

**EARLY
CHILDHOOD
EDUCATION
REPORT**
2020

**THE
FEDERAL
ROLE**



FEDERAL FUNDING AND MULTILATERAL AGREEMENTS WITH PROVINCES AND TERRITORIES

The federal government has a direct role in funding early childhood programs for First Nations, Métis and Inuit children, for military personnel, federal prisoners and refugees and immigrants to Canada.

The [Multilateral Early Learning and Child Care Framework](#) agreement was signed in June 2017 between the federal government and the provinces and territories. A 10-year investment strategy was outlined in Budget [2017](#), with \$500 million growing slowly over the first 3 year phase. Although federal funding was small it did spur interest with all jurisdictions adding their own revenue to boost child care spending.

The COVID pandemic and its impact on maternal labour force participation heightened interest in child care as a mechanism for economic recovery. Budget [2021](#) features the Federal government's plan for the development of a Canada-wide early learning and child care program featuring the principles of equitable access, quality and affordability. Using its spending powers to incent provinces and territories to participate, the government commits to investments totaling \$30 billion over the next 5 years, including \$1.4 billion for Indigenous families. After that \$9.2 billion annually, with \$385 million ongoing for Indigenous programs, makes the federal government a partner in the provision of early learning and child care along with the provinces, territories and Indigenous communities.

