonal component came from a provincial government policy process. Thus, in addition to describing Eastern Kings

Early Childhood Academy and its seasonal child care, we will also describe the provincial process in some detail. This provincial initiative focused specifically on expanding families' access to seasonal child care, and it is unique in Canada at this time. It should be noted that this centre's seasonal component is very new, having begun in the summer of 2019.

The policy context

The Government of Prince Edward Island began its non-standard child care initiative by identifying non-standard hours child care in its Action Plan, which outlined steps to be taken under the Multilateral Framework Agreement. PEI's Action Plan specifies the goal of "creating spaces for children whose parents work non-standard hours and/or seasonally." In PEI, non-standard hours care is defined as "regulated centre-based or home child care provided outside the hours of 7:00 am to 5:00 pm Monday–Friday". Seasonal child care is generally understood as child care that allows parents to participate in agricultural and fishing employment.

As a first step in the new non-standard child care development process, the province created a grant program and an RFP with two streams: extended hours child care and seasonal child care. In the extended hours stream, participating centres could extend their hours beyond those on their current license to

times between 5:00 am to 9:00 pm and provide care on Saturday and/or Sunday. The operating costs for additional spaces in those hours are covered by the provincial government. In the seasonal stream, Early Years Centres (EYCs)⁴¹ in areas with seasonal employment sectors (e.g., agriculture and fishing) were allocated funds for additional spaces to help them respond to seasonal demands. The provincial government decided not to include overnight care at this time due to the difficulties and uncertainties that are associated with this model.

For centres that are participating in the extended hours stream, the operational funding covers the cost of meals and the staff time that is needed to cover the longer extended hours. The funding is calculated using the PEI salary grid, which EYCs are required to use, at an ECE Level Three rate.⁴² In the seasonal stream, the additional spaces are funded operationally as designated EYC centre spaces. In addition, some criteria in the fee subsidy⁴³ program were relaxed, which allowed

some parents who work seasonally to qualify for a fee subsidy, when they previously did not qualify due to social criteria. Provincial official Garth Waite, a key informant for this section, noted that the parents who had entered the program when they qualified for the seasonal fee subsidy became regular users of licensed child care. Therefore, the structure of the fee subsidy system allowed these parents to continue accessing the fee subsidy, which allowed their children to stay in the program after their seasonal employment ended. In some locales, this included many children with special needs who were able to access an ECEC opportunity for the first time. Mr. Waite observed that this is consistent with PEI's broad social goals for early learning and child care, which are to meet not only the parents' employment needs, but also the children's development and well-being needs.

Thus far, the PEI non-standard hours child care program has allowed eight centres in the extended stream to provide 32 additional child care spaces and four centres in the seasonal

⁴¹In PEI, Early Years Centres, a subset of licensed child care centres, are operationally funded and governed by additional provincial policies including provincially-set parent fees, formula-based unit funding, a provincial salary scale and other provincially-required elements.

⁴² In PEI's provincial salary scale, which is required for EYCs, an ECE Level Three must have a two-year diploma or a degree in ECEC for certification.

⁴³In PEI, EYCs receive operational funding and charge parents provincially set fees. Fee subsidies pay parent fees on behalf of parents who meet income and social eligibility criteria.

stream to provide 48 additional spaces. All spaces have been filled.

PEI government officials developed the new extended hours and seasonal child care services through the grant program, while also working with provincial health authorities to meet the needs of their staff. Specifically, they conducted surveys at 24/7 health care facilities across the province to identify the child care needs of their staff. As a next step, the department that is responsible for child care will work with the health authority to engage licensed ELCC providers to explore innovative ways to support the child care needs of health care shift workers.

The department is also advising a community group that is funded to explore gaps in access to child care that limit women's participation in the work force. The group will research this issue and pilot test an innovative approach to it. They identified access to child care outside traditional work hours as a priority for this project.

A three-pronged approach has emerged from these various initiatives. This approach features working with the licensed child care sector, employers, and community organizations/parents to find innovative ways to increase access to child care outside of traditional work hours. PEI's policy and program development for non-standard child

care is noteworthy for its systems change process. Following the RFP process and establishment of the new services, the service providers who were the "early adopters" formed a provincial "think-tank group", which has been an integral part of assessing the initiative's progress. The provincial government has been bringing this group together to discuss the challenges and successes of their non-standard hours programs, well as to encourage them to share their information and knowledge and engage in problem solving. The process involves both the child care sector and parents and is intended to use the knowledge they gain from reflecting on the first steps of the initiative to continue and expand it.

The child care centre and its seasonal component

Eastern Kings Early Childhood Academy was established 43 years ago and is located in Souris in rural Prince Edward Island. Today it is licensed to offer 58 spaces, 12 of which are for infants. Many parents use the centre part time, so the 58 spaces cover as many as 68 children. While the number of preschool-age children that are allowed is not specified, there are 16 preschoolers this year and the remainder are toddlers. The child care centre employs 10 certified staff in ratio, plus a director. There are also three special needs assistants. The centre was recently displaced from its previous

school-based space and is now located in a large house.

The centre opens at 6:45 am and closes at 5:30 pm. These hours were set to allow nurses working at the nearby hospital to arrive at the centre in time to make their 7:00 am shift. The centre tries to be flexible to accommodate its parent population, many of whom use child care part time. Key informant Karen Picot stressed how important child care flexibility is in this community and noted that the centre would be willing to open earlier if it seemed necessary. Ms. Picot also said that the centre now requires parents using part-time care on a regular basis to use at least three days of child care per week; they also ask parents to notify the centre of their schedule three months in advance. She emphasized that because “flexibility” is always a consideration in child care for rural communities, they aim to accommodate this as much as possible.

The centre provides child care for a high number of children with special needs. In August 2019, there were seven children placed in the centre by child protection authorities. There were also three children diagnosed with autism attending the centre, with three more on a waiting list, as well as many children from low-income families. In addition to the three special needs assistants and regular staff, Intensive Behavioural Intervention (IBI) tutors work with individual children diagnosed with

autism. Ms. Picot noted that the federal-provincial bilateral agreement had supported additional training for the special needs assistants.

Eastern Kings Early Childhood Academy, as an Early Years Centre (EYC), receives operational “unit” funding as well as additional provincial funding for early and late hours. The centre is also able to hire special needs consultants and additional staff to cover the seasonal component of the program. Thus, its funding situation allows the program to be more flexible than it could be without the additional funding.

The additional eight spaces from the seasonal component are a seamless part of the regular program. Karen Picot noted that although the seasonal funding component covers eight spaces, more children were able to be accommodated because the centre is already relatively flexible. Parents’ seasonal child care needs, largely associated with work in agriculture and the fishery, may mean that a child moves from part time care to full time seasonally.

Finally, Karen Picot commented on the seasonal employment patterns of Prince Edward Island and how they relate to child care. She noted that although seasonal child care can fill in some of the gaps for seasonal working parents, it does not seem to impact

their work patterns. Nevertheless, if seasonal child care becomes part of a regular program, it can help PEI reach its goal of meeting both parents' employment needs, and children's needs for their development and well-being.

