

An Examination of Regulatory and Other Measures to Support Quality Early Learning and Child Care in Alberta



A DISCUSSION PAPER

Prepared for the Edmonton Council for Early Learning and Care
and The Muttart Foundation

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November, 2020

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Introduction

Background

Over the past several decades, countries across the globe have increasingly recognized the important role that high-quality, affordable early learning and child care (ELCC) plays in supporting a healthy economy, the labour force participation of mothers, greater gender equity and social inclusion, reducing poverty, and increasing the well-being and healthy development of children. Numerous international studies have examined the factors that support quality provision, and recommended various strategies to address policy, funding and structural concerns.¹

In Canada, statutory responsibility for ELCC rests with provincial/territorial governments. While all orders of government, parents, the child care sector and other stakeholders have important roles to play, it is the provincial/territorial governments that define the overall policy direction, regulations and funding mechanisms, and determine how ELCC services are developed and distributed. These factors all have an impact on the quality of care provided.

Provinces and Territories are involved in ELCC to varying degrees. Some are involved in setting service and quality goals, forecasting demand and planning for services, establishing maximum parent fees and providing supply side funding to programs, establishing wage scales, developing strategies to support the workforce, collecting and analyzing data, and evaluating the effectiveness of policies and funding programs. Others play a more passive role, leaving it to individuals, and community and business groups to determine where and when to establish programs, how much to charge parents and pay staff, minimizing policies and standards to stimulate growth, and intervening only as required. Across jurisdictions there are many variations in policy, provision, funding levels and arrangements, availability, and mechanisms and process that support quality, and ELCC systems usually fall somewhere along the policy and funding continuum.

In spite of the considerable variations in approaches across the country, all provinces and territories provide some type of ongoing funding to eligible programs and fee reductions for eligible low-income families, and all define the minimum requirements to operate a child care program through their respective child care regulations.

¹ European Commission Network on Childcare and Other Measures to Reconcile Employment and Family Responsibilities. (1996); OECD. (2001), (2006), (2012); UNICEF. (2008).

Child Care Regulation Review

In Alberta, the *Child Care Licensing Act*, which came into force on November 1, 2008, and the *Child Care Licensing Regulation* provide the legislative framework for child care in Alberta. Just under half of provincial spending on licensed and approved child care is on fee subsidies with the remaining monies allocated to various grant and program supports, the largest of which is tiered wage enhancements for staff.

The current child care act and regulation expire in January 2021, and the plan for a regulation review was contained in the Ministry of Children's Services 2019-23 and 2020-23 Business Plans. In keeping with the Government of Alberta 2019-23 Strategic Plan, the Children's Services Business Plans include a key objective of reviewing the *Child Care Licensing Act*, with the intent of "reducing red tape, supporting choice for parents, and maintaining focus on the safety and well-being of children." The government has also indicated that it wishes to 'embed' principles of quality in legislation, rather than using the practice standards supported through the former voluntary accreditation process, which it discontinued effective April 1, 2020.

The Government of Alberta recently completed a brief consultation with selected stakeholders to inform revisions to the *Child Care Licensing Act* and the supporting regulations. The details of the consultation were announced on June 8, 2020, with the consultations themselves taking place between June 15 and July 15, 2020. The consultation included virtual table talk sessions, and surveys of parents, child care staff and operators. Results of the consultations are to be taken into account in revisions to the legislation.

Building on the regulation review

In May 2020, the Edmonton Council for Early Learning and Care and The Muttart Foundation commissioned a study to inform and contribute to public discourse on how regulatory and other public infrastructure mechanisms can be used to enhance quality early learning and

child care at a systems level in Alberta. While regulations play an important role in ensuring the health and safety of children and working conditions for staff, alone, they do not guarantee quality provision. Many factors have an impact on quality, including government policy and funding, parental involvement, engagement of multiple stakeholders and ongoing support of the workforce. As well, quality needs to be considered within the larger context of ideas about the purpose of child care and who it serves, and about views of children and their current and future roles in society.

The objectives of the study are to:

- Define and identify the key elements of accessible, affordable and quality child care, which are included in the Government of Alberta's objective of ensuring "the growth and development of children are supported through accessible, affordable and quality child care."
- Propose core values for early childhood education and care to serve as a preamble to a regulatory framework.
- Undertake an analysis of:
 - quality measures contained in the early learning and child care regulation and related legislation of selected jurisdictions
 - the approach to the oversight, support and monitoring of early learning and child care services in selected jurisdictions with the dual focus both on ensuring the safety, health and well-being of children and their families and of driving and supporting quality improvement in services and their delivery. This will include both measures that are contained within regulation as well as measures included in policy, standards and in other mechanisms
 - designated and voluntary measures undertaken by non-governmental bodies whose aims include the ongoing quality improvement in early learning and child care.

- Identify possible approaches, strategies and mechanisms that the Government of Alberta might develop, implement and support to advance early learning and care services consistent with the findings of the study.

This report presents the results of the study in the form of a discussion paper. It is intended to stimulate dialogue among stakeholders and identify actions that can support the development of an enhanced system of high-quality, affordable child care, accessible to all families in Alberta.

Approach and activities undertaken

The study was undertaken within the context of the government review of the child care legislation. The work was undertaken between May and July 2020, and was informed through:

- The significant efforts of ELCC experts, organizations and other stakeholders in Alberta that have been identifying quality concerns and proposing solutions for many years. In particular, the position paper on legislative change by the Association of Early Childhood Educators of Alberta provided a timely and comprehensive resource
- The review of recent and current Alberta child care policies and funding and activities and projects in support of quality undertaken by child care organizations
- Child care legislation and other quality provisions in selected jurisdictions that include Prince Edward Island, Ontario, Manitoba and British Columbia. An overview of support to quality ELCC in Norway is also included
- Selected international studies on factors affecting quality provision
- Relevant Canadian literature and other documents on quality
- The review and analysis of administrative child care data contained in various editions of

Early Childhood Education and Care in Canada produced by the Childcare Resource and Research Unit

- Key informant interviews with ELCC stakeholders
- Discussions and consultation with members of the working group overseeing the study.

The work was overseen and supported by a working group of the Edmonton Council for Early Learning and Care. Members of the working group are listed in Appendix A.

Scope and limitations

The study was conducted primarily through document review and analyses, with a limited number of key informant interviews (see Appendix A for a list of key informants). The focus of the report is on regulatory and other measures that support quality in child care centres and homes. It is important to note that little is known about the actual quality of child care in Alberta (as is the case in much of Canada) and so this report does not comment specifically on the quality of child care in Alberta, but rather on the factors known to have an impact on its quality. Similarly, there was no assessment of the quality of government-funded professional development, or of preservice education and training; however, regulatory requirements for education and the availability of professional development in Alberta were compared to international recommendations and to other selected Canadian jurisdictions.

This report only touches on the complexity of defining, documenting and analyzing approaches to quality in child care. It is not a comprehensive review of each jurisdiction's ELCC system, but it is important to note that elements of a child care system are interrelated and inextricably linked. The report attempts to highlight various reviews and studies, and key aspects of regulation and other measures that support and have an impact on quality, while also recognizing that it does not provide a complete picture.

It is beyond the scope of this study to consider the quality issues and proposed solutions specific to child care on reserve, innovative child care, Early Childhood Services (ECS) offered by child care operators, workplace child care or non-standard hours child care.

The quality, stability and viability of child care has been severely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. It is also beyond the scope of this study to examine the impacts on provision and what quality measures may need to be considered as a direct result of the closing and reopening of centres and homes.

The latest comparable data across provinces and territories on spaces and spending used in this report comes from *Early Childhood Education and Care in Canada 2016*, as part of the ongoing series prepared by the Childcare Resource and Research Unit (CRRU). These data have been used when comparing spaces and spending in Alberta with other selected Canadian jurisdictions. Alberta-specific data for 2019 have been provided by CRRU in advance of the next publication which, at the time of writing, is in preparation.

A note about terminology

Many different terms are used to describe the care and education of young children, including the broader terms, such as child care, daycare, early childhood education and care, early learning and child care, early care and learning, and the more specific terms, such as family day homes, preschool, and out-of-school care. Early learning and child care (ELCC) and child care are used interchangeably in the report to refer to care and education that is licensed or approved by the relevant government body in Canada; ELCC is the term currently used in most provinces and territories. When referring to international studies and reports, the term early childhood education and care (ECEC) is used to reflect the language most commonly used.

For purposes of the report, *non-profit child care* is used to include charitable and other forms of not-for-profit provision, including public delivery, and includes both single-site and multi-site operations. *For-profit child care* includes child care that is owned by an individual, a registered partnership or a corporation, and includes single owner-operator sites, and small and large chains.

Comparisons with selected jurisdictions

A number of characteristics of child care, such as supply, cost, affordability, and regulatory and other approaches that support quality are examined within the Alberta context as well as in other selected jurisdictions. The other Canadian jurisdictions include Prince Edward Island, Ontario, Manitoba and British Columbia. Each of these provinces has undertaken studies in recent years that look at ways to enhance the delivery of child care, and they have all taken various approaches to regulation, developing and providing supports to the workforce and addressing affordability. Collectively, they provide useful examples of quality measures that could apply within the Alberta context.

Norway was selected as an international jurisdiction to review. Norway is one of the few countries in the world in which ELCC is a legislated entitlement for all children from age 1 to school entry, and where more than 90 percent of children in that age group attend. Norway has successfully addressed availability and affordability and has numerous mechanisms in place for ongoing quality improvement. And unlike its Nordic counterparts, Norway has a significant supply of for-profit provision. Much can be learned from how Norway has addressed many of the challenges faced in Canada with for-profit delivery, as well as from examining some of the concerns it is now considering.

Organization of the paper

In addition to this introductory section (section 1), this paper includes the following sections:

- Section 2 provides an overview of child care in Alberta, including a brief history of the development of child care services, recent developments and current government priorities. It provides details of the supply, funding and cost of child care and comparisons with selected jurisdictions.
- Section 3 discusses aspects of accessibility, research findings on quality, and a summary of select international studies and reviews that identify quality targets, benchmarks and indicators.
- Section 4 provides an overview of regulatory measures that support quality in Alberta and in the selected jurisdictions, as well other measures that are not included in regulation.
- Section 5: provides a case study of how Norway built a comprehensive, quality, universal child care system by both regulatory measures as well as through policy and funding approaches, that can be considered within the Canadian context.
- Section 6 provides questions and considerations for discussion by stakeholders on how quality in ELCC in Alberta can be maintained and enhanced through regulatory changes and improvements at a systems level.

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Overview of Child Care in Alberta

This section provides a brief history of key milestones in the development and provision of child care in Alberta and a snapshot of the provision of child care today. It is intended to provide a context for the discussion of aspects of quality in subsequent sections. As noted in the introduction, for reasons of comparability with other jurisdictions and within Alberta over time, data on spaces and spending come from various editions of *Early Childhood Education and Care in Canada*, prepared by the Toronto-based Childcare Resource and Research Unit.

A brief history of child care in Alberta²

Alberta has had a complex and varied history with respect to ELCC and related supports. Over the years, Alberta has seen the expansion and contraction of spending, various approaches to policy, funding for parents and programs and the delivery of services, and differing views on the respective roles and responsibilities of government, service providers and parents.

Unique to Alberta has been the important role played by a number of municipalities, primarily between the 1970s and 1990s. Alberta is the only jurisdiction outside of Ontario (where the municipalities have a legislated responsibility) to play such a role.³ During that period, a number of municipalities were involved in the funding and operation of child care and, in the case of Edmonton, in developing child care standards that were considerably higher than the provincial minimum. These municipalities played a strong role in advocacy, planning, and supporting non-profit and publicly operated child care facilities. While there has been little municipal involvement in direct provision since that time, there have been a few exceptions; the towns of Beaumont, Jasper and Drayton Valley currently operate and support child care centres.

To provide a context for the current ELCC landscape, it is useful to understand some of the key activities and decisions made around roles, responsibilities, policies, funding, legislation and service delivery.

² The details contained in the historical overview come from the Alberta section of various editions of the Childcare Resource and Research Unit. *Early Childhood Education and Care in Canada*; Langford, T. (2011). *Alberta's Day Care Controversy: From 1908-2009 and Beyond*; The Muttart Foundation (2016). *Engaging Alberta Municipal Level Governments in Support of Early Learning and Care*.

³ In recent years, a small number of municipalities, districts and school boards in British Columbia have begun operating preschools and child care centres.

The following timeline in Table 1 identifies the key milestones, activities and policy directions between 1960 and 2016 that have shaped the provision of ELCC in Alberta. It shows the key role played by municipalities, the various funding mechanisms in place at various times that supported growth and, in more recent years, policy and funding initiatives aimed at increasing supply and improving quality, particularly through supports for the workforce.

Table 1. Key activities and milestones in ELCC in Alberta, 1960-2016

Time period	Key activity/milestone
1960-1979	<p>In 1961, the provincial government issued the first set of standards for child care, followed by enhanced standards in 1963. At that time there were no qualification requirements for staff.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In July 1966, the <i>Preventative Social Services Act</i> (PSS) was enacted, which delegated decision-making responsibilities for child care to the municipalities and introduced 80/20 cost-sharing for participating municipalities. The centres could be run by a municipality or a non-profit organization. • Later that same month, the Canada Assistance Plan (CAP) came into effect, providing 50/50 federal/provincial cost-sharing on eligible expenses for social programs. The PSS funding was aligned with CAP; this meant that the province was now responsible for only 30 percent of overall costs, the municipality 20 percent, with the federal government covering the remaining 50 percent. It also meant that fee subsidies could be provided on behalf of low-income parents in public and non-profit child care programs for the first time. • In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Edmonton, Calgary, Medicine Hat, Red Deer and Grande Prairie (and later High Level, Slave Lake and Claresholm) all established and supported municipally run and non-profit centres under the PSS. At the same time, the number of for-profit child care spaces grew considerably in Calgary and Edmonton, and along with that growth came increasing opposition to the public funding received by the PSS centres. • By 1975, 69 percent of spaces in Calgary, 53 percent in Edmonton and 25 percent in the rest of Alberta were for-profit. • In the late 1970s the province ended provincial-municipal cost-sharing through PSS. It introduced operating allowances for both the for-profit and non-profit centres, and extended fee subsidies to for-profit centres, neither of which were cost-shareable under the Canada Assistance Plan. Municipalities retained responsibility for school age child care programs. • In 1978, <i>The Social Care Facilities Licensing Act</i> included the first legislated regulations for child care; standards for family day homes were introduced in 1981.
1980-1999	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By 1982, 70 percent of the spaces were operated on a for-profit basis – the highest of all jurisdictions in Canada—and at the same time, the province contributed more funding per capita than any other province or territory, fueling further growth in the for-profit sector, attracting capital investors and resulting in the establishment and growth of large chains. • Five municipalities continued to cover the cost of municipal child care following the end of PSS funding, and at the same time continued to negotiate with the federal government to cost-share directly with the municipalities. In 1983, an agreement was reached for federal-municipal 50-50 sharing on eligible preventative social services. This enabled the municipalities to support facilities that exceeded the provincial minimum, which became known as “lighthouse” programs.

Time period	Key activity/milestone
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A 1990 White Paper on Day Care Programs resulted in increased requirements for staff qualifications and auditing of programs, and a reduction in operating allowances, replaced by an increase in subsidies for low income families. • The end of CAP in 1996 and provincial cutbacks to other municipal grants led to the end of most of the municipally operated child care centres. However, the towns of Beaumont and Jasper opened municipally run centres in 1980 and 1981 respectively, which still operate today. In 1999, operating allowances were eliminated and responsibility for child care was largely turned over to 18 Child and Family Services Authorities.
2000-2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A new <i>Day Care Regulation</i> came into force in 2000, following a two-phase consultation regulation review process with child care operators and other stakeholders. The review was part of a government-wide initiative to “streamline, simplify requirements and reduce duplication.” • In 2002, a voluntary <i>Child Care Accreditation Program</i> was announced and fully implemented in 2005. The requirements for accreditation exceeded the provincial regulations. In 2003, funding was provided to help programs work towards accreditation standards, and accredited programs were provided with small wage increases for staff. • In 2004, amendments to <i>Day Care Regulation</i> included standards for school age care, enabling families of school age children to receive fee subsidies. • In 2008, the hourly wage enhancements for staff in accredited centres and day home agencies were increased to their present levels. They ranged from \$2.14 for staff with a Level One (now Child Development Assistant) certification to \$6.62/hour for those with a Level Three (now Child Development Supervisor). More than 90 percent of centres and agencies were successful in becoming accredited. • A new <i>Child Care Licensing Act</i> and <i>Child Care Licensing Regulation</i> were introduced in 2008, which included new certification requirements for all child care staff. <p>Other funding enhancements during this time period included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Space Creation Innovation fund, providing \$1,500 to child care programs, municipalities, school boards and businesses for each new space created. • A Child Care Leadership Bursary for staff to further their post-secondary early childhood education and training. • A Fort McMurray Allowance (later the Northern Allowance) for full-time staff and family day home providers. • A Staff Attraction Incentive Allowance to recruit back qualified staff who had left the field and to compensate new staff for working in the field after graduation. • A monthly Infant Care Incentive Grant to licensed and approved programs for each infant enrolled. • An increase in quality funding grants to pre-accredited and accredited programs to purchase quality toys and equipment. • A Retention Stability Grant (wage top up) for staff working with school age children.

Recent developments

In 2017, Alberta committed \$10 million over three years, to test a new approach to enhancing quality, improving affordability and addressing service gaps, though providing block funding and setting a maximum parent fee of \$25/day. Thirteen existing centres were transformed into ELCC centres and nine new centres were created. In addition to capping parents fees, ELCC centres were required to offer flexible care for parents, implement the Play, Participation and Possibilities (now known as Flight: Alberta's Early Learning and Care Framework), support children with diverse needs, participate in on-site professional development, be co-located within community buildings, partner with public institutions, and participate in an evaluation of the pilot.

Multilateral Early Learning and Child Care Framework

In June 2017, the federal government announced the signing of the Multilateral Early Learning and Child Care Framework with provinces and territories, with funding of \$7.5 billion over 11 years. The framework “sets the foundation for governments to work toward a shared long-term vision where all children can experience the enriching environment of quality early learning and child care that supports children’s development to reach their full potential.” This shared long-term vision commits governments to “work towards investments to increase quality, accessibility, affordability, flexibility, and inclusivity in early learning and child care, with consideration for those more in need.”⁴

Each jurisdiction developed a plan for how the funding would be allocated, according to the principles set out in the Framework, as part of a bilateral agreement. Alberta received approximately \$45.6 million in each year of the first three-year agreement. As part of this first agreement, federal funding was used to create an additional 100 ELCC sites.

⁴ Government of Canada. (2017). *Multilateral Early Learning and Child Care Framework*.

Current priorities for child care in Alberta

Adjustments to funding and policies in keeping with revised government priorities

Following a change in government in 2019 a number of changes to policies and funding were made:

- The Preschool-Stay at Home Parent Support subsidy and The Kin Child Care subsidy were both discontinued on January 1, 2020.
- An end to the Northern Allowance for ECEs was announced in Budget 2020.
- The accreditation program ended effective April 1, 2020. The program was replaced with a wage top up grant, equal to the accreditation wage enhancements for all eligible centres and homes; however, the 16 percent benefit contribution formerly provided through accreditation funding was eliminated, as were the accreditation grants. Professional development funding is still provided.
- The discontinuation of the Early Learning and Child Care Centre initiative, with the first phase of 22 sites concluding at the end of July 2020. The second phase of 100 federally funded sites is scheduled to conclude at the end of March, 2021 as part of the renegotiated Canada-Alberta Agreement described more fully below.

Renegotiated Canada-Alberta Agreement under the Early Learning and Child Care Multilateral Framework

Alberta renegotiated the terms of the agreement for the period April 1, 2020-March 31, 2021 to support its current priorities. These include:

- A simplified formula and increases to the child care subsidy rates reducing parent fee payments for many subsidized families
- Investments in inclusive child care, providing professional development and funding for additional staff to support the inclusion of

children with additional support needs

- Programming that addresses cultural and linguistic needs, such as Indigenous and Francophone programs
- Creating up to 385 new child care spaces in high need areas and on solutions for parents working non-standard hours
- Coaching supports for implementation of Flight: Alberta's Early Learning and Care Framework.

In addition to the identified priorities, a surplus from the 2019-2020 year is to be allocated to support programs to re-open following temporary closures resulting from COVID-19. As outlined above, the renegotiation of the Canada-Alberta Agreement means that federal funding for the ELCC centres will end effective March 31, 2021.

A number of key informants expressed concern about the future of ELCC centres when funding for the program ends. One centre, which was established as part of the second wave of funding in a community where previously there been no full-day child care, indicated that the inability to keep fees affordable after the end of the program funding would likely result in closure of the centre.

In addition, concern was raised about the impact of funding cuts, both in the regulated child care sector and in the school system, on children with additional support needs. With cuts to the Program Unit Funding (PUF), some prekindergarten full day kindergarten programs have been reduced or eliminated, as well as some supports previously provided through ECS programs provided in licensed child care settings.

Alberta believes accessible, affordable, quality child care is essential to positive early childhood development, labour force participation of parents, women's equality, social integration and inclusion of newcomers, and poverty reduction – all aspects of social and economic growth.

A child's future health, learning, employment, and social well-being is impacted by early childhood experiences. Children who have a strong start in life are more likely to be healthy and engaged learners and citizens, and more likely to become independent, resilient and productive adults.

Government of Canada (2020). Canada-Alberta Early Learning and Child Care Agreement 2020-2021.

Quality Beyond Regulations project

Alberta is one of four provinces in Canada participating in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Quality Beyond Regulations project.⁵ This project is intended to help countries better understand different quality dimensions in ELCC, with a particular focus on dimensions that can be addressed through policy. There is no publicly available information on the project to date, but according to the project outline, it is to include a country survey on process quality, generated through the OECD Network on ECEC, collecting information on curriculum and pedagogy, workforce development and family and community engagement, as well as a country background report that documents its approaches to multi-dimensional quality. A final synthesis report is due in early 2021.

⁵ OECD, Directorate for Education and Skills (n.d.). Other provinces involved in the project are Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Quebec.