In addition, the federal government provided \$625 million in 2020 through the [Safe Restart Agreement](#) to support provinces, territories and Indigenous

The Government of Québec supports the principles of the Framework but is not a signatory, Québec does receive its share of federal funding and makes major investments in programs and services for families and children.

providers to sustain early learning and child care programming in the face of the pandemic.

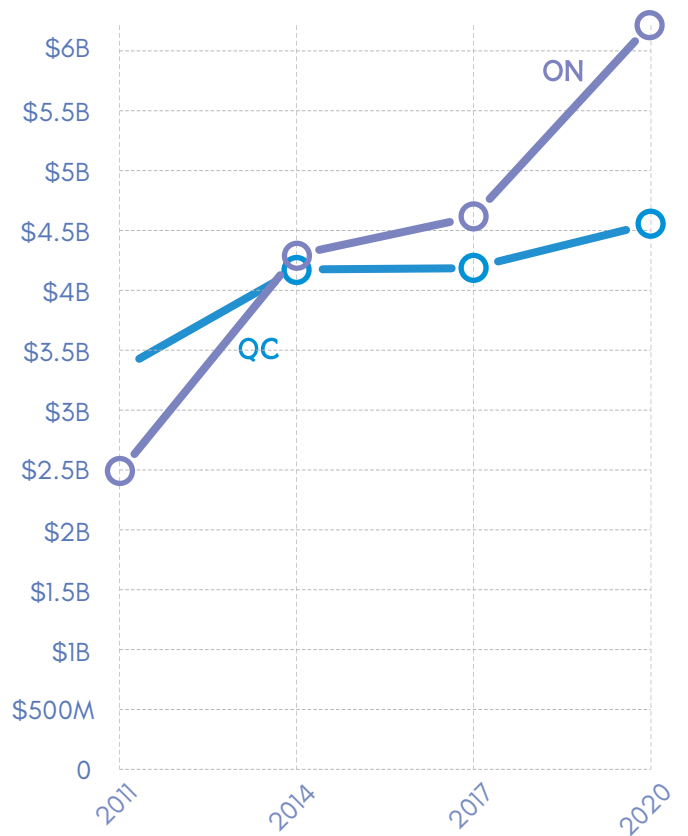
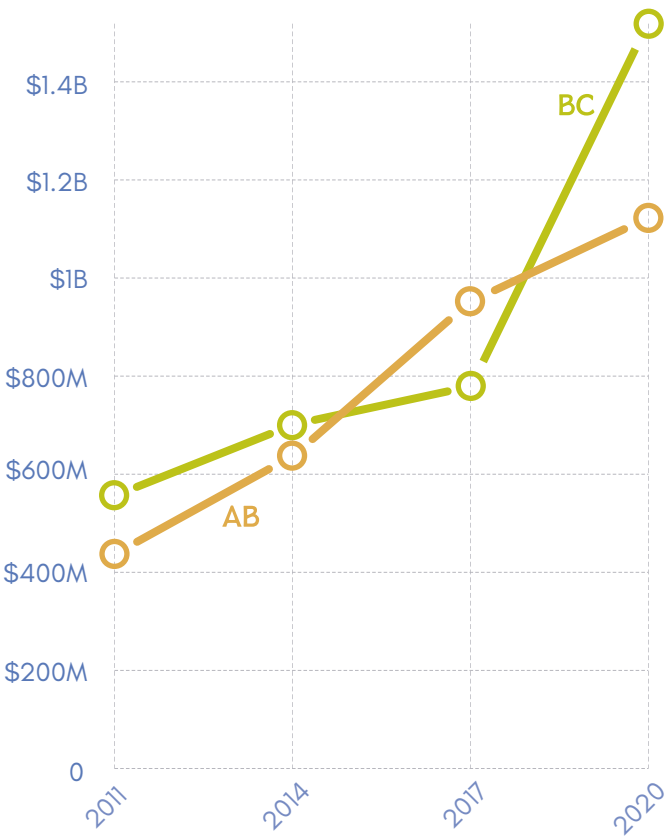
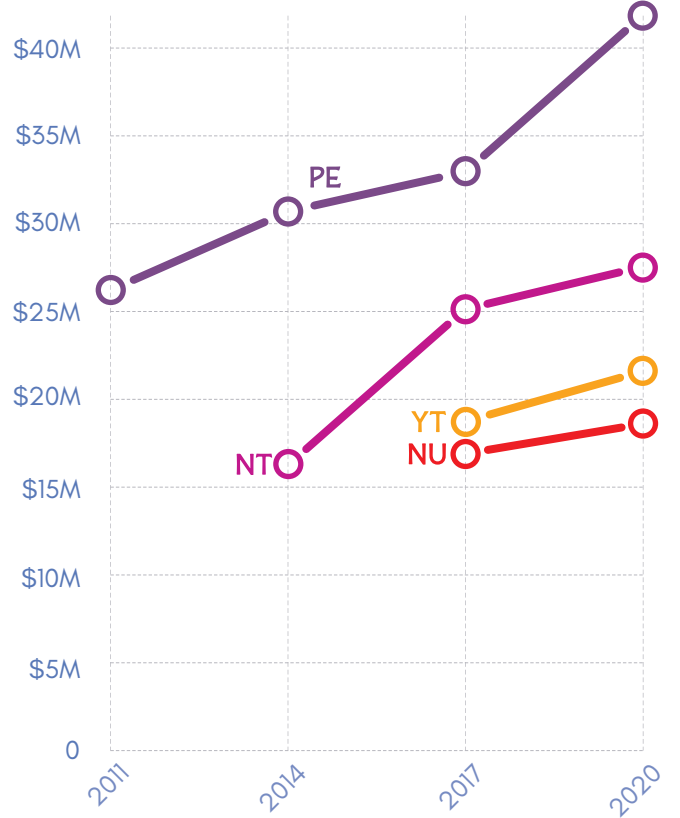
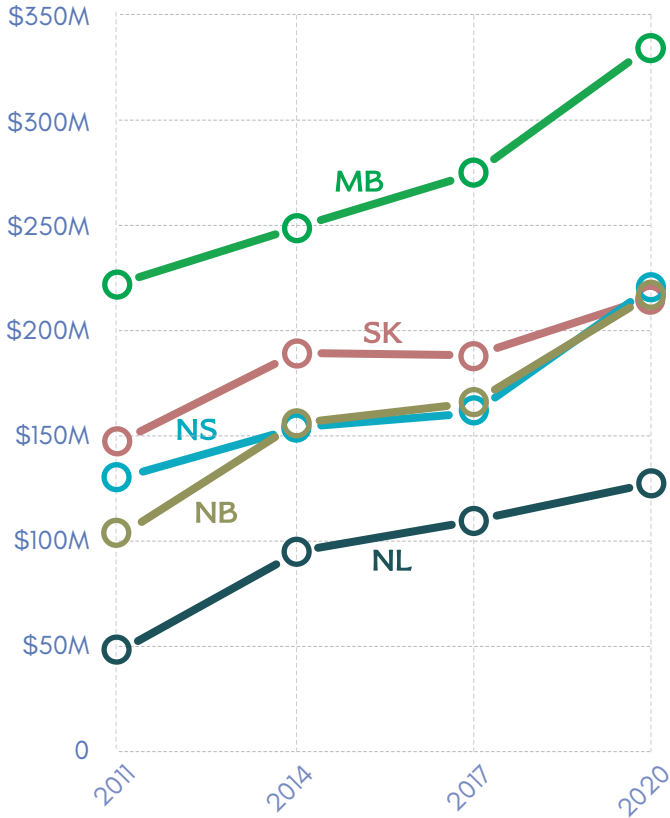
Capacity building is supported through the [Early Learning and Child Care Innovation Program](#), which provides \$10 million annually to practitioners and academics to identify and promote innovative practices. Starting in 2021-2022, with \$4.3 million per year ongoing, a Federal Secretariat on Early Learning and Child Care will support capacity building within the government and engage stakeholders to provide child care policy analysis. Finally, an investment of \$70 million over 5 years, starting in 2021-22, with \$15 million ongoing will sustain the existing federal Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care Secretariat, and help build Indigenous governance. A commitment to a data and monitoring strategy will inform decision-making and allow the public to track progress.

