

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION REPORT

2017



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Early Childhood Education Report is produced by the Atkinson Centre for Society and Child Development at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education/University of Toronto. By linking research to practice and public policy, the centre seeks to improve outcomes for young children and their families. The Atkinson Centre relies on its strategic partners that play a critical role in the research, content development and knowledge mobilization. The centre would like to thank our funders, listed below. We would also like to thank the Centre of Excellence in Early Childhood Development, which oversaw the development of the Québec profile and the French translation.

Many contributed to the development of the ECER, too many to name in this space. Contributors are listed on the website. While appreciating the input of many and the direct contribution of the reviewers, the authors accept full responsibility for the content of this report and its companion documents.

Emis Akbari, Kerry McCuaig



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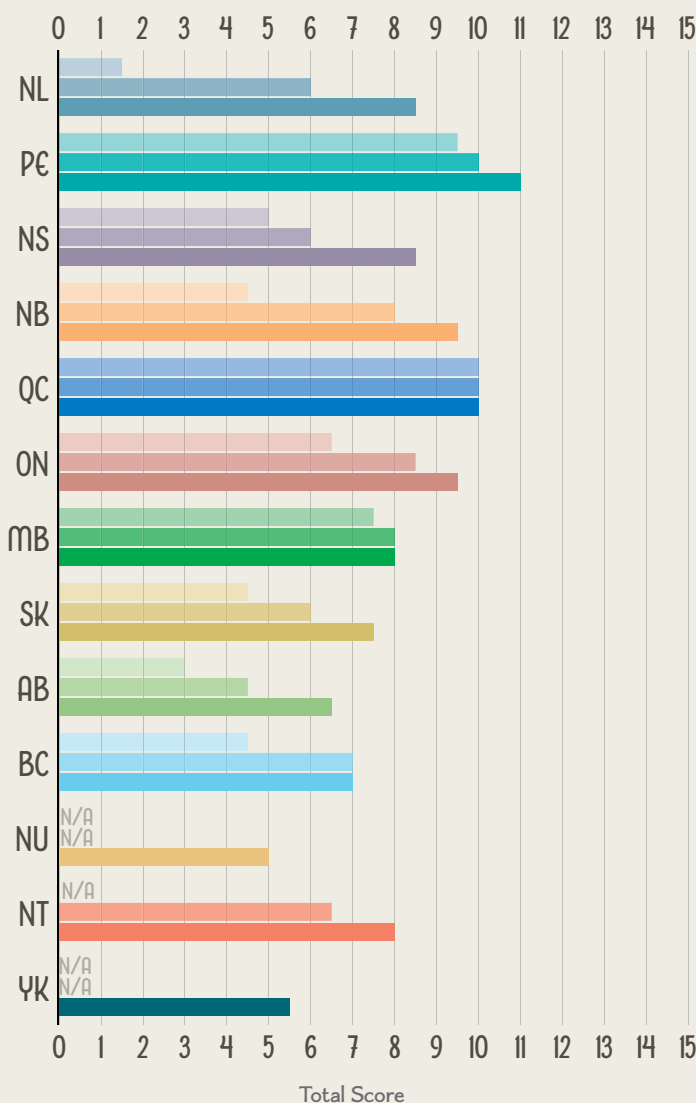
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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The Early Childhood Education Report 2017 is the third assessment of provincial and territorial frameworks for early childhood education in Canada. Nineteen benchmarks, organized into five equally weighted categories, evaluate governance structures, funding levels, access, quality in early learning environments and the rigour of accountability mechanisms.

Results are populated from detailed provincial and territorial profiles developed by the researchers and reviewed by provincial and territorial officials. Researchers and officials co-determine the benchmarks assigned. We are pleased to welcome Nunavut and Yukon as new participants in this edition. ECEReport.ca includes the profiles for each jurisdiction, including the federal government, plus the methodology that shapes the report, references, charts and figures and materials from past reports.

CHANGE IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION REPORT RESULTS 2011/2014/2017





An expansion in ECE would increase female labour market participation, improve child outcomes (particularly for disadvantaged children), and reduce inequality in Canada.

Conference Board of Canada.
Ready for Life

BALANCING ACCESS AND QUALITY

A trend is emerging in early childhood education. As a country, we are recognizing that early education is beneficial for children, for families, for everyone. It is why provinces and territories have focused more attention on programs for preschoolers, and why the federal government is prepared to invest billions of dollars over the coming decade.

The benefits of quality, well-designed early childhood education programs are well-documented. For children they include enhanced academic and socio-emotional competencies, contributing to increased earnings and better health and social behaviour as adults.

Social benefits are derived from early education's role as a job creator in its own right, while supporting parents to work or upgrade their skills. This in turn reduces the draw on income-tested programs and the inequalities that result from poverty.

ECE is also a highly effective platform for early identification and intervention. By addressing problems early, special education costs are reduced. In a country highly dependent on immigration, early education acts as a settlement program.

Economic studies calculate the cost-to-benefit ratio from spending on early education at between \$2 and \$7 returned for every \$1 spent, depending on the population studied.

Most importantly, early education programs offer young children their own space and place to be children.

More than a dozen terms are used to describe programs designed for children before they begin formal schooling. This report uses "early childhood education" or the abbreviated "ECE." ECE refers to programs for young children based on an explicit curriculum, delivered by qualified staff and designed to support children's development and learning. Attendance is regular and children may participate on their own or with their parents or caregivers. It includes child care, but also school-operated kindergarten and prekindergarten programs, as well as Aboriginal Head Start and parent and child programs. The Early Childhood Education Report (ECER) views ECE as an

Most importantly, early education programs offer young children their own space and place to be children.

entitlement for every young child regardless of where they live, their abilities, their language and origins, or parental occupation.