A snapshot of child care in Alberta, 2019

Research has shown that quality child care has a positive impact on children's well-being, especially children from low income households and those living in vulnerable circumstances.⁶ Children who have attended high quality ELCC are shown to do better, on average, in a number of cognitive and social areas than children who have attended poor quality or no ELCC prior to school entry. While regulations do not guarantee quality, there is a considerable body of research that shows regulated care is generally of higher quality than unregulated care, and that child care operated on a non-profit basis is generally higher than that operated on a for-profit basis. Inadequate supply of regulated child care and poor quality care can both have negative long-term consequences for children and families. In addition to examining regulatory and other measures that support quality, which are discussed in Section 3, it is important to consider how much regulated child care is available, and who has access to those spaces. In part, the cost of care has a significant impact on who can afford to access regulated care. This section examines various aspects of the supply of licensed/approved child care and the cost to families in Alberta, as well as comparisons of availability and cost with selected jurisdictions.

Types of child care in Alberta

There are three main types of child care in Alberta:

- Unregulated family child care (also known as private babysitting), provided in a caregiver's home for up to six children under the age of 13, excluding the caregiver's own children. There is limited public oversight of this form of care, no requirements for caregiver education and no restrictions on the specific ages of the children in care.

- Approved family child care, overseen by agencies, contracted by a Ministry of Children's Services Region to coordinate and monitor the provision of child care in private homes. Care may be provided for up to six children, including the caregiver's own children.⁷ Contracted agencies and approved day homes are required to operate according to the Family Day Home Standards Manual for Alberta.
- Licensed child care, which may operate on a full-time or part-time basis. There are five types of licensed care:
 - Day care program: provided to seven or more infants, preschool and/or kindergarten children for four or more consecutive hours/day in each day that the program is provided
 - Preschool program: provided to preschool and/or kindergarten children for less than four hours/day in each day that the program is provided
 - Innovative child care: designed to meet the unique needs of the community in which it is provided
 - Out-of-school program: provided to kindergarten and school age children under the age of 13, in any or all of the following periods: before school, during the lunch hour, after school and/or when schools are closed
 - Group family child care program: provided in the private residence of the license holder to a maximum of 10 children under the age of 13. Group family child care programs must have two providers on record and both must be on the premises when seven or more children are in attendance.

⁶ Gormley, W. et al. (2008); OECD. (2006).

⁷ During the COVID-19 Pandemic the Ministry of Children's Services relaxed the requirement that approved family child care providers include their own children in the number of children for whom they were providing care.

Responsibility for licensed and approved child care rests with the Ministry of Children's Services. Licensed and approved child care operates under the authority of the *Child Care Licensing Act*, and licensed child care is regulated under the *Child Care Licensing Regulation*.

The supply of child care

In 2019 there were 138,892 licensed child care spaces for children 0-12 years in Alberta, with 91.5 percent of spaces in centre-based programs and 8.5 percent in approved family day homes. Table 2 shows the breakdown of licensed centre-based and approved family day home spaces.

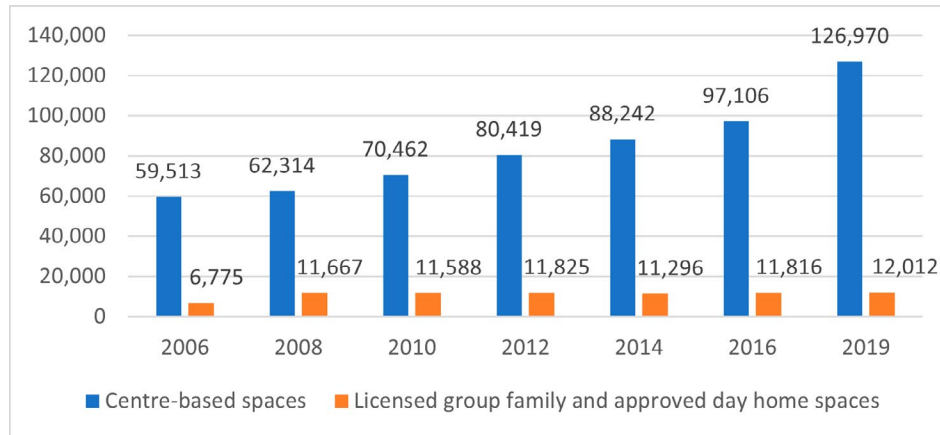
Table 2. Full and part-day licensed and approved child care spaces in Alberta, by program type, as of March 31, 2019

Centre-based spaces (excluding ELCC spaces)	Full-day	Part-day	Total spaces
Infants (under 12 months)	2,080	-	2,080
Infants (13-19 months)	6,774	-	6,774
Toddlers (19 months to less than 3 years)	15,989	1,304	17,293
Preschool (3 years to kindergarten entry)	20,762	14,277	35,039
Kindergarten	9,854	13,763	23,617
Out-of-school (Grades 1 to 6)	-	34,301	34,301
Innovative child care	598	-	598
ELCC centre-based spaces (\$25/day spaces)			
Infants (under 12 months)	277	-	277
Infants (13-19 months)	875	-	875
Toddlers (19 months to less than 3 years)	2,121	-	2,121
Preschool (3 years to kindergarten entry)	2,553	-	2,553
Kindergarten	1,442	-	1,442
Family child care spaces			
Licensed group family child care	90		90
Approved family day homes	11,922		11,922
TOTAL LICENSED/APPROVED SPACES	75,247	63,645	138,892

Source: Friendly, M. et al. (in press). *Early Childhood Education and Care in Canada 2019*..

Alberta has seen considerable growth in licensed and approved child care in recent years, with the number of spaces almost doubling between 2006 and 2019. Figure 1 shows the growth in spaces in centres and homes over the last 13 years, with most of the growth taking place in centre-based spaces. The rate of growth is an important consideration within a quality agenda. If the number of spaces increases too rapidly, quality can suffer if, for example, there is a shortage of qualified staff to meet the requirements, or if in an effort to meet expansion targets, child care centres open in poorly planned spaces and locations, or with lack of adequate outdoor space.

Figure 1. Number of centre-based and group family/day home spaces in Alberta, 2006-2019



Source: *Early Childhood Education and Care in Canada reports 2006 to 2016 and pending report for 2019*

The Canada-Alberta Early Learning and Child Care Agreement 2020-2021 states that as of December 1, 2019, approximately 105,351 children in Alberta were enrolled in 138,081 licensed and approved child care spaces. That means that 76.3 percent of the spaces were occupied. Does Alberta have more child care than is required? Given the supply of child care relative to the child population and the numbers of children with employed mothers, as well as the experiences of other jurisdictions, and international targets established for coverage, it is doubtful that Alberta has an adequate supply of high quality, affordable child care for all families who need and want it. There are a number of reasons why spaces may be under-enrolled:

- Operators may choose to have an operating capacity lower than the licensed capacity for quality reasons. Licensed capacity is often based on minimum square footage, but an operator may believe that the particular space is not suitable to serve the maximum number

of children allowed and reduces the number that the program will serve, to allow for quality provision.

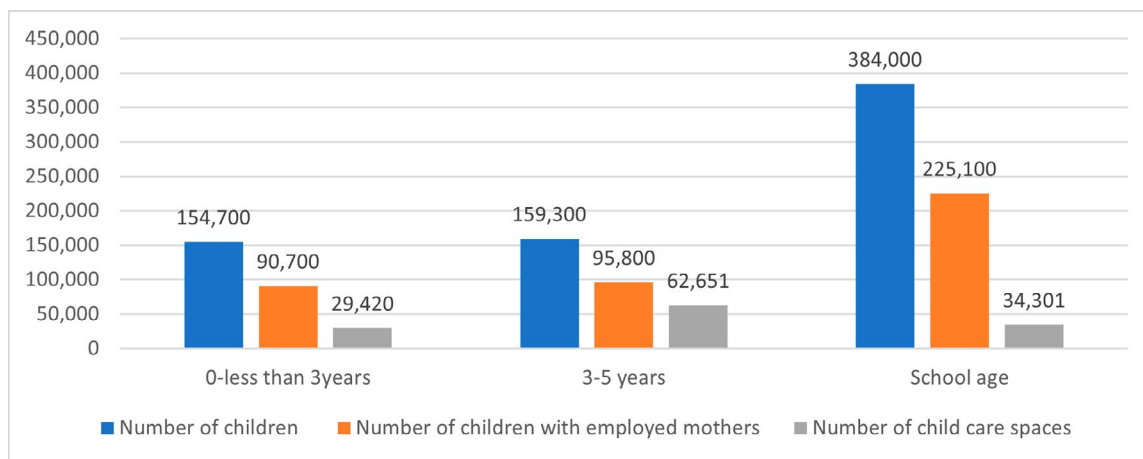
- In some communities there may be a shortage of qualified staff, and operators may have to reduce their capacity until staffing requirements can be met.
- The fees may not be affordable in particular communities or for particular families. Even families in receipt of a full subsidy will have to pay hundreds of dollars a month (the difference between the full fee and the maximum subsidy), which may well be out of reach.
- Conducting a needs assessment is not a requirement to receive a child care licence. This means that an operator can open a child care facility if they meet the regulatory requirements regardless of need, or other facilities already operating in the community.
- Neither Children's Services nor local municipalities undertake any formal planning

process that sets targets for coverage.

- Beyond knowing how many children receive a fee subsidy, there is little examination of who is using licensed and approved child care, or identifying barriers to participation.

Whether ELCC should be available for all children, or tied to maternal labour force participation, is an important policy consideration. Figure 2 shows the number of centre-based spaces in Alberta, relative to children with employed mothers and to the child population.⁸

Figure 2. Number of children, children with employed mothers and centre-based child care spaces by age group, Alberta 2019



Source: Child population and children with employed mothers: Labour Force Survey, 2019 annual average; child care spaces: Friendly, M. et al. (in press). *Early Childhood Education and Care in Canada 2019*. Note: child care spaces for children 3-5 years include children who may also attend kindergarten.

Table 3 shows the percent of all children for whom there is a licensed child care space and the percent of children with employed mothers for whom there is a licensed space.

Table 3. Percentage of children for whom there is a licensed centre-based space, by age of child and maternal labour force participation, 2019

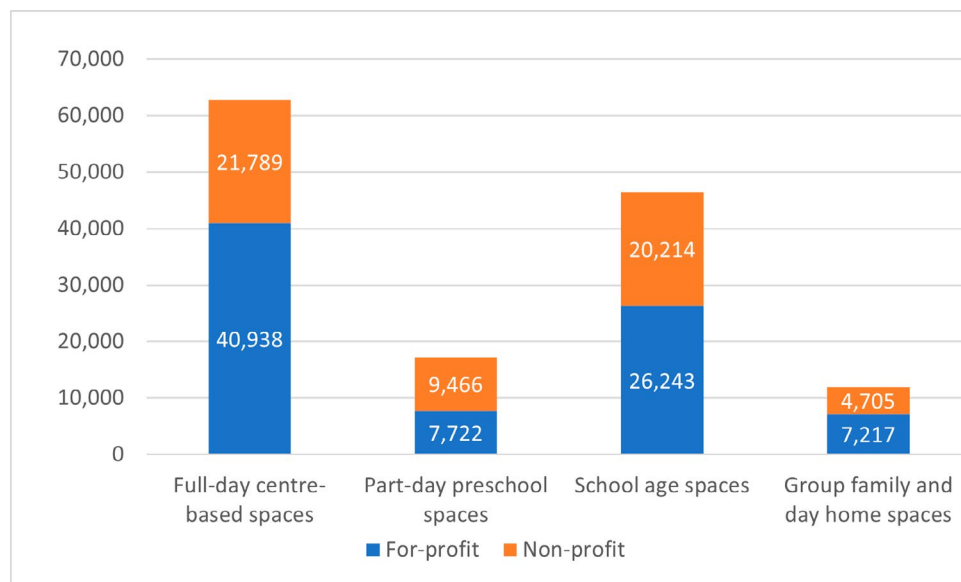
Age of child	% of all children for whom there is a space	% of children with employed mothers for whom there is a space
0-less than 3 years	19.0	32.4
3-5 years	39.3	65.4
School age	8.9	15.2

Source: Child population and children with employed mothers: Labour Force Survey, 2019 annual average; child care spaces: Friendly, M. et al. (in press). *Early Childhood Education and Care in Canada 2019*. Note: child care spaces for children 3-5 years include children who may also attend kindergarten.

⁸ The number of child care spaces includes only centre-based spaces, as information on the age of children enrolled in group family child care and day homes is not available.

Alberta has a mixed model of child care, with both non-profit (including a few public) and for-profit operators (non-profit or for-profit operation is referred to as auspice). Overall, 59.4 percent of all spaces in Alberta are operated on a for-profit basis and 40.6 percent on a non-profit (including public) basis; however, the type of operator varies considerably by the type of program. As Figure 3 shows, 65.3 percent of full-day child care spaces are operated on a for-profit basis, compared to 44.9 percent of preschool spaces, 56.5 percent of school age spaces and 61.0 percent of group family/approved day home spaces. The full-day centre-based child care spaces include the 7,268 federally-funded ELCC spaces, all of which are non-profit (or public).

Figure 3. Licensed centre-based and approved group family/approved day home spaces by type and auspice in Alberta, 2019

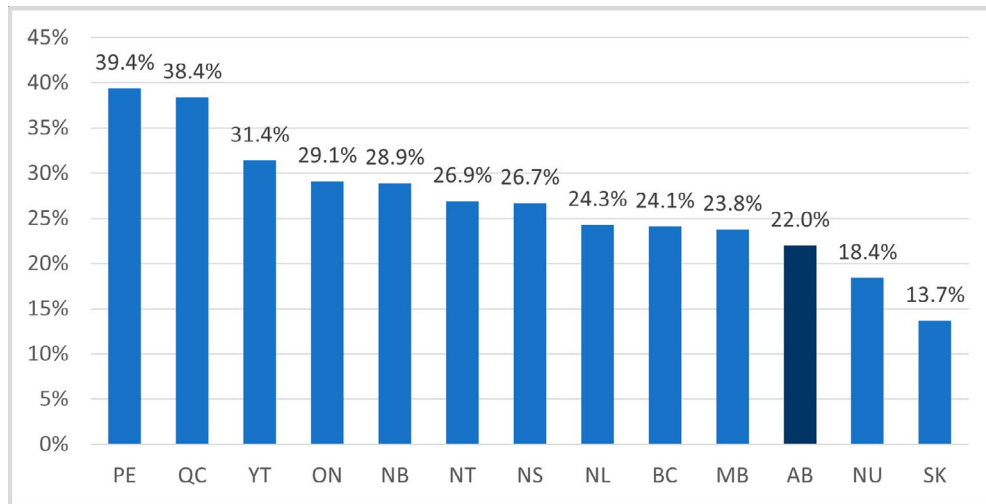


Source: Friendly, M. et al. (in press). *Early Childhood Education and Care in Canada 2019*.

How does the supply of child care in Alberta compare to other provinces and territories?

In 2016, the latest year for which comparable pan-Canadian data are available, Alberta had enough regulated centre-based spaces for 22 percent of all children 0-5, compared to the Canadian average of 28.7 percent. Figure 4 shows the percentage for each province and territory. It should be noted that Quebec has a high proportion of family child care spaces (one-third of all spaces for children 0-4 – with very few exceptions all children in family child care are younger than school age); however, to be comparable with other jurisdictions the family child care spaces are not included in the calculations.

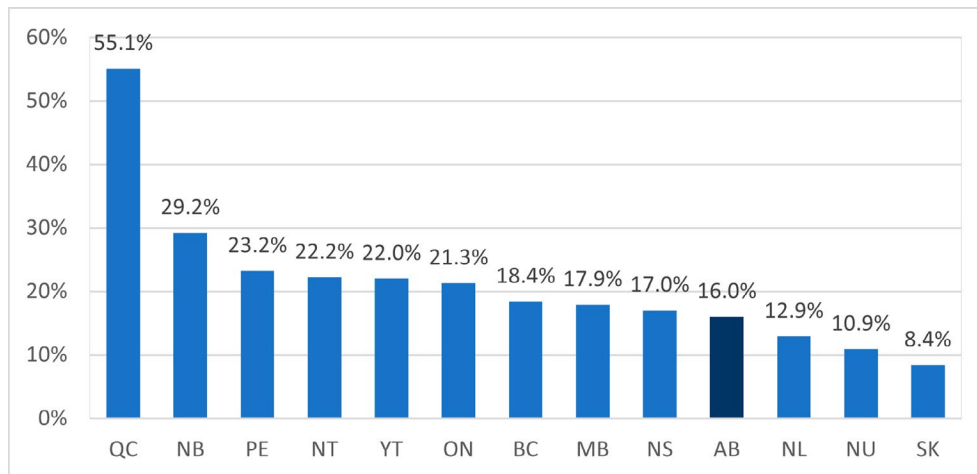
Figure 4. Percentage of children 0-5 for whom there was a licensed centre-based child care space by province and territory, 2016



Source: Friendly, M. et al. (2018). *Early Childhood Education and Care in Canada 2016*.

Figure 5 shows that the picture changes somewhat when including both centre-based and family child care and children 0-12, which suggests that, for the most part, there is proportionally less availability for school age children than for younger children. The Quebec data reflect the high number of family child care spaces and the entitlement to school age child care.

Figure 5. Percentage of children 0-12 for whom there was a regulated or approved space by province and territory, 2016.



Source: Friendly, M. et al. (2018). *Early Childhood Education and Care in Canada 2016*.

Table 4 shows the percent of full and part-day centre-based spaces that are operated on a for-profit and non-profit basis between 2004 and 2016. There is little or no for-profit child care in Nunavut, the Northwest Territories, Saskatchewan and Manitoba. More than half the spaces are operated on a for-profit basis in Newfoundland and Labrador, Yukon, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, Alberta and Nova Scotia. It should be noted that outside of Alberta, British Columbia and Ontario there are few corporate chains among the for-profit operators.

Table 4. Percent of full-day and part-day centre-based spaces that are for-profit, by province and territory, 2004-2016⁹

Province/territory	2004	2006	2008	2010	2012	2014	2016
Newfoundland and Labrador	73	69	70	72	65	65	72
Prince Edward Island ¹⁰	70	56	58	58	80	64	59
Nova Scotia	45	46	50	52	53	55	55
New Brunswick	70	64	67	62	62	63	62
Quebec	12	13	14	17	22	19	20
Ontario	22	23	24	25	25	24	22
Manitoba	8	6	5	5	5	5	5
Saskatchewan	0	0.6	0	0	0.5	0.6	2
Alberta	54	49	51	50	51	53	58
British Columbia	NA	NA	42	43	44	47	49
Yukon	26	31	36	44	64	61	65
Northwest Territories	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Nunavut	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Source: Friendly, M. et al. (2018). *Early Childhood Education and Care in Canada 2016* (Table 16).

Spending on child care and cost to families

Another factor affecting quality is the amount and nature of public spending. Demand-side funding, such as fee subsidies, make child care more affordable for some families, but in order to keep fees affordable for fee paying parents, there may not be adequate funding to support quality programming, or to provide staff with adequate wages and benefits. Supply-side (operational) funding generally supports quality and stability, and there is likely to be more funding for staffing, the premises and program supplies. But if all the funding is on the supply-side, it may not be enough to keep fees affordable for low income families. Finding a balance between secure and adequate operating funding, with additional supports for low income families or other sub-populations, requires careful planning and clear policy goals. This section looks at the overall allocations for child care in Alberta over time,

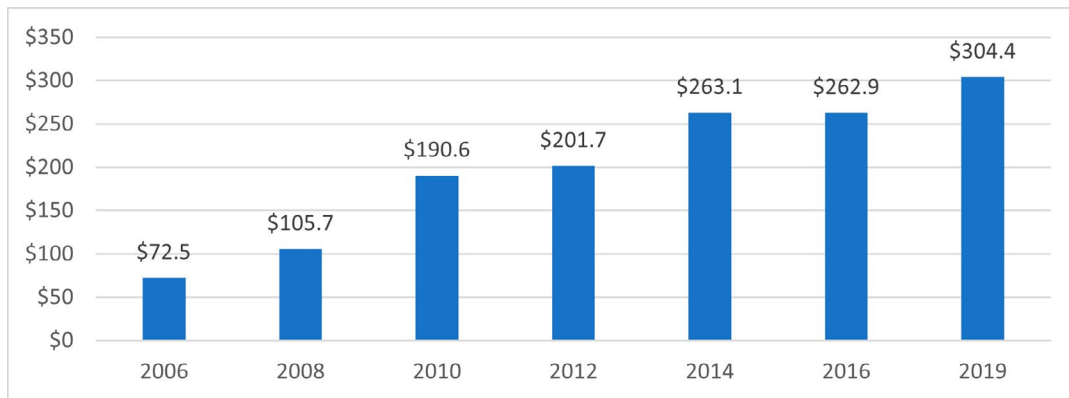
⁹ Comparable information across provinces and territories is not available for family child care spaces.

¹⁰ For the purpose of comparison with other jurisdictions, where kindergarten is in the public education system, the 2004-2010 figures do not include kindergarten. As of September 2010, kindergarten moved to the public education system and are included in the figures from 2012 on.

how these translate into allocations per regulated space, the type of funding provided in 2019, and comparisons with selected jurisdictions.

There has been considerable growth in the allocations for child care with the funding more than quadrupling between 2006 and 2019. Some years saw substantial increases and other years very modest increases, with a slight decrease between 2014 and 2016. Figure 6 shows the allocations between 2006 and 2019.

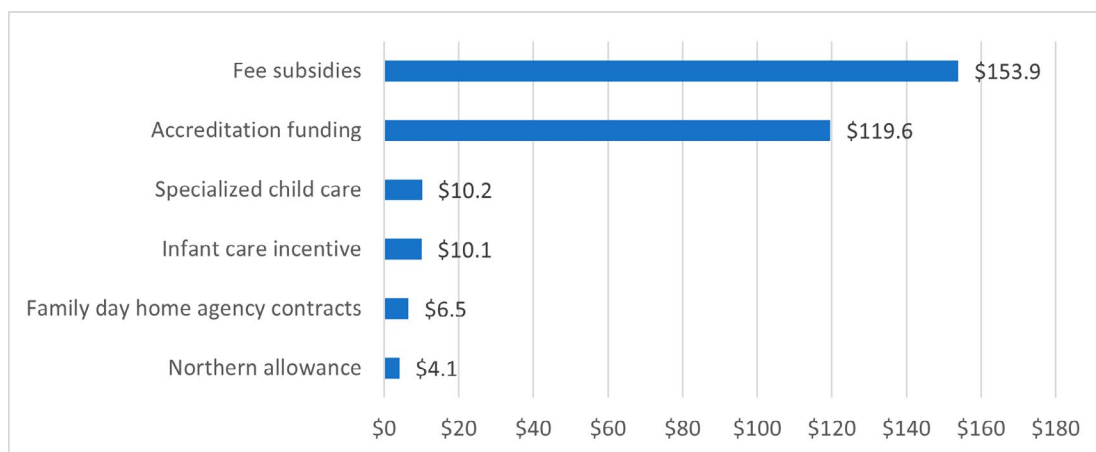
Figure 6. Total allocation for licensed/approved child care in Alberta, 2006-2019 (\$millions)



Source: Friendly, M. et al. (2018). *Early Childhood Education and Care in Canada 2016*. Childcare Resource and Research Unit; Friendly, M. et al. (in press). *Early Childhood Education and Care in Canada 2019*. Figures for 2012, 2016 and 2019 have been adjusted by the author to be consistent with other years.