To address the recruitment and retention challenges in the early childhood workforce \$420 million will be made available in 2021-2022 for provinces and territories for grants and bursaries for students studying early childhood education. An additional \$75 million will support quality and accessibility in Indigenous child care programs. Providers may use funding to support the retention of Indigenous early childhood educators and to offer more flexible and extended hours of care.

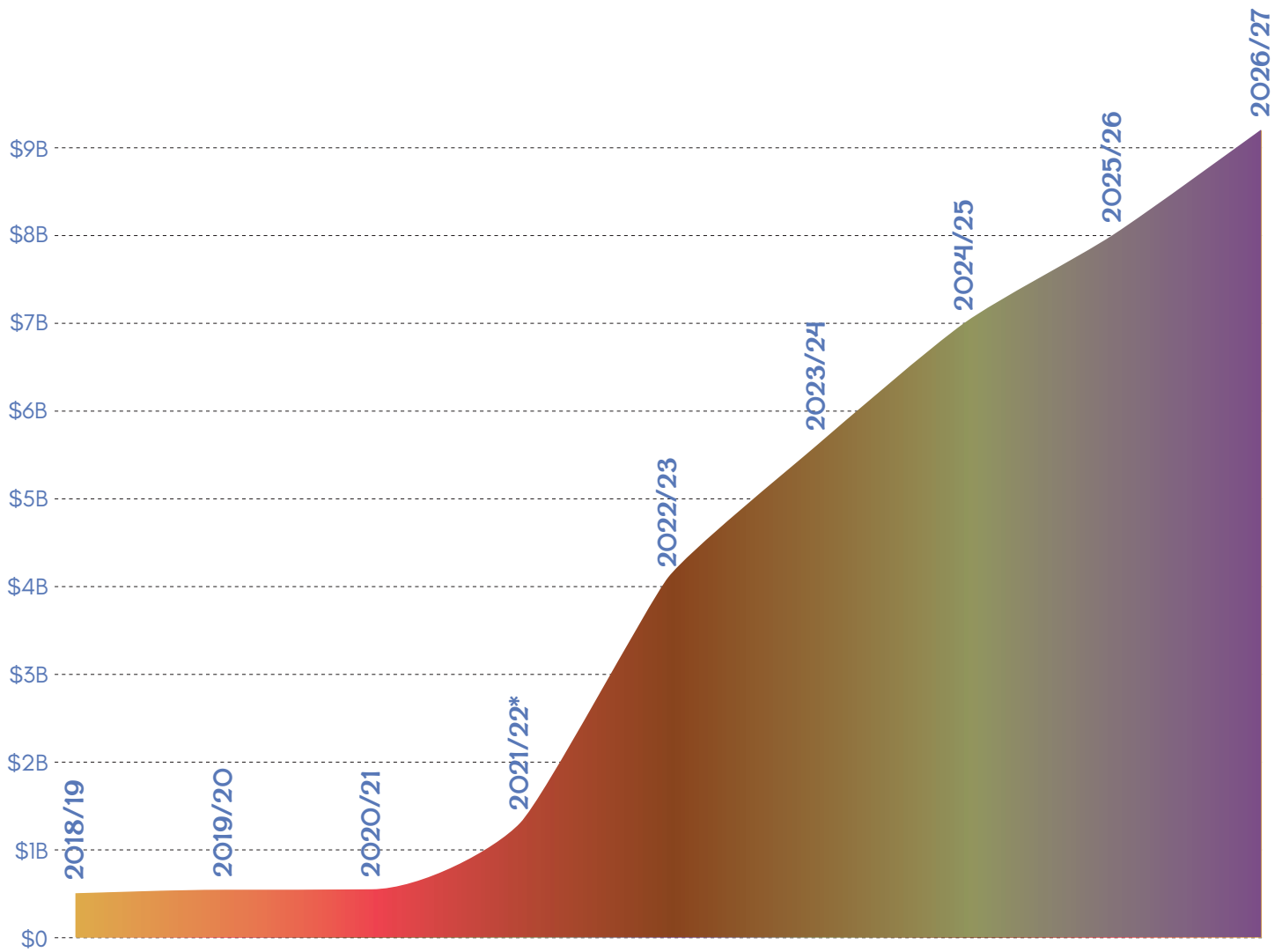
Budget 2021 specifically addresses 3 areas:

AFFORDABILITY: Parents have been told to expect a 50 percent reduction in their child care costs by 2022. By the end of 5 years in 2025-2026, fees will average \$10 a day for a regulated child care space outside of Québec, which already has an established low fee structure.

CHANGE IN ECEC SPENDING BY PROVINCE/TERRITORY



FEDERAL FUNDING EARLY LEARNING AND CHILD CARE 2018 TO 2027



Includes spending for First Nations, Métis and Inuit programs

* Includes one time funding of \$625 million for pandemic measures, plus \$120 million of Indigenous ELCC support

AVAILABILITY: While it does not provide specific targets, Budget 2021 calls for ongoing annual growth in the numbers of children who can access affordable early learning and child care across Canada.

QUALITY: Budget 2021 acknowledges that qualified educators are “at the heart” of a quality system. It references professional learning opportunities and the need for wages to support and grow a professional early childhood workforce. Unlike fees for parents, the Budget does not state a wage target for educators.

FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL-TERRITORIAL COLLABORATION

Budget 2021 reinforces processes already in place through the Multilateral Early Learning and Child Care Framework and the bilateral agreements reached with provinces and territories, the asymmetrical agreement with Québec and the [Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care Framework](#) and accompanying accords signed with [Métis](#) and [Inuit](#) peoples.

FEDERAL EXPENDITURES TO SUPPORT EARLY CHILDHOOD

Policy	Program Name	Department	Annual Expenditure	Description
Transfers to provinces/territories	Canada Social Transfer	Finance	\$1.45 billion	Support for children's programs
	Multilateral ELCC Framework	Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC)	\$399.3 million	Transfers to provinces and territories for early learning and child care
	Safe Restart Program		\$625 million	One time funding for COVID-19 mitigation
	Workforce Recruitment and Retention Strategy		\$420 million	Grants and bursaries for students studying early childhood education
Income transfers to individuals	Canada Learning Bond	ESDC	\$194 million	Supports access to post-secondary education for children from low-income families
	Canada Education Savings Grant		\$980.5 million	Payments to Registered Education Savings Plan (RESP) to encourage parents to save for their children's post-secondary education
	Canada Benefit		\$27.6 billion	Payments to families to offset the cost of raising children. Pays maximum of \$6,765 per year for children < 6 years old. \$5,708 for children 6 to 17 years old
Tax measures	Child Care Expense Deduction	Finance	\$1.135 billion	Parents may claim up to \$8,000 per child for children <7 years. \$5,000 per child for children aged 7 to 16 years. For disabled, dependent children of any age who qualify for the disability tax credit, the amount to claim for that child is \$11,000
	Exemption from GST for Child Care		\$175 million	Child care services are exempt from GST charges
	Credit for Child Care Spaces		\$5 million	For business to create new child care spaces to a maximum credit of \$10,000 per space
	Teacher and Early Childhood Educator School Supply Tax Credit		\$5 million	Teachers and early childhood educators may claim a 15% refundable tax credit based on an amount of up to \$1,000 in expenditures made in a taxation year for eligible supplies
Capacity building	ELCC Innovation Program	ESDC	\$10 million	\$10 million annually to practitioners and academics to identify and promote innovative practices
	Federal Secretariat ELCC		\$4.3 million	Support capacity building within the government and engage stakeholders to provide child care policy analysis
Community grants	Children's Special Allowance	ESDC	\$361.0 million	Payments to child welfare agencies. Monthly amount of a child < 6 years is \$541.33 and for a child 6 to 17 years is \$456.75