Profile 7: Canadian Auto Workers Community Services; Windsor and Oshawa, ON

The Canadian Auto Workers (CAW) community service had been one of Canada's most extensive non-standard hours child care initiatives. In 2012, after 23 years of operation, the last remaining piece of this initiative closed. The CAW's first union-led centre that provided extended hours child care initially opened in Windsor, Ontario in 1989, and the initiative grew from there. At its peak in the 1990s, it included a larger replacement centre in Windsor in a purpose-built building, a centre in Oshawa, a centre in Port Elgin at the union's conference centre, and an innovative, flexible regulated home child care program administered by the Windsor centre.

A key element that allowed the union to provide flexible extended hours child care was its 1986 collective agreement with the "big three" auto

makers (General Motors, Chrysler, and Ford). At the time, these automakers played an important role in Ontario's economy, which is why their union was able to support such an ambitious initiative for their southern Ontario workforce. Laurel Rothman was previously the Director of CAW Community Services and the developer of the second Windsor centre. She noted that it is ironic that the same negotiated funding that originally allowed the CAW child care program to flourish later contributed to its demise as the funds dwindled and then were eliminated.

Note that the "big three" agreement in 1986 was not the first collective agreement in which the CAW had negotiated funds for child care. In 1984, a much smaller CAW settlement was made in Stratford, Ontario. It was the first time in Canada that a union bargained for child care funds with a private sector employer.

The motivation for developing the first Windsor child care centre has been attributed to the leadership of then-union president Bob White, the advocacy of women in the union, the broader women's movement, and the union's commitment to women's equality. Key informant Peggy Nash, who had been Bob White's long-time Executive Assistant, observed that this commitment to providing child care came from two main sources. First, it was a matter of social justice, and second, the reality was that women needed access to

affordable child care to be able to participate in non-traditional "good jobs", like those in the Ontario auto industry.

Following the successful negotiation of the "big three" child care fund, the union secured vacant school space and opened the first Windsor centre. It aimed to cover two of the three shifts, deciding not to operate overnight, and allowed shift-working parents to use it "flexibly".

In 1990, an NDP government was elected in Ontario, and promised to improve on the previous Liberal government's substantial contributions to "making [Ontario] child care a public service, not a welfare service". As a result, a substantial capital grant was secured by the union. These additional funds allowed for a much larger "flexible" extended hours centre to be built in Windsor. This centre was operated by CAW Community Services, which also had a role in providing affordable, non-profit housing. The child care fund offset what would have otherwise been sky-high parent fees needed to cover the high operating costs of the centre. The costs were high because the early child educators' wages were considerably higher than Ontario's standard low wages for child care staff, and because of the additional costs of providing flexible care for parents who required it because of the auto plants' shifts.

The success of the Windsor centre encouraged the CAW to open a second centre in Oshawa, where the main industry was the General Motors plant. It opened in 1996 and operated similarly to the Windsor centre: it provided decent wages for staff and flexible extended hours for parents. In the same time period, the union also initiated an innovative, flexible, extended hours home child care program in Windsor that paid minimum wage to providers, which was higher than regulated home child care workers usually earned. It operated either in the home of one of the children or in the provider's home, which required provincial flexibility for the operation of regulated home child care in the child's own home. During this period, the CAW also developed and operated a licensed centre at the union's education-conference centre in Port Elgin. The purpose of this centre was to care for the children of parents who were attending union educational activities and meetings, as well as children from the community who attended on a regular basis.

The home child care program was relatively short-lived. Its innovative, flexible model meant that it was very costly, and it ceased to operate even before the decline of the auto industry and the subsequent reduction of the child care funds.

The flexible extended hours centre in Oshawa, which provided care for more than 50 infants, toddlers, and preschoolers, closed in 2010 as the auto industry declined, the negotiated funds shrunk, and the union's Oshawa population aged. The Windsor centre also faced challenges: their funding was reduced, the “big three” auto makers withdrew, enrolment from union parents dropped as the workforce aged, and full-day kindergarten for four- and five-year-olds was introduced, which disabled child care services across the province. In an attempt to keep the Windsor centre running, it opened enrolment to the larger community in 2010 and increased parent fees to cover costs.

The CAW child care centre in Windsor was the last remaining element of the original initiative. It served 173 families and 244 children in 150 licensed extended hours spaces, and in August 2012 it was finally forced to close. When it closed, Ken Lewanza, the National president of the CAW,⁴⁴ said in a media statement:

When the union bargained monies from Chrysler, General Motors and Ford to set up the child care centre more than 23 years ago, it was with the plan of creating a measure to support parents, where governments were then failing to do so. It was with the intention that

the quality, not-for-profit care provided could be a model for a genuine child care strategy that benefited children and parents alike, right across the province and across the country.

More than two decades later, governments are still failing parents and children. And our dream of quality, affordable, not-for-profit child care has still not yet come into fruition. With major downsizing in the auto industry, the companies can no longer afford to subsidize the centre. Without government support for quality, affordable, not-for-profit child care, the centre is unable to keep the doors open. Our centre is one of many who have had to close because of a lack of government support, with resources instead being diverted to implementing full-day kindergarten and ignoring the need for child care.

We must create better child care opportunities so that parents do not have to string together an endless series of stop-gap measures, just to ensure their children are safe, happy and being well-cared for.

⁴⁴ Subsequently, in 2013, the Canadian Auto Workers merged with the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers to form the largest private sector union in Canada—Unifor.

What has been learned about non-standard hours child care from these profiles?

The profiles we presented in this chapter are not intended to be representative of all non-standard hours child care programs. Instead, we profiled these child care services to demonstrate how some child care programs across Canada have successfully developed services that meet the needs of a group of parents and children who are often left out of regulated child care. We also wanted to demonstrate what factors seem to affect a program's success, and to describe some of the challenges each program identified.

Most of the services we profiled have had considerable longevity, although the non-standard hours component of the PEI seasonal initiative is very new. However, when we asked one of the key informants about her program's success, she stated: "It's not so much about success, but more that the program has survived". This point is not a trivial one: there is a long list of non-standard hours child care programs that have either closed or stopped offering non-standard hours [31, 82, 104]. It is for this reason that the profile of the now-closed Canadian Auto Workers' child care services is

instructive. The CAW's child care services operated for 23 years, had several of the characteristics of successful non-standard hours services, and experimented with innovative non-standard hours programming in its home child care program. Nevertheless, all the CAW child care services eventually closed. These profiles, however, still illustrate a number of consistent factors that appear to have sustained some non-standard hours child care services in Canada, as well as some common challenges they have faced.

First, each of the profiled programs have had some additional source of funding and/or support. In some cases, this is because they are part of a bigger entity. Family Day Care Services' Collegiate Centre and Andrew Fleck Children's Services' Short-term Child Care are both large charitable multiservice agencies. In other cases, the programs received public and/or private funding and support, either from a provincial government, the federal government, or employers/collective agreements, as was the case for Discovery, the CAW services, CPE les casinours, Eastern Kings, and Short-Term Child Care.