The ECER was developed out of the policy lessons emerging from the twenty-country review of early education and care programs¹ conducted by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

The OECD provided a prescription for countries to improve their early childhood services:

- Pay attention to governance. Responsibility for services for young children are scattered among different departments. Give one ministry the lead and hold it accountable.
- Spend more, but spend wisely. Children need good early years services, while economies need working parents. Organize ECE to meet the needs of both.
- Expand access, but do not take short cuts with quality. Poor quality services harm children and waste financial resources.
- Invest in the workforce. It needs better training and care. Give it the same level of leadership, career opportunities and resources that are provided to public school teachers.
- Build in accountability. Ensure evaluation and research are conducted to keep abreast with the burgeoning science and changing social needs.

Finally, the OECD noted there was no common monitoring mechanism across Canada's 13 jurisdictions to assure Canadians of the value of their investments. The ECER was developed to fill this void. Established in 2011 as part of the Early Years Study 3,² the ECER is released every three years. It provides an accessible means of tracking and communicating the status of early childhood education across Canadian jurisdictions.

The ECER is organized around the five categories highlighted by the OECD: governance, funding, access, learning environments and accountability. Each category is equally weighted around 19 benchmarks to form a common set of minimum criteria necessary for the delivery of quality programming. Thresholds for each benchmark reflect Canadian reality. Each has been achieved in at least one Canadian jurisdiction. As such, they are not aspirational goals, but rather minimum standards. The data sources and rationale for the benchmarks are summarized in the methodology and supplemented by profiles of each province and territory, as well as a review of federal policies impacting ECE.

1 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2006). *Starting Strong II: Early childhood education and care*. Paris: OECD.

2 McCain, M. N., Mustard, J. F., & McCuaig, K. (2011). *Early Years Study 3: Making decisions, taking action*. Toronto, ON.

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION REPORT BENCHMARKS OF QUALITY

5 CATEGORIES	1 INTEGRATED GOVERNANCE	2 FUNDING	3 ACCESS	4 LEARNING ENVIRONMENT	5 ACCOUNTABILITY
19 BENCHMARKS	0.5 ECE under common department/ministry	1 At least 2/3 of child care funding goes to program operations	1 Full day kindergarten offered	0.5 ECE curriculum framework	1 Annual progress reports (2014 or later)
	0.5 Common ECE supervisory unit	1 Mandated salary and fee scale in licensed child care	1 50% of 2 to 4 year olds regularly attend an ECE program	0.5 Alignment of ECE programs with kindergarten	1 Standards for ECE programs include kindergarten
	1 Common ECE policy framework	1 At least 3% of overall budget devoted to ECE	1 Funding conditional on including children with special needs in licensed child care	0.5 At least 2/3 of staff in programs for 2 to 4 years olds are qualified	1 Population measures for preschool collected and reported
	1 Common local authority for ECE administration and delivery			0.5 Kindergarten educators require ECE qualifications	
				0.5 Salaries of ECEs are at least 2/3 of teachers	
				0.5 ECE professional certification/ professional development required	
15 POINTS	3	3	3	3	3

ECER 2017 is particularly timely. The federal government has returned to early education and child care after a decade's absence, flowing new investments shaped by a ten-year intergovernmental framework.³ Federal funds are made available to provinces and territories through bilateral agreements spanning three years. The next edition of the ECER is scheduled for 2020, coinciding with the renewal of the bilateral agreements. Evidence from the first phase of the agreements will be essential to shaping the next.

ATTENTION TO GOVERNANCE

Most jurisdictions have reduced what the OECD identified as the adverse effects of fragmented governance by merging their early education, child care and family support services under a single ministry. During the OECD's 2004 Canada review, no jurisdiction had merged departments; today, eight out of 13 have done so. The Northwest Territories, Nunavut, Saskatchewan, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, Ontario, and most

recently, Nova Scotia and Newfoundland, now include policy and oversight for child care and related early years services within their education departments.

It is also important to look closely at what takes place within departments that house both education and early years services. Most have developed policy frameworks guided by the science of early development and a holistic view of childhood. Policies also recognize the need to reduce program transitions throughout children's early years and into kindergarten and school. Gaps remain however, with programs residing in the same ministry but with different legislative mandates, administrations, oversight and educator requirements, contributing to the separation of school-operated kindergarten and prekindergarten from child care and family support programs. At the local level, infrastructure is weak with poor oversight and support for service providers, lax or absent planning, and operators competing for the same families in some neighbourhoods while other communities have no options.

³ Federal-Provincial/Territorial Early Learning and Child Care Agreement, July 2017.



Our role as caregivers is to give children the freedom to explore and play as they choose while supporting them in managing the real dangers that pose a serious and realistic threat to their safety.