Approximately half of the provincial allocation in 2019 was spent on demand-side funding in the form of fee subsidies (50.6 percent), and 49.4 percent in supply side funding, of which the majority was spent on accreditation (primarily for wage top ups). Figure 7 shows the distribution of spending by program category.

Figure 7. Provincial allocations for regulated child care, Alberta 2019, by funding category (\$millions)



Source: Friendly, M. et al. (in press). *Early Childhood Education and Care in Canada 2019*.

Accreditation funding has had a significant impact on the hourly wages of the workforce. Table 5 shows the wage tops, by certification level and the impact on average province-wide hourly wages.

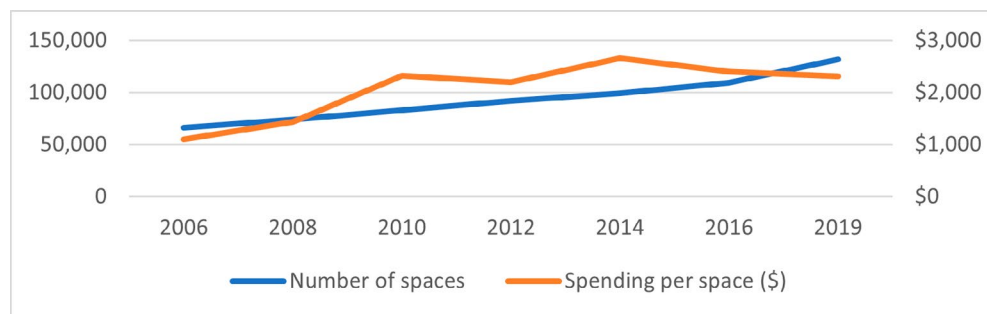
Table 5. Average hourly wage, by certification level, before and after wage top-ups, September 2019

Certification level	Average wage before top-up	Wage top-up	Average wage with top-up
Child Development Assistant	\$15.90	\$2.14	\$18.04
Child Development Worker	\$16.91	\$4.05	\$20.96
Child Development Supervisor	\$18.51	\$6.62	\$25.13

Source: Government of Alberta. (2020). *Alberta Child Care Grant Funding Program*.

While there has been significant growth in both spaces and funding between 2006 and 2019, the increase in spending has not always kept up with the growth in spaces. The allocation per regulated space (total allocation divided by the total number of licensed/approved spaces) shows considerable variations in the overall provincial spending per space, as Figure 8 shows. Note that the federally-funded ELCC spaces and the associated federal funds have not been included in the 2019 figures.

Figure 8. Number of licensed and approved spaces, and provincial allocation per space in Alberta, 2004-2019



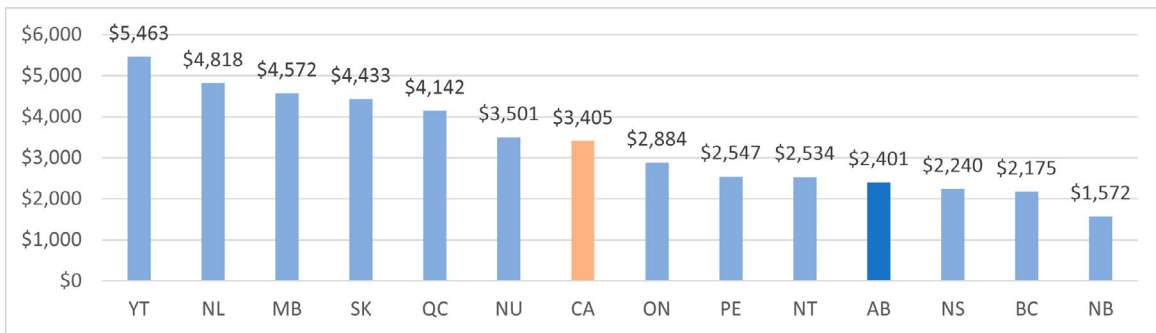
Source: Friendly, M. et al. (in press). *Early Childhood Education and Care in Canada 2019*.

How does Alberta's spending compare with other jurisdictions?

There is a wide variation in the allocations per regulated spaces across provinces and territories. In 2016, Yukon allocated \$5,463 per space, compared to \$1,572 in New Brunswick, with a Canada-wide average of \$3,405. While Alberta's allocation per space is less than average, it is within \$500/space of five of the other six jurisdictions whose allocations are below average.

Figure 9 shows the allocation per space for each province and territory in 2016. Table 6 shows the percent of the total allocation to demand-side funding (fee subsidies) in the five selected jurisdictions.

Figure 9. Allocation per regulated child care space by province and territory, 2016



Source: Friendly, M. et al. (2018). *Early Childhood Education and Care in Canada 2016*.

As Table 6 shows, Manitoba and Prince Edward Island spend considerably less in demand-side funding than Ontario, Alberta and British Columbia. In both Prince Edward Island and Manitoba there are caps on fees in funded programs, with spaces supported by operating funding to keep them more affordable. Both Alberta and Ontario spend more than half their allocations on demand-side funding through fee subsidies.

Table 6. Total allocation and percent allocated to fee subsidies in selected provinces, 2016,

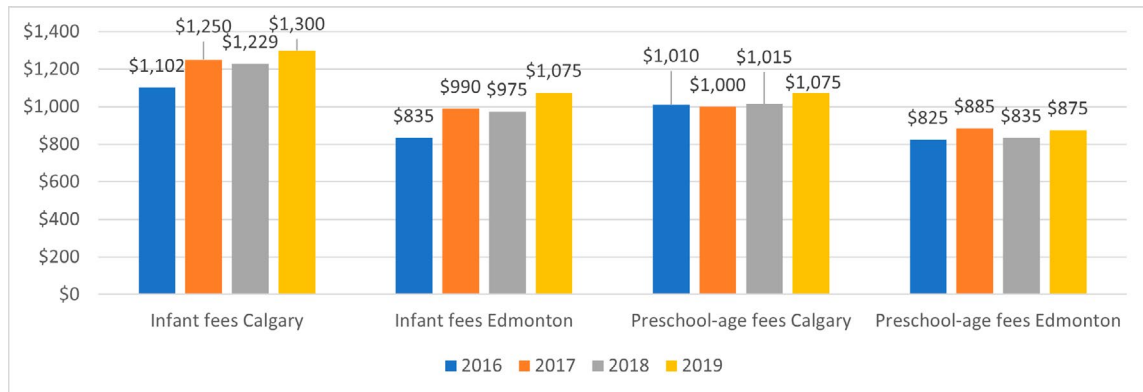
Province	Total Allocation	Percent allocated to fee subsidies
Prince Edward Island	\$11,821,500	24.3
Ontario	\$1,169,784,899	63.3
Manitoba	\$156,638,000	19.3
Alberta	\$262,900,000	53.0
British Columbia	\$231,401,000	34.9

Source: Friendly, M. et al. (2018). *Early Childhood Education and Care in Canada 2016*.

Cost of child care for families

Since 2016, the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA) has conducted child care fee surveys in Canada's largest cities. Median monthly fees are reported for three age groups: infants, toddlers, and preschool-age. As Figure 10 shows, there have been greater increases in infant fees than in fees for preschool-age children in both Calgary and Edmonton.

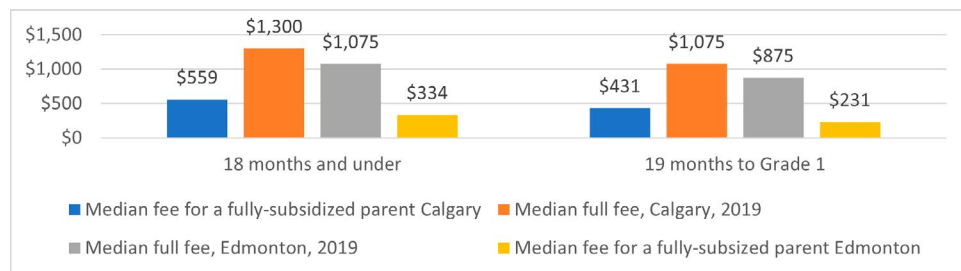
Figure 10. Median monthly child care fees in Calgary and Edmonton, 2016-2019



Source: Macdonald, D., & Friendly, M. (2016). *A Growing Concern: 2016 Child Care Fees in Canada's Big Cities*; Macdonald, D., & Friendly, M. (2017). *Time Out: Child Care Fees in Canada 2017*; Macdonald, D., & Friendly, M. (2019). *Developmental Milestones: Child Care Fees in Canada's Big Cities 2018*; Macdonald, D., & Friendly, M. (2020). *In Progress: Child Care fees in Canada 2019*.

Figure 11 shows the relative costs for full-fee and full-subsidy parents in Calgary and Edmonton. Costs for full-subsidy parents are determined by calculating the difference between the full fee charged by operators and the maximum subsidy paid by government.

Figure 11. Median monthly fees for full-fee and subsidized parents in Calgary and Edmonton by age group¹¹



Source: Macdonald, D., & Friendly, M. (2020). *In Progress: Child Care Fees in Canada 2019*.

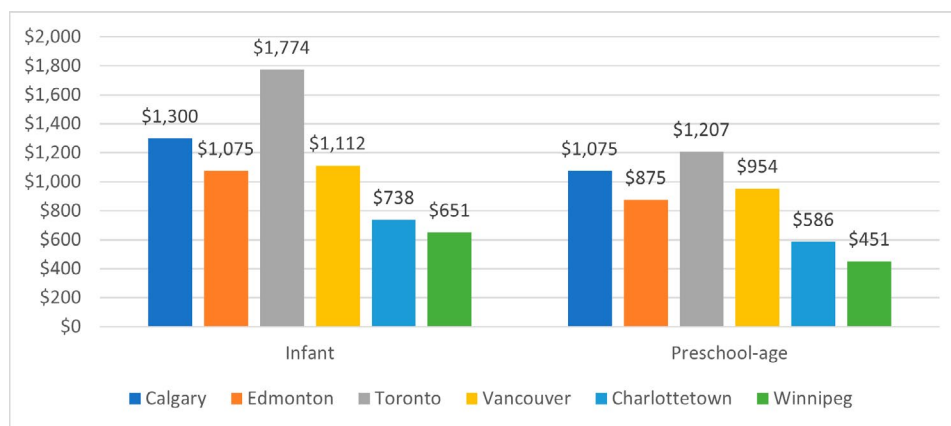
In 2019, CCPA examined the difference in fees between for-profit and non-profit centres. They excluded cities in provinces with set fees and those where there were no or very few for-profit centres, leaving 25 cities where comparisons were possible. They found that for-profit centres generally charged more than non-profit centres. Calgary and Edmonton were among the four cities where preschool-age fees in for-profit centres were more than 50 percent higher than in non-profit centres (52 percent and 62 percent respectively).

¹¹ Median fees are for 2019; fees for subsidized parents use the maximum subsidy rate effective August 2020.

How does the cost of child care in Calgary and Edmonton compare to other cities?

Figure 12 shows how the median monthly fees in Calgary and Edmonton compare to cities in our selected jurisdictions. Fees in Winnipeg and Charlottetown, where there are maximum fees in funded centres, are considerably lower than in cities where there are no caps on fees. However, among the cities without maximum fees, both infant and preschool-age fees in Edmonton are lower than the other cities. Median infant fees in Toronto are \$474/month higher than in Calgary, which has the second highest infant fees.

Figure 12. Median monthly infant and preschool-age fees in selected cities, 2019



Source: Macdonald, D., & Friendly, M. (2020). *In Progress: Child Care fees in Canada 2019*.

The amount that parents pay for child care can be less than the full fee if they are eligible for a full or partial subsidy. Usually there are two criteria to be eligible for subsidy: financial and social. Maximum household incomes to be eligible for subsidy are set at various levels by each jurisdiction. Social criteria establish a need for child care; usually this requires parents to be working, looking for work (usually for a specified maximum amount of time), studying, unable to care for their child due to a disability, or in some cases, when child care is recommended by a child welfare agency/department. In 2020, Prince Edward Island eliminated all social criteria for fee subsidy, which means that any family who meets the financial criteria can receive subsidy, regardless of their work situation. British Columbia and Manitoba do not have any social criteria for fee subsidies for part-time preschool programs.

Subsidy eligibility levels, subsidy rates and amounts that parents pay at various income levels vary considerably by province.

- Prince Edward Island, Manitoba, Alberta and British Columbia all have a maximum subsidy rate. In Alberta and British Columbia parents pay the difference between the subsidy rate and the market fee (or the maximum \$25/day fee in ELCC centres in Alberta and the maximum \$10/day in universal prototype sites in BC). Prince Edward Island has a set maximum fee in its Early Years Centres as does Manitoba in its funded child care centres. In PEI, Early Years Centres cannot charge a fee to full subsidy parents, while Manitoba has a maximum fee for full subsidy parents of \$2/day/child. All parents who are eligible for subsidy in these four provinces receive it. In Ontario, there are no province-wide maximum subsidy rates; they are based on the lower

of the actual cost of providing care, or the full fee charged to the parent, as contained in a purchase of service agreement between the operator and the municipality; however, there are a maximum number of subsidies, and in large municipalities there can be a long waiting list for a subsidy, even if you already have secured a place in a child care centre or home.

- All parents in PEI are eligible for subsidy, regardless of employment status, and as of September 2021, there will be free universal preschool for all 4-year-olds. Parents in British Columbia and Manitoba who are not working or attending school are eligible for a fee subsidy in part-day preschools if they meet the financial eligibility criteria.

The provincial online subsidy estimators¹² and the median (or set) fee in each of the cities have been used to estimate the approximate cost amounts families of different compositions and income levels. Figure 13 shows how much a single parent with one infant would pay in monthly fees, after any fee subsidies are applied. On average, parents in Vancouver pay the least, except for those with household incomes of \$100,000. Even though a parent in this income group in Vancouver is still eligible for a small amount of subsidy, the parent portion of the fee is higher than the set fees in either Prince Edward Island or Manitoba. A single parent with one child, earning \$25,000/year in Calgary or Edmonton pays more for child care than in the other comparison cities; at a \$50,000 annual income, a family in Edmonton pays less than in all other cities except Vancouver. Once families reach an annual income of \$75,000, they pay more in Calgary and Edmonton than in any of the comparison cities, and at \$100,000, they pay less than in Toronto. While these parent fees are only approximate, and do not take into account specific measures that may be considered in different provinces (such as total family size, or various eligible deductions), they show the general impact of subsidy eligibility levels and provincially-established controls on fees on what families at various income levels have to pay.

¹² Government of Prince Edward Island. (2019, September 23). *Child Care Subsidy Calculator*. <https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/feature/child-care-subsidy-calculator#/home/ChildCareSubsidy/ChildCareSubsidy>

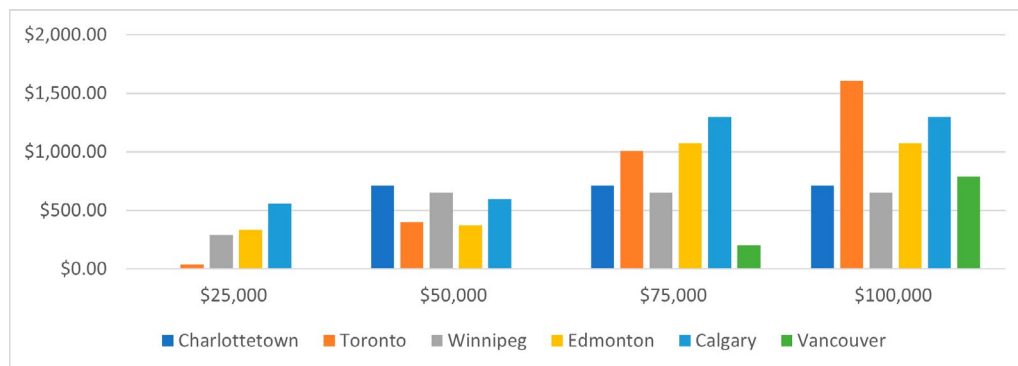
City of Toronto. (2020). *Child Care Fee Subsidy Calculator*. <https://www.toronto.ca/community-people/employment-social-support/child-family-support/child-care-support/child-care-fee-subsidy-calculator/>.

Government of Manitoba. (2020). *Child Care Subsidy*. <https://www.gov.mb.ca/fs/childcare/families/childcare-subsidies.html>.

Government of Alberta. (2020). *Child Care Subsidy*. <https://www.alberta.ca/child-care-subsidy.aspx>.

Government of British Columbia. (2020). *Affordable Child Care Benefit Estimator*. <https://myfamilyservices.gov.bc.ca/s/estimator>

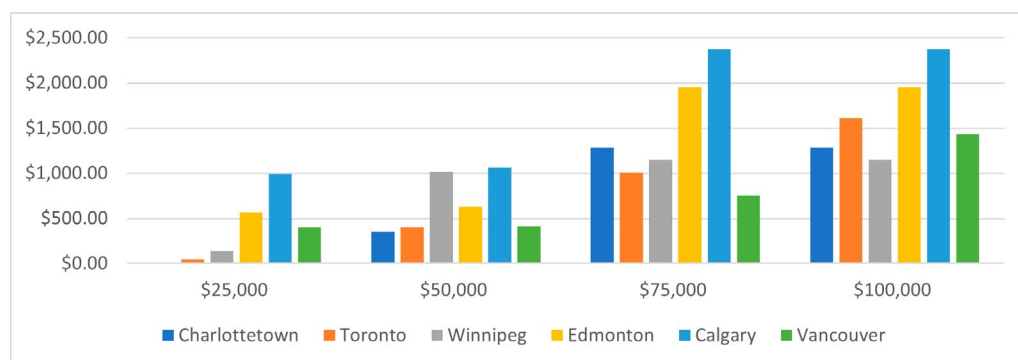
Figure 13. Approximate median monthly fee for a single parent with one infant in selected cities by annual income¹³



Sources: median fees: Macdonald, D., & Friendly, M. (2020). *In Progress: Child Care fees in Canada 2019*. Fee subsidies: provincial online subsidy calculators, 2020; calculations by author.

As Figure 14 shows, families in Calgary and Edmonton with two children in child care pay more than in all other cities, at most income levels; with the exception of families in Edmonton earning \$50,000/year, who pay less than families with similar incomes in Winnipeg.

Figure 14. Approximate median monthly fee for a two-parent family with an infant and a preschooler in selected cities by annual income, 2020



Sources: median fees: Macdonald, D., & Friendly, M. (2020). *In Progress: Child Care fees in Canada 2019*. Fee subsidies: provincial online subsidy calculators, 2020; calculations by author.

It is important to note that the estimated fees in Calgary and Alberta are based on the median fees that were in place prior to the announcement of the subsidy rate increases effective August 1, 2020. In the past, increases in subsidy amounts in Alberta have been accompanied by a similar increase in fees, as was found during the *You Bet I Care!* Study 1 on wages and working conditions.¹⁴ As there are no controls on fees in Alberta, it is quite possible that fees will increase and subsidized parents may be no better off than they were before the rate increase.

¹³ The net fee paid by a parent after any applicable fee subsidy is applied.

¹⁴ Doherty, G. et al. (2000). *You Bet I Care! A Canada-Wide Study on Wages, Working Conditions, and Practices in Child Care Centres*. (Chapter 10).

Summary

There has been a steady growth in child care spaces in Alberta over the last 13 years, but the percentage of children for whom there is a regulated/approved space in Alberta is lower than in most jurisdictions. There has also been a considerable increase in overall spending, but the allocation per space has been uneven, and in 2016, was lower than average across all jurisdictions.

Fees in Calgary are considerably higher than in Edmonton. In both cities there has been little increase in preschool-age fees between 2016 and 2019; however, infant fees have risen 18 percent in Calgary and almost 29 percent in Edmonton during that time period. Fees are lower than in Toronto and are similar to fees in Vancouver; fees in Charlottetown and Winnipeg, where there are maximum fees in funded centres, are considerably lower. The amount that subsidized parents have to pay in Calgary and Edmonton at various income levels are higher than in most of the other selected cities.

Since the government of Alberta believes that *accessible, affordable quality child care is essential to positive early childhood development*,¹⁵ the availability and the cost of child care will have a significant impact on the ability of many families to access licensed and approved child care arrangements. Fees tend to be higher in jurisdictions with a higher proportion of demand-side funding than in those with a higher proportion of supply side funding. As we look at regulatory and other measures to support quality, it will be important to look at policies that ensure more equitable access to quality ELCC services.

¹⁵ Government of Canada. (2020) *Canada-Alberta Early Learning and Child Care Agreement 2020-2021*.

3

Access and Quality

Children's well-being and development is enhanced from participation in ELCC when it is of high quality. For children to benefit from high quality child care, they need to have access to a space.

This section discusses various aspects of accessibility, and inputs and factors known to contribute to quality, at both the program and system levels. It summarizes key international studies and research that identify benchmarks and targets for a quality system of ELCC and identifies the strengths and challenges in access to and quality provision in Alberta.

Overview

Culture, context and ideology play major roles in how ELCC in any given jurisdiction is developed and shaped. If child care is viewed primarily as a private responsibility, best left to the marketplace, the role of government is limited to setting minimal safety standards and targeted funding for those considered most in need. If the vision is for a comprehensive, high quality child care system, with services available and affordable to all families, governments are usually more involved in planning, implementing measures to ensure equity of access, public management of services and funding, and working in collaboration with stakeholders. Public policy and funding are key drivers of the demand for and parents' ability to access quality child care.

Accessible, affordable and quality are probably the three words most commonly used to describe what ELCC services need to be if they are workable and suitable for families and children. These aspects of provision are each value laden, complex and inextricably linked. One cannot be successfully addressed in isolation. For example, quality child care depends on consistent, well qualified and skilled staff. In order to recruit and retain such staff, they must

be fairly compensated, well-supported in their work and work environments, and respected for the contribution they make to the development and well-being of children and support of families. Public funding has to be sufficient to ensure that staff are adequately remunerated and supported without an undue burden on parents, or parents will not be able to afford the fees and children will not benefit. If staff are poorly paid so that parents can afford the fees, turnover will be high, centres will have difficulty attracting and retaining qualified staff and quality will be diminished. Without a consistent supply of qualified educators, expansion of services cannot effectively occur, and even mediocre child care becomes hard to find. There is no quality child care without a quality workforce.