Second, public policy clearly makes a difference. The profiles of EHWCCS, Eastern Kings, CPE les casinours, and Discovery Children's Centre each illustrates the effects of child care policy at the provincial level. One can also ask how the federal government's

approach to child care policy makes a difference. As we described in Chapter Five, part of the context in which we are conducting this research is that the federal government is revisiting child care policy after a decade of absence. In 2019, the Multilateral Framework Agreement, along with the funding it provides to the provinces through its bilateral Action Plans, has become the vehicle for new federal, provincial, territorial, and Indigenous partnerships. It is noteworthy that in two profiles, key informants specifically noted the use of the federal funds for non-standard hours child care in their province. The EHWCCS, as one of Alberta's \$25/day pilot projects, was able to re-establish non-standard hours child care when it received operational funding from the federal government. As the PEI profile describes, the province's bilateral agreement with the federal government is what generated the non-standard hours/seasonal child care initiative.

Third, the people who lead these programs often play a significant role in sustaining them, sometimes through multiple iterations. Short-Term Child Care, Eastern Kings, and Discovery Children's Centre all have long-term leadership, and thus, exemplify this well. However, while this creativity and dedication is valuable, having to rely on private, individual efforts to support child care is, in part, why the provision of child care in Canada has continued to be uneven, inequitable, and often unsustainable.

Although we did not intend to select “workplace child care” programs, several of the child care services we profiled were associated with workplaces or employers. These include Short-Term Child Care, which identified that the service is too costly for most parents who are not financially assisted by their employer; Edmonton Hospital Workers' Child Care Society, which was founded by a group of parents working in Edmonton hospitals and is currently sustained by Glenrose Rehabilitation Hospital; CPE les casinours in Montreal, which primarily serves casino and Loto-Québec employees, and the now-defunct Canadian Auto Workers' programs. This raises another set of higher-level questions about the public/private dimensions of child care provision. Some of the profiles illustrate how employers' needs and interests may change over time, as was the case for Canadian Auto Workers and Short-Term Child Care. Other profiles show how the needs of the workers may change, as was the case for the workforce population at both CPE les casinours and the CAW programs, which both aged out. Finally, several key informants pointed out the practical and ethical issues attached to not providing child care for parents who work non-standard hours and who lack an employer or union who will step in to support them.

When we look at the challenges identified by the key informants in these profiles, it is clear that financing is an over-arching theme;

additional funding and resources have been crucial for success in every case. It is important to note that, even in cases where non-standard hours child care receives additional financial support from the government (Discovery Children's Centre in Manitoba and EHWCCS in Alberta), this funding may be subject to political shifts rather than being dependable and sustaining. This may mean that services that are funded as pilot projects (such as the EHWCCS) or those receiving short-term funding (as did Short-term Child Care at one time, and EHWCCS is currently), often close when the pilot project funding ends.

Another challenge identified in almost every profile is staffing; this was true even for programs noting that they had been "lucky" with program staff or had specifically worked to reduce program staff turnover. While it is difficult to recruit and retain child care staff in general across Canada, staffing for extended hours may be even more difficult. In the case of Eastern King's seasonal extension of regular hours, however, our key informant noted that regular staff sometimes were happy to have extra hours generated by the centre's flexibility. It should be noted, however, that this centre is not providing child care late at night, overnight, or on weekends, which may be harder to staff. At the same time, CPE les casinos stated that hiring staff even for the slightly non-

standard evening hours was one of the centre's main challenges.

Further, almost all the profiles identified the issue of staffing to support the substantial administrative work needed to organize non-standard hours child care. This included a range of specific instances, such as EHWCCS's description of their scheduling. Generally, the key informants identified that providing non-standard hours child care requires considerable administration in order to accommodate a larger number of children and families, additional staffing needs and operating costs, and the challenges of accommodating parents' needs for flexible scheduling. In some instances, the additional administrative load is sustained through additional staffing and support, while several profiles suggested that they did not have access to additional supports.

Several key informants reported that much of the additional administration is associated more with offering parents "flexibility", rather than non-standard hours child care per se. All the programs we profiled made an effort to provide some flexibility for parents, mainly because some families require it, or in the case of the PEI seasonal centre, because the community requires it. This may take the form of reserving some spaces for "flexible" use, sometimes defined as "on demand" use. In most instances, processes or rules have been

established to govern how this happens but it is still difficult to administer. There was only one instance where a program guaranteed that space would be available for “on demand” use, which was the Canadian Auto Workers’ innovative in-child’s-home version of regulated home child care. In retrospect, it became clear how this guarantee was a key financial factor that led to the early demise of the home child care program.

In several instances, specific regulations shaped how the non-standard hours program was provided, and for whom. For example, Ontario’s and Alberta’s regulations specify that centre-based child care cannot occur after 10:30 pm, while other regulations define minimum ratios in family (multi-age) groupings in evening and night programs. It should be noted that the key informants were not complaining about regulations they regarded as appropriate, such as staff-to-child ratios, but rather pointed out that these regulations restrict how child care can be provided.

Although we never specifically asked the key informants about their views on children’s experiences, several of them raised the issue of children’s well-being in non-standard hours child care. In the Discovery Children’s Centre’s profile, the key informant raised the issue of

trying to provide children with higher quality experiences, as well as considering how the experience may be difficult for school-age children. In the EHWCCS profile, the issue of how children may be impacted by participating in day-in-and-day-out child care was identified, but it was considered in the context of parents’ needs and their lack of other options.

The case studies also illustrate that very little progress has been made in the collaboration and sharing of knowledge and experience at the service provider and policy maker levels. This is in spite of the fact that the challenges of non-standard hours child care have been studied as a child care policy issue several times throughout the past few decades. At the provincial level, the policy process described in the Prince Edward Island profile (which includes engaging service providers in information sharing and problem solving and using a system change approach) is unique and noteworthy. This could serve as a model for successful policy development across Canada. There are many places where collaborative work, detailed analysis of policy and program practices, and even clarification of terms could begin to help better meet the needs of parents who work non-standard hours as well as the needs of their children.



CHAPTER SEVEN

Conclusions and Recommendations

For more than four decades research studies and policy documents have consistently shown that Canada needs a national, comprehensive approach to early learning and child care (ELCC) to achieve important economic and social policy goals. These goals include supporting parents' employment and ongoing education, promoting gender equality, reducing economic and social marginalization, and ensuring that "all children can experience the enriching environment of quality early learning and child care so they can reach their full potential" [4].

Renewed federal attention, leadership, and new funding to achieve these goals are evident in the 2017 Multilateral Early Learning and Child Care Framework, the Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care Framework, and the associated bilateral agreements with provinces and territories. Most recently, the platforms of three of the four main national political parties in the 2019 federal election featured strong commitments to ELCC. The increased national political attention may lead to expansion of the supply of high quality, affordable child care. It may also encourage increased policy support to enable child care services to be more inclusive and flexible to better meet the needs of families with young children, including those in which parents work non-standard hours.