Marina Brussoni, Professor,
University of British Columbia.
The Conversation



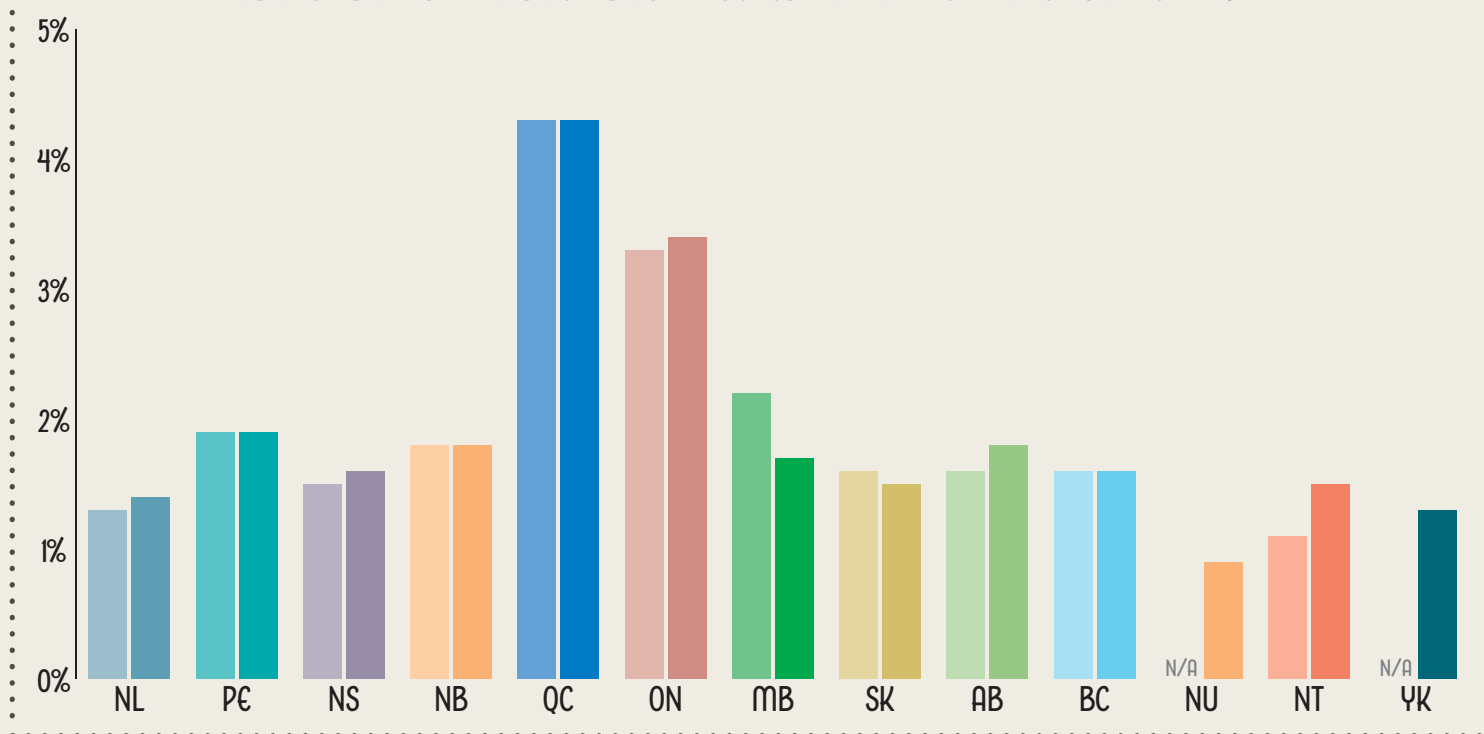
MORE FUNDING

Provinces and territories have increased ECE funding by almost \$1 billion since 2014, bringing total spending to \$11.7 billion. As the most populous provinces, Ontario and Québec account for over half this increase. Every province and territory has added to their funding with the exception of Saskatchewan, where spending amounts have remained stable. Amounts are important, but it is equally telling to identify the share of provincial and territorial resources devoted to young children: the benchmark is a minimum of 3 percent of annual budgeted spending. By comparison, ECE spending averages 5–6 percent of annual budgets in most OECD countries. Adjusted

to Canadian realities, 3 percent was the highest spending percentage attained by a province when the ECER was developed in 2011. The benchmark is a modest target for an age group that makes up between 5 percent to over 13 percent of provincial and territorial populations.

Only Ontario and Québec exceed the spending benchmark of 3 percent. No other province or territory reaches 2 percent. As a percentage of annual budgets, spending on ECE largely flatlined between the 2014 and 2017. A bump in funding is anticipated in 2018 as provinces and territories add their own investments to federal transfers.

ECE BUDGET AS A PERCENTAGE OF PROVINCIAL/TERRITORIAL BUDGET 2014/2017

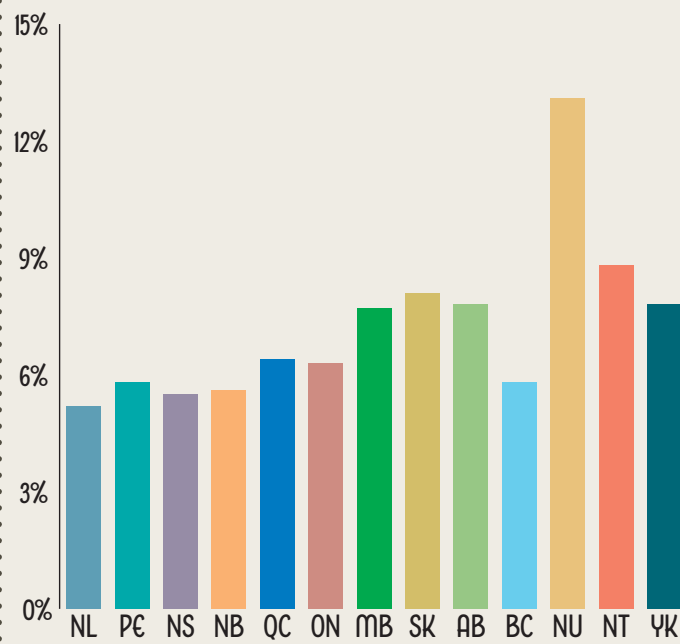




Canada's tomorrow depends on our ability to leverage what we know into policies and practices that support families and benefit children today.

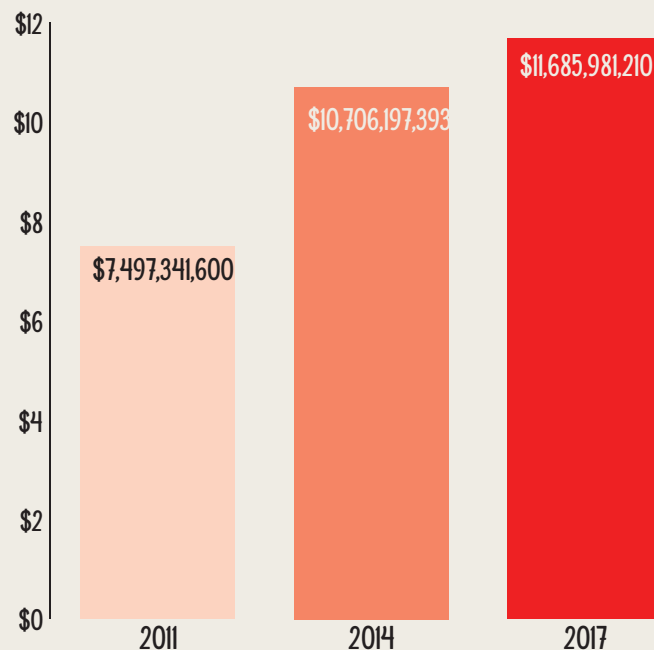
Fraser Mustard
Early Years Study 3

CHILD POPULATION 0-5 YEARS AS A PERCENTAGE OF PROVINCIAL/TERRITORIAL POPULATION



Statistics Canada July 1, 2016

CHANGE IN TOTAL PROVINCIAL / TERRITORIAL ECE SPENDING (DOLLARS IN BILLIONS)