Within a market approach to child care, child care is conceived of as a commodity purchased by parents, with government intervening to varying degrees to address the cost and quality of services. The development of new services is usually left to community groups, small and large businesses, individuals, and occasionally local governments to find or create child care spaces; to apply for any available grants, to

raise funds, or to find investors; to meet the regulatory requirements; to hire staff; to assume all the responsibilities of being an employer; and to set a budget that determines fees, wages and operational viability. These are daunting responsibilities, and in many jurisdictions community groups or private businesses take them on with the support of little or no public planning or management. As a result, the availability of child care is uneven, as was demonstrated in the 2018 report of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives¹⁶ which identifies a series of what it describes as child care “deserts” across the country.

When a government announces a new child care initiative it often focusses on one aspect of delivery - most often setting a target to create a certain number of new spaces (to increase accessibility), sometimes to raise subsidy rates or eligibility levels, or occasionally to increase operating funding (to improve affordability). Quality measures are often time-limited or one-time grants to programs for professional development or various pilot projects. Accessibility, affordability and quality are rarely tackled at a system level through comprehensive planning and policy development. While these three critical aspects of ELCC are intertwined, it is useful to consider what each includes.

Accessibility

Accessibility is usually used as a synonym for availability, that is the number of “spaces” that are licensed or approved. A dictionary definition of accessible is “able to be easily obtained or used.” In this paper, availability and affordability are both considered part of accessibility, as are other conditions necessary for parents to be able to “use” and depend on a space for their child. In order to be accessible a “space” needs to be:

- **Available:** There needs to be an adequate supply of regulated child care that is developed through a planned process, with targets and timetables for development. Parents need to know if a space is available when they need it, if there is priority admission for some families over others, or if there are eligibility criteria that have to be met. Governments often set targets for the establishment of spaces, but often give little thought to how or which children will be able to participate. Other than knowing how many children receive a fee subsidy, there is little tracking of who is using child care and what are the barriers to participation.

How available should child care spaces be? In 2002, the Barcelona European Council, in an effort to increase gender equity and women’s labour force participation, as well as addressing the need to support the cognitive and social development of children from an early age, set two targets for children’s participation in ELCC – 90 percent for children from age three to mandatory school entry and 33 percent for children under age three. The European Council of the European Union (EU) aimed to have those targets reached by 2010 and have been regularly tracking progress of the 28 member countries. While the targets have not been fully met by all countries, by 2018 the EU average for children younger than three was 32.9 percent; 12 countries had reached or exceed the target for children under three. The EU average participation rate for children over three was 86.3 percent, with

¹⁶ Macdonald, D. (2018).

13 countries meeting or exceeding the target. We do not have comparable participation data for children in Alberta, or in Canada. We do know that more than 95 percent of 5-year-olds attend kindergarten (which is not mandatory in most provinces and territories), and that some provinces and territories offer 4-year-old kindergarten for some or all children. We don't know participation rates of children in child care. We do know how many licensed centre- and home-based spaces there are, so can estimate the percentage of children for whom there is a licensed space. In Alberta in 2019, we know that there were enough centre-based spaces for 19 percent of children younger than 3 years, 39.3 percent of children 3-5 years and 8.9 percent of school age children.

- **Suitable and inclusive:** Services need to be inclusive and welcoming of all children, including children with additional support needs, children from disadvantaged families, and children from various cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Services need to be responsive to the needs of working parents, conveniently located, appropriately staffed with qualified, caring educators, with resources available for children with extra support needs, and contextually and culturally appropriate. If a centre closes at 5:00 and a parent finishes work at 5:30, or if there are no specialist staff or other resources available to early childhood educators to help them provide appropriate support to a child with a significant disability, the arrangement is not suitable.
- **Sustainable:** This requires system-level funding and infrastructure, fair wages and working conditions for qualified educators and other members of the workforce. If centres rely on public funding that takes the form of individual grants that are not secure from year to year, the space is not sustainable.
- **Affordable:** Can parents afford to pay for the space if it is available? In Alberta and in Canada there is no agreed upon definition

of affordability; we simply say that child care needs to be more affordable. There are examples of recommendations and measures taken in other jurisdictions.

- A 2015 commission on child care reform in Scotland recommended that:
The net cost to parents should be on a sliding scale that takes account of income to ensure affordability for all families. In the long term, no family should spend more than 10% of their net household income on the costs of their 50 hours of childcare entitlement. Depending on their circumstances, some families may need support to reduce costs below 10% of their net household income.¹⁷
- In 2016, the United States Department of Health and Human Services established a federal benchmark for affordable family co-payments of seven percent of family income.¹⁸
- A 2016 licensed child care demand and affordability study conducted for the City of Toronto, found that 63 percent of families are likely to use licensed child care if its total cost is less than 10 percent of net family income, and only 15 percent will use licensed child care if it costs more than 20 percent of net family income.¹⁹
- Norway established a maximum monthly fee (equal to approximately CAD \$445 in 2019), with a 30 percent discount for a second child and 50 percent for a third or subsequent children. At the same time, parents pay no more than 6 percent of their income up to that ceiling; low income families are entitled to 20 free hours a week for all children age two and older.²⁰

¹⁷ The Commission for Childcare Reform. (2015). *Meeting Scotland's Childcare Challenge: The Report of the Commission for Child Care Reform*. (p. 9).

¹⁸ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2016).

¹⁹ Cleveland, G. et al. (2016).

²⁰ Royal Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research. (2019).

- A 2018 Ontario study on affordability determined that if licensed child care costs between 10 percent and 19.9 percent of net family income it is considered unaffordable, and if it costs 20 percent or more of total family income after taxes and benefits, it is considered completely unaffordable. Child care is also considered affordable if it costs less than 30 percent of the after-tax and benefit earnings that the primary caregiving parent (usually the mother) would contribute to family income. If it costs between 30 percent and 59.9 percent of her net contribution, it would be considered unaffordable, and at 60 percent or more of her contribution, it would be considered completely unaffordable.²¹

While governments often cite the high cost of child care as a reason for not making further investments, an analysis of Quebec expenditures for their heavily supported child care system found that the availability and affordability of child care in that province had a net financial gain to both federal and provincial governments. It also found that there was a significant increase to women's labour force participation and a significant decrease in the number of lone parents receiving social assistance.²²

How affordable is child care in Alberta?

Using the affordability measures developed for the City of Toronto and Ontario affordability studies (10 percent of net family income as the maximum amount a family should pay for licensed child care to be considered affordable), we can see that child care in Alberta is largely unaffordable or "completely unaffordable." Table 7 shows what a family would pay annually at the median fee in Edmonton and Calgary for one and for two children in full-time child care. The annual median fees in Calgary and Edmonton, and the amounts subsidized parents with a family income of \$50,000 pay, approach affordability for only two income groups in Edmonton – those with family incomes of \$50,000 and \$150,000 and one infant in child care. Fees are almost affordable for a family in Calgary with one child in child care and a family income of \$150,000.²³

For all other income groups, child care is considered unaffordable, and for all families with two children in child care earning \$100,000 or less, child care is "completely unaffordable." A family in Calgary, with an infant and preschool-age child in licensed child care, earning \$50,000/year would be paying 25.4% percent of their income on child care.

²¹ Cleveland, G. et al. (2018).

²² Fortin, P. (2015).

²³ The calculations of affordability are based on total family income and not net family income as proposed by Cleveland, G. et al. (2018).

Table 7. Annual median amounts parents pay for licensed child care and percent of family income, in Edmonton and Calgary, by number of children in child care, 2020

Total family income	Amount family pays for 1 infant in Edmonton / % of family income	Amount family pays for 1 infant in Calgary / % of family income	Amount family pays for 1 infant and 1 preschool-age in Edmonton / % of family income	Amount family pays for 1 infant and 1 preschool-age in Calgary / % of family income
\$50,000	\$4,452 / 8.9%	\$7,152 / 14.3%	\$7,608 / 15.2%	\$12,708 / 25.4%
\$75,000	\$12,900 / 17.2%	\$15,600 / 20.8%	\$23,400 / 31.2%	\$28,500 / 38%
\$100,000	\$12,900 / 12.9%	\$15,600 / 15.6%	\$23,400 / 23.4%	\$28,500 / 28.5%
\$150,000	\$12,900 / 8.6%	\$15,600 / 10.4%	\$23,400 / 15.6%	\$28,500 / 19%

Source: median fees: Macdonald, D., & Friendly, M. (2020). *In Progress: Child Care fees in Canada 2019*. Fee subsidies: provincial online subsidy calculators, 2020; calculations by author.

Ideally, cost, geography, family composition, income, employment status or culture, or a child's ability or age should not present barriers for a child to actively participate in a high quality ELCC arrangement. At the moment, the cost of licensed child care is unaffordable for most families and a major barrier to participation.

Sustained public funding and regulations are necessary to achieve quality goals. First, generous core funding can ensure the recruitment of a highly professional staff who remain committed to improve children's performance towards cognitive, social and emotional goals. Second, investment in ECEC facilities and materials can support a child-centred environment for learning and development. In the absence of direct public funding or parent subsidies, there is a risk of uneven and poor-quality provisions with high-quality ECEC limited to affluent neighbourhoods.

OECD (2006) in OECD (2012). (p.25).

Quality

Quality programs

It is widely accepted that high quality ELCC produces positive outcomes for children and positive supports for families. However, there is no single definition of quality; there are numerous concepts and ideas about quality, depending on whose perspective is being considered. Quality from a child's perspective may look different than quality from a parent perspective, or that of educators or policy makers. Quality is a relative concept, usually developed from the shared understanding of multiple stakeholders.

However, quality at the program level is usually conceptualized by structural and process elements:

- Structural quality usually refers to the easily measured aspects of a program, often contained within a regulatory framework. These include staff qualifications, child to staff ratios, group size, the indoor and outdoor physical environment, and the existence of program statements, philosophy and/or a curriculum framework. Structural elements do not guarantee quality, but are a necessary underpinning for quality to exist, and for process quality to be effective. These elements of quality are examined in Section 4 on regulatory measures that support quality.

- Process quality relates to the nature of experiences in the ELCC setting, such as the interactions between staff and children, among children, between staff and parents, between staff members, between staff members and other professionals, the type of activities available to children, the pedagogical approach, and the nature of the physical environment. Certain types of structural elements are more likely to predict improved measures of process elements. There are numerous tools to assess process quality, most commonly used are the various Environmental Rating Scales (ECERS-3, ITERS-3, FCCERS-3 and SACERS-U), the Caregiver Interaction Scale (CIS), the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS). The SpecialLink Early Childhood Inclusion Quality Scale is a tool for assessing the quality of inclusion in ELCC settings and helping educators move to higher quality inclusion.²⁴ Longitudinal studies on child outcomes are sometimes used to determine the long-term impact of children's early childhood experiences in various settings.

Process quality is generally measured using one or more of the observational tools noted above. This is often a costly undertaking and is rarely used in a systematic way to measure quality and to use those results to help centres develop quality improvement plans.

A large, multi-jurisdictional study on quality in child care centres and family child care homes was conducted as part of *You Bet I Care!* (YBIC) in seven Canadian jurisdictions: New Brunswick, Quebec, Ontario, Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia and Yukon. It remains the only such study of observed quality across numerous Canadian jurisdictions.

Caring and Learning Environments: Quality in Child Care Centres Across Canada,²⁵ published in 2000,

explores the relationship between centre quality and:

- Centre characteristics
- Teaching staff wages and working conditions
- Teaching staff characteristics and attitudes

Quality scores were obtained using the *Caregiver Interaction Scale (CIS)*, the *Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale (ITERS)* and the *Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale–Revised (ECERS–R)*. The study found that the majority of centres in Canada provided care of minimal to mediocre quality.

Analyses found that higher levels of staff sensitivity were associated with:

- Higher staff wages
- Teaching staff with higher levels of ECCE specific education
- Better benefits
- Higher staff levels of satisfaction with their relationships with colleagues and the centre as a work environment
- The centre being used as a student-teacher practicum site
- The centre receiving subsidized rent and/or utilities
- The centre having favourable staff: child ratios
- The centre being non-profit.

The study organized the predictor variables into four categories:

- Regulable: staff level of ECE-specific education, adult to child ratio, and auspice
- Financial: staff wage level, subsidized rent and/or utilities, level of full-time fees
- Administrative: centre is used as a practicum site, number of adults in the room
- Attitudinal: staff satisfaction with their work environment and relationships with colleagues

²⁴ Irwin, S. (2009).

²⁵ Goelman, H. et al. (2000).

It notes that improvements to the quality of child care depends on addressing the complex interaction among predictors, not simply addressing individual variables. The findings of the study show that predictors of quality that can be regulated are only one part of several interrelated factors. Even though the study is now more than 20 years old, there are valuable lessons about predictors of quality that can be considered within the current Alberta context.

Child care staff invest a tremendous amount of time and energy in doing their jobs to the best of their ability under extremely difficult conditions with minimal financial resources, inadequate compensation and little respect. It is the child care workforce that serves as the major engine on the road towards achieving quality child care in Canada, and it is the nature of the difficult and restrictive conditions under which the workforce operates that is the major obstacle to quality.

Goelman, H. et al. (2000). *Caring and Learning Environments: Quality in Child Care Centres Across Canada. You Bet I Care!* (p.72).

A competent, stable workforce is key to both access and program quality.

- Ontario's Expert Panel on Human Resources noted that the single most critical factor affecting the quality of early learning and care programs is the knowledge, skills, and stability of the early childhood workforce.²⁶
- Friendly, Ferns, and Prabhu (2009) noted the importance of the interplay between structural elements, and that ratios/class size cannot be considered independently from teacher qualifications, classroom structure and composition, group size and working conditions.

*Caring and Learning Environments: Quality in Regulated Family Child Care Across Canada*²⁷

²⁶ Expert Panel on Quality and Human Resources (2007).

²⁷ Goelman, H. et al. (2000).

explores the relationship between quality in family child care and:

- Provider characteristics and attitudes about family child care provision
- Provider income levels and working conditions
- The provider's use of support services such as child care resource programs, networking with other providers, and professional development opportunities.

The study found that just over one-third of providers provided care that would stimulate a children's development.

Analyses identified six key variables that predicted the quality in a family child care home as indicated by the *FDCRS* score.

- The provider's highest level of attained education in any subject, with higher levels of education predicting higher quality
- Whether the provider had completed a formal family child care specific training course, with completion of such a course predicting higher quality
- Whether the provider networks with others through an organized association or network, with networking predicting higher quality
- The provider's gross family child care income from the previous year, with higher income predicting higher quality
- The age of the youngest child present when the *FDCRS* observation was done. The average *FDCRS* score was lower for the group of providers who had at least one child under age 18 months present than for the group where the youngest child present was older than 18 months of age
- The provider's attitude toward family child care provision. Higher quality was predicted by providers who stated that they intend to continue providing family child care, enjoy the work and view it as their chosen career.

We firmly believe that family child care quality in Canada can be supported and enhanced through systematic implementation of coherent and coordinated policies and practices. Getting from “here” to “there” is do-able given public commitment and political will

Doherty, G. et al. (2000). (p. 102).

Program quality and auspice

Alberta has both non-profit and for-profit delivery; both forms of provision have to meet the same regulations and are eligible for the same funding from government. Operators establish wages and charge fees based on their service costs and market conditions, although they must pay employees at least the minimum wage. To date, there has been little discussion among stakeholders and government as to what kind of ELCC structures are most appropriate for families, what role government should play and what the vision for a child care system looks like. Should ELCC development be left to the market place as it is now, with any operator able to open a child care facility where they see fit? Or should government play a greater role in planning, managing and developing a system that ensures services are affordable and of high quality? Decisions made about roles and responsibilities will determine the direction of future growth.

If the goal is quality provision at an affordable cost for all families who need and want child care, then rigorous standards, public planning and management, controls over fees, wage scales for educators, accountability for public funds, public reporting, mechanisms for parental engagement and ongoing data collection and analyses are all important mechanisms to build a quality system, regardless of the operator. While recognizing and supporting the parts of the for-profit sector that work with other stakeholders in the best interests of children and families, the province may wish to facilitate future growth in the non-profit and public sectors, in publicly-owned spaces, to ensure that public dollars are spent most effectively and the facilities become public assets.

The for-profit sector has played an important role

in increasing the supply of regulated child care spaces, especially operators with ECE credentials who opened centres and homes in a climate of little public funding. However, the growth of large corporate chains is of concern, where interests may be more on profit, often realized through the increased value of real estate and returns to investors, than on quality provision. Since the majority of provision in full-day child care is by for-profit operators, it will be important to consider the types of measures that can be put in place to maximize the quality of care, and accountability for public dollars. As noted in the previous section, the 2019 CCPA fee survey found that for-profit operators in Calgary and Edmonton charged fees more than 50 percent higher than the median fees in non-profit centres. Given that both types of centres receive the same public funding, further analysis of fees will be necessary to determine the reasons for such a difference as the cost to parents and affordability is a significant barrier to quality child care.

Numerous Canadian studies have found that while quality in both non-profit and for-profit child care services vary, in general, for-profit programs provide lower quality child care than non-profit and public child care programs.

- *You Bet I Care!* (YBIC) found that for-profit centres scored lower, on average, than non-profit centres on each of the total and subscale scores of both the ITERS and the ECERS quality ratings. Further analysis of the YBIC data set found that the lower quality ratings in the for-profit centres reflected behaviours such as hiring higher proportions of untrained staff, paying poorer wages, generating higher staff turnover and lower morale, as well as program characteristics such as a poorer

child to staff ratios. The YBIC study on wages, working conditions and practices in child care centres²⁸ found that non-profit centres spent approximately 80 percent of their budgets on wages compared to 60 percent in for-profit centres.

- Two major Québec studies, the *Étude longitudinale du développement des enfants du Québec* (ELDEQ), which uses the ECERs scales, and the *Grandir en qualité*, which uses a Québec-developed four-point quality scale, found for-profit centres to be consistently poorer in quality than non-profits.²⁹ *Grandir en qualité* showed that for-profit child care fared worse overall, as well as scoring lower on all sub-scales, and on global evaluation. The studies found that for-profits were vastly over-represented among “unsatisfactory” centres, and eight times more likely to be of unsatisfactory quality.
- A 2004 BC study found auspice a significant predictor of stability.³⁰ Using BC data, they found that for-profit centres were disproportionately more likely to close than non-profit centres.
- A study of Calgary child care centres found that 53.1% of for-profit centres offered poor quality care, compared to 15.4% of non-profit centres.³¹
- An analysis of data from the City of Toronto Operating Criteria found quality in non-profit and municipal centres to be consistently higher than in for-profit centres.³²
- A 2018 City of Vancouver survey of wages and working conditions in centre-based child care programs³³ found many auspice-related differences. Staff working directly with children in for-profit centres had lower levels of education, had fewer years of experience

in the field, were paid less and received fewer benefits than their counterparts in non-profit centres.

A 2015 analysis of publicly available licensing information from an equal number of full-day child care centres operated by one large corporate chain and by non-profit operators in the same three cities in Alberta shows considerable differences in compliance with the regulatory requirements.³⁴ These differences are particularly concerning as they only refer to minimum licensing standards, not to other measures of quality. The study examined non-compliance with the regulations, organized into “paper” non-compliance, largely related to documentation and record keeping, and “people” non-compliance, such as not meeting staff-to-child ratios, using appropriate behaviour management, having enough staff at the necessary certification levels, or administering prescription medications according to directions. Complaints and critical incidents were also examined, which included, but were not limited to, allegations of abuse, a child going missing from the centre, children left on the premises after hours, illness or injury requiring emergency medical care, or unexpected program closure. The licensing information showed:

- Incidents of non-compliance were four times higher in the corporate than the non-profit centres, including six “people” non-compliances for each one in the non-profit centres
- Non-compliance in the corporate centres included multiple violations of the regulation against inflicting “physical punishment, verbal or physical degradation or emotional deprivation” as well as using unreasonable disciplinary action. There were no such violations in the non-profit centres

²⁸ Doherty, G. et al. (2000).

²⁹ Japel, C., Tremblay E., & Côté S. (2004), (2005); Drouin, C. et al. (2004).

³⁰ Kershaw, P., Forer, B., & Goelman, H. (2004).

³¹ Friesen, B. (1992).

³² Cleveland, G. (2008).

³³ Forer, B. (2018).

³⁴ Richardson, B. (2017).

- Critical incident reports at the corporate centres outnumbered those in the non-profit centres by slightly more than two to one
- The number of complaint investigations in corporate centres was more than 10 times higher than in the non-profit centres, with 41 complaints made in the corporate centres, compared to three in the non-profit centres.

All but one of the corporate centres were accredited, which puts into question the effectiveness of the process by which centres can achieve accreditation, and the accompanying use of public dollars. The study notes that these regulatory violations only relate to those directly observed by licensing officials.

The growth of corporate child care should be treated with caution, as past experiences, particularly with the ABC chain in Australia, have shown that once large corporations are well-established they begin to influence government regulation, and as they acquire other for-profit and non-profit facilities and begin to dominate the sector parent fees increase substantially, even when government funding increases. In order to maximize profits, fees have to be as high as the market will bear. As well, smaller businesses are often bought out by larger businesses. Before ABC Learning collapsed in 2008, it provided 30 percent of the care in Australia and 70 percent in the state of Queensland.³⁵

³⁵ Penn, H. (2012).

Whether child care is for-profit or public/not-for profit is not the only policy issue that determines whether children and families get high quality early childhood services. But it is a fundamental choice that influences how well other key structural policy elements—public financing, a planned (not market) approach, well paid, early childhood-educated staff treated as professionals, a sound pedagogical approach and ongoing quality assurance—function to ensure high quality and equitable access.

Friendly, M. (2011).

Going forward, it will be important to engage both for-profit and non-profit service providers in supporting quality provision, increasing accountability and working towards shared goals on maximizing the outcomes for children, rather than profits.

Quality at a systems level: international perspectives

There are a number of linked elements that make up a child care system. They include financing, human resources, physical environment, planning and policy development, governance, infrastructure, data, research and evaluation, and are determined by public policy.