This research project was undertaken upon the request of Employment and Social Development Canada under its Innovations initiative to inform future developments in early learning and child care. It updates and extends several previous studies of this issue, including the study conducted by Halfon and Friendly in 2015.

In this chapter we summarize our main findings; identify important policy, knowledge, and data gaps; and raise some important questions about policy goals, values, and child and family well-being. We conclude with recommendations for research, policy, and practice.

Context

Inescapably, it is important to contextualize this work. To include more children from unique subpopulations, such as children whose parents work non-standard hours, efforts must go beyond ad-hoc, short-lived pilot projects or limited funds distributed to a small number of service providers. Therefore, as a starting point for this project it is important to note that many ordinary, non “unique” families across Canada lack reliable access to the ELCC services they and their children need.

The limited spaces and high child care fees in Canada have been well documented by Canadian researchers and advocates as well as international organizations studying ELCC [1, 3]. In addition, efforts to maintain and improve quality care are compromised when challenges affecting the early child care workforce remain unaddressed. Overall, policy that fails to consider the importance of comprehensive planning and public investments in early childhood services undermines the quality of child care provision and threatens its viability.

Clearly, in order to address the issue of non-standard hours child care, broader concerns that affect the accessibility, affordability, and quality of ELCC services must be addressed. Failing to address these broader issues means that efforts to “add on” non-standard hours

care to an under-funded, under-resourced service system will inevitably be limited or short-lived. As a result, such efforts will meet the needs of only a small portion of children and families who could otherwise benefit from stable, high-quality child care. This point cannot be stressed highly enough.

What we learned

What we learned from the research literature on non-standard work and non-standard work schedules

There is now an extensive and important body of research on non-standard work, precarious employment, and non-standard work schedules. Our review of the literature confirms that non-standard work is a longstanding, persistent, and increasing feature of the Canadian economy. Non-standard work is a complex concept with a number of dimensions, of which non-standard work schedules is only one. Some jobs may be non-standard only because they require non-standard work hours, otherwise providing employment on a full-time, permanent basis. More often, however, non-standard work hours is associated with one or more other dimensions of non-standard work. This can increase the likelihood of income and job insecurity, lower incomes, and potential

exclusion from social protections such as Employment Insurance – factors that constitute precarious employment.

Statistics Canada data show that close to 30% of employed Canadians worked something other than a regular day shift in 2016-2017. They also show that most people who work non-standard hours have irregular or rotating shifts, with changes to work shifts that may occur with little advance notice. Canadians who work non-standard hours have a variety of different professional and demographic backgrounds. The non-standard hours workforce includes a growing number of professionals, especially in health care and protective services, along with people working in retail sales, manufacturing, primary industries, accommodation and food services, and transport industries. The literature also affirms that Canada’s non-standard workers are more likely to be women, parents, younger in age, racialized and recent immigrants, Indigenous, and to have less formal education and lower incomes than workers with standard employment.

What we learned from the research literature on parents’ non-standard work hours and child care

Our review further demonstrates that parents’ non-standard work hours profoundly affect child care patterns for their young children. To

cover their non-standard work hours, parents typically use more complex and less stable combinations of care arrangements – referred to as “child care packages”. These packages may include tag-team parenting among couples, family and kin care, child care centres, and regulated or unregulated home child care providers, as well as a mix of all these types. U.S. research suggests that parents who work non-standard hours, particularly those with low income, often experience a “child care scramble” [5], which is characterized by inconsistent and poorer quality child care arrangements.

A key observation is that parents who work non-standard hours experience an additional layer of challenges in finding and affording regulated centre-based care. Low-income parents, and especially single mothers, often cannot secure a child care space or a subsidy to reduce child care costs. Although many non-standard child care issues are unique, in this respect these parents share much in common with most Canadian families. They all must find and afford child care in an environment where fees are high and the distribution of child care services is uneven and inadequate, creating what are sometimes referred to as “child care deserts” [6].

What we learned from our original analysis of recent statistical data on families, non-standard work schedules, and child care

Our analysis of 2017 GSS data confirms that 1.5 million parents of young children in Canada currently work non-standard schedules. In fact, at least one parent worked a non-standard schedule in 39% of families with one or more children under 6 years of age. Approximately 27% of working mothers with young children, and 27% of working fathers with young children had non-standard work hours in 2016-2017. Mothers and fathers who worked non-standard schedules were similar: about 17% of both groups worked a regular evening or night shift, 36–37% worked rotating shifts, and 41–42% had irregular shifts or worked on call. Mothers who worked non-standard schedules were more likely to have temporary or contract work and/or to work part-time hours than fathers who worked non-standard hours, indicating that mothers had a higher degree of precarious employment. Our analyses also confirmed that mothers who work non-standard schedules tend to be younger, less well-educated, and have lower individual and family incomes than mothers who work standard daytime hours. Interestingly, the number of children in the family and the age of the youngest child did not seem to be related to whether mothers worked standard versus non-standard hours.

Child care patterns are quite different when mothers work non-standard hours. Mothers who work non-standard schedules are less likely to use non-parental child care for their youngest child age 1-5 (perhaps because many rely on tag-team parenting or can work at home). Furthermore, when they do use non-parental care, mothers who work non-standard hours are more likely to use it on an irregular or occasional basis. Mothers who work standard hours were more likely to use a licensed child care centre or preschool program as their main method of care in the last year compared to mothers who work non-standard hours (52% compared to 36%); mothers who work non-standard hours were much more likely to use care by a relative. Similar proportions of both groups used care in another's home, which may have been provided by a relative or a licensed or unlicensed home care provider. The current data did not allow us to estimate the number of families who used multiple care arrangements to cover their work hours. We were also unable to determine the stability of the care arrangements that young children and their parents experienced.

What we learned from interviews with parents who work non-standard schedules

Interviews with parents of young children who work non-standard schedules provided rich insights into the challenges they face in their daily lives, often compounded by changing

work schedules for one or both parents. Although we interviewed a small and non-representative sample of parents, the interviews confirmed that simply focusing on the nature of the mothers' non-standard work schedule does not capture the full experience of non-standard work. We learned that to fully understand the complexity of parents' lived experiences we must also consider whether a parent works a regular number of hours per week; whether one or both parents work full time, part time, or short hours; and whether work schedules are predictable and known in advance. Importantly, family life was the most complicated when both parents had non-standard work schedules or when a single parent had a rotating schedule or irregular work hours.

All the families we interviewed use complex child care packages that must respond to unexpected changes and circumstances. In addition, parents with two or more children often have different care packages for each child. Half the couples use tag-team child care (shared between parents/partners) as their main care method, but they typically require support from a relative as well. Additionally, in many cases the mother dropped down to part-time employment to make the tag-team arrangement work and be sustainable. Relatives (typically grandparents) were less often the main care arrangement but were the essential glue in many families: they provide

transportation to and from care, provide regular care as part of a child care mix, and most importantly, they act as the backup care parents need when their schedules change, or when tag-team arrangements do not align.