Budget estimates as reported by provincial/territorial governments

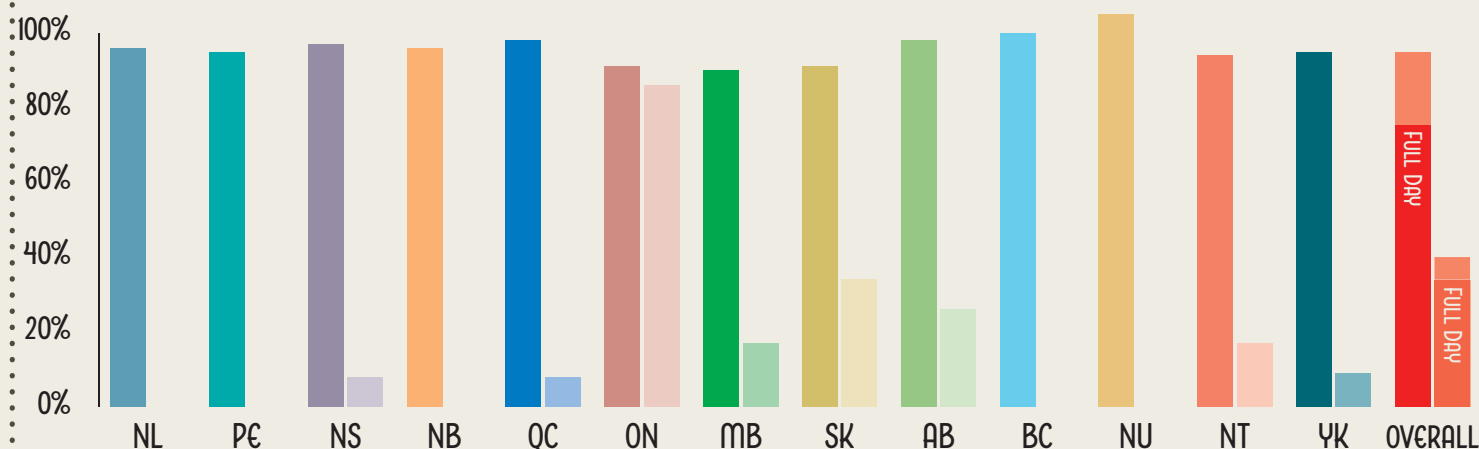
ACCESS

Kindergarten for 5-year-olds is Canada's only universal early years program and the only preschool program most children will experience. Although voluntary in all jurisdictions with the exception of Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, 95 percent of eligible children across the country attend. The Northwest Territories, Yukon, British Columbia, Ontario, Québec, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Newfoundland all offer full-day kindergarten, meeting the needs of 75 percent of Canadian 5-year-olds. The other provinces and Nunavut provide part-day programs.

Over 125,000 children in Ontario attend full-day junior kindergarten for 4-year-olds. The 2017 school year opened with junior kindergarten being offered in all elementary schools in the Northwest Territories, and marked the first year of a province-wide rollout of pre-primary in Nova Scotia. Schools in Whitehorse, in the Yukon offer full day preschool, and, Québec is expanding its full-day 4-year-old program in low-income communities.

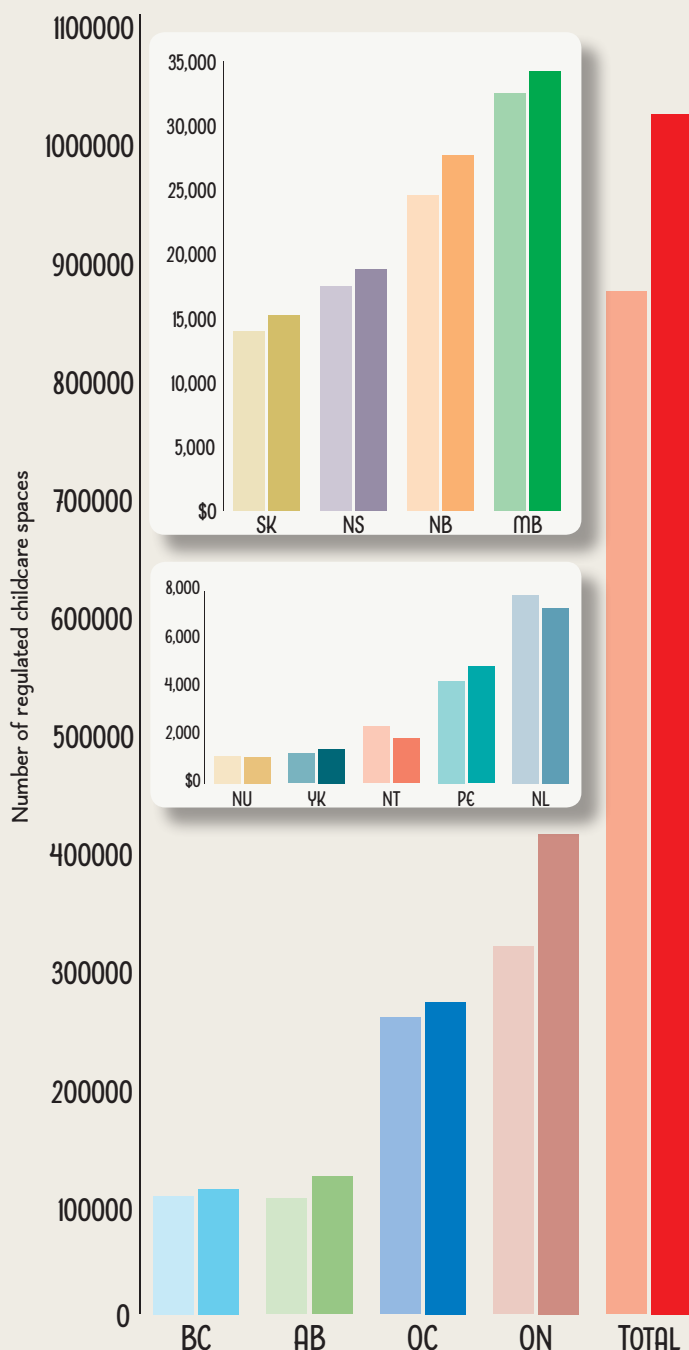
Access to at least part-time programs is available for preschoolers in vulnerable circumstances in Saskatchewan and Alberta and