Over the years, a number of multi-national organizations have conducted in-depth reviews and analyses of ELCC. The results of these studies have identified international trends, informed policy development, set quality targets and benchmarks, and articulated the elements of a quality system. Whether the impetus for a particular study was to improve quality provision for young children, improve access, or to make child care more affordable for parents, the areas identified for system redesign to achieve the stated goals are similar. All address governance, service delivery, and settings goals for coverage; education and working conditions for staff; pedagogy and structural quality measures; financing, including affordability for families; and data collection and monitoring, and research and evaluation. They also note that the necessary elements to achieve a quality system must be considered in totality, rather than in isolation from each other.

Select examples from three multi-nation organizations are summarized below.

The European Commission Childcare Network

In 1996, following an 18-month development process, the European Commission Childcare Network released a 10-year action plan to address

quality in child care provision.³⁶ It was prepared for the European Commission to address a specific task: to “establish criteria for the definition of quality in childcare services.” The assumptions that guided the work of the Network were as follows:

- Quality is a relative concept, based on values and beliefs.
- Defining quality is a process and this process is important in its own right, providing opportunities to share, discuss and understand values, ideas, knowledge and experience.
- The process should be participatory and democratic, involving different groups including children, parents and families and professionals working in services.
- The needs, perspectives and values of these groups may sometimes differ.
- Defining quality should be seen as a dynamic and continuous process, involving regular review and never reaching a final, ‘objective’ statement.

The Network developed 40 quality targets, organized into nine categories. At a program level, targets particularly relevant to regulatable quality measures include:

- Staff education and professional development: target of at least 60 percent of front-line staff with a three-year postsecondary education that includes the theory and practice of pedagogy and child development. Untrained staff should have access to training, including on an in-kind basis, and all staff should have the right to continuous in-service training.
- Square footage requirements, including:
 - internal space of at least 6 square metres for each child under three years and of at least 4 sq metres for each child 3-6 years (excluding storage and corridor or through-way space)

- direct access to external space of at least 6 square metres per child
- an additional 5% of internal space for adult use.

At a systems level, targets for government to address include:

- Policy framework targets that set out principles, objectives and priorities, and implementation plans
- Financial targets that include funding for in-service training, research and monitoring, capital spending, and parent fees of no more than 15 percent of income
- Public expenditure on services for young children (in this case defined as children aged 5 years and under) of not less than 1 percent of GDP in order to meet targets set for services, both for children under three and over three years of age
- Targets for levels of service, that include full-time places for at least 90 percent of children 3-6 years and 15 percent of children under three years, with the same right of access for children with disabilities

The Organization for Economic Development and Co-operation (OECD)

In 1998, the OECD began an international review of 12 countries as part of a Thematic Review of ECEC. As part of the review, each country prepared a background report, responding to common questions posed by the OECD. This was followed by a country visit by international ECEC experts and included a document and literature review specific to the country, site visits to programs, and meetings with government officials, key stakeholders and early childhood operators and staff. Following each country visit a report was prepared by the expert group – the Country Note – that included the findings and made recommendations for improvement.

The contextual issues shaping policy, policy developments and issues, and policy lessons from

³⁶ European Commission Network on Childcare and Other Measures to Reconcile Employment and Family Responsibilities of Men and Women. (1996).

the review are described in *Starting Strong*, the report of the first review.³⁷ The report identified eight key elements of successful policy that are interrelated and to be taken as a totality:

1. A systemic and integrated approach to policy development and implementation
2. A strong and equal partnership with Education
3. A universal approach to access, with particular attention to children in need of special support
4. Substantial public investment in services and the infrastructure
5. A participatory approach to quality improvement and assurance
6. Appropriate training and working conditions for staff in all forms of provision
7. Systematic attention to monitoring and data collection
8. A stable framework and long-term agenda for research and evaluation.

Following the success of the first round of country reviews, between Fall 2002 and Winter 2004, the OECD undertook a second round of reviews with an additional eight countries, of which Canada was one.

The OECD Canada Country Note stated that: *Adequate access to early childhood services is determined by availability and costs of provision. We know that in Canada, both these criteria – access and affordability – present real challenges to many parents.*³⁸ Among the numerous recommendations made in the report, the following are among those that are particularly relevant and timely:

- Encourage provincial governments to develop, with the major stakeholder groups, an early childhood strategy with priority targets, benchmarks and timelines, and with guaranteed budgets to fund appropriate

governance and expansion.

- Develop a national quality framework for early childhood services across all sectors, and the infrastructure at provincial level to ensure effective implementation.
- Review ECEC professional profiles, improve recruitment levels and strengthen the initial and in-service training of staff.
- Insofar as possible, include children with special educational needs in public early development/education service.
- Continue efforts to expand access while promoting greater equity.
- Provide publicly funded, high-quality interventions in all disadvantaged areas.
- Provide attractive indoor and outdoor learning environments.

Starting Strong II examined progress made in each of the eight elements and explored more deeply the issues of governance of ECEC systems, the impact of financing approaches on quality, and contrasting pedagogical approaches.³⁹ The report proposed 10 policies for governments to consider:

1. To attend to the social context of early childhood development
2. To place well-being, early development and learning at the core of ECEC work, while respecting the child's agency and natural learning strategies
3. To create the governance structures necessary for system accountability and quality assurance
4. To develop with the stakeholders broad guidelines and curricular standards for all ECEC services
5. To base public funding estimates for ECEC on achieving quality pedagogical goals
6. To reduce child poverty and exclusion through upstream fiscal, social and labour

³⁷ OECD. (2001).

³⁸ OECD, Directorate for Education. (2004). (p. 61).

³⁹ OECD. (2006).

policies, and to increase resources within universal programmes for children with diverse learning rights

7. To encourage family and community involvement in early childhood services
8. To improve the working conditions and professional education of ECEC staff
9. To provide freedom, funding and support to early childhood services
10. To aspire to ECEC systems that support broad learning, participation and democracy.

Starting Strong and *Starting Strong III* represents the first international comparative study of ELCC among OECD countries, and suggested actions to address access, quality and equity. Following the Thematic Reviews, the OECD launched the “Encouraging Quality in ECEC” project to address quality from a policy perspective. Based on the findings from the two *Starting Strong* reports and international research literature, *Starting Strong III* suggests five policy levers to address quality from a policy perspective.⁴⁰

1. Setting out quality goals and regulations
2. Designing and implementing curriculum and standards
3. Improving qualifications, training and working conditions
4. Engaging families and communities
5. Advancing data collection, research and monitoring

For each policy lever, the “toolbox” presents five action areas to guide the policy work. Following the development of the policy levers, 10 countries participated in Quality Matters in Early Childhood Education and Care. Each country selected one of the policy levers to address in depth, followed by a report that addressed three questions: What does the research say in the particular area, how does the country stand compared to other countries, and what are the challenges and

strategies.⁴¹

The OECD has produced numerous other materials on quality, and most recently is undertaking a policy review: Quality Beyond Regulations. The review has a particular focus on the dimensions of quality that can be addressed through policy and will provide the first international comparison of process quality. The review began in 2018, and country background reports were to be prepared by early 2020, with a synthesis report expected in early 2021. It is not clear what impact the COVID-19 pandemic will have on the timelines. Canada is participating in this review, and Alberta is one of the four provinces involved. However, to date, there is no publicly available information on any activities or findings.

UNICEF

As a step towards monitoring the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre prepared a report card that proposed a set of minimum standards for protecting the rights of children in their most vulnerable and formative years.⁴² It developed 10 benchmarks in consultation with government officials and academic experts from OECD countries, with input from UNICEF and the World Bank, to begin the process of establishing common, core minimum standards for protecting the rights of young children. It collected data from 25 countries including Canada, reporting on which benchmarks were met in each country. The report noted: *In almost every industrialized country, support for parents in the bringing up of children is now regarded as a duty of governments and is explicitly recognized as such by the Convention on the Rights of the Child which almost all OECD countries have ratified.*⁴³

The benchmarks do have some limitations:

⁴¹ The participating country policy profiles can be found at: <http://www.oecd.org/education/school/qualitymattersinececcountrypolicyprofiles.htm>

⁴² UNICEF. (2008).

⁴³ UNICEF. (2008). (p. 13).

⁴⁰ OECD. (2012).

they represent a basic minimum rather than a guarantee of quality, they primarily relate to centre-based child care, they do not take into account other early years programs and supports, and there are no measures regarding parental involvement. However, they begin the process of establishing common, core, minimum standards. A summary of the benchmarks are as follows:

1. A minimum entitlement to paid parental leave
 - At least one year at 50 percent of salary
 - For unemployed or self-employed parents, not less than the minimum wage or the level of social assistance
 - At least two weeks specifically reserved for fathers.
2. A national plan with priority for disadvantaged children
 - While all countries should have a national strategy to ensure that the benefits of ELCC are fully available, especially for disadvantaged children, it was not possible to assess and compare this benchmark in a satisfactory way. As a proxy measure, a national plan for the organization and financing of early childhood services was used.
3. Minimum level of child care provision for under threes
 - Subsidized and regulated services available for 25 percent of children under three.
4. Minimum level of access for four-year-olds
 - Services available for at least 80 percent of four-year-olds in publicly subsidized and accredited ELCC for a minimum of 15 hours/week.
5. Minimum level of training for all staff
 - At least 80 percent of staff, including neighbourhood and home-based providers, should have relevant training. As a minimum staff should have

completed an induction course.⁴⁴

6. Minimum proportion of staff with higher level education and training
 - At least 50 percent of staff in ELCC centres supported and accredited by government should have a minimum of three years tertiary education in early childhood studies or a related field.
7. Minimum staff-to-children ratio
 - A minimum ratio of trained staff to four- and five-year-olds of not greater than 1:15 with a maximum group size of 24.
8. Minimum level of public funding
 - Not less than one percent of GDP spent on early childhood education and care for children aged 0 to 6 years.
9. Low level of child poverty
 - Less than 10 percent of children living in families in which income, adjusted for family size, is less than 50 percent of median income.
10. Universal outreach
 - As no direct measure was possible, two of three proxy measures had to be met: an infant mortality rate of less than 4 per 1,000 live births; the proportion of low birth-rate babies (less than 2,500 grams) of less than six percent; an immunization rate for children 12-23 month of at least 95 percent.

The European Commission

In May, 2019, the European Commission's *Recommendation on High Quality Early Childhood Education and Care Systems* was adopted by the Education Ministers.⁴⁵ The aim of the recommendation is to support Member States in

⁴⁴ The explanatory note associated with the benchmarks do not specify what should be included in an induction course. It simply notes that "all staff should have at least initial training before taking up employment in early childhood education and care."

⁴⁵ Council of the European Union. (2019).

their efforts to improve access to and quality of their early childhood education and care systems. It presents key elements of the ELCC quality framework and is intended to inspire Member States in their strategic thinking about services. The proposal recommendations relevant to the Canadian context include:

1. Improve access to high quality early childhood education and care systems in line with the statements set out in the 'Quality framework for early childhood education and care'
2. Work towards ensuring that early childhood education and care services are accessible, affordable, and inclusive
3. Support the professionalisation of early childhood education and care staff
4. Enhance the development of early years curricula in order to meet the wellbeing and educational needs of children
5. Promote transparent and coherent monitoring and evaluation of early childhood education and care services at all levels with a view to policy development.

Summary

According to various experiences with and recommendations regarding affordability, child care is affordable if it costs less than anywhere between six and 10 percent of household income. By these definitions, child care is unaffordable for most Alberta families. In looking at fees in Edmonton and Calgary, child care is most affordable for an Edmonton family with a household income of \$150,000/year with one child in child care, and least affordable for a family in Calgary with a household income of \$75,000 and two children in child care.

The growth in corporate for-profit chains is of concern for both affordability and quality. The 2019 CCPA study found that for-profit child care operators in Calgary and Edmonton charged approximately 52 percent (in Calgary) and 63 percent more (in Edmonton) than non-profit operators in the same communities. As well, there is a significant body of research that shows, on average, quality in the for-profit sector is lower than in the non-profit sector. A number of measures could be put in place to control parent fees, establish early childhood educator wage scales and increase accountability and reporting requirements for all centres that receive public funds.

As can be seen from the various international reviews there are common findings and conclusions:

- Policy and funding are the main drivers of quality.
- Developing systems-level goals and targets guide efforts to increase quality provision.
- A well-compensated, qualified and skilled workforce is essential to quality provision.
- A common curriculum framework supports quality and helps ensure a level of consistency across services.
- Adequate public funding for programs and infrastructure is needed for quality provision.

- A universal approach to provision, with particular attention paid to the needs of children with diverse needs, will support equitable access.
- Services need to be affordable for families.

The findings show that there is no single road or quick fix to achieving quality; it is an ongoing process that requires more than focussing on regulatory measures that can be assessed with a checklist. Setting targets for coverage, for staff education and ongoing professional learning, ensuring adequate funding, monitoring and evaluating provision, public planning and management, engaging parents, children and other stakeholders all contribute to a quality agenda that goes beyond quality at the level of a centre or home, but which can help ensure program-level quality. Quality is multi-faceted and multi-dimensional and strong public policy is the foundation for a quality system, which in turn helps ensure quality provision that is available and affordable for all families.

Countries with robust ELCC systems that are high quality and accessible have approached development, delivery and funding of services in a variety of ways. However, they have a number of common characteristics:

- ELCC is part of a larger set of social, economic and educational supports. These include generous maternity and parental leaves and benefits, and family policies that help parents balance work and family life
- A considerable portion of services are publicly delivered, including, in some instances, family child care (where providers are employees of or are supervised by the municipality)
- The parental portion of child care fees are low and capped
- There is an increase in Bachelor degree qualification requirements for educators
- Educator and assistant roles are usually defined, with related educational requirements and wages

- There are common wage scales for educators
- Use of informal or unregulated care is low

Systems have been built over time, and have addressed availability, affordability, equity of access and quality as a totality rather than focusing on individual elements.

...there are no little tricks and turns, no borrowed ideas, and no small-scale innovations at the level of providers, that can make up for the shortcomings of a starved system. Individual centres may perform well and achieve good results, even in a weak system, but individual excellence cannot substitute for systematic failings which exclude the poorest and most marginal children and those who care for them.

Penn, H. (2017). (p. 31).

4

Existing Mechanisms to Support Quality in Alberta and Selected Jurisdictions

This section examines regulatory and other measures that have an impact on ELCC quality, across five jurisdictions: Prince Edward Island, Ontario, Manitoba, Alberta and British Columbia. As noted in the introduction, the particular jurisdictions selected provide a range of approaches to, and goals for, ELCC and have both regulatory and other measures that support quality. Broadly, the section does two things:

- First, it compares the three main structural elements of quality identified in the literature, contained in regulation and common to all jurisdictions, as well as the inclusion of children with special needs where it is included in regulation
 - Staff to child ratios and group size
 - Staff qualifications and certification
 - Physical environment
- Second, it examines factors known to have an impact on quality, and which may or may not be included in legislation, including:
 - Monitoring, inspection and support
 - Curriculum frameworks
 - Supports for the workforce
 - Ongoing engagement and consultation with the sector

Regulatory measures that support quality⁴⁶

Legislation, supporting regulations and related standards commonly provide the basis for a jurisdiction's oversight and management of ELCC programs and services. Traditionally Alberta, and indeed much of Canada, has placed an emphasis on protecting the health and safety of young children, by defining the nature of services and establishing minimum licensing standards for their organization and delivery.

All provinces and territories have child care regulations that set the conditions under which centres and homes must operate. They all include regulations on the initial licensing process, administrative matters, emergency procedures, health, hygiene and nutrition, staffing and the

⁴⁶ See Appendix C for details of the regulatory requirements across jurisdictions.

physical environment, as well as how non-compliance and complaints are handled. Most of these regulations can be readily assessed for compliance. Many provinces and territories do not require licensing officials responsible for approving, inspecting and monitoring child care facilities to have an early childhood background.

Regulation is primarily used to address market failures. The characteristics of some markets mean that, left to their own devices, they risk failing to produce behaviour or results in accordance with public interest (for example, clean air) or policy objectives

National Audit Office. (2017). (UK).

There are four main structural elements of quality that are included in regulation: child to staff ratios, group sizes, staff qualification and certification requirements, and minimum indoor and outdoor space requirements. As Friendly, Ferns, and Prabhu (2009) noted, ratios and group size cannot be considered independently from staff qualifications, classroom structure and composition, and working conditions. For example, a group size of eight toddlers may seem to be more conducive to quality provision than a group size of 12, but if the group of eight is in the care of staff with only orientation-level training, provision is likely to be of considerably lower quality than a group of 12, in which one or more staff have a two-year ECE diploma. As a result, it is not reasonable to comment on how well or poorly a province fares compared to others on individual requirements – it is necessary to look at the whole picture.

Child to staff ratios and group size

A number of research studies have found child:staff ratios to be a significant determinant of quality.⁴⁷ Lower child:staff ratios have usually been found to enhance quality and support better outcomes for children. However, they

⁴⁷ Helburn, S. et al. (1995); Shim, J., Hestenes, L., & Cassidy, D. (2004); Goelman, H. et al. (2006).

also found that while an important structural feature, they must be part of a package of other structural features, such as staff training, wages and experience, and group size.⁴⁸

The age groupings in child care are not consistent across jurisdictions. For comparative purpose, the ratios for specific ages of younger children have been examined – 12 months, 24 months, from 3 years to school entry, and school age (usually from Grade 1 to 12 years). Child to staff ratios are fairly similar across jurisdictions.

- For children 12 months of age, they range from 3:1 in Prince Edward Island, Ontario and Alberta to 4:1 in Manitoba and British Columbia.
- For children 24 months of age, they are 4:1 in British Columbia, 5:1 in Prince Edward Island and Ontario, and 6:1 in Manitoba and Alberta
- For children who are 3 years old, they are 8:1 in all selected jurisdictions, except in Prince Edward Island, where they are 10:1. Alberta and British Columbia have different ratios for part-day preschool programs, which are 12:1 and 10:1 respectively
- For school age children they are typically 15:1, with some variations for younger children (kindergarten or kindergarten to grade 2, ranging from 10:1 to 12:1)
- Most jurisdictions have different ratio requirements for mixed age groups.

Of note, Prince Edward Island has different indoor and outdoor ratios for children 24 months and older (they remain the same for infants), and Alberta doubles the allowable number of children to staff while children are sleeping.

Prince Edward Island only regulates group size for infants, with a maximum group size of six, the same as Alberta. They are somewhat larger in the other jurisdictions – eight in Manitoba, 10 in Ontario and 12 in British Columbia. Maximum group sizes for children who are 24 months are 12 in Manitoba, Alberta and British Columbia,

⁴⁸ Friendly, M. et al. (2009).

and 15 in Ontario; and for 3-year-olds are 16 in Manitoba and Alberta, 24 in Ontario and 25 in British Columbia.

In addition to the standard ratios, Ontario, Manitoba, Alberta and British Columbia allow for mixed age groups, each with different ratios according to the numbers and specific ages of children involved. British Columbia has a separate licensing category for mixed age groups – multi-age child care – with a maximum of eight children in each group, with one staff. PEI allows the group size for infants to be larger than six for a maximum of 24 percent of the time the infant is in care, providing the group includes preschool or school age children.

All of the selected jurisdictions exceed the recommended child to staff ratios of 15:1 for 3-year-olds in the European Commission quality targets and the 15:1 for 4-year-olds in the UNICEF benchmarks (UNICEF also recommends a maximum group size of 24 for this age group). However, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends lower child:staff ratios of 4:1 with a maximum group size of eight for two-year-olds, a 7:1 ratio and maximum group size of 14 for 3-year-olds, and an 8:1 ratio and maximum group size of 16 for 4- and 5-year-olds.

Alberta's ratios and group sizes are in line with other jurisdictions, but there are two areas of some concern. Alberta has different ratios for when children are awake and asleep, with allowable ratios doubling when children are asleep. This could easily result in one staff being alone with a fairly large group of children. In the case of an emergency, this may not necessarily be a safe situation, or it could result in children who wake early being required to remain on their cots or mats until other children wake or until a second staff is available. The other area of concern is the 6:1 child:staff ratio for a child of 24 months, which is slightly higher than the recommended 5:1 and slightly higher than most other jurisdictions. It is the same as Manitoba's; however, it is important to take into account that two-thirds of staff and at least one per group in Manitoba require at

a minimum a two-year diploma. In Alberta, with only one in three staff requiring a one-year certificate, and no requirements at a group level, it is likely that many groups have no staff with post-secondary ECE qualifications. All of the maximum group sizes suggest that there are two staff per group.

Staff education and certification

In all five selected jurisdictions, child care is considered a registered profession under the terms of the Canadian Free Trade Agreement (formerly the Agreement on Internal Trade). This means that educators who are certified/registered in one province can be certified at a comparable level in another province, without having to undergo additional training or assessment. Each of the jurisdictions specify levels of certification and the educational qualifications required for each level.

Ontario is the only jurisdiction with a College of Early Childhood Educators, a self-regulating body that has legislative recognition. The College establishes the requirements for registration, sets professional standards for ECEs, establishes requirements for ongoing professional learning and is responsible for disciplinary processes for professional misconduct. Ontario is also the only selected jurisdiction that has only one level of certification – that of Registered Early Childhood Educator, which requires, as a minimum, completion of a two-year diploma from a recognized public post-secondary institution. One staff per group of children must be a Registered Early Childhood Educator (RECE), but there is no requirement for other staff to have any training or qualifications. Directors must be an RECE and have at least two years' experience.

Manitoba has the highest educational requirements; two-thirds of all program staff in full day child care centres, and at least one per group, require at least a two-year diploma and certification as an ECE II. Other staff must have completed a 40-hour course and be certified as a Child Care Assistant within the first year of

employment. Directors require a post-diploma credential and certification as an ECE III.

In British Columbia, at least one staff per group of children age 3 years to kindergarten entry must have a one-year certificate and be certified as an Early Childhood Educator. In groups of children younger than 3 years, one staff per group must have a post-secondary basic certificate or two-year diploma and be certified as an Infant Toddler Educator; an additional staff must be certified as an Early Childhood Educator. All other staff must have completed at least one course of a basic early childhood education training program in child development, child guidance, or child health, safety and nutrition, and be certified as an Early Childhood Educator Assistant.

In Prince Edward Island, at least one staff per centre (in addition to the supervisor or director) must have at least a one-year certificate and be certified as an ECE II. A supervisor must have at least a two-year diploma and be certified as an ECE III, as well as have at least 3,900 hours experience.