Minor amounts support child care for military and refugee families and federal prisoners. Report on Federal Tax Expenditures - Concepts, Estimates and Evaluations 2021. Retrieved from: <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-finance/services/publications/federal-tax-expenditures/2021/>. Fall Economic Statement 2020. Retrieved from <https://www.budget.gc.ca/fes-eea/2020/report-rapport/chap3-en.html>

Recognizing provincial/territorial jurisdiction for the management of early learning and child care, Ottawa is inviting governments to bring forward their plans using the bilateral agreement process. The current range, organization and funding of existing programs are unique to each jurisdiction and building a system will need to take this into account.

FOR-PROFIT GROWTH

The prospect of substantial public funding announced in Budget 2021 has peaked commercial interest in child care. The Budget indicates a preference to expand access through the non-profit sector, however commercial operators dominate child care, capturing over 50 percent of the market in eight out of 13 jurisdictions. Of the \$7 billion in public funding spent in 2020 on regulated child care, 43 percent (over \$3 billion) went to for-profit providers.

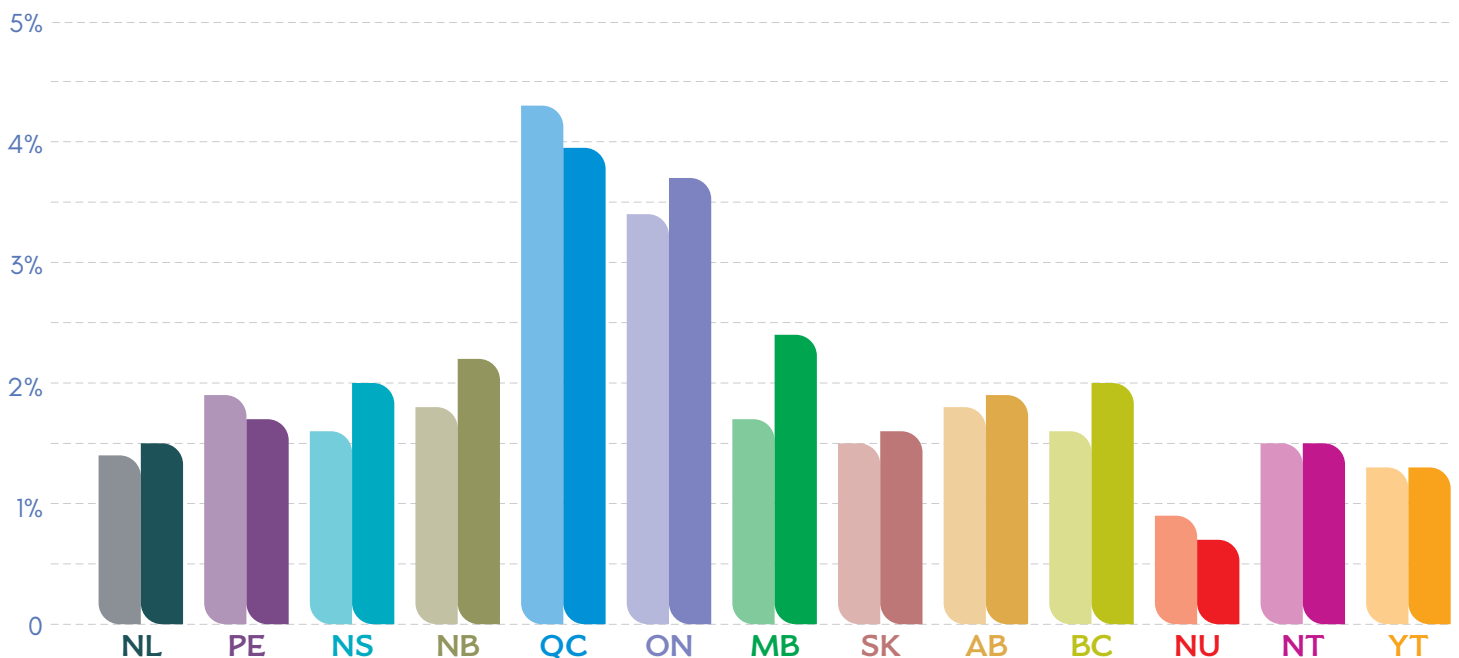
Some premiers have already signalled an interest in expanding commercial care, arguing private sector efficiencies and faster growth of badly needed services. The Budget touts the 'Québec model' as a vision for the rest of Canada. Among the lessons to learn from Québec's more than two decade

experience is the danger of relying on for-profit providers. Research consistently demonstrates the [poor quality in commercial programs](#) and poorer outcomes for children.