PERCENTAGE ENROLLED IN SCHOOL-OPERATED ECE PROGRAMS
(5-YEAR-OLDS IN KINDERGARTEN/4 YEAR OLDS IN PREKINDERGARTEN)



• Enrolment figures for kindergarten 2016. • Not all provinces include students attending private schools or First Nations schools in their kindergarten calculations. • Some children are 4 years old when entering kindergarten. • AB prek enrolment includes 2 - 4-year-olds. SK prek enrolment includes 3- and 4-year-olds. • BC, ON, QC and NL also have school-operated parent/child drop-in programs. These numbers are not included.

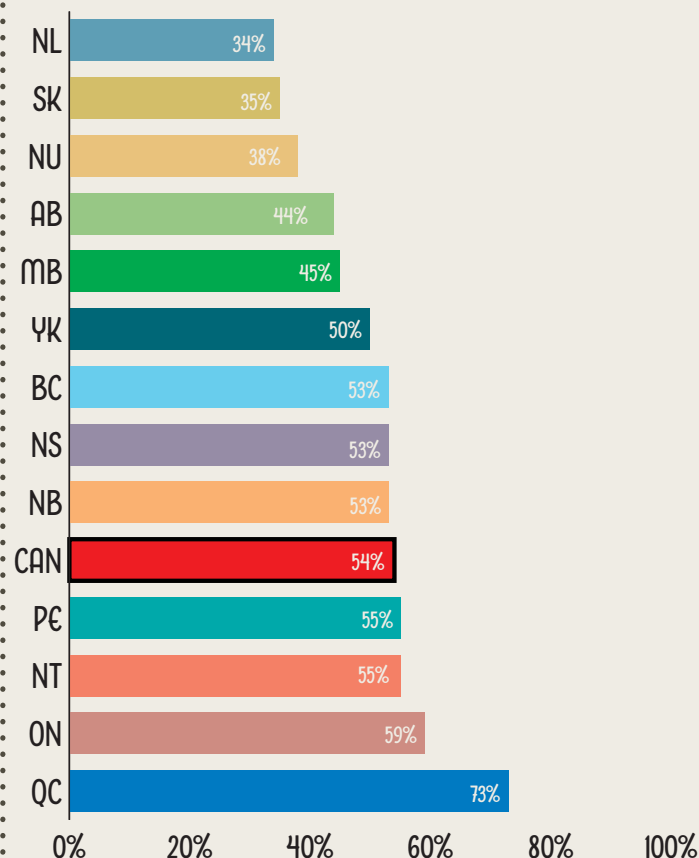
CHANGE IN NUMBER OF REGULATED CHILD CARE SPACES BY PROVINCE/TERRITORY 2014 AND 2017



nursery school is widely available in Manitoba. In addition, many schools in British Columbia and Ontario offer daily part-time, parent/child drop-in activities. In 2016, 40 percent of 4-year olds attended a no fee, school-provided preschool program. ECE in schools accounts for much of the increase in ECE participation and builds on the infrastructure that exists in public education.

Regulated child care has also grown to over 1 million spaces, an increase of 150,000 spaces since 2014. Ontario accounts for most of the new spaces.

PERCENTAGE OF 2-4 YEAR OLDS REGULARLY ATTENDING AN ECE PROGRAM BY PROVINCE/TERRITORY



• Licensed child care spaces as of March 31, 2017 except for QC (2015). Number of 2-4 years olds in child care estimated, since age groupings overlap in some provinces/territories. • Includes pre-primary in NS, Junior kindergarten in YK, NT, QC and ON, public nursery schools in MB, Early Childhood Services for 2.5 to 5 years in AB, Prek in SK. • Includes unlicensed Aboriginal Head Start (AHS is not licensed in all jurisdictions), unlicensed nursery school in SK, Parenting and Family Literacy Centres in ON and Strong Start in BC.

ECER 2017 estimates that 54 percent of children aged 2-4 years attend an early childhood education program, up slightly from the 51 percent reported in ECER 2014. This includes those participating in school-operated prekindergarten and parent/child drop-in programs, licensed child care and Aboriginal Head Start. Participation is estimated. Service providers collect data in different ways: schools count enrolment; child care is counted in spaces; and parent/child programs tally registrations. Not all child care spaces may be occupied and attendance systems for drop-in programs are sometimes unable to determine if a child participates every day or once a month.

Kindergarten for 5-year-olds is Canada's only universal early years program, and the only preschool program most children will experience.

QUALITY

More attention is being focused on the ECE workforce, with enhanced professional development requirements, more density of trained staff, and enhanced support for wages in the Northwest Territories, Ontario, Manitoba, New Brunswick and Newfoundland. In addition, Québec and Prince Edward Island maintain a province-wide wage scale.

