

Availability and expansion of ELCC services: What's needed?

Martha Friendly



How can the supply of regulated child care grow as fees are reduced and demand increases?

How can child deserts be eliminated?

How can equitable access be ensured?

What lessons can be learned about expanding child care from Canada and elsewhere?

What's the role for public, non-profit, and for-profit players?

Are distinct strategies required for remote, rural and Northern communities?

How should development of new ELCC services be steered?

What are the limits and possibilities of the P/T action plans?

“Accessibility”

Child care expansion and management of the supply of services must become a public responsibility

Why?

Child care for all

Demand



Public/non-profit

Equity

Political fallout



How expansion happens now

Market, not planned – “pop corn”

Private, not public responsibility

Govt role is supportive at best

Limited non-profit capacity to tackle

Growth of for-profits to fill gaps

RESULT

Limited growth (four-fold since 1992)

Low coverage

Uneven distribution

Unequity



Limited expansion is a danger to ELCC success

Expectations - “Child care for all”



Demand - Reduced fees

Equity - Excluded groups

Not-for-profit - Pressure to rely on for-profits

Low fee child care for the few

Political fallout

NATIONAL POST

[NP Comment](#) / [Canadian Politics](#) / [Canada](#)

John Ivison: Sorry Canada. You're still unlikely to snag cheap child care, no matter governments' promises

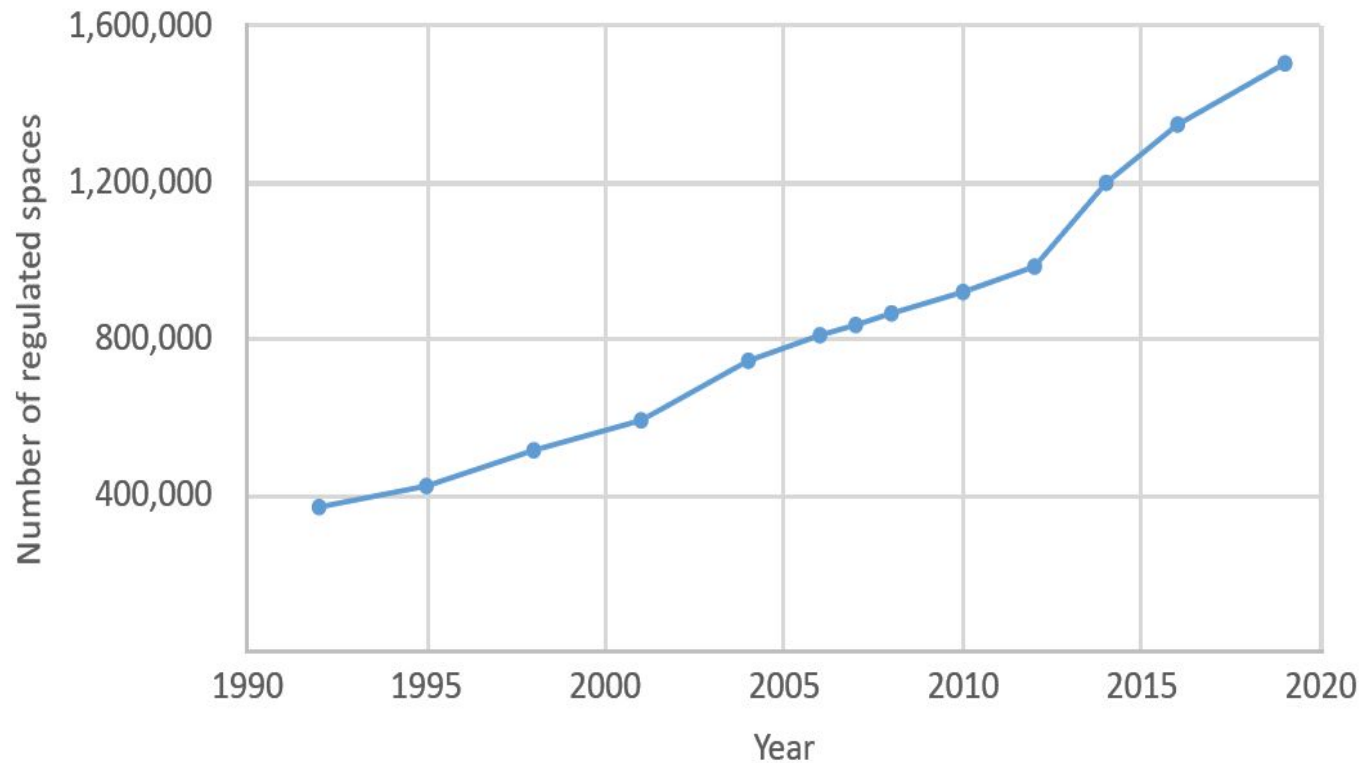
Much of the government's emphasis has been on the reduction of costs to families, rather than on expanding spaces

John Ivison

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Slow growth and child care deserts

FIGURE 1 Number of regulated child care spaces (centre and home) for children 0-12 (1992-2019)



“Just as child care fees vary substantially across the country, so too does the availability of licensed child care spaces, creating the highly inequitable situation in which a person’s access to child care depends largely on where they live”.



What is needed ?

1 Address child care workforce issues

2 A public proactive comprehensive expansion strategy in every province/territory

...as well as sufficient capital funding.



Comprehensive expansion strategies tailored to each province/territory and local needs

Local public planning (municipal);

Use demand forecasting;

Locate child care in public buildings/public land;

Build child care in new housing and commercial development;

Provide support to build non-profit sector capacity (as with housing);

Expand publicly delivered child care by municipal governments, school boards, and other public entities.

Key to this...

Early learning and child care must move from being a private to a public responsibility Canada-wide...

Observations:

Countries that have built universal ELCC systems all have assumed public responsibility for creating and ensuring there is adequate supply.

This almost always goes together with making ELCC an entitlement.

Building adequate supply can never be instantaneous but needs to happen much much faster and better than it has in Canada thus far.