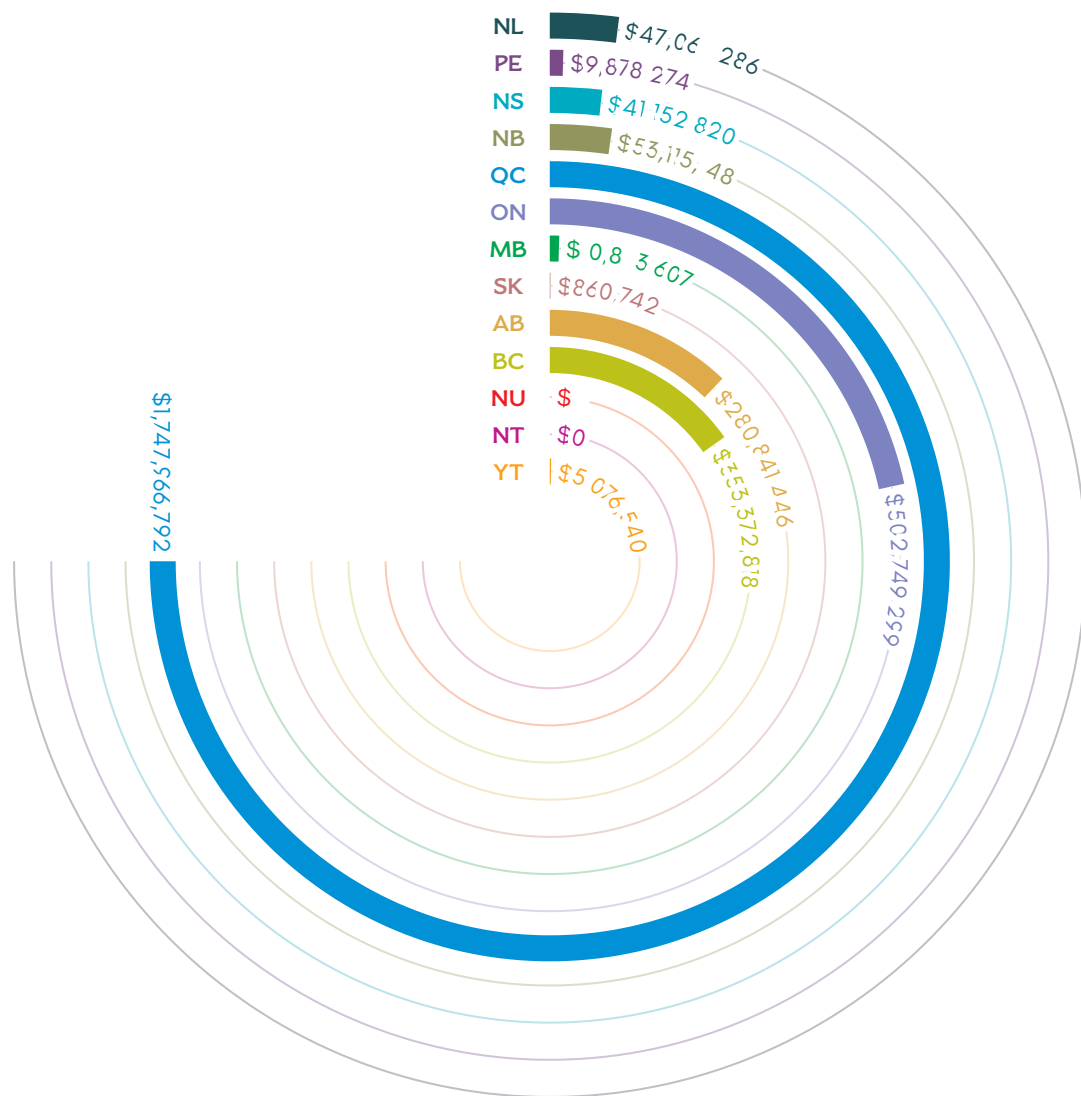
The chilling spectre of child care services dominated by corporate interests has been heightened by the criminal negligence in long-term care institutions during the pandemic. For-profit nursing homes saw COVID-19 [death rates](#) more than twice as high as those operated by non-profit and public providers. The worst casualties were in facilities owned by corporate chains, many of the same companies that are now turning their attention to child care, ready to grab up the many programs shuttered or floundering under the weight of the pandemic.

The heavy presence of for-profit child care providers in many jurisdictions will require a transition strategy to avoid creating a long-term care debacle in child care. PEI and New Brunswick provide examples of how funding can be tied to strong standards for commercial providers reducing profit incentives. Expanding prekindergarten and requiring schools to offer extended hour care for their students restricts the child care market.

ECEC SPENDING AS A % OF TOTAL BUDGET PROVINCES/TERRITORIES
2017 • 2020



SPENDING ON FOR-PROFIT CHILD CARE BY PROVINCE/TERRITORY (2020)



Nunavut, Northwest Territories and Saskatchewan limit their child care funding to public and non-profit programs.

There [are many parallels between long term care and child care](#). The sad irony is corporate greed was able to devastate so many seniors because those responsible for their care have access to ample public funding. Their lonely and preventable deaths are a warning of what happens when governments allow publicly-generated profits to trump people.

STRENGTHENING CAPACITY

Canada's Budget 2021 recognizes the dearth of

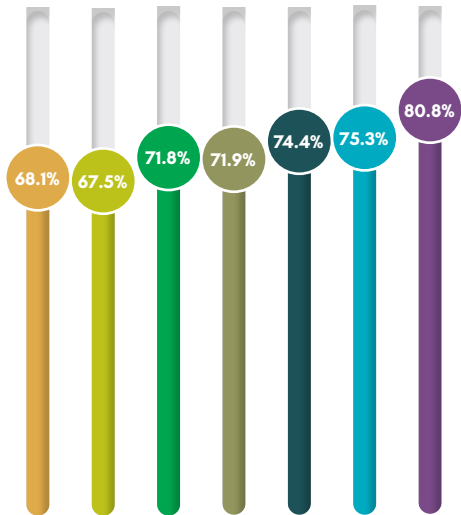
capacity within the federal government to develop a pan-Canadian early learning and child care plan, enough to devote \$34.5 million, on top of the \$20 million, announced in 2020 for a secretariat to lead the work.

Money for bureaucracy is rarely heralded but, in this case, so necessary. During the 10 year reign of the previous government every division remotely associated with child care or women's equality was shuttered. Knowledgeable civil servants retired or moved to other departments and were not replaced. Employment and Social Development Canada, which is to lead the building of a pan-Canadian early childhood system, will be assembling its team from scratch.