Staff practice is guided by curricula for young children designed to tap into their natural curiosity. In most jurisdictions this approach continues into kindergarten. All jurisdictions now have curriculum frameworks with the exception of the Territories, where they are currently in development.

ACCOUNTABILITY

A series of federal, provincial and territorial agreements propose that jurisdictions monitor the progress of ECE provision through annual reports. The 2017 Early Learning and Child Care Agreement has the same provision. In 2017, eleven provinces/territories have publicly-posted reports. Monitoring is an integral part of democratic accountability. It is essential for

informed decision-making, ensuring that societal resources are deployed productively, scarce resources distributed equitably and social goals reached. Monitoring on its own does not deliver results, although it is a crucial part of a larger system designed to achieve them.

CHALLENGES

While it is promising to see publicly-funded education provide more ECE opportunities for younger children, the divide between education and child care persists. As more children participate in kindergarten and prekindergarten, child care is left to top and tail the school day and fill in during holidays. This is a poor model that leaves too many families on wait-lists for child care, destabilizes child care operators and creates split-shift, precarious jobs for early childhood educators. There are examples where regions have merged school programs and child care. This allows more mothers to work, creates full-time employment for educators and reduces transitions for children. Consolidated delivery also brings administrative efficiencies, creating savings that can be passed on to parents in lower fees.



Service organization is not the only challenge. Large funding gaps persist between public education and the market delivery of child care. On average, per child funding for ECE programs in schools is twice as much as spending for a child care space.

How child care is funded also makes a difference. All provinces and territories provide some form of direct operating support to child care programs. Direct funding takes the pressure off parent fees and provides a level of stability to programs that parent fees alone cannot provide. Subsidies for parent fees are administratively cumbersome for parents and subsidy managers. They are often insensitive to the cost of care and the dignity of the family. When subsidies don't cover the fees charged by licensed programs, families are often unable to make up the difference forcing them to settle for unregulated options.

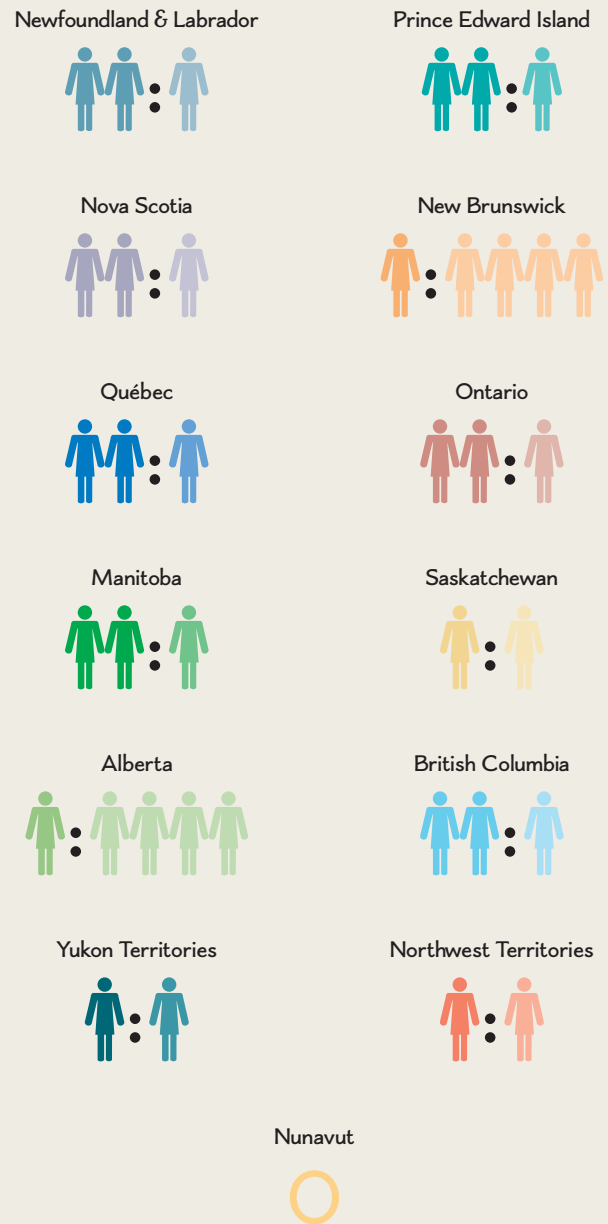
Levels of public spending are also related to staff compensation. Wages have been a priority for most provinces and territories. For some jurisdictions, wage supplements are their single biggest ECE investment. Ontario tops up the wages of child care staff by \$2/hour or \$4,160 annually for a full-time position earning less than \$26.68/hour. Newfoundland contributes up to \$12,500 annually depending on the level of educator qualification. The Northwest Territories, the Yukon and New Brunswick provide similar supplements. Alberta enhances staff wages for child care operators meeting accredited quality standards. Manitoba has a wage floor, and Quebec and Prince Edward Island have province-wide wage grids. Jurisdictions have also implemented other measures to support the ECE workforce, including training bursaries, hiring incentives and bonuses for continuous employment.

Despite these efforts, the wage gap between kindergarten teachers and educators working in licensed child care is wider than can be justified by educational differences. The ECER sets the benchmark for early childhood educator salaries at two-thirds of those earned by kindergarten teachers. Only Newfoundland meets the benchmark in ECER 2017.

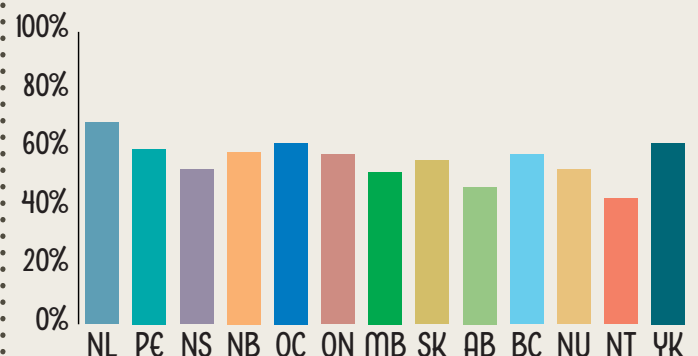
The wage gap between kindergarten teachers and educators...is wider than can be justified by educational differences.