Parents spoke movingly and emotionally about the challenges they experienced, and the practical difficulties caused by their lack of child care options. They stressed the problem of not being able to access child care centres because the hours did not fully work, there was no space, or because they could not afford the fees. All the parents we interviewed were concerned with the high cost and scarce availability of non-familial child care (whether regulated, unregulated, a babysitter, or nanny) and many mothers struggled with the reality that most of their wages would be going to child care. Several parents explained that they did not qualify for a fee subsidy despite being unable to afford the child care fee, especially for two young children. Several mothers spoke about the consequences they and their children face because of child care problems caused by non-standard work hours. These included leaving a career they had trained for, turning down a desired promotion, feeling stressed from trying to keep tag-team parenting going, over-relying on relatives and creating family tension, and not being able to have their child benefit from early childhood education. The few single mothers we interviewed gave clear examples of how child care was crucial for

them to be able to be employed and to provide stable, supportive education and care for their children.

In addition to the problems of high cost and limited access to child care, parents described the problem of the “lock in” when child care providers (especially centres, but also home child care providers) expect a commitment to regular daily/weekly participation, fixed hours, and accompanying fees. This causes issues when the parents’ own work hours are neither regular nor consistent. Many parents also stated that finding appropriate caregivers was particularly challenging. Only one parent used regulated home child care; others were left to search continually for unregulated home child care, sometimes resorting to Facebook or Kijiji.

An interesting finding from the parent interviews was that regulated centre care still benefits parents even when it does not fully fit their work schedules. In many cases, centre-based care provided a stable anchor that parents and children could rely on, which reduced stress and made it easier to organize wrap-around care arrangements. As well, parents who work, non-standard hours said they desired the benefits of quality ELCC for their children, especially considering the ever-shifting arrangements many of them experienced. It was clear from the interviews that regulated child care services were a precious element of family support and

became even more so when they were even slightly flexible with their opening or closing hours.

What we learned from an environmental scan of provincial/territorial policies and activities

Our environmental scan of federal/provincial/territorial policies, initiatives, and services provided a current picture of developments in this area. Although we found that provision of child care at non-standard times and on weekends remains very limited, there seems to be more recognition and interest in this issue by provinces and territories. For example, a number of jurisdictions have recently introduced initiatives or declared their interest in doing so. These policies nevertheless remain partial, modest, and disparate.

Five provinces/territories (Newfoundland and Labrador, PEI, Québec, Ontario, and Alberta) reported specific initiatives on non-standard hours child care. Three of them incorporated plans to address this issue in the first phase of their Multilateral Framework Agreement P/T Action Plans. Nine provinces have specific regulations or policies for non-standard hours child care, and seven provinces/territories identified additional or specific funding of some kind associated with non-standard hours child care. However, while these are promising

developments, the actual provision of non-standard hours regulated child care remains very low.

There is no inventory or cross-Canada data on the prevalence of non-standard hours services. Based on available data, we attempted to estimate the extent of non-standard hours regulated child care that is currently available. We were cautious when creating our estimate since jurisdictions vary in the amount and type of data they could provide, as well as how they define non-standard hours care. Our best estimate based on the data from nine jurisdictions is that fewer than 2% of centres provide some form of non-standard hours care. Furthermore, many of these centres only provide *slightly non-standard hours* care, where provision is slightly extended to include some early morning or evening hours, but generally not before 6:00 am or later than 8:00 pm. Our estimate of the availability of non-standard hours child care in regulated child care homes is based on data from only four jurisdictions. The other nine jurisdictions either do not have any data available or do not have any provision in home child care. Among the provinces reporting non-standard hours child care in child care homes, British Columbia reported that 5% of regulated homes provide non-standard hours child care at night and Ontario reported that 7% of child care homes offer overnight care. In Québec, officials reported that very little non-standard hours child care is in home

child care, despite the substantial supply of regulated home care in that province. In the Yukon, approximately 9% of regulated homes provide non-standard hours care. Manitoba and Saskatchewan data indicated that most non-standard hours child care is in home child care, but specific numbers were not available.

One development we noted is that all provinces and territories now have online information listing regulated child care services. Some have province-wide information available through surveys and/or licensing processes that allow them to estimate the provision of non-standard hours child care. Similarly, in six provinces information about services that provide non-standard hours child care is publicly available online, although parents or others may have to search service-by-service to find it. This suggests that there could be considerable progress in making information about non-standard hours child care services more available to parents, which could help them find services that offer non-standard hours in their community if they are available. Of course, such online lists will only be useful if they are specific, current, and accessible. Information about regulated home child care provision remains an unresolved concern, which limits access to this form of care, as well as the opportunity to assess improvements in its provision.

We are optimistic that, based on the environmental scan, there appears to be increasing provincial/territorial interest in tackling this issue. Despite varied approaches, definitions, and remedies across provinces/territories, better information, collaboration, data, and research about initiatives, successes, and challenges in providing non-standard hours care would be valuable. A consistent, Canada-wide approach to collecting data and ongoing information, as well as program data would allow the provinces and territories to better address these issues. For example, it could help them identify parents' unmet needs for non-standard hours child care, the challenges providers have in sustaining such services, and the extent to which current initiatives are effective in providing actual on-the-ground changes for families and children.

What we learned from profiles of services offering extended hours and flexible child care

Our analysis of seven child care services across the country (including one that operated for more than 23 years) confirms that funding and support from governments, employers, and unions is crucial to establishing non-standard hours services and for sustaining them over time. Pilot project funding sparked the initial development of three of the seven services, but the withdrawal of such funding, as well as

other changes in provincial policies, can result in destabilizing these programs. As a result, the programs must either reduce their capacity to serve parents and children or risk the demise of the service. In addition to financial considerations, key informants identified additional administrative and human resource burdens when more children and families are served, especially when efforts are made to permit flexible use by parents with irregular schedules. Administrators also noted challenges in recruiting and retaining staff for evening hours. Some key informants identified challenges with the provision of non-standard hours care in home child care or for short-term care in the child's home. These included difficulty retaining providers, as well as the financial challenges caused by guaranteeing a minimum number of hours per week to providers or by guaranteeing flexibility in the small home environment.

It should be noted that successful non-standard hours programs that operated over a number of years were most often part of well-established, larger centres or agencies with considerable experience and dedicated leadership in the management of child care and related services. It is also noteworthy that all the programs profiled benefited from either additional funding sources or significant contributions that defrayed operating costs, such as free rent and occupancy costs.

Nevertheless, even these centres/organizations have found it challenging to meet families' needs while maintaining the quality of care to which they are committed.

What remains unknown?