Alberta requires one in three staff to have a one-year certificate and be certified as a Child Development Worker. A centre supervisor must have completed a two-year diploma and be certified as a Child Development Supervisor. All other staff must have completed either a 45-hour college-level course in ELCC, a government-sponsored online orientation course, approved family day home provider training course, or specified high school or college course within six months of employment.

Neither Alberta nor PEI stipulate staff qualification requirements at the group level, just at the centre level, so it is possible to have one or more groups of children where no staff have post-secondary qualifications.

All jurisdictions have processes for reviewing and assessing international credentials and the individual course content of relevant non-ECE courses for comparison with the provincial requirements, which in some cases can be given

credit towards an ECE certificate or diploma. While coursework equivalency is also available in Alberta, Alberta is unique in granting certification to those with a variety of other credentials, through its equivalency process. For example, individuals with a two-year diploma in disability studies, kinesiology, social work or therapeutic rehabilitation are eligible for certification as a Child Development Worker. The equivalency process has been criticized by early childhood educators in Alberta, and in other provinces where staff certified in Alberta have to be granted certification, many of whom would not ordinarily qualify in that jurisdiction.

Ontario and Manitoba require one staff per group in school age centres to have a post-secondary credential. Alberta requires one in four school age staff to have at least a one-year certificate, but the requirements are not specified at the group level. Prince Edward Island and British Columbia require only orientation level training.

Prince Edward Island, Ontario and British Columbia require renewal of certification, along with a minimum number of hours of professional development. In order to recertify as an ECE assistant in BC, the individual must have completed at least one additional post-secondary course of basic ECE training.

It should be noted that centres may have policies that exceed the minimum requirements, but they are not required by legislation. According to available licensing reports, many centres have exemptions from the licensing requirements due to the lack of available qualified staff.

Educational requirements in family child care

Ontario and Alberta have no education or training requirements for regulated/approved family child care providers. Both of these provinces have an agency model of family child care, where the agencies may provide training, and providers are regularly monitored and supported by home visitors. It should be noted that in Alberta, family child care is defined in and operates under the authority of the *Child Care Licensing Act*, but is not included in regulation; roles, responsibilities and expectations are included in the *Family Day Home Standards Manual*.

In Prince Edward Island, Manitoba, British Columbia family child care providers are individually licensed and are monitored by provincial licensing officials. British Columbia and Prince Edward Island require 20 and 30 hours of training respectively, and Manitoba requires providers to complete a 40-hour course from a community college in family child care or early childhood education, within the first year of operating. In Manitoba, providers with an ECE credential may charge a higher rate than providers without; in British Columbia, a provider with an ECE credential may hold a different licence, In-Home Multi-Age, and care for additional children.

Number of children permitted in family child care

The number of children that regulated or licensed family child care providers can provide care for varies between the five comparison provinces, as does the number of children for whom unregulated, private family child care providers can provide care. Table 8 shows the maximum number of children permitted in unregulated and regulated/approved homes. The number of children that may be cared for in an unregulated home ranges from two in British Columbia to six in Alberta, not including the provider's own children. In Prince Edward Island, Ontario and Manitoba, the provider's own children are included in the maximum. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic all five jurisdictions included a provider's own children in the maximums in regulated/approved homes. In the summer of 2020, however, the Ministry of Children's Services in Alberta announced the lifting of this requirement. Prior to this change, which may or may not be made permanent, Alberta was the only jurisdiction that permitted more children in unregulated care than in approved day homes.

Table 8. Maximum children permitted in unregulated and regulated/approved family child care homes in selected jurisdictions

Province	Structure	Maximum children permitted in unregulated homes	Maximum children permitted in regulated homes
Prince Edward Island	Individually licensed	No more than 2 infants, 4 preschool-age children, 6 six school-age children, or 5 in mixed-aged groupings where only 1 child can be under 22 months and only 3 children can be preschool-age children. Includes provider's own children	8 including the provider's own children; no more than 3 under 2 years
Ontario	Licensed agency	5 under 13, including the provider's own children under 4; no more than 2 under 2 years	6 under 13, including the provider's own children under 4 years; no more than 2 under 2 years
Manitoba	Individually licensed	4 under 12 years including the provider's own children; no more than 2 under 2 years	8 under 12, including the provider's own children; no more than 5 children under 6 years, and 3 children under 2 years
Alberta	Contracted agency	6, excluding the provider's own children	6, including the provider's own children; no more than 3 under 3 years and 2 under 2 years (the Ministry of Children's Services relaxed the requirement excluding a provider's own children in Spring 2020 in response to the Pandemic)
British Columbia	Individually licensed	2 children or one sibling group, excluding the provider's own children	7; if any child is younger than 12 months, no more than 3 under 48 months, and no more than 1 under 12 months If no child is younger than 12 months, maximum is 4 under 48 months old, and no more than 2 children under 24 months old

Source: The author's review of provincial child care legislation and regulations

Space requirements

Legislated indoor space requirements in the selected jurisdictions range from 2.8 square metres/child to 3.7 square metres/child across jurisdictions, with a greater range among the outdoor space requirements. Indoor requirements are for net floor area for children's play space. Table 9 shows the requirements for the amount and location of indoor and outdoor space.

Alberta's indoor space requirements are in keeping with the other selected jurisdictions, but the outdoor requirements are much lower. The outdoor space requirements for infants is of real concern. Where most provinces require between 5-7 square metres/child regardless of age, Alberta requires 2 square metres/child for 50 percent of the enrolled children younger than 19 months.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ See the following study for a discussion of outdoor play spaces in Alberta child care programs: <https://getoutsideandplay.ca/licensing-regulation-project/>

Table 9. Minimum space requirements in licensed child care centres in selected jurisdictions

Province	Indoor space requirements	Outdoor space requirements	Location of outdoor space
Prince Edward Island	3.5 m ² /child, excluding closets, hallways, entryways, kitchens, washrooms, storage or dedicated sleep space for infants	7 m ² /child	Adjacent to the centre, or where none is available, other outdoor space may be used if safely accessible and within reasonable distance. Outdoor space may be shared with another centre as long as it is not used by more than one operator at a time
Ontario	2.8 m ² /child unobstructed floor space for infants, toddlers, preschoolers; 2.58 m ² /child for children in kindergarten or older In a centre for children with special needs, 5 m ² /child Programs for infants, toddlers, preschoolers must be on or below the second storey, unless approved by a director	5.6 m ² /child based on licensed capacity	Must be at ground level and adjacent to the premises, unless otherwise approved by a director
Manitoba	3.3 m ² /child, excluding hallways, washrooms, food preparation area, storage space, infant sleep space, or other space not used by the children for play 2.3 m ² of floor area for each child while the child is sleeping	7 m ² /child and accommodates the greater of 50% of the number of licensed spaces or 55 m. A minimum of 50% must be grass, sand or a similar surface	Must be located within 350 metres of the centre for children younger than school age; and within 700 meters for school age children
Alberta	3 m ² /child net floor area	2 m ² /child under 19 mo.; 4.5 m ² /child 19 mo. or older, to accommodate 50% of the licensed capacity	Adjacent to or within safe and easy walking distance from the program premises
British Columbia	3.7 m ² /child, excluding hallways, built-in storage areas, bathrooms and fixed or large appliances	6 m ² /child; or, if more than one care type is provided, must meet the requirements for the largest maximum group size	Must be enclosed in a manner that is suitable for the age and development of children. If not on site, distance is not specified

Source: The author's review of provincial child care legislation and regulations

Inclusion of children with special needs

- Manitoba is the only one of the selected jurisdictions that includes in regulation a requirement for licensees to submit an inclusion policy for children with additional support needs, and to have an inclusive daily program. In addition, the Manitoba regulations specify the types of funding that may be available to support inclusion.
- While not in regulation, but through a Ministerial Directive, Prince Edward Island requires all Early Years Centres to be inclusive of children with special needs.⁵⁰ Included in the PEI regulation are the certification requirements for an inclusion support worker.
- Ontario regulations define a child with special needs, what is required for an individualized plan, as well the requirements for a resource teacher who provides support to programs who include children with special needs, but inclusion is not a requirement. Child care centres for children with special needs require a child:staff ratio of 4 to 1 for children older than 2 years and younger than 6 years, with a maximum group size of four, and 1:3 for children older than 6 years and younger than 13 years, with a maximum group size of three. All staff must be “qualified employees.”
- BC requires a facility that provides care to a child with additional support needs to ensure that the physical structure and program of activities are modified to meet the needs of the child. BC has a classification of Special Needs Educator Certificate and requires an employee who provides care to a child with additional support needs to have the training, experience and necessary skills. It also details the requirements for a care plan that is developed with the parent and any person requested by the parent.
- Alberta has no reference to children with additional support needs in regulation.

Licensing, monitoring and inspection

All provinces and territories have designated officials who license, monitor and inspect centres and family child care homes and agencies. However, there is little reference in regulation to either the frequency and nature of inspections or the responsibilities of the licensing officials, other than to provide a written report of the outcome of the inspection. The regulatory requirements focus on the obligations of the licensee to provide the required documentation, on how violations are handled and any penalties for non-compliance. Licences are renewed anywhere from one to three years, depending on the jurisdiction and centres may be issued a time-limited provisional licence while matters of non-compliance are being addressed.

Monitoring for compliance is approached in a similar manner across jurisdictions, with all including observations, a review of records and documentation, and interviews or discussions with the director and staff. A checklist is usually used to indicate compliance with particular regulations, along with supporting evidence of compliance or non-compliance, and any actions to be taken. Full inspections are usually undertaken when a licence is being renewed, and shorter regular inspections and monitoring visits, including those that are unannounced, to follow up on areas of non-compliance are undertaken with varying frequency.

Information about licensing and monitoring for licensees are usually available in online provincial manuals and licensing guides.

Following is an overview of available information on Alberta’s licensing and monitoring procedures, as well as a summary of key informant comments on their experiences with the licensing process.

⁵⁰ More than 2/3 of all full day centres in PEI are designated Early Years Centres.

Alberta

Information to support licensees

The Alberta Child Care Licensing Handbook provides information on the licensing process; inspections, monitoring and enforcement; reporting incidents and certification. It includes:

- The information needed to apply for a child care licence, and lists the documents that will be sent in a licensing application package, including a program plan template that outlines required information to be submitted about staffing, and administrative policies and procedures
- What to expect during licensing visits and how to prepare for them. After an initial licence inspection, licensees usually receive a minimum of two licensing visits/year, with additional inspections if non-compliance is found, or if there has been a complaint that requires investigation. It outlines the type of enforcement actions that may be taken, which may include a condition on the licence, an order to remedy, a variation of the licence, a verbal warning, and where there is a history of non-compliance or significant risk to children, the licence may be suspended or cancelled. It also includes information on the appeal process.
- Requirements for reporting serious incidents, and information on what type of incident must be reported
- Information on the certification requirements for staff and links to online resources and forms for applying for certification
- A list of forms available on the Ministry website, including licensing and renewal applications checklists, various reporting forms, program templates, exemption requests, and appeal forms.

Information to support family day home agencies and providers

Family day home agencies are not licensed, but they must operate in accordance with standards

established under the authority of the *Child Care Licensing Act*. The *Family Day Home Standards Manual for Alberta* includes the standards for both the agency and the day home. The agencies are responsible to monitor the homes for compliance with the standards, and Children's Services is responsible to monitor the agencies' compliance. Agencies are required to monitor providers at least six times/year. Agencies are required to have policies and procedures in place to address complaints. The manual includes a list of forms that Children's Services and the agencies are required to complete and maintain. It does not include information on non-compliance with the standards.

Other support to licensees

The government contracts with the Alberta Resource Centre for Quality Enhancement (ARCQE) to provide support to a number of operators who have been found to have significant licensing infractions. Regional offices identify operators who are to receive this support; identified programs are required to work with ARCQE to address the non-compliance issues. The Ministry of Children's Services also provides business support services to child care organizations that require organizational or operational supports through a contracted third-party provider. In addition, the Ministry provides additional supports to help organizations meet the needs of children with exceptional needs as well as supports to help them promote healthy eating and physical activity.

It appears that considerably more public funding is spent in efforts to bring many centres into compliance with minimum licensing requirements than was spent on the ongoing quality improvement, mentoring and leadership development undertaken by qualified service vendors working with programs that were in compliance, and which may well better serve the sector and the quality of care for children.

Sector experiences with licensing and inspections

While not representative of the sector as a whole, key informants (from different parts of the province and types of programs) reported positively on their experiences with licensing and inspections.

Key informants who have, or have had, direct involvement with licensing officials were asked about their perceptions of the licensing process, the inspection visits and relationship with their licensing officer. They commented on the positive relationships they generally had with their licensing officers, and, for the most part, they found the monitoring and inspection process manageable. A number mentioned that licensing officers were often reluctant to make suggestions, and that mentoring or support was not part of their role. One key informant mentioned that the licensing officer would call upon her to help mentor those establishing new centres.

Key informants made frequent mention of some confusion and uncertainty regarding the implementation of Flight: Alberta's Early Learning and Care Framework and how those best practices would fit within the child care regulations that were under review during the conduct of the current study. They also reported some uncertainty regarding reopening requirements and procedures following child care centre closures due to COVID-19 pandemic.

When asked about any "red tape" or undue burdens on facilities, reporting requirements and follow-up for critical incidents were found to be onerous by some key informants, especially in situations where a child had a minor accident and treatment was dealt with by the child's parent. An example was given of a child having a minor injury that the staff thought may need stitches. The parent was called, picked up the child and went to the hospital for stitches. Following the regulations, the centre reported the incident and had to subsequently submit significant paperwork related to staff certification, hours of work that day, staff:child ratios at the time of the

incident, and records related to the individual child. The key informant suggested that the process is a deterrent to reporting and expressed concern that more serious incidents went unreported as a result.

Public reporting on licensing and inspections

Licensed centres are required to post their inspection reports in a visible location, and day home agencies are required to provide parents with information on a provider's compliance history.

Information on inspection results for individual centres and day home agencies can be found on the government website, with the Child Care Lookup tool. It lists the type of inspection (such as renewal licence inspection, routine inspection, provider review, incident report, follow up to enforcement action), any non-compliance found and any enforcement action taken.

A data set of information on all child care programs can be found on the government Open Data website. It provides program details, such as location, capacity, ages served and includes inspection and non-compliance information. The data set is updated quarterly.

Provinces have similar approaches to licensing and monitoring, and selected jurisdictions provide various online resources related to licensing and regulations, including licensing manuals, and standards of practice. Examples of unique features of each selected jurisdiction are summarized below.

Prince Edward Island

The PEI Early Learning and Child Care Board is responsible for licensing and licence renewal of early learning and child care programs, under the authority to the *Early Learning and Child Care Act*. The board is also responsible for monitoring and investigating complaints. Staff from the Department of Education and Lifelong Learning act as a resource to the board and carry out activities on its behalf.

Information for licensees

A business plan, service plan and staffing plans have to accompany an application for a licence. The Licence Application Guidelines include details of what those plans should include and provides a template for both the business and service plans.

Other support for licensees

In addition to licensing officials, who monitor and inspect child care facilities, the Department of Education and Lifelong Learning has an Early Childhood Resource Team, made up of early childhood and early literacy specialists and early childhood coaches, who provide support to Early Years Centres. The team works with supervisors and staff to enhance learning environments, enhance the integration of children with additional support needs, and encourage a community of learning. Centres develop quality improvement plans in collaboration with the coach. Participation is mandatory for Early Years Centres and voluntary for other centres.

More than two-thirds of centres are designated Early Years Centres (EYC); EYCs must meet standards higher than the minimum required in regulation, and designated centres receive core operating funding to meet those requirements. The Early Years Designation Criteria lays out the requirements for designation with respect to staffing, children, parents, policies and program.

There is no public reporting on licensing inspections.

Ontario

Six regional offices with six licensing and compliance managers and approximately 60 program advisors are responsible for licensing. The program advisors conduct inspections, assess compliance with licensing requirements, follow up on complaints, support operators to maintain compliance and encourage the development of quality programs. Full licences must be renewed every two years and the maximum term for a

provisional licence is one year. Beginning in August 2016, a new tiered licensing process was introduced for centres that had been licensed for at least three years. Based on compliance history, centres are assigned to a Tier 1, 2 or 3. Criteria for assigning a tier include whether or not a centre has maintained a regular licence, has been subject to any enforcement actions, has had full compliance, and they have previously received a provisional licence. The tier determines the frequency of and type of inspection the centre will receive as well as the duration of the licence. Tier 1 centres have abbreviated inspection visits and may be issued a licence for up to two years, with an interim unannounced visit. Tier 2 centres have abbreviated inspection visits and may receive a licence for one year or less; Tier 3 centres have full renewal inspections and may receive a licence for up to one year, as well as additional compliance monitoring.

Information for licensees

The Ministry has numerous online information and training resources for licensees and family home child care providers. To apply for a child care centre or home child care agency licence, prospective licensees must enrol in the Ministry's web-based Child Care Licensing System. Once enrolled, applicants can view a presentation on the application process.

Some of the key resources to support operators are listed below.

- The Child Care Centre Licensing Manual: a 177-page document that provides information on the legislative and regulatory requirements for licensed child care. It is intended to
 - Help centres meet licensing requirements by describing the intent of the regulations and indicators of compliance
 - Support centres to maintain compliance by suggesting best practices and providing additional information
 - Connect centres with other resources to deepen knowledge and inform best practices

There is also a Home Child Care Agency Licensing Manual and a Before-and-After School Licensing Guideline

- Child Care and Early Years Act Licensing Standards
- A licensing kit that provides
 - Sample policies, procedures and forms that must be adapted to reflect the individual program
 - Sample templates that can be used to meet regulatory, policy, documentation and record-keeping requirements
 - Numerous tip sheets for developing policies and procedures
 - Sample floor, site and playground plans, outdoor supervision plan
 - Sample template for developing an individualized support plan
- A self-test on the provincial licensing requirements (one for supervisors and licensees, and one for child care staff and the general public)
- Child care licensing system reference guide for applicants/licensees
- Child Care Licensing System Registration Video for Licensed Child Care Programs

Public reporting on licensing and inspections

Confirmed violations are posted to the Registry of Child Care Violations and can be searched online. The registry includes violations by unlicensed providers.

Regulation review

The *Child Care and Early Years Act* of 2014, requires that the legislation is reviewed five years after it was proclaimed in 2015. The review takes into account the current government priorities, including the Ministry of Education two-year Burden Reduction Plan. The new plan for child care includes:

- Reducing red tape and administrative burden

- Increasing choice and availability
- Making child care more affordable
- Improving quality and delivering high standards of care

In September 2019, a set of regulatory amendments took effect. They included revisions to streamline licensee reporting obligations, clarifications to terminology, and removal of requirements perceived to be outdated.

In October 2019, the Ministry of Education established the Cross-Sectoral Early Years and Child Care Advisory Group to provide a forum for partners to provide input on policy and regulatory matters. Its mandate is to discuss and provide feedback on:

- Ideas to improve the legislative and regulatory framework for child care and early years.
- Key initiatives under the government's new child care plan including a provincial statement on quality, an inclusion strategy and opportunities to expand and enhance home-based child care.
- Potential opportunities to reduce regulatory and administrative burden.

In July 2020 the Ministry also invited feedback from the child care sector and other stakeholders via an online survey. A public report on the findings of the consultation is expected to be available in Fall 2020.

Role of local government

Municipalities have a mandated role in the delivery and management of ELCC and have taken various approaches to quality improvement. For example:

- The City of Toronto assesses all programs with which it contracts, using the Assessment for Quality Improvement (AQI), a validated tool, developed by the City to assess the quality of a

child care program.⁵¹ The AQI evaluates 3 main areas: programming, learning environment and interactions. The results of this annual assessment are posted online for parents to view. The AQI also serves as a self-evaluation and planning tool for child care operators, and educators. The City has four online resource videos – an introduction to the tool as well as videos for Boards, operators, front line workers.

The Children's Services Service Plan 2015-2019 guides the planning and management of services for children and families. The service plan is developed in close consultation with stakeholders, including parents, service providers and other community partners, and is driven by community priorities. The plan reviews the role of Children's Services, provides an environmental scan of influences affecting the system, provides a snapshot of the sector, and sets strategic directions and actions for the five years.

- The Region of Waterloo ELCC service plan framework uses the eight elements of a quality system⁵² to guide system planning. The 2016-2020 service plan notes "High quality care evolves from a high-quality ELCC system, and Children's Services is committed to supporting a high-quality system."⁵³ A focus on quality is the core of the service plan. In addition to supporting quality at a program level, Waterloo assesses its own role in supporting quality by setting and reviewing progress in achieving its goals for quality improvement at a systems level. Through consultation and collaboration with other municipalities, community organizations and sector experts, the Region developed a co-constructed framework for quality in 2016. The framework was further refined

⁵¹ See <https://www.toronto.ca/community-people/community-partners/early-learning-child-care-partners/assessment-for-quality-improvement-aqi/> for details.

⁵² Friendly, M., & Beach, J. (2005).

⁵³ See <https://www.regionofwaterloo.ca/en/living-here/resources/Documents/Childrens-Services-/2016-2020-ELCC-Service-Plan-Accessible.pdf> for details of the service plan.

and transformed into Early Years Engage: Continuous quality improvement in Waterloo Region, a continuous quality improvement approach. The goal is to create a high-quality early years system where quality is embedded into all organizational processes at both the system level and program level. It focuses on setting goals, measuring and using data for planning, and involving all staff and board members.⁵⁴ It contains vision statements for both children and families, and for the early years community, for each of the eight elements of a quality system.

Manitoba

Any individual or group wanting to open a new child care centre must attend an initial information session provided by the Early Learning and Child Care Program.

Information for licensees

The Best Practices Licensing Manual for Early Learning and Child Care Centres is the primary resource for licensees. It provides:

- A general overview of the Manitoba child care standards and relevant sections of the *Community Child Care Standards Act*
- Information and resources to assist licensees in providing high-quality child care
- Guidelines that explain the intent of specific regulations and how to meet the requirements
- Best practices for selected regulations
- Information for centres and homes about the ongoing responsibilities for licensing
- The appeal process for the refusal to issue a licence, loss or suspension of a licence, terms and conditions on a licence, or orders respecting licensing requirements.

There is also a Best Practices Licensing Manual for Family and Group Child Care Homes.

⁵⁴ See <https://www.regionofwaterloo.ca/en/living-here/quality-improvement.aspx>.

Child care centres and licensed homes in Manitoba are required to have an inclusion policy; they must provide inclusive programming and individual program plans for children with additional support needs. The Guide to the Inclusion Support Program provides information on inclusive practice, developing a support team, program planning, and available funding.

