

### FACT SHEET #1 Public funding and child care policy: how do we ‘make the connection’?

#### THE LINK

Over the last several years, federal, provincial and territorial governments have acknowledged the importance of public investment in programs and services for young children. As the evidence clearly shows, a comprehensive approach to public funding for early childhood development (ECD), with regulated early learning and child care as a foundation:

- supports healthy child development and parents/families in all of their roles,
- advances women’s equality,
- builds communities, and
- strengthens our economy.

While Canada currently spends less supporting families and young children’s development than many other countries, the good news is that our investment is increasing. The challenge is to ensure that these public funds are used to develop and implement government policy that the research shows will lead to good outcomes for Canada’s children and will meet families’ needs.

For example, annual public funding for maternity and parental benefits for working parents with new babies has increased by more than \$1.6 billion in recent years.<sup>1</sup> While far from perfect, this increase is directly linked to new government policies that extend parental benefits from 10 weeks to 35 weeks. By pooling resources, government is improving family supports and responding to the early years research.

Families also need a range of other supports and services, including child care. Between 2000 and 2005, annual federal funding through transfers to provinces and territories for ECD, including child care, have increased by \$1.2 billion.

While increased public funding is critical, *how* these funds are spent is equally important. Effective child care systems in other countries depend on public policies that make high quality, affordable services accessible for families. This approach is reflected in the four building blocks for child care advanced by the Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada (CCAAC)<sup>2</sup>, and demonstrates accountability for public funds.

Without supportive government policies and adequate public funding families who can’t afford or find quality child care will not have their needs met.

The stakes are high, so we need to get the most public policy ‘bang’ for our public investment ‘buck’. All stakeholders — governments, parents, child care workers, researchers and other interested community members — have a role to play in developing an effective early learning and child care system as part of an integrated ECD strategy.

#### MAKING THE CONNECTION

Increases in public funding for ECD and child care have been accompanied by some commitments from federal, provincial and territorial governments to public accountability and transparency regarding the use of these funds. These commitments are reflected in agreements to produce annual public reports that describe each government’s priorities, investments and progress. Interested stakeholders are then expected to review these reports and provide feedback to governments.

Using these public reports as a basis for our work, the CCAAC’s *Making the Connections* project will provide tools and resources to support stakeholders in their analysis of and commentary on the implications of child care policy and investments, and to support future planning.

The project will encompass child care policy and funding developments under existing federal/provincial/territorial agreements on ECD, including child care, as well as any new agreements.

**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:**

*Aren't the provinces and territories responsible for their own child care policies, and if so why is a pan Canadian organization involved in this work?*

Child care is a provincial and territorial responsibility, yet the federal government has a leadership role to play in funding and establishing the overarching principles for the system. This project supports community groups and governments at all levels to work together to develop services that meet the needs of families in communities across the country, while ensuring that the goals of quality, affordability and accessibility are advanced.

*We can't find quality child care that our family can afford, and we don't have time to analyze and comment on governments' reports. What can we do?*

We hear from many families who can't access quality child care that's affordable, and that's why we're committed to child care advocacy. We know it will take several years to build a comprehensive system. If we make sure our public funds are invested effectively along the way, families should begin to see more high quality child care services becoming more accessible and affordable in their communities. The CCAAC's *Making the Connections* project will help community members use government's reports to see how we're progressing in child care.

We know your time is limited, but please take a few minutes to let your elected representatives<sup>3</sup> know of your concerns, and that you expect public funding to build a good system in Canada. That's the most important comment they need to hear!

You might also want to join/support voluntary organizations in your province or territory that promote quality child care<sup>4</sup>.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION/ADDITIONAL LINKS:**

**Introductory letter to provincial and territorial governments**

<http://www.childcareadvocacy.ca/mtc/en/pdf/introletter.pdf>

**An example of analysis and public commentary on a provincial report (BC)**

[http://www.cccabc.bc.ca/forum/pdf/CCAF\\_ECDanalysis.pdf](http://www.cccabc.bc.ca/forum/pdf/CCAF_ECDanalysis.pdf)

**Patchwork to Framework** <http://action.web.ca/home/ccaac/alerts.shtml?x=69262>

**Building Blocks** [http://www.childcareadvocacy.ca/action/buildingblocks/CCAAC\\_bldgblocks.pdf](http://www.childcareadvocacy.ca/action/buildingblocks/CCAAC_bldgblocks.pdf)

**NOTES**

<sup>1</sup> Government of Canada's 2003/04 "Early Childhood Development Activities and Expenditures"

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.childcareadvocacy.ca/action/buildingblocks/CCAAC\\_bldgblocks.pdf](http://www.childcareadvocacy.ca/action/buildingblocks/CCAAC_bldgblocks.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Federal Members of Parliament [http://canada.gc.ca/directories/direct\\_e.html](http://canada.gc.ca/directories/direct_e.html)  
Provincial/territorial elected representatives to Legislatures <http://www.childcareadvocacy.ca/mtc/en/links.html#gov>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.childcareadvocacy.ca/resources/links.html> [Scroll to "Regional"]

*This project is funded by the Government of Canada's Social Development Partnerships Program. The opinions and interpretations in this publication are those of the CCAAC and do not necessarily reflect those of the Government of Canada.*