An important observation is that there is limited research on the relationship of non-standard work and non-standard child care in Canada; much of the research literature is American, and tends to focus on low-income, hourly workers. There are many important knowledge and data gaps that could be addressed through more in-depth research on parents' non-standard work and child care provision, including longitudinal research and well-designed quantitative and qualitative studies. These gaps persist, in part, because there are few sources of data that include in-depth questions about both parents' work and their child care arrangements. As a result, we are left with important, unanswered questions. Key among them are:

- Why do parents of young children work non-standard hours? How many feel that they have a choice given the nature of their work or the jobs available to them?
 - How many parents who work non-standard hours choose to do so, at least in part, because they cannot find or afford regulated child care or have concerns about the quality of care available to them?
 - To what extent do mothers make trade-offs between the flexibility they may gain from working part-time or being self-employed versus the child care costs they would otherwise incur? What long-term consequences does this have for women and for families?
- Digging deeper about work:*
- What patterns are discernible among parents who work rotating shifts and irregular hours?
 - How much advance notice do parents working non-standard hours typically have? Are there differences between professionals and hourly workers? To what degree do parents who work non-standard hours have control over their schedules or flexibility to better manage work and child care?
 - To what extent are parents involved in forms of work, including contract work, self-employment, and gig work, that fall outside of labour protections (e.g.,

Employment Standards legislation) and that are not covered under Employment Insurance?

Digging deeper about child care:

- How many parents who work non-standard hours need or want child care outside of their home that extends beyond early evening? How many need or want care on weekend days? How many would use/benefit from affordable regulated care offered earlier and later than is typical?
- How many parents use combinations of care arrangements, including tag-team parenting and/or care by relatives as well as various forms of non-familial care (both regulated and unregulated)? How stable are these arrangements? How do they affect parental stress, employment, the maternal wage gap, satisfaction with work-family balance, and child outcomes?
- How many parents who work non-standard hours use care in a child care centre or preschool even when it does not match their work hours for the benefits it provides for their children? How many mothers in low- and modest-income families would change from part-time work or non-standard hours work to full-time work if licensed child care was

available and affordable? How many would use regulated/licensed home child care if it was more available and easier to access in their community?

- What mechanisms can be developed to help parents who work non-standard hours learn about programs and regulated providers that offer extended hours care in their community? Where such mechanisms already exist, do parents use them and find them to be a helpful source of information?

The Canadian child care landscape is characterized by varied approaches, definitions, and remedies. We underscore that unless specific efforts are made to collect consistent and timely information across jurisdictions about policies, funding, and service provision, our understanding of child care provision across Canada will remain frustratingly incomplete. Researchers and policy makers need consistent, recurring information to benchmark where we are and to assess the effectiveness of new initiatives and policies. Such information is also important for monitoring how public monies are spent and whether improvements are being made in line with the Multilateral Framework Agreement and the bilateral agreements that have been developed.

Some provinces have developed initiatives and funding to support some non-standard hours care provision, yet we simply do not know how many services are providing non-standard hours care. We also do not know how much non-standard hours care they are providing or to how many children, let alone how many regulated home caregivers provide extended hours or weekend care. This also means that it is impossible to gauge how many families who require non-standard hours care can access these services and how many families have unmet needs.

Finally, we highlight our conclusions from the profiles we developed of a select sample of services that provide non-standard hours child care. Our understanding of the challenges child care services face when offering extended hours care also remains underdeveloped. The profiles we conducted for this study, however, clearly indicate that unstable or insufficient funding, staffing issues, and the increased administrative load involved in providing extended hours are common to all child care services. Sharing such information and using it as a base to further discuss and improve child care services is recommended. A planned system change process is also recommended, such as PEI's efforts to expand extended hours and seasonal care provision.

Key takeaways from the project

The issue of non-standard hours child care has been studied before in Canada. Our project, however, has identified new “takeaways” or useful learnings from the five research approaches we employed. Some of these have practical potential for policy action, further research, or data collection and analysis, and debate.

We note that:

1. The term “non-standard hours” is broad and imprecise. The way it is currently used limits our understanding of parents’ work schedules and needs as well as the nature of “non-standard hours” service provision. We suggest that a more fine-grained approach will be helpful. It is clear that child care can meet some non-standard work hours or schedules much more easily than others. The spectrum of services offered ranges from mildly to extremely non-standard. Similarly, families’ needs remain unknown and appear to range from requiring services that could provide slightly extended hours

- or weekend child care, which are easier to sustain, to overnight and late-night care, which are more difficult to finance and sustain.
2. We also observe that it is important to distinguish between flexible child care and non-standard hours child care, because although they are related, they are not identical. “Flexibility” generally means that child care arrangements can change or be arranged “on demand”; this may apply both to standard hours and non-standard hours child care. Flexibility creates significant issues for service providers regarding staffing and administration, yet many parents need child care flexibility in order to work. It is noteworthy that the service providers we interviewed for this project were prepared to go to some lengths to provide flexible child care, as well as non-standard hours care, to meet family and community needs.
 3. Our research demonstrates that we need to better understand the relationship between parents’ work, family composition, and need and desire for child care. A family with a parent who works non-standard hours may or may not need or want non-standard hours child care, depending on their circumstances.
 4. We learned that parents who need non-standard hours child care could benefit from having access to reliable regular hours child care to serve as a more solid anchor in their “child care package.” Both the research literature and parent interviews showed how this anchor can stabilize families’ daily experiences and provide children with a quality early childhood education.
 5. This was the first research project to analyze Statistics Canada data on parents’ non-standard work as part of an exploration of non-standard hours child care. While the data provide several interesting new findings about who is doing what kind of work, they do not provide information that is specific enough to answer more detailed questions. We need this more detailed information to develop good policies and provisions. There are no data about parents’ weekend work or the nature of shift rotations and irregular schedules. Additionally, we do not know the extent to which parents are informed about schedule changes in advance and have any flexibility. We also lack information about how couples use tag-team care and about the extent to which parents use child care packages, which appear to be common based on the literature and interviews. Thus, we need an agenda for

different data and research to develop the right policy and services, in the right places, and for the right populations.

6. Based on the parents we interviewed for this project, the patchwork nature of non-standard provision (i.e., relying on a shifting “package” of provision) appears to be even more widespread than we would have predicted. This finding is important because this kind of constant balancing act places stress on families, particularly on mothers, and creates problematic circumstances for young children, for whom continuity of care is critically important.
7. We note that although there is active policy movement and experimentation underway at the provincial/territorial level, there is no coordination or overall evaluation of models, successes, or challenges. Similarly, we were told that there is little sharing of information or coordination for the purpose of better service provision among service providers, even within a province.
8. Finally, we wish to highlight the astute observation of one key informant from an exemplary centre profile. When we asked the informant what their “success” was attributable to, she replied: “It’s not so much about success, but rather having

survived”. This observation is supported by the reality that the non-standard hours child care file includes many non-successes that did not survive or ceased to provide non-standard hours child care.