With few exceptions, recruiting and retaining qualified staff in licensed child care remains a challenge. No jurisdiction requires all child care staff to hold post-secondary credentials in ECE, however all but Nunavut stipulate a minimum portion of qualified staff. Some provinces have adopted entry-level

RATIO OF QUALIFIED TO UNQUALIFIED STAFF IN PRESCHOOL GROUPS IN LICENSED CHILD CARE CENTRES BY PROVINCE/TERRITORY



EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATOR SALARIES AS A PERCENTAGE OF TEACHER SALARIES BY PROVINCE / TERRITORY

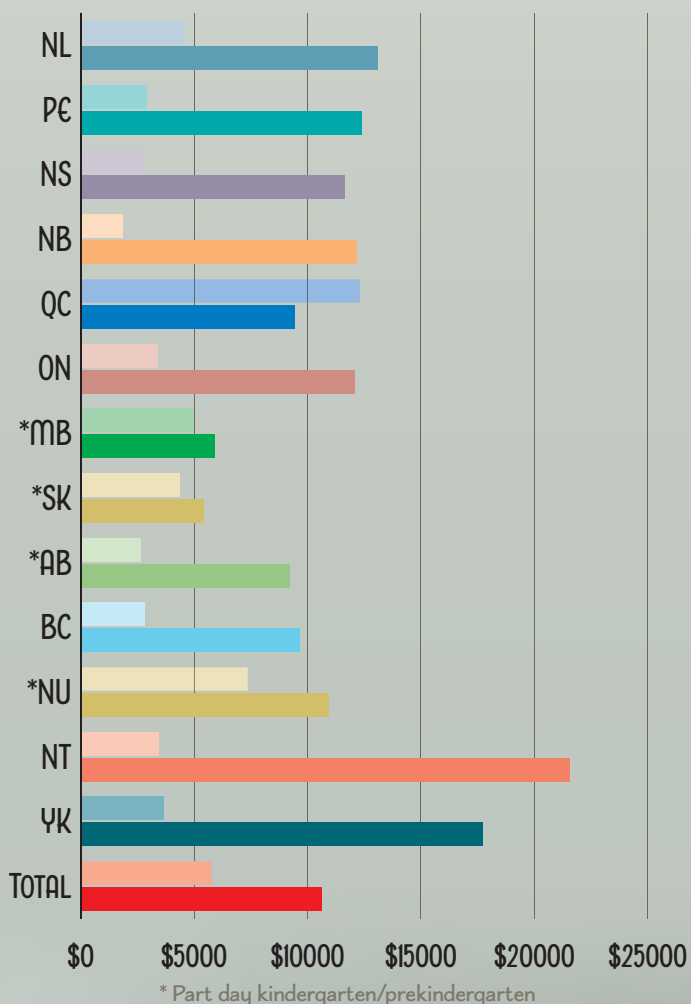




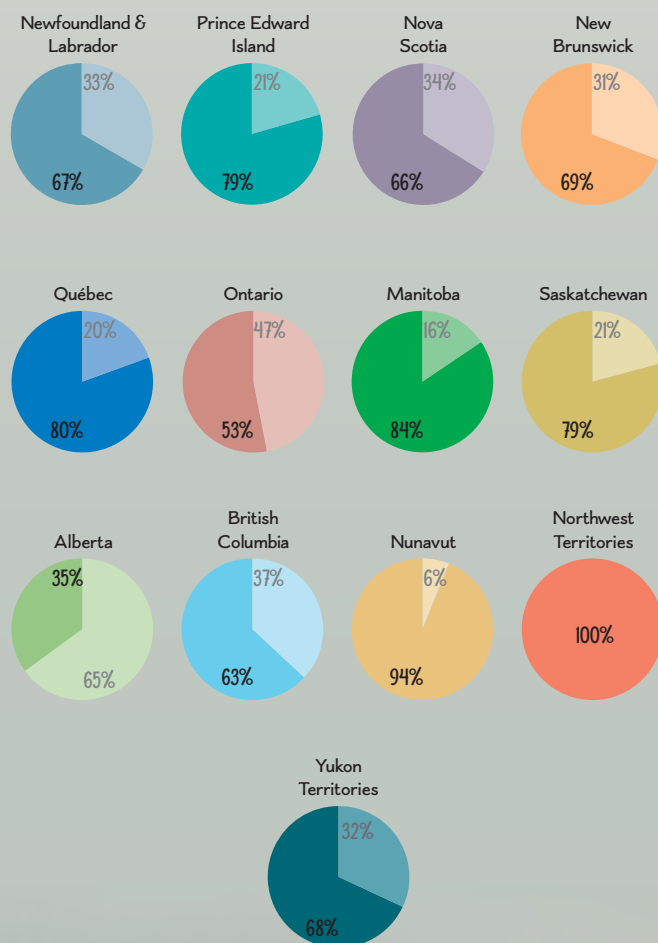
Young children have an innate sense of fairness and are capable of cultivating racial and cultural literacies along with numeracy and reading.

Margaret Norrie McCain

OPERATING EXPENDITURES PER CHILD CARE SPACE AND PER CHILD IN SCHOOL PROGRAMS



LICENSED CHILD CARE PROGRAM FUNDING VERSUS FEE SUBSIDY SPENDING





training requirements, which vary from 40 to 120 hours of ECE course work, while others have no policies governing pre-service training except for recognised ECEs. Although staff/child ratios are consistent across the country, the required number of qualified early childhood educators varies widely.