Since Ottawa recognizes the need to create its own capacity, hopefully it will support the provinces and territories to build theirs. This is the level of government that will be leading the change, and they will need people in their provincial/territorial capitals as well as their regions to develop and execute the transformation.

The Governance chart at the end of this section demonstrates many of the challenges. Some jurisdictions have multiple ministries responsible for child care. Others lack policy direction and have little or no local management and oversight. If governments are serious about embedding quality into more affordable care, they must think beyond passing on money and monitoring child care programs for regulatory violations. System building is a long term project requiring a coterie of expertise within government working in partnership with the people who deliver and use early learning and child care.

CANADA MATERNAL LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION BY AGE OF YOUNGEST CHILD
<1 • 1 • 2 • 3 • 4 • 5 • 6-24 YEARS



2019

CREATING A FIRST TIER OF EDUCATION

Early learning and child care is integrated into education ministries in nine provinces and territories. Full-day Kindergarten for at least some 5-year-old children is offered by 10 jurisdictions.

Prekindergarten programs are open to all four-year-olds in Nova Scotia, Ontario and the Northwest Territories. Québec is committed to expanding school-based prekindergarten province-wide by 2023. Newfoundland and Labrador and Prince Edward Island have plans for 4-year-old PreK but implementation has been delayed due to the pandemic.

Many parents find that a full school day provides sufficient hours of care. Mothers work more hours, and the number of mothers in the workforce increases the year in which their youngest child starts school full time, whether that is at age four, five or six years. Before- and after-school programs extend the school day and can further cover parents' work needs. Québec, Ontario and Nova Scotia require before- and after-school programs be offered for children starting in prekindergarten.

While many schools directly operate their own before- and after-school programs, and some provide child care or drop-in programs for preschoolers, outside of minority francophone and First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities, there is no precedence for the federal funding of school programs. The Budget does not rule this out as a possibility, and indeed provinces have publicly said they want their preschool investments to be recognized when negotiating their share of federal child care funding.

Recent reports from [Deloitte](#) and the [Conference Board of Canada](#) suggest that the provinces and territories expand access to early learning using the public education platform by first ensuring that all 5-year-olds receive a full day of Kindergarten, and then include 4- and 3-year-old children, building in extended day options.

WILL CHILD CARE BE UNIVERSAL?

The additional federal funding proposed in Budget 2021 would adequately cover about 70 percent of children five years old and younger. This level of provision may meet much of the demand for child care, since parental leave and benefits cover children during their first 12 – 18 months.

Increasing payments and extending coverage to those working in the gig economy, students and others who are currently ineligible, would also reduce child care needs for the youngest children.

Both Canada and Québec have modified all their plans adding additional weeks to incent couples to share the parental portion of the leave. But weaknesses persist with self-employed and low-income earners unable to access benefits.

Since 2010, Canadians who are self-employed can join the federal EI program; however, to receive maternity or parental benefits, they need to have opted in at least one full year prior to their claim. The level of earnings required to be eligible for benefits is indexed annually. A claimant would need at least \$5,000 in net earnings in 2020 to be eligible for benefits under the self-employed program in 2021. COVID-19 exceptions provide \$500 per week before taxes, or \$300 per week before taxes for extended parental benefits,

The number of self-employed women increased by 15 percent since 2006. Self-employed men increased only 6 percent in the same period. Yet, not many self-employed women have opted into the program since its inception. Fewer than 1,000 claims were made in 2018. Many sole proprietors are women who don't have the ability to take a year off work.

"Quebec has its own parental leave program formed in 2006 when it exited the federal program. Quebec's program has lower eligibility requirements and higher payout levels. The differences are highlighted in an analysis published in the Journal of Industrial Relations. Some 38 percent of all mothers under the federal EI program are excluded from maternity or parental benefits. In contrast, only 10 percent of mothers in Quebec are excluded from the province's parental insurance plan (QPIP)."

During its tenure as a provider of parental benefits, Québec has dramatically improved the number of low-income mothers supported through paid parental leave. Across the country, mothers in households earning \$30,000 and above receive

disproportionately higher access to benefits than lower-income households. In Québec, the rate of low income mothers taking leave is 42 percent higher than in the rest of Canada.

Accessible and adequate parental leave are essential complements to child care.

EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS FOR INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

[The National Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care Framework](#) was released on September 17, 2018. It was welcomed by Indigenous leaders as a flexible guide for communities, service providers, policy-makers and governments to use to design and implement early childhood programs.

Early learning and child care for First Nations in their communities and in urban areas is delivered through four key initiatives:

- First Nations Inuit Child Care Initiative (FNICCI)
- Aboriginal Head Start Urban and Northern Communities (AHSUNC)
- Aboriginal Head Start On Reserve (AHSOR)
- Federally-funded daycare centres in certain provinces

Other aspects of early childhood development programming for First Nations children and families include:

- Brighter Futures
- Canada Prenatal Nutrition Program – First Nations and Inuit Component (CPNP)
- Children's Oral Health Initiative (COHI)
- Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Initiative – First Nations and Inuit Component
- Maternal and Child Health
- Community Action Program for Children (CAPC)

The landscape of ELCC for First Nations is vastly different across the country. The best known, Aboriginal Head Start, has two streams, one for Urban and Northern Communities, funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada, and Aboriginal Head Start On-Reserve funded by Indigenous Services Canada.