Broader observations

Our research on parents’ non-standard work and non-standard work schedules also highlights some important questions for policy makers and for Canadian society more broadly. The first relates to the growth of non-standard and precarious work. A growing number of Canadians, especially parents, find themselves working unsocial work hours that are out of step with the rhythms of family life, social life, and children’s normal activities. International agreements and analyses identify both non-standard work hours and precarious work as critical policy issues related to workers’ rights and to the provision and maintenance of decent work. These dimensions of working life are critically important for individuals and families, and impact both income security and parents’ ability to combine work and family responsibilities. Finally, the relationship between non-standard work and early learning and child care has profound effects on social justice, particularly for women, Indigenous

people and reconciliation, and marginalized Canadians.

All these concerns are apparent when considering families with young children. These families depend on economic, personal, and community resources daily to ensure that their children's early years are secure, stable, and provide positive and stimulating experiences that enhance their development and well-being. There are ongoing concerns about the availability and costs of high quality, regulated early childhood education and care services across Canada. There is also now increasing interest and concern about how the lack of policy and program development regarding parents' non-standard work hours may result in even more challenges to children's access to quality early learning and child care. Additionally, the lack of policy and program development may pose further obstacles to women's economic security.

For all these reasons it is important to consider whether and how public policies and workplace practices can better protect parent-workers (as well as other workers). These policies and practices should aim to protect workers from the most harmful aspects of precarious work and improve their access to work arrangements that would allow them to have a balanced family life. Such policies would consider what kinds of work are essential to be performed during non-standard hours and how

non-standard work schedules could be better managed for employees, clients/customers, and organizations. These policies should also incorporate enhanced protections and equity under labour provisions as well as accommodations of family status under Human Rights provisions. Finally, they should include changes to labour standards that provide parents and other caregivers with the statutory right to request more flexible work arrangements, as has been implemented in the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, several U.S. states and most recently in the Canada Labour Code. Changes to workplace practices, especially those involving advance notice of shift changes whenever possible, is also critical.

A second broader concern relates to the question: What is best for *children* with regard to parents' work non-standard hours? To consider this topic more broadly and in more depth would certainly require additional research and debate about how families' and children's needs can, and should, be better balanced with workplace demands.

A final and fundamental broader concern is the need for major reforms in early learning and child care policy to address the issues of accessibility, affordability, quality, flexibility, and inclusion in general. Our analysis clearly demonstrates that partial measures to improve child care provision in a mixed market of care

are not sufficient. Partial measures result in many families and children being excluded from access to the kinds of early learning and child care experiences that are so important to support families and promote children's early development. While steps to improve access to extended hours care for a limited number of families may help some, such efforts must be part of much broader improvements to Canada's child care policies and programs.

This research project is not the first to emphasize the futility of attempting to address the particularly difficult child care needs of parents who work non-standard hours outside ELCC system reform. As one researcher observed, "It is like trying to serve dessert before the meat-and-potatoes part of the meal". It is challenging to provide the quality early learning and child care so many families need within Canada's underfunded, under-resourced ELCC service system. To effectively provide the non-standard hours child care that this paper has considered, Canada's early learning and child care needs to be transformed into a planned, publicly-funded, responsive system. Under the current system, it is not just challenging, but essentially impossible to address the unique, varied needs of the non-standard hours workforce in a meaningful way. We make this statement because we know that identifying the problem is a critical first step in good policy. In the final analysis, even creative efforts to address

families' needs are no substitute for the kind of systemic, transformative changes that are needed.

Recommendations

Many features of a revised early learning and child care policy that would help all Canadian families access and afford high-quality early learning and child care services will also help parents with non-standard hours work. In this section, however, we consider the specific recommendations that come from our focus on the child care needs of parents who work non-standard hours and from what we have learned from parents and from key informants with experience providing non-standard hours care. Many of our recommendations are similar to the recommendations from previous analyses of this topic.

We recognize that there is no quick or universal fix for the challenges parents face when they work non-standard hours in a nation where child care services are neither accessible nor affordable for most families. This is especially true for parents whose schedules are irregular or change with little advance notice. Some of our recommendations relate to how important it is to decrease the likelihood that parents will have inconsistent, "unsocial" work schedules, especially in cases where changes in shifts are

not provided in advance. Additionally, we affirm our conviction that policy initiatives and program changes in early childhood settings must be rooted in high quality care for children that ensures consistent and stable relationships with staff and other children and provides stimulating, appropriate care that responds to children’s knowledge, interests, and capacities.

We look forward to ongoing discussions with policy makers, child care professionals, and parents to develop and sustain high quality programs and services that will better meet the needs of parents and children who cannot access them under current conditions.

Our first recommendations focus on steps to promote discussion and dialogue with and among policy makers and child care providers. The goal of these discussions is to promote shared learning and an active process of policy and program change. These are followed by a broader set of recommendations.

We recommend that within six months:

- Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) provide funding to support one or a series of roundtables/planning groups of policy makers at the provincial/territorial and municipal levels, where appropriate. The objective of these meetings will be to share information from this project, assess needs, and

develop plans to implement and evaluate specific efforts to (i) increase the supply of affordable non-standard hours child care in centres and in regulated family day care homes, and (ii) monitor policy developments, take up, and sustainability.

- ESDC provide resources for collaborative work in the form of roundtables or meetings that bring together service providers who deliver successful non-standard hours child care so they can share their experiences, knowledge, best practices, and challenges. These meetings will help service providers improve the provision of non-standard hours child care and allow them to share their knowledge with policy makers.
- A working group including policy makers and community experts receive funds to advance this work, and to promote policy and practice guidelines.

Further, we recommend that:

The Government of Canada

- Build upon, sustain, strengthen and extend the Multilateral Framework Agreement so that it supports and promotes access to affordable, high-quality regulated child care for all children and parents including parents who work non-standard hours.

- Work with the ESDC Minister's Expert Panel on ELCC and other federal departments such as Women and Gender Equality, the Public Health Agency, and Labour, along with other community experts and representatives. The collaborative effort should examine child care needs and use the best available evidence to recommend ways to better meet the goals of the Multilateral Framework on Early Learning and Child Care.
- Work with provinces/territories, Indigenous communities, and Statistics Canada to establish research, data and evaluation agendas on the needs and provision of early learning and child care that include the issue of child care for non-standard hours workers.
- Facilitate research and policy development that aligns with International Labour Organization (ILO) Framework conditions that are associated with the various dimensions of decent work, including combining work, family, and personal life.
- Share with provinces/territories information and resources relevant to newly enacted changes to the Canada Labour Code under Bills C-63 and C-86. This includes regulations and training materials that enhance protections for workers and would benefit parents and non-standard hours workers.
- Comprehensively study and analyze child care needs, parental employment and involvement in education/training, and child care use patterns to better understand current issues and inform policy planning.
- Analyze the extent to which women's involvement in non-standard work and the lack of non-standard hours child care affects women – e.g., by contributing to the maternal wage gap and to limited career advancement; to difficulties combining work and family; and to additional unpaid work and stress as a result of limited child care options.