Ninety-five percent of centres in Manitoba are run by non-profit organizations, with Boards of Directors largely made up of parents. As the legal employer, the boards are ultimately responsible to ensure that the regulatory requirements of a centre are met. The Ministry provides a Board Development Guide for centre directors and board members to understand the role and legal accountability of boards. It provides, among other things, information on planning and program governance, policies and procedures, financial management, and program, staff, board and agency evaluation. Each section of the guide contains links to further resources. There are also numerous worksheets to help boards operate effectively. An online training series is also available for boards that covers:

- The basic responsibilities and functioning of a board and its members
- The accountability and authority of the board of directors
- The elements of an effective meeting

Public reporting on licensing and inspections

Licensing orders are issued when a licensed facility is not in compliance with regulation. The order must be posted in a visible location in the centre or home. A complete list of licensing orders issued since 2003, and dates for compliance are listed online.

British Columbia

Child care licensing, monitoring and inspection of child care facilities in BC is the responsibility of local health authorities. The processes follow the same approach used for other community care

facilities, such as assisted living. The details of the licensing process, inspections and investigations are detailed in the *A Guide to Community Care Facility Licensing in British Columbia*. It provides extensive detail about roles and responsibilities; requirements of the *Community Care and Assisted Living Act*, the *Residential Care Regulation* and the *Child Care Licensing Regulation*, as well as other relevant provincial regulation; how licensing activities are approached; and key licensing activities and the processes and procedures used to carry them out.

Risk assessment

Any areas of non-compliance found following a routine inspection, are used to inform a risk assessment. It is a two-part process

- Part A involves the completion of a risk inspection matrix. The matrix includes the scope of the non-compliance – that is, whether it is an isolated incident, shows a pattern of non-compliance or widespread observation of non-compliance, and the severity of the non-compliance – ranging from potential for minimal harm to potential for imminent harm/immediate harm.
- Part B involves an assessment of the operational history of the facility, by reviewing the inspection reports for the previous three years. Licensing officers attach a value, on a scale from 1 (met requirements) to 5 (did not meet requirements), on the licensee's history of reportable incidents and how they were addressed, as well as responses to non-compliance identified in previous inspections, and compliance with any terms or conditions. This assessment forms an Operational History score. In addition, licensing officers evaluate the licensee's history of and compliance with investigations. Investigations are scored on a scale of 1 (met requirements) to 10 (did not meet requirements) and they result in an Investigation History score.

The results of Part A and Part B form a Total Risk Assessment Score, with a score of 3-13 indicating

low risk, a score of 14-20 indicating medium risk and a score of 21-40 indicating high risk.

Standards of practice

The Act gives the Director of Licensing the authority to specify policies and standards of practices for all or a particular type of community care facility. There are four Standards of Practice for licensed child care: they are considered and monitored as part of licensing inspection visits.

- **Active play:** Stipulates the type and duration of active play required on a daily basis, as well as limits on the use of screen time. It includes a requirement for licensees to develop an Active Play Policy and Screen Use Policy.
- **Family child care:** Identifies the parts of a licensee's home in which family child care may operate, types of buildings in which family child care may not operate, descriptions of what constitutes a home-like environment, and the physical space requirements.
- **Safe play space:** Provides details of space design, play zones, considerations for outdoor landscaping, ground surfaces, materials and equipment, supervision of play spaces, maintenance and equipment, and use of shared space.
- **Water safety:** Covers practices and precautions to protect the health and safety of children when around bodies of water or during water play.

Other information for licensees

Numerous fact sheets and information booklets available on the Ministry website provide instructions and guidance to help licensees understand and comply with licensing requirements.⁵⁵

Other Support for licensees

The Ministry of Children and Family Development funds 38 Child Care Resource and Referral

Programs (CCRRs), across the province, many of which operate in multiple communities. CCRRs work in partnership with government to improve the accessibility, affordability and quality of child care in communities across the province. They provide information, training and resources to providers and operators, information and resources for parents, and compile information on all the homes and centres in their area.

Public reporting on licensing and inspections

Child care facilities are licensed by their local health authority. Information on licensing infractions is available on each Health Authority website.

Early learning frameworks

Most provinces and territories have developed early learning curriculum frameworks, including the five provinces examined for this report. They are:

- *PEI Early Learning Framework: Relationships, Environments, Experiences. The Curriculum Framework of the Preschool Excellence Initiative* (2011)
- *How does learning happen? Ontario's pedagogy for the early years* (2014)
- *Early Returns: Manitoba's Early Learning and Curriculum Framework for Preschool Centres and Nursery Schools; and its companion document Early Returns: Manitoba's Early Learning and Child Care Framework for Infant Programs* (2012)
- *Flight: Alberta's Early Learning and Care Framework. Play, Participation, Possibilities* (2014)
- *British Columbia Early Learning Framework* (2019)

Langford (2010) suggests that curriculum frameworks can be used in two ways: to stimulate discussion among educators and families about values, theories and beliefs about early learning, and to provide educators with the tools to

⁵⁵ See Instructions and Guidance for details. <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/family-social-supports/caring-for-young-children/running-daycare-preschool/rules-operating-licensed-day-care>

provide rich and stimulating environments for children.

Early learning frameworks that are used on a province-wide basis can support quality by ensuring greater consistency among ELCC providers, providing common goals for staff, ensuring greater continuity for children through their years in child care, and supporting educators in their practice. They help develop shared views and understandings of the needs of young children and how to support them.

It is beyond the scope of this paper to analyze and assess the details of each framework; however, it is worth noting that while each of the frameworks has unique aspects, there are a number of similarities across frameworks – they all view children as capable and eager learners, they all guide pedagogy and practice, and include questions for educators to reflect on their practice and to help build relationships with children and families. All approach learning through play, exploration and inquiry, with educators and children working together as co-constructors of knowledge.

The use of the curriculum framework is required in all ELCC settings in Manitoba and Ontario. In PEI it is required in Early Years Centres; in Alberta the *Flight* framework is required in the 122 ELCC centre demonstration sites providing \$25 per day child care; and the BC framework is required in all StrongStart Centres.⁵⁶

The frameworks range in length from 24 pages to 191 pages, and therefore some include more detail on goals, core concepts and reflections for educators than others.

- The Manitoba framework does not include specific learning goals or foundations, but focuses on interactions and relationships, environments, and planned and spontaneous

experiences. It emphasizes the importance of diversity and inclusion and how to incorporate them into curriculum.

- The Prince Edward Island framework describes the role of the early childhood educator and director, using the Occupational Standards for ECEs developed by the Child Care Human Resources Sector Council. It includes obligations to children, obligations to families and obligations to one's self and colleagues. It also includes a significant section on inclusion of children with additional support needs, with guidelines for inclusion and sample policies.
- The Ontario framework builds on the principles of the 2007 framework *Early Learning for Every Child Today: A Framework for Ontario Early Childhood Settings*. It includes goals for children, and expectations for programs.
- Both Ontario and British Columbia frameworks are intended for educators working with children from birth to 8 years; the others focus on children from birth to school entry.
- The 2019 BC framework is a significant revision of the 2008 early learning framework, and reflects the changes to social, political, economic and cultural realities. It aims to contribute to reconciliation with Indigenous people and was developed in consultation with the BC Aboriginal Society, the First Nations Education Steering Committee and Métis Nation BC.

"It strives to contribute to lasting reconciliation with Indigenous people, which is anchored by the province's cross-government commitment to fully adopt and implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), and the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). Recognizing and acknowledging how Euro-western practices are embedded in mainstream educational pedagogy, this framework's intention is to contribute to reconciliation through

⁵⁶ StrongStart BC programs are free parent/caregiver and child school-based drop in programs, led by qualified early childhood educators. They are for children from infants to school entry, and are designed for early learning development.

implicitly and explicitly honouring Indigenous authorities in education". (p. 4)

- Alberta's framework was developed by a research team in collaboration with a wide range of stakeholders, including representatives of professional and community organizations, post-secondary institutions and government. The framework was piloted in numerous child care settings. Staff in the demonstration sites receive extensive coaching and mentoring support by pedagogical leaders, which has led to communities of learning in different communities. There appears to be very strong buy-in for the use of the curriculum on the part of the sector.

The government of Alberta has proposed to increase online training and coaching in support of the framework for all centres and day homes as part of the renegotiated Alberta-Canada Early Learning Framework Agreement. Done well, and with well-qualified pedagogical leaders and coaches, this proposed change can serve as a positive step in quality improvement.

Support for the workforce

A competent, stable workforce in adequate supply is key to quality provision and the expansion of services. With challenges in recruiting and retaining qualified educators, provinces have undertaken a number of initiatives in an effort to increase and stabilize the early childhood workforce.

Wage support

All provinces and territories provide some form of funding to licensed/approved child care that either directly or indirectly supports wages.

Alberta contributes significantly to wages, formerly through accreditation funding and now wage top-up grants. It is second only to Newfoundland and Labrador in terms of the dollar amounts per hour it provides for eligible staff. However, as part of other recently

announced funding cut-backs, the 16 percent Benefit Contribution Grant is no longer provided.

Alberta also provides professional development funding to assist early childhood educators with the cost of post-secondary tuition and approved conferences and workshops. This funding is intended to help staff achieve higher levels of certification, and increase their capacity in leadership, management, administration and early childhood education knowledge. Amounts of funding vary by type of professional development, certification level of the applicant and hours of work. In total, the maximum annual funding for staff working 80 hours/month or more is \$1,000 for a Child Development Assistant or Child Development Worker (with a maximum \$500 for conferences and workshops), and \$1,700 for a Child Development Supervisor (with a maximum of \$200 for conferences and workshops). For those staff working fewer hours per month the amounts available are lower.

The Ministry of Children's Services' decision to discontinue the voluntary accreditation process was met with mixed reviews by key informants. While there were a number of criticisms of the process and the actual value of accreditation as a measure of quality, given that more than 90 percent of programs were accredited, the concern was raised that its discontinuation might result in more centres aiming for the minimum requirements rather than working towards quality improvement. Another concern raised was the replacement of accreditation funding with a wage top-up grant. In addition to the loss of the Benefit Contribution Grant, there were concerns that the provision of wage enhancements in the form of a grant might mean that they could be more easily withdrawn or reduced in the future.

The Northern Allowance (which was discontinued at the end of June) provided further additional funding to support the recruitment and retention of staff in child care centres, out-of-school programs and family day home agencies in the Wood Buffalo region. It provided additional funding for wages, beyond the accreditation

amounts, and an additional \$500/year for professional development.

Prince Edward Island has an integrated approach to program funding for its Early Years Centres, as follows:

- A provincial wage scale sets out what centres must pay staff based on each staff member's qualifications and experience, even if they exceed the minimum regulatory requirements for the number of trained staff.
- Based on the centre's staffing and benefits cost, an operating amount is calculated, with 78% allocated for staffing costs and 22% for all other costs, including occupancy, program costs and professional development. This provides an incentive to hire more than the minimum required number of trained staff.
- The total revenue (from parents' regulated fees) is deducted from the calculated centre operating budget, and the balance is paid as an operating grant. Grants are paid on a quarterly basis, following analysis of submitted financial statements.
- Centres receive additional funds for inclusion support.

Ontario transfers funds for child care on a per capita basis to municipalities, who in turn determine how much is allocated to operating funding and how much to fee subsidies, with no specific requirement for funds to be dedicated to wages. The only requirement is that 4.1 percent of the municipal allocation must be spent on special needs resourcing. Municipalities also share in the costs associated with delivering child care.

In 2015 Ontario introduced a wage enhancement/home child care enhancement grant, which is administered by the municipalities separately from the operating funding. Directors apply for the grant on behalf of staff, who receive a wage increase of \$2/hour and home child care providers who receive an additional \$20/day.

Manitoba provides operating grants to non-profit centres and to family child care providers,

based on a "unit" funding model, which takes into account the regulated parent fee and the differences in staff:child ratios for each age group. This approach provides programs with funding equity across age groups. Each "unit" is made up of the fee subsidy, the parent fee and the operating grant multiplied by the number of children in the unit, based on legislated staff:child ratios. Since 2015, the unit amount has been \$289/day. The unit funding translates into annual operating grants for non-profit child care centres of:

- \$10,985 per infant space
- \$3,983 per preschool space
- \$1,557 school age space

For family child care providers, annual operating grants are:

- \$1,766 per infant space
- \$1,262 per preschool space
- \$739 per school age space.

Since the introduction of the unit funding model, the Manitoba Child Care Association (MCCA) has developed salary guidelines based on classification, position and experience, and in 2007, established a Market Competitive Salary Guideline Scale that is updated annually. While these guidelines are taken into account in determining the amounts of operating grants, the actual wages are established by individual parent boards. In recent years, there has been no increase to the unit funding, and, as a result, wages have not kept up with the levels in the MCCA wage scales.

In addition to the annual operating grants to funded centres and homes, and selected grants and funds to eligible programs, Manitoba Early Learning and Child Care provides support for the employer contribution to pension plans, up to 4% of employee salary and matching RRSP contributions for family child care providers up to a maximum of \$1,700/year.

Manitoba also provides support to Child Care Assistants who are enrolled in a post-secondary workplace training program. The staff

replacement grant covers the cost of a substitute to replace the staff who participates in the training program two days a week, who receive their full salary during the training period (usually two years).

British Columbia provides operating funding to eligible licensed centres and homes through the Child Care Operating Funding (CCOF) program. It has three components:

- Base CCOF funding to assist with the day-to-day running costs of the child care facility. The amount varies by licence type, hours of operation and enrolment. To be eligible for funding, centres and providers have to apply and must be in good standing with the Ministry of Children and Family Development, agree to provide care to subsidized children, make every effort to provide an inclusive environment for all children, including children with additional support needs, and complete an annual Provider Profile Survey.
- The Child Care Fee Reduction Initiative (CCFRI) provides funding to eligible providers to reduce parent fees, without having an impact on wages. Providers have to apply to enrol in the program and must be in receipt of CCOF base funding. The payments reduce monthly parent fees by \$350 for infant/toddlers in group care and \$200 in family child care, and \$100/month for children aged 3 years to kindergarten age in group care and \$60 in family child care. Providers enrolled in CCFRI also receive an administrative top up equal to 20 percent of their base CCOF funding to offset the cost of participating in the program. Any fee increases for participating providers must be approved by the Ministry.
- The Early Childhood Educator Wage Enhancement provides a \$2/hour wage enhancement for front-line ECEs, plus an 18.73 percent payment for statutory benefits. Eligible providers must be enrolled in CCOF and participation in the CCFRI. Eligible staff must hold a valid Early Childhood Educator, Infant and Toddler Educator and/or Special

Needs Educator certificate. ECE Assistants are not eligible.

Ongoing engagement and consultation with the sector

Stakeholders can play an important role in working with government to support quality improvement. Engaging stakeholders can help with:

- Building a shared understanding of quality and supporting the development of quality goals
- Clarifying roles, responsibilities and expectations
- Ensuring voices from across the sector are heard when decisions are being made, and identifying potential implications of those decisions
- Exchanging knowledge, perspectives and experiences with various aspects of policy, funding and delivery
- Ensuring transparency and increasing buy-in related to proposed changes.

The selected provinces have a variety of mechanisms for ongoing stakeholder engagement.

Prince Edward Island

The Early Years Advisory Committee is chaired by senior staff in the Department of Education and Lifelong Learning, and membership includes representatives from other government departments (including Health and Community Services), the Early Childhood Development Association (ECDA), and representatives from Indigenous groups, post-secondary institutions, child care centres, family resource centres and parents. The committee advises on broad ELCC policy matters, including the PEI Action Plan under the Multilateral Agreement.

The Early Learning and Child Care Board is established by legislation. It has a role specific to licensing and monitoring, and advising the Minister on regulatory issues. The Board is made

up of nine members appointed by the Minister, representatives from the professional association, parents, and government officials, and is supported by resource staff from the Department.

In addition to the formal bodies established by government, the department works in close collaboration with the ECDA, the provincial professional early childhood association. The Department provides the ECDA with core funding and free office space. They have an annual contract with government, based on the ECDA providing professional development for the sector, serving on stakeholder committees, and participating in communication activities with the Department (for example, the ECDA prepared the PEI Guide to Quality Child Care in collaboration with the Department); they also receive funding to undertake specific projects.

Ontario

In October 2019, the government established the Cross-Sectoral Early Years and Child Care Advisory Group. It is made up of a wide range of stakeholders, intended to provide a forum for the Ministry to engage with partners to discuss and identify the potential implications of the Ministry's decisions and plans in key areas of early childhood policy. The areas include the current regulation review and related policy decisions.

Municipalities, which have a mandated role in ELCC, may also have advisory bodies. For example, the **City of Toronto** has a Child Care and Early Learning Forum, made up of service providers, policy makers and planners. It provides an opportunity for Children's Services and other planning and decision-making bodies to gather input and feedback from the ELCC sector on related initiatives, and also enables ELCC sector representatives to receive information and ask questions of the City, the Province and School Boards on ELCC-related matters. The forum meets three times a year.

Manitoba

In 1996, a 24-member Regulatory Review

Committee was appointed to develop recommendations for simplifying the regulations, systems and policies, and increasing flexibility and accessibility for families. A number of the committee's recommendations were accepted, including a simplified subsidy application process, funding to all non-profit centres and homes to support children with special needs, and full funding to all partially and unfunded non-profit centres. The committee proposed a unit funding model for child care, which was implemented in 1999-2000. At the request of the Minister, the committee then developed a vision for child care. It envisioned a "universal, accessible, affordable, quality child care system that provides for optimal development of children and support to families throughout Manitoba," noting that these four key elements needed to be considered as integral to building a comprehensive child care system. The vision was circulated for public consultation, and as a result of the public responses, Manitoba developed its first Five-Year Plan for Early Learning and Child Care. It included increased operating funding to providers to improve staff wages, a public education and recruitment campaign, mandatory training for family child care providers, and a review of the subsidy system and the daily fees.

In December 2019, the government established the Early Learning Consultation Table to inform the government on issues related to ELCC. Members are appointed by the Minister and the table is co-chaired by a member of the committee and a representative from the Early Learning and Child Care Program.

British Columbia

The Provincial Child Care Council (PCCC) is established in regulation, through the Child Care BC Act, comprising 14-21 members appointed by the Minister. It provides advice on the policies and programs that affect the affordability, quality, stability and accessibility of child care in BC, and is consulted on significant policy, regulatory or legislative changes. The PCCC, meets as a full Council for two days approximately three

times a year, and has three working groups that separately address accessibility, quality, and affordability. The Minister usually participates for at least part of each council session.

Alberta

Alberta does not have any formal mechanism for ongoing consultation or collaboration with the sector. During the Regulation Review, an ad hoc committee was established to give input to the government, but details on membership, mandate, or the nature or content of the discussions were not made public.

Municipal involvement in Early Learning and Child Care

Alberta

Edmonton

The City of Edmonton and End Poverty Edmonton (EPE) support the Edmonton Early Learning and Care Steering Committee, established in 2017, to plan and implement an integrated system of early learning and care within the City of Edmonton. In Fall 2018, the steering committee presented a proposal to the City of Edmonton Community and Public Services Committee to establish the Edmonton Council on Early Learning and Care. The proposal was approved and the Council was established in March 2019, with the City and EPE identifying partners to serve on the Council. Membership includes representatives from the City of Edmonton, Alberta Children's Services, Edmonton Public and Catholic School Boards, The Muttart Foundation, the Edmonton Community Foundation, the Community-University Partnership for the Study of Children, Youth, and Families at the University of Alberta, child care providers and other stakeholders. The Council's areas of focus include developing and supporting partnerships between local government and community-based services, designing and building strategies that build capacities of community-based service providers and school

boards, and increasing quality services by setting service goals and supporting service delivery standards that exceed those in current regulation.

Drayton Valley

Between the 1970s and 1990s, a number of Alberta municipalities played a strong role in advocacy, planning for, and supporting non-profit and publicly operated child care facilities. While there has been little municipal involvement in direct provision since that time, there have been a few exceptions; the towns of Beaumont, Jasper and Drayton Valley currently operate and support child care centres, as does the Municipal District of Opportunity.

In 2006, Drayton Valley, a town of approximately 7,000 in central Alberta identified the lack of quality child care as a barrier to attracting workers to work in the oil field services industries. An Early Childhood Development Centre plan was developed by Community Futures Alberta, which recommended a publicly delivered child care facility to address the need. With financing arranged by a debenture, and additional capital from the province through its space creation fund, an 88-space centre was built, and opened in 2009. It serves children from 12 months to 12 years. Staff are employees of the town; they are not unionized, but are paid at union rates, and have comprehensive benefits; most of the staff are certified as 'Child Development Supervisors', and the centre requires all staff to be certified at the time of employment, rather than within six months as required by regulation. Drayton Valley does not experience the recruitment and retention of qualified staff challenges facing many other centres. Prior to becoming an ELCC site, the town contributed approximately \$200,000/year to keep the fees affordable for parents while ensuring good wages and benefits for staff. The centre works in close collaboration with the elementary school and, until the 2020 funding cuts for children with disabilities, served a number of PUF-eligible children in the child care centre. The centre freely shares all the operating policies, procedures and related documentation with

other centres and when a new centre is being developed in the region. The regional licensing officer has often asked the centre manager to provide support, advice and mentorship to the new operators. The support of the municipality has helped ensure a stable and well qualified workforce to deliver quality care, and the financial security to remain operational in the current environment of provincial cuts and the challenges of COVID-19.⁵⁷

British Columbia

Vancouver

The City of Vancouver is a leader in addressing child care issues at a local level, and has been involved in providing space for non-profit child care at a nominal cost, planning for child care and providing a number of grants to support child care organizations and to help make child care more affordable for families.

The City:

- Provides annual grants to two community partners that help support quality:
 - Westcoast Child Care Resource Centre develops and provides professional development and training for educators, offers resource and curriculum materials through its library, conducts an annual fee survey by care type, provides information and support to parents looking for child care, and provides the City with space statistics.
 - The Vancouver Society of Children's Centres (VSOCC) operates 14 City-facilitated Centres in downtown Vancouver. Funding from the City contributes to management and administration. VSOCC provides support to other non-profits through the design and development phase of new facilities, contributing to quality beyond its own centres.