Wages are one indicator of the status of the workforce. Workforce stability has also been associated with the following:

- The employer – Positions for early childhood educators in the public sector have few retention and recruitment challenges.
- Unionization – Unionized programs experience less staff turnover.
- Qualifications – Early childhood educators report less job satisfaction in workplaces dominated by unqualified staff.
- Leadership – Competent management and access to resources to support the work are rated highly.
- Public perception – ECE staff appreciate seeing their work reflected positively.

These factors would indicate the need for a more holistic policy approach to addressing workforce stability and shortages.

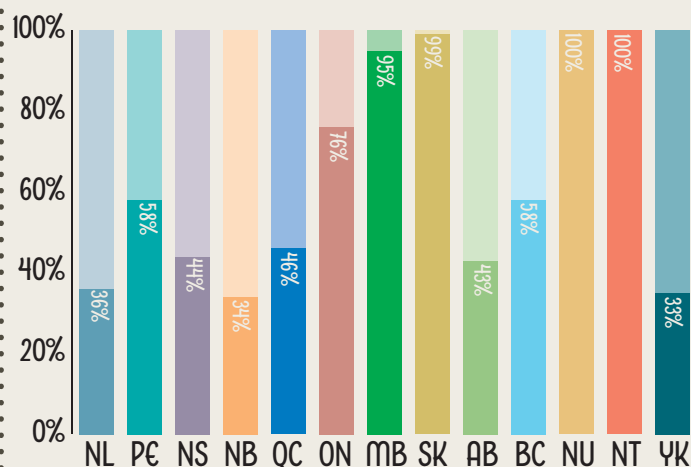
Access, affordability and quality – ECE policy must consider all three. While federal funding conditions require provinces/territories to increase the number of child care spaces, economic studies indicate that new spaces will sit empty because parents can't afford the fees.⁴ Who will staff the new spaces is in question. The density of qualified staff in licensed programs is already minimal. The practice of staffing child care using directors' exemptions (i.e., filling positions requiring ECE qualifications with unqualified staff) drags on quality, further demoralizing qualified educators. Non-profit operators are reluctant to undertake expansion without trained educators, leaving commercial providers to fill the gap. This is why the ECER will begin tracking the proportion of profit to non-profit child care delivery with this report.

ECER 2017 is a snapshot of the status of ECE across Canada. Steady improvements are reflected in changed results and standings between jurisdictions. It may come as a surprise that Québec, a standard for many of the benchmarks in the ECER, has been overtaken for first place. Québec's family policy is now 20 years old. A commission examining its status

⁴ City of Toronto Licensed Child Care Demand and Affordability Study, September 2016.



PERCENTAGE OF NON-PROFIT VERSUS PROFIT
CHILD CARE BY PROVINCE/TERRITORY



We can enhance equity of opportunity by building on to public education to provide every child with the best start possible.

provides a portrait of a service that helped to transform and modernize Québec society, but it is now tired. Its facilities and workforce need attention. The commission made a number of recommendations to improve child care's contributions to equal opportunity. Central to this is replacing the idea of child care as a service so parents can work with a system formally linked to public education and "covered by the same broad principles of universal and free access."⁵

Canada is well-placed to take up this challenge. We can enhance equity of opportunity by building on to public education to provide every child with the best start possible. Building education down to serve younger children and their families makes sense. Among our Anglo-American counterparts, Canada has the highest enrolment in publicly-funded education. Parent confidence is well-founded: Schools have helped prepare children, born here and abroad, to participate in shaping our democratic institutions. As schools respond to their communities across the life cycle, support for public education, for pluralism and for democracy grows.

5 Report by the Early Childhood Education Commission, February 2017.

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION REPORT 2017

Benchmarks		Value	NL	PE	NS	NB	QC	ON	MB	SK	AB	BC	NU	NT	YK
Integrated Governance	ECE under common department or ministry	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5		0.5		0.5			0.5	0.5	
	Common ECE supervisory unit	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5		0.5		0.5			0.5	0.5	
	Common ECE policy framework	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1		1	
	Common local authority for ECE administration and delivery	1				1									
Funding	At least $\frac{2}{3}$ of child care funding goes to program operations ^a	1	1	1	1	1	1		1	1			1	1	1
	Mandated salary and fee scale in licensed child care	1		1			1		1 ^b						
	At least 3% of overall budget devoted to ECE	1					1	1							
Access	Full day kindergarten offered	1	1	1	1	1	1	1				1		1	1
	50% of 2-4 year olds attend an ECE program	1		1	1	1	1	1				1		1	1
	Funding conditional on including children with special needs in licensed child care	1		1 ^c					1		1 ^d				
Learning Environment	ECE curriculum framework	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5			
	Alignment of ECE programs with kindergarten	0.5	0.5	0.5		0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5			
	At least $\frac{2}{3}$ of staff in programs for 2-4 yr olds are qualified	0.5	0.5		0.5		0.5	0.5	0.5			0.5			
	Kindergarten educators require ECE qualifications	0.5		0.5			0.5	0.5 ^e					0.5 ^f	0.5 ^f	
	Salaries of ECE at least $\frac{2}{3}$ of teachers	0.5	0.5												
	ECE professional certification/professional development required	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5		0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5
Accountability	Annual progress reports posted (2014 or later)	1	1	1	1	1	1 ^g	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
	Facilities standards for ECE programs including kindergarten	1	1							1	1				
	Population measures for preschool collected and reported	1		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
TOTAL		15	8.5	11	8.5	9.5	10	9.5	8	7.5	6.5	7	5	8	5.5
Benchmarks		Value	NL	PE	NS	NB	QC	ON	MB	SK	AB	BC	NU	NT	YK

^a Amount includes funding for special needs; ^b MB has a wage floor; ^c In PE Early Years Centres only; ^d In AB Early Childhood Services programs only; ^e ECEs are part of a educator team; ^f ECE is one of the accepted qualifications to teach kindergarten; ^g Québec was not a signatory to the federal/provincial/territorial early childhood development agreements where the parties agreed to regular standardized reporting. Québec has it's own mechanisms for public reporting.