Provincial/territorial governments

- Develop policies in collaboration with the federal government and other provinces/territories that build systems to make high quality, regulated early childhood education and care more accessible and affordable to parents with non-standard as well as standard schedules. These policies should ensure that all families who need or want care can find appropriate, affordable,

accessible, high quality services when and where they need them.

- Review and analyze each jurisdiction's approach to non-standard hours child care and develop additional plans to meet unmet needs; develop ongoing systems to evaluate initiatives in this area including take-up rates by services, sustainable operations of non-standard hours provision, and the reduction of impediments to expanding non-standard hours operation in centres and regulated child care home.
- Develop plans for inter-provincial/territorial collaboration and better sharing of information, data, and research on non-standard hours child care.
- Develop/expand and sustain provision of public funding to child care services that provide extended hours child care. These funding provisions must recognize the actual cost of operating non-standard hours services to make them widely available to programs within a publicly planned approach.
- Provide parents with readily accessible information, including searchable, updated lists of regulated centres and home child care providers online and in

print. These lists should include information about regulated child care services offering non-standard hours/flexible child care, and involve municipalities, local regions, and community organizations where appropriate.

Provincial/territorial Ministries of Labour

- Recognize the prevalence of non-standard and precarious work, and review workplace policies and labour protections to ensure that workers with non-standard employment are not disadvantaged in their labour rights, pay equity, and parental leave.
- Improve labour standards so that in most cases workers' schedules cannot be arbitrarily changed with short notice.

Employers

- Use effective human resource management practices that recognize human rights requirements for accommodating family status and consider the needs of workers who are parents when implementing workplace arrangements and policies such as scheduling (including overtime), advance notice of shift changes, and the provision of flexible work arrangements.

- Develop workplace policies that are specifically designed to address the issues that parents face when they work non-standard hours. This work should be in collaboration with relevant unions and other workplace groups and should recognize there are instances where non-standard hours work is needed.

The Research Community

- Collaborate with federal/provincial/territorial governments to develop methods for collecting reliable, consistent data in each province and across Canada. This data should focus on child care services and the impacts of child care policies on families, children, and specific subpopulations, including parents who work non-standard hours.
- Develop policy-relevant research that aims to enhance our knowledge on topics related to families, children, and employment, including non-standard hours work and child care.

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Appendix A: Parent Interview Guide

Preamble

Thank you so much for taking the time to speak with me today. As was described in the letter of invitation and consent form, I am currently working on a research project titled *Non-Standard Work and Child Care in Canada: A Challenge for Parents, Policy Makers and Early Learning and Child Care Provision*. This project is funded by Employment and Social Development Canada and includes Dr. Susan Prentice (University of Manitoba), Dr. Donna Lero (University of Guelph), Martha Friendly (Childcare Resource and Research Unit), and myself as the research team. The goals of the project are to develop a portrait of Canadian parents' work arrangements and work schedules, summarize what is known about the supply of regulated care services offering non-standard care (extended hours, overnight or weekends), identify an agenda for extended hours care research in Canada and propose recommendations to guide future ELCC policy action.

Your experiences as a parent who works non-standard work hours is invaluable to this project and will help us understand how parents like yourself manage work and parenting under these circumstances.

As a reminder, information provided will remain strictly confidential and made anonymous for the purposes of any research report or publication. You are welcome to withdraw from this study or end the interview at any time.

Are you okay to get started with the interview questions?

Questions for Parents

1. Can you tell me a little bit about yourself and the make-up of your family?
 - *Number of children*
 - *Single parent? (degree to which a single parent)*
 - *Ages of children*
 - *Sex/gender of the interviewed parent*
 - *Age of parent*
 - *Race/ethnicity*
 - *Canadian-born? Immigrant?*
 - *First language?*

- *Highest level of education?*
 - *Overall family income?*
 - *Where do they live? Province, town, rural or urban*
2. Where do you work/what do you do?
 3. What days/hours/weeks do you work outside the home? How far in advance do you typically know your schedule for the coming days/weeks/months?
 4. What childcare arrangements do you currently have in place for your child(ren)? How long have you had your current childcare arrangements in place? Do you feel these arrangements are sustainable long-term?
 5. Can you tell me about some of the limitations and/or opportunities that impacted your decisions regarding childcare arrangements for your child(ren)?
 6. Do you pay for childcare? How much do you pay (monthly)?
 7. What kind of care did you use before your current arrangements? What would you do if this arrangement were no longer available?
 8. Would you say that your work schedule has played a key role in determining your childcare options?
 9. On the flip side, to what extent would you say your childcare options have impacted your employment opportunities?
 10. Do you think other families with whom you regularly interact face similar challenges in finding/arranging childcare?
 11. Given your current career/place of employment, what would ideal childcare look like for your family?
 12. What recommendations would you make to governments seeking to make childcare more accessible and affordable for working Canadian families?
 13. Is there anything else you think we should know?

Appendix B: Provincial/Territorial Non-Standard Hours Child Care Questionnaire

1. Does your province/territory have a definition of non-standard hours child care?
2. Are there any regulations or policies that specifically or by default restrict operation of non-standard hours child care provision? Have there been any changes to this in the last five years?
3. Does your province/territory have any specific policy or special funding to facilitate/support non-standard hours child care, either specifically or incidentally?
4. Does your province/territory have, or anticipate, any new initiatives in this area?
5. Have there been any initiatives in the last five years of which we should be aware?
6. Are you able to identify services operating non-standard hours?
 - If so, is this through the licensing process, a survey, or in some other way?
 - Is this information publicly available for parents (or others)?
7. Has there been any calculation or specific examination of the need for non-standard hours child care in your province/territory?
8. Has there been any research or analysis of the issue of non-standard hours child care in your province/territory, either by you as government or by academic or independent researchers?
9. Is there anything else that is of interest regarding non-standard hours child care?

Appendix C: List of Key Informants Consulted for Profiles

1. **Discovery Children's Centre, Winnipeg, MB**
Ron Blatz, Executive Director
2. **Short-Term Child Care, Andrew Fleck Children's Services, Ottawa, ON**
Kim Hiscott, Executive Director, Andrew Fleck Children's Services
3. **Collegeside Early Learning Centre, Family Day Care Services, Brampton, ON**
Joan Arruda, outgoing CEO, Family Day Care Services
Diane Daley, incoming CEO, Family Day Care Services
Mary Sharifzadeh, Associate Director of Programs
4. **Edmonton Hospital Workers' Child Care Society, Edmonton**
Johanna Tassie, Director
5. **Centre de la petite enfance (CPE) les casinours, Montreal, PQ**
Aurélie Laly, Director General
6. **Eastern Kings Child Care Academy, Souris PEI**
Garth Waite, Provincial official
Karen Picot, Eastern Kings Child Care Academy
7. **Canadian Auto Workers (CAW) Community Services, Windsor and Oshawa, ON**
Laurel Rothman, Previous director, CAW Community Services
Peggy Nash, Executive assistant to then CAW President Bob White
Laurell Ritchie, Good Jobs Coalition