PARENTAL BENEFITS IN CANADA AND QUEBEC

	Standard Canada EI	Extended Canada EI	Québec Basis Plan	Québec Special Plan
Eligibility	600 hours	600 hours	\$2,000 earnings	\$2,000 earnings
Self-employed	Covered	Covered	Covered	Covered
Waiting period	1 week	1 week	None	None
Weeks of income-replacements at % of average earnings				
Maternity	15 at 55%	15 at 55%	18 at 70%	15 at 75%
Paternity	5 at 55%	8 at 33%	5 at 70%	3 at 75%
Parental (shared)	35 at 55% + 5 additional weeks if both parents share the parental leave	61 at 33% + 8 additional weeks if both parents share the parental leave	32 weeks: 7 at 70% + 25 at 55%, + 4 additional weeks at 55%, if each parent takes at least 8 weeks of shared parental benefit	25 at 75%, + 3 additional weeks if each parent takes at least 6 weeks of shared parental benefit
Adoption per couple shared	35 shared plus 5 paternity at 55%	61 shared plus 8 paternity at 33%	5 to each parent, plus 13 at 70% + 32 at 55%, plus 4 additional weeks at 55%, if each parent takes at least 8 weeks of shared parental benefit	3 to each parent + 12 weeks, + 24 at 75% + 3 additional weeks if each parent takes at least 6 weeks of shared parental benefit
Parental for multiple births/ adoptions	N/A	N/A	5 weeks to each parent at 70%	3 weeks to each parent at 75%
Benefits based on income				
Maximum insurable earnings	\$56,100	\$56,100	\$83,500	\$83,500
Maximum benefit	\$595 / week for 60 weeks	\$595 / week for 15 weeks + \$357/ week for 69 weeks	\$1,124 / week for 55 weeks + \$883/ week for 29 weeks	\$1,204 / week for 46 weeks
Benefit for a low income family when annual income is less than \$25,921				
Parental Benefits	Up to 80% of annual income		Families that are eligible for the Quebec Parental Insurance Plan (QPIP) benefits may apply for additional financial support	
EI Family Supplement	Added to the Parental Benefit to reach a maximum of \$595 / week			

Maximum Insurable earnings and benefits are adjusted annually. Amounts shown are for 2021.

Only birth mothers are entitled to maternity leave in all plans. All plans recognize same sex relationships. The EI Family Benefit provides additional benefits to claimants with children under the age of 18 years who are registered for the Canada Child Benefit. Single parents in Québec receive 5 additional weeks under the Basic Plan and 3 additional weeks under the Special Plan. Changes to the Canada plans during COVID-19: The waiting period is waived. Qualifying hours reduced to 120 from 600. Minimum payments of \$500 for standard leave, and \$300 for extended leave. Expires September 21, 2021.

GOVERNANCE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION SERVICES BY PROVINCE/TERRITORY

Province/ Territory	ECEC Department Oversight	ECEC Supervisory Unit(s)	Integrated ECEC Policy Framework	Local Service Delivery	Community/ Sector Oversight
NL	Department of Education and Early Childhood Development	K-12 Education and Early Childhood Development Branch	<i>Caring for Our Future: Provincial Strategy for Quality, Sufficient and Affordable Child Care in Newfoundland and Labrador 2012-2022</i> <i>Education Action Plan</i>	2 school districts: 1 English with 4 regional offices (257 schools) and 1 French (5 schools) 4 regional Early Learning and Child Development offices with staff that oversee the regulated child care sector	
PE	Department of Education and Lifelong Learning (formerly the Department of Education, Early Learning and Culture)	Early Childhood Development Division	<i>Moving Forward: The Early Years in PEI</i>	Early Learning and Child Care Board 1 Public Schools Branch and 1 French Language School Board - La Commission Scolaire de Langue Francaise (CSLF)	Early Years Advisory Committee
NS	Department of Education and Early Childhood Development	Early Learning and Child Care Branch and Early Childhood Development and Pre-Primary Branch	<i>Affordable, Quality Child Care: A Great Place to Grow!</i> <i>Building Connections: An Early Years Framework for Nova Scotia</i>	Pre-Primary and Grade Primary programs delivered through 7 Regional Centres for Education (RCEs) and Conseil scolaire acadian provincial school board Child care administered through Early Learning and Child Care Branch	Schools and licensed child care facilities are required to have parent committees that vary in their structure Council on Mi'kmaq Education Council on African Canadian Education

GOVERNANCE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION SERVICES BY PROVINCE/TERRITORY (CONTINUED)

Province/ Territory	ECEC Department Oversight	ECEC Supervisory Unit(s)	Integrated ECEC Policy Framework	Local Service Delivery	Community/ Sector Oversight
NB	Department of Education and Early Childhood Development	Early Childhood Development Division Corporate Services Division – Early Learning and Child Care Branch (Licensing) French and English sectors each have their own supervisory units.	Early learning and child care: <i>Everyone at their best... from the start: Early Learning and Child Care Action Plan</i> Schools: <i>Everyone at Their Best</i> (Anglophone sector); <i>Donnons à nos enfants une longueur d’avance</i> (Francophone sector)	7 District Education Councils (4 Anglophone, 3 Francophone) responsible for K-12 Each district has a director of early childhood services who is part of the management team for the school districts Licensing compliance is provided through 4 regional teams that are supported by the central office	Local Francophone and Anglophone early childhood service networks
QC	Ministère de la Famille Ministère de l’Éducation Ministère de la Santé et des Services Sociaux	Educational Child Care Services (ECS) Joint MFamille and MEQ Committee	<i>Politique familiale</i>	Educational Child Care Services (ECS) and 161 home child care coordinating offices	Advisory Committees on the Provision of Early Childhood Services (ACP)
ON	Ministry of Education	Early Years and Child Care Division		47 Consolidated Municipal Service Managers (CMSMs) and District Social Services Administration Boards (DSSABs) manage child care and related early years services 31 English Public-School Boards; 29 English Catholic; 4 French Public; 8 French Catholic; 10 School Authorities consisting of 4 geographically-isolated boards and 6 hospital-based school authorities. In addition, to 1 Provincial Schools Authority	

GOVERNANCE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION SERVICES BY PROVINCE/TERRITORY (CONTINUED)

Province/ Territory	ECEC Department Oversight	ECEC Supervisory Unit(s)	Integrated ECEC Policy Framework	Local Service Delivery	Community/ Sector Oversight
MB	Department of Families	Early Learning and Child Care Program	In development	37 school divisions, including 1 Division Scolaire Franco-Manitobaine	Ministers' Consultation Table
	Department of Education	Early Childhood Development		Child care coordinators work out of regional offices of the Department of Families throughout the province	
	Manitoba Indigenous and Northern Relations				
SK	Ministry of Education	The Early Years Branch		Prekindergarten and Kindergarten: 27 school divisions including Conseil des écoles fransaskoises	Early Years Networks/ Coalitions
				Child Care: 3 regional offices of the Early Learning and Child Care Program and 12 Early Learning and Child Care Service Delivery Unit branch offices	
				KidsFirst: 8 targeted communities plus 12 communities in the North	
				KidsFirst Regional: 10 Southern Regions	
AB	Alberta Children's Services		<i>Guide to Education: ECS to Grade 12 2019-2020</i>	378 school authorities including: 42 public, 17 separate, 4 Francophone, 13 charter, 19 provincial, 155 private, 93 private ECS operators, and 34 First Nations, Inuit, and Métis; in addition, there is 1 federal authority	
	Alberta Education		Funding Manual for School Authorities 2020-2021	Early Learning and Child Care: 7 Child and Family Service delivery regions and Métis Settlements	

GOVERNANCE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION SERVICES BY PROVINCE/TERRITORY (CONTINUED)

Province/ Territory	ECEC Department Oversight	ECEC Supervisory Unit(s)	Integrated ECEC Policy Framework	Local Service Delivery	Community/ Sector Oversight
BC	Ministry of Children and Family Development/ Minister of State for Child Care Ministry of Education Ministry of Health		<i>Child Care B.C. Caring for Kids, Lifting up Families: The Path to Universal Child Care</i> <i>Early Years Framework</i> <i>Early Learning Framework</i> <i>Early Care and Learning Recruitment and Retention Strategy</i>	Kindergarten and StrongStart BC early learning programs: 60 school districts including the Conseil scolaire francophone, plus independent schools (for kindergarten only) Licensed child care: Independent providers licensed by 5 Regional Health Authorities	The Provincial Child Care Council School Planning Councils
NU	Department of Education	Early Learning and Child Care	Annex 2: Nunavut's Action Plan	Early Childhood Officers in 3 regions license and monitor child care programs Regional School Operations oversee K-12 education	District Education Authority (DEA) for K-12
NT	Department of Education, Culture and Employment	Early Childhood Program	<i>Right from the Start: A Framework for Early Childhood Development in the Northwest Territories</i> <i>A Framework for Early Childhood Development: Action Plan: 2017-2020</i>	10 educational bodies 5 regional offices supporting licensed child care	
YT	In April 2021 responsibility for early learning and child care was assumed by the Department of Education	The Early Learning and Child Care Unit replaces the Family Resources Unit	Yukon Action Plan 2020/2021	Kindergarten in 24 schools/K4 in 12 schools Commission scolaire francophone du Yukon Child Care Services	School Councils Child Care Board (Yukon)

FEDERAL INVESTMENTS IN EARLY LEARNING AND CHILD CARE FOR INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

Program Name	Department	Annual Expenditure	Description
Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care Transformation Initiative		\$126 million	Supports the implementation of the co-developed Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care Framework
Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care support	Employment and Social Development Canada (ESCD)	\$120 million	One time funding to support pandemic mitigation efforts
First Nations and Inuit Child Care Initiative		\$50 million	Child care for First Nations and Inuit parents employed or participating in a training program
Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care Secretariat		\$15 million	To build capacity in Indigenous governance.
Aboriginal Head Start on Urban and Northern Communities	Public Health Agency of Canada	\$48 million	Part day culturally appropriate preschool programs for children living off-reserve
Aboriginal Head Start on Reserve	Indigenous Services Canada	\$35 million	Part day culturally appropriate preschool programs for children living on reserves
Grants	ESCD	\$38.2 million	Contributions to non-profit Aboriginal organizations to develop early intervention programs for Aboriginal pre-school children and their families
Child Care on Reserve (ON, AB)	Crown Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada	\$22 million	Cost sharing agreement where Ottawa reimburses ON and AB for their share of spending for child care on reserves

Evaluations dating back decades highlight problems. The Aboriginal Head Start on Reserve program serves [fewer than one-in-five eligible children](#). Services have not kept pace with population growth and a lack of trained staff, proper equipment and accessibility often prevents young children with special needs and their families from receiving the program's services.

The most [recent national-level evaluation of the AHSUNC program](#) reported notable improvements in school readiness and knowledge of Indigenous languages and culture among participating children; enhanced caregiving skills, social support and mental health among parents; and evidence that programs have been able to leverage other services in the community to meet the needs of children and families.

However, accessibility remains a barrier to participation. The budget has remained constant since the program's inception in 1995, unresponsive to inflation, population growth and evolving needs for over two decades. As the evaluation describes, "sites have seen a reduction of resources available to them due to, for instance, increases in the cost of food, gas, salaries, and number of children in need of special education, as well as continuing difficulties with staff recruitment and retention," which has wor"potential of affecting programming quality."

Budget 2021 begins to address some of these long standing deficiencies. It proposes investment of \$2.5 billion in early learning and child care for Indigenous children over the next five years, with \$325-million ongoing in subsequent years.