- Prepares and regularly updates child care needs and supply maps by network areas and individual neighbourhoods, using a child care calculator that estimates current need and projected need from growth. The City sets targets for expansion and aims to meet approximately 50 percent of unmet need.
- Secures child care through the land use development process, with spaces built by developers and turned over to the City, which in turn leases the space at a nominal cost to non-profit operators. The City has also made space available in parks, on other city lands and in civic buildings. In partnership with the Vancouver School Board, the City provided funding for new child care facilities in seismic replacement schools.
- Developed design guidelines that are applied to centres built as a condition of rezoning and for development applications involving child care facilities.⁵⁸ The guidelines contain detailed provisions intended to facilitate the creation of safe and secure indoor and outdoor environments for children that provide a range of developmental opportunities. The guidelines exceed the provincial minimums for square footage, include design and layout considerations for indoor and outdoor space, and contain requirements for contiguous indoor/outdoor space. They reflect international standards and best practice in children's environments. Application of the guidelines has resulted in the creation of high-quality, physical play environments for children and work environments for staff. (It should be noted that Manitoba and Ontario have also child care design guidelines).

In 2004, City created the Joint Childcare Council (JCC) to bring together public and non-profit partners to plan for and support the provision of non-profit care. The council sets out a framework for the City of Vancouver, Vancouver School Board and Vancouver Park Board, and community partners to work toward building a

⁵⁷ Details of the municipal role in the Drayton Valley facility was provided by the centre manager.

⁵⁸ City of Vancouver Community Services. (1993).

comprehensive range of childhood education and care services. The public partners work together on child care issues of mutual interest, and in recent years the JCC has also focused on advocacy to senior governments and creating opportunities for quality professional development for child care staff.

Local planning

In 2018, the Ministry of Children and Family Development provided \$2.85 million for the Community Child Care Planning Program, which is administered by the Union of BC Municipalities. It provides funding to municipalities to conduct child care needs assessments, identify space creation targets for the next 10 years, and develop plans to meet those targets. As of 2020, 74 municipalities across the province received funding through this program.

Summary

Provinces and territories have both regulatory and non-regulatory measures that support quality provision. The regulatory measures that impact structural elements of quality focus include child:staff ratios and group size, staff qualifications and physical space requirements. The educational and certification requirements are lower in Alberta than in Ontario, Manitoba and British Columbia. They are higher than Prince Edward Island; however, in addition to licensing and monitoring inspections, PEI has an Early Childhood Resource Team that provides coaching and mentoring support to its centres to support ongoing quality improvement.

Elimination of the current equivalency process and a requirement for certification to be renewed regularly would bring Alberta more in line with the other jurisdictions.

Alberta's child:staff ratios and group sizes are comparable to the other jurisdictions examined, with some concern noted about the requirements for children aged 19 months-3 years.

The single, most frequently identified issue raised by key informants was the need for improved staff qualifications. Comments included the need to phase out orientation-level qualifications, require certification prior to employment, require renewal of certification along with required professional development, and revise the equivalency process to ensure all who are granted equivalency have child development related education.

Alberta's outdoor space requirements are lower than the other provinces, and the requirement for infant care of 2 square metres/child for half the number of enrolled children is much less than required for quality provision. It is well below any other regulated requirement in Canada and far below international standards.

Alberta has a very strong early learning and care curriculum framework, that was developed with extensive engagement and input from a wide

range of stakeholders. There was strong support for the *Flight* framework among key informants, and a view that mandatory implementation and support for that implementation would improve the overall quality of care. The training modules developed and pedagogical leadership provided for *Flight*, during its demonstration and pilot stages, were also mentioned as strengthening the quality of ELCC. At least one school board is implementing *Flight* in its pre-kindergarten programs.

Alberta provides significant wage support to staff, with the hourly amount varying by level of staff certification, through a newly implemented the wage top up grant. Wage enhancements were previously linked to the now discontinued voluntary accreditation program for child care centres and family day home providers. The top ups have helped raise wages, although there are no requirements for operators to pay more than the minimum wage before the top ups. The method of calculating amounts, based on hours worked to an established maximum, is administratively cumbersome. Direct operating funding combined with established wage scales and maximum fees that operators must agree to as a condition of funding could simplify reporting for operators, streamline procedures for government, create greater equity in wages across programs and increase affordability for families.

Other provinces provide various types of operating grants, with only limited amounts specifically directed to wages in Ontario and BC. PEI provides funding to pay staff according to mandated wage scales that are based on both education and years of experience.

Like Ontario, Manitoba and British Columbia, Alberta makes information on licensing infractions publicly available on its website. One thing that sets Alberta's public information apart is Open Data Alberta, which provides a database of all licensing information over a number of years. This is very useful for policy-makers, researchers and child care organizations

interested in assessing the level of compliance across the province and developing quality improvement plans.

5

Case Study: Lessons from beyond our borders - how Norway supports access and quality in early learning and child care

It can sometimes be helpful to look beyond our borders and examine the approaches taken by other jurisdictions in their efforts to improve access to and quality of ELCC provision. While the history, culture and context are unique to each country and systems cannot simply be imported from one country to another, successful approaches and mechanisms can be considered and adapted to local circumstances.

This section examines how Norway's approach to ELCC resulted in a legal entitlement to affordable, quality child care. It is of particular interest as unlike its Nordic counterparts, Norway has considerable private provision by both non-profit and for-profit operators. And unlike other countries with significant private provision, the regulatory requirements, funding and accountability mechanisms and policies in Norway have addressed many of the quality concerns identified with for-profit provision. While no system is perfect, there is much to be learned from Norway's planned approach to high quality, accessible child care for all.

The section provides an overview of:

- The Norwegian context
- Access to ELCC
- Quality measures in ELCC through both regulatory and non-regulatory measures

A note about terminology

The term used in Norway for all forms of ELCC is *barnehager*, which translates into *kindergarten* in English. To avoid confusion with the use of the term kindergarten in the Canadian context, which usually refers to early childhood provisions in the school system, the terms *child care* and *ELCC* have been used, except when the term *kindergarten* is used in English translations of Norwegian documents.

The Norwegian Context

Children have the right to be respected for their human value. They have the right to be heard in questions regarding themselves, and their opinion shall be given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity.

In actions and decisions regarding a child, the best interests of the child shall be a fundamental concern.

Children have the right to protection of their personal integrity. The authorities of the State shall create conditions enabling the child's development, hereunder secure the necessary economic and social safety, as well as the necessary standard of health, for the child, preferably within its own family.

Constitution of Norway

Norway is a social democracy and a constitutional monarchy. Norway has a history of decentralization and local autonomy. Municipalities and counties are the key players in providing significant social and education programs, such as child care, education, and health care. Responsibilities for delivering services is based on the generalist local authority system, requiring all municipalities to provide the same services regardless of size, revenues and expenditures. As a result, both the expenditures and taxes are equalized.⁵⁹

The Indigenous peoples of Norway, the Sámi, have an independent Assembly, elected by the Sámi people. They have special rights identified in the Kindergarten Act.

Part of the Norwegian context important in the development of ELCC is the emphasis placed on the intrinsic value of childhood and the rights of children in society. Children's right to participate (as in the right to be heard), and the principle of the best interest of the child are contained in the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child, and are a fundamental part of child care legislation.

In 2014, special provisions and protections for children were added to the Norway Constitution, that present the child as a rights holder.

Child care in Norway is widely accepted as a public good and a public responsibility. It is considered beneficial for all children, for reducing social inequities and for ensuring equal opportunities regardless of family circumstance. In addition to a child's right of access, child care is considered an important part of the government's health policies, and as well, must be taken into account in local and regional planning processes.

Historical overview

Norway's system of ECEC has been built over many years, with steady growth in supply for more than 40 years. However, for many of those years, in spite of considerable state and municipal funds, it was in short supply, was unaffordable for many families, and access to services varied considerably across municipalities.

The first Kindergarten Act was enacted in 1975, and with it a new state grant system. Subsidies varied according to enrolment, the age of children served and hours of attendance. This act gave local governments increased responsibility and the ability to respond to local conditions. Municipal and non-municipal child care both received state grants, but in many cases municipal funds only supported municipal child care. As a result, fees in non-municipal child care were often high and unaffordable for many families.

In 1996, the first Framework Plan for Kindergartens, a regulation to the Kindergarten Act, came into force. It defined the goals and functions of child care, and set guidelines for their responsibilities to provide care, play and development of social, cognitive and physical skills. Each child care centre had to establish an annual plan for the pedagogical activities, and a plan to evaluate its program.

⁵⁹ Discussion Paper for the Copenhagen Workshop: September 17th-18th, 2009.

The Norwegian government set a goal of full or part-time access to child care for all parents who wanted it by 2000, with municipalities responsible for reaching the goal. It was estimated that demand would be met when 53 percent of children younger than three and 80 percent of children over three had a place in child care. However, it was anticipated that as access increased so would demand.⁶⁰ By the end of 1997, 60 percent of children ages 1-5 were enrolled in child care, but coverage varied considerably across municipalities, ranging from less than 30 percent up to 90 percent, and many children were enrolled on a part-time basis. That same year, the age for compulsory school was lowered from 7 to 6 years. With the removal of 6-year-olds from child care, additional spaces for children under the age of three were created, increasing coverage for that age group by 30 percent.

The goal of a place in child care for all parents who wanted it was not achieved by 2000, and many families still relied on private babysitters and family members. Participation by low income families and immigrant families, whose children were likely to benefit most, was considerably lower than by more affluent families. Non-municipal child care operators played an important role in meeting increasing local need when municipalities did not increase services to meet demand. Due to the lack of funding, however, these operators had to charge higher parent fees.

By 2001, most political parties agreed that lack of equitable access to child care was a problem, and a coalition of opposition parties set out to reform the financing of child care. This coalition proposed increased state and local funding to cover 80 percent of costs and the establishment of a maximum parent fee.

Following parliamentary debate in 2003, broad political agreement was reached on the proposed financial and regulatory changes, with the goals of universal coverage and reduced

parent fees. The key levers for achieving this included increasing the responsibilities of the municipalities, and significantly increasing state funding through earmarked grants to enable municipalities to achieve the goal of full coverage. The state grants covered both operating costs and investments to expand the number of child care centres. Municipal and non-municipal child care was to receive equal funding.

Some municipalities chose to put out calls for proposals when they wanted to establish a new child care centre on publicly owned land, or to transfer the management from municipal to non-municipal operation. With strong public funding from the state and strong demand in the municipalities, for the most part, municipalities did what they could to facilitate the establishment of new child care facilities, including through private initiatives. Throughout this process there was ongoing dialogue among all stakeholders around how to move towards full coverage.

- In 2004, the government introduced a regulated maximum parent fee.
- By 2005 municipalities were required to ensure that there was an adequate supply of child care places, but access did not become a statutory right until 2009.
- The 2005 Kindergarten Act and the 2006 regulation *The Framework Plan for the Content and Tasks of Kindergartens* legislated children's rights to participate and provided clear roles for municipalities and counties, as well as kindergarten owners. The Framework was updated in 2011 and again in 2017.
- In 2006, responsibility for child care was transferred from the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs to the Ministry of Education and Research. This was to recognize child care as the first step in lifelong learning and to create better coherence between child care and primary school.
- In 2009 access to child care became a statutory individual right for all children.

⁶⁰ Eknes, K. (2000).

- In 2011, funding was devolved to the municipalities, moving from earmarked state funding to block funding. Municipalities must fund all non-municipal child care facilities that were approved when block funding was introduced. They can still choose to approve and fund non-municipal child care developed after this time, but now decisions about whether to provide new municipal or non-municipal child care rests with the municipality.

Access

Availability

Municipalities are responsible for ensuring an adequate supply of places. They may operate child care centres directly or choose to have them operated by a non-municipal owner. About half the spaces are municipally operated and half privately. The private operators include parent co-ops, churches, non-profit associations, individuals and corporate entities.

Children have a legal right to a place in child care between the age of 1 and compulsory school entry age 6. More than 90 percent of children in that age group participate. In 2017, 83.5 percent of children 1-2 years, and 97.1 percent of children 3-5 years attended child care, with the vast majority in centre-based care and only 1.4 percent in family child care. 95.5 percent of children attend child care on a full-time basis.⁶¹

Spaces are not counted as child care centres have the ability to change the age grouping of children according to demand in any given year. Centres have a total capacity, but children younger than 3 years are counted as two “spaces.” This means, for example, a centre with a capacity of 70, and an enrolment of 12 children under 3, could enroll 46 children over 3. If 18 children under 3 were enrolled, the centre would be limited to 34 children over 3.

The main entry point to child care is in August, the same time as for primary schools. Children who turn one before the end of August are entitled to a place in child care that August. Children who are born in September, October and November are entitled to a space by the end of the month in which they turn one. Children born after November are entitled to a space when they turn one, but they do not have a statutory right until the following August. If no space is available, the parents of these children may receive a cash for care benefit until a space becomes available. Families who move during the year may also have to go on a waiting list in their new community until a place becomes available.

While there are slight variations across municipalities, parents typically submit an application to their municipality with a list of preferred child care centres or homes (typically up to five preferences) in March. Parents are entitled to a place in the community in which they live. Priority for preference is given to children with additional support needs and children involved with child welfare services. If parents do not receive their first choice, they may choose to remain on a waiting list for their preferred placement and take a place in their second choice in the meantime.

To assist parents in their search, municipalities post a list of all the centres and homes on their websites, with information about location, size, hours of operation, public or private operation, and for centres, the particular type of facility, the percentage of trained staff, results of parent satisfaction surveys and any additional costs for food.

Municipalities are required to include child care as part of land use planning. The need for child care is considered as part of the necessary community infrastructure and is included in Norway's Planning and Building Act. Zoning plans are required for major construction projects and the Act states that development of an area cannot take place “until technical installations and public services such as energy supply, transport and road

⁶¹ Royal Norwegian Ministry of Education. (2019).

networks, health and social services, child day care services, public outdoor recreation areas, schools etc., are adequately established.” (12-7, 10).

Special efforts have been made to increase the participation of minority-language children⁶² and children from low-income households, who have lower than average enrollment rates in child care, and who would particularly stand to benefit. Multi-language information videos have been produced, health clinics promote the benefits of child care and, in some cases, door-to-door outreach undertaken by municipalities provides opportunities for all families to be informed about the benefits of child care.

Financing and affordability

Child care is financed through a combination of state grants, municipal funds and parent fees. Prior to reaching universal coverage, the state grants were provided in the form of earmarked funding – that is funding that was specific for child care. Earmarked grants have been used to provide incentives to build a new service, where national coverage is low or uneven across the country.

These grants were a key lever in increasing coverage in child care in a relatively short period of time, and an effective way of achieving national priorities. After full coverage was reached, the earmarked grants became part of the general-purpose block funds transferred to municipalities.

Affordability has been achieved through a number of measures:

- There is an overall maximum that is established by the national parliament every year. Centres and homes may not charge above that amount, except for the cost of food, if it is provided. The maximum monthly fee in 2019 was NOK 2,990, or about \$CAD 445.00.
- Families receive a discount of 30 percent for

a second child and 50 percent for a third and any additional children.

- Families pay no more than 6 percent of their income, up to the maximum ceiling.
- Lower income families are entitled to 20 hours/week free child care for children two years and older. In 2019, the annual income threshold for free hours was NOK 548,500, or about CAD \$82,000.
- The national government provides additional funding to municipalities to enhance integration and language support of language minority children.
- Child care centres are funded approximately 86 percent by public funds and 14 percent by parent fees.⁶³

The Ministry of Education and Research is responsible for legislation, policy, the curriculum framework, and the block funding provided to municipalities for services for which the municipality has responsibility. Funding is approved by the national parliament on an annual basis.

Regulatory measures that support quality

The Kindergarten Act and Regulation are of a completely different nature and content than child care legislation in Canada. While the act states that child care operators must provide information on ownership, admission criteria, hours of operation and the composition of its coordinating committee before being approved by the municipality, there is almost no content related to record keeping, non-compliance issues or other prescriptive measures. The focus of the Act is on the purpose of child care, and the rights, roles and responsibilities of the various stakeholders.⁶⁴

⁶² The definition of minority language children in Norway excludes those whose mother tongue is Sami, Swedish, Danish or English.

⁶³ In Edmonton, for example families pay approximately 82% of the costs and government 18% (the difference between the median full fee and the overall government funding per space).

⁶⁴ Ministry of Education and Research. (2005).

There are no regulations regarding group size or square footage requirements, or many of the administrative details we are used in the Canadian context. It does address:

- Child to staff ratios (3 to 1 for children 1-2 years and 6 to 1 for children 3-5 years)
- Educational requirements for head teachers and pedagogical leaders (that they must be trained “kindergarten” teachers, which requires a three year degree); requirements for Norwegian language skills.

The Act addresses:

- The right to a child care place, and the priority admission for children with a disability, as well as expanded rights for children with disabilities. Children must be given the opportunity to take an active part in planning and assessing the activities of the child care centre
- The purpose of child care centres: that they must be pedagogical facilities, work closely with families, be based on a set of fundamental principles, and have a health-promoting function. “They must contribute to well-being and joy in play and learning, and must be a challenging and safe place for community life and friendship. The Kindergarten must promote democracy and equality and counteract all forms of discrimination”
- The requirement for each child care centre to have a parents’ council and a coordinating committee and their roles
- The general responsibilities of the municipality to provide supervision, advice and guidance
- The requirement for the use of public funds and parent fees by kindergartens, including reference to provisions of maximum fees, and the permitted use of any profits made
- Responsibility to work with schools in the transition from child care to schools.

Meeting every child's need for care, security, belongingness and respect and enabling the children to participate in and contribute to the community are important values that shall be reflected in kindergarten. Kindergartens shall promote democracy, diversity and mutual respect, equality, sustainable development, life skills and good health.

Framework Plan for the content and tasks of kindergartens 2017 (p. 7).

The regulation to the Act is the *Framework Plan for Kindergartens*.⁶⁵

It sets out conditions and approaches that are largely in support of process quality. It is a combination of a curriculum framework and the requirements for implementation. It covers:

- Core values
- Roles and responsibilities of the owner, head teacher and pedagogical leader
- The objectives and the content of child care centres in meeting the needs of children in various areas, as well as special provisions for Sami (Indigenous) child care centres and for Sami children attending non-Sami child care
- Children’s rights as to how they participate in and have input into their program, taking into account their age and level of maturity
- Transition from home to child care and between child care and school
- Requirements for planning, evaluation, record keeping and provision for children with special needs
- Working methods
- Learning areas to be covered in child care.

All child care programs must adopt the core values set out in the Kindergarten Act, as well as international treaties, such as the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Indigenous and

⁶⁵ Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training. (2017).

Tribal Peoples Convention.

The Kindergarten Act and regulation notes that Norway has a responsibility to safeguard the interest of Sámi⁶⁶ children by supporting preservation of language, knowledge and culture, regardless of where they live. The Act also stipulates that municipalities are responsible to ensure that child care for Sámi children in Sámi districts are based on the Sámi language and culture. In other municipalities steps shall be taken to enable Sámi children to secure and develop their language and their culture.

The Kindergarten Act stipulates that children with additional support needs are entitled to special educational assistance as needed, including transportation, sign language education, alternative and supplementary communication. Municipalities must ensure the right to special assistance is provided.

Municipalities are responsible for inspecting child care centres; however, the frequency of inspections is not defined. In turn, county governors inspect the municipalities to monitor that they are meeting their legislated obligations.

⁶⁶ The Sámi are the Indigenous people of Norway. Most live in the norther part of the country in Sami districts, but they also live in cities, primarily in Oslo.

Other measures that support quality

Institutional support for quality

A key part of the infrastructure to support quality is the Directorate for Education and Training, the Ministry of Education and Training's executive body for child care, school and vocational training. It is responsible for:

- Supporting the implementation of the Kindergarten Framework Plan
- Quality developments in child care, including continuous professional development of staff
- Collecting and analyzing data from child care centres and collaborating with Statistics Norway to provide regular reports on the status of child care.⁶⁷

The Directorate has developed numerous tools to support educators in their practice, including:

- Support material for pedagogical documentation
- Guidance materials for child care staff about language stimulation and diversity
- RefLex – a self-assessment tool
- Support material for external evaluations (usually conducted by peers from other child care centres)
- Support to municipalities in their outreach to minority families, through preparation of magazines and films
- Summarizing Scandinavian research on child care for the sector in a regular publication *Vetuva*.

And it adds to the overall knowledge base used by the Ministry and others by:

- Compiling facts and indicators on child care (BASIL) including:
 - Profiles of child care operators, opening

⁶⁷ See <https://www.udir.no/> for details.

hours, staff types and positions, participation of children by age and hours of care, including participation by minority language children and children with disabilities, fees and reduced fees, accounting details of private owners.

- Undertaking research and sharing the findings through various publications including:
 - Recent policy evaluations on the strategies for quality improvement
 - Parental satisfaction survey
 - International research such as the OECD 2018 TALIS survey.

Parent and other stakeholder engagement

In 2010, the government established the National Committee of Parents in Kindergarten (*Foreldreutvalget for barnehager* – FUB), a seven-member body appointed by the Ministry of Education and Research. FUB ensures that parents have input into discussions on child care policy, and acts as the Ministry of Education and Research advisory body representing parents' interests. The Ministry provides two full-time advisors to support FUB, and ensures that parent voices are heard and are part of the decision-making process.

Every child care centre must have a parents' council made up of the parents of all the children in the centre, as a vehicle for parents to have regular input into the program. Each child care centre also has a parent-staff coordinating committee that is responsible for identifying priorities and developing an annual plan for the program.

Other key stakeholders include:

- The Sámi Parliament (*Samediggi/Sametinget*)
- The two main unions that represent staff in child care: The Union of Education Norway that represents qualified (degree level) child care teachers (*Utdanningsforbundet*) and the Norwegian Union of Municipal and General Employees (*Fagforbundet*) that represents

the assistants and staff with diploma-level qualification

- The two employer associations: The Association of Local and Regional Authorities (KS) that represents the municipalities and the National Association of Private Kindergartens (PBL) that represents private non-profit and for-profit child care owners.

Physical space

Square footage requirements are not prescribed in regulation, but the guideline is 4.4 square metres/child of indoor space. Statistics Norway found the average was 5.5 square metres/child across all programs. The guideline for outdoor space is six times the amount of indoor space. Where this is not possible, such as in dense urban areas and outdoor play spaces are smaller, staff and children regularly go the "forest," one of many large green spaces widely available in both urban and rural areas. Outdoor experiences play a large role in child care; a 2009 study found that in the summer, children spent an average of 70 percent of their time outdoors, and in the winter 31 percent.⁶⁸ The study also found that of the centres surveyed some had as much as 47 square metres of outdoor space per child.

The workforce

All staff are entitled to belong to a union; child care teachers are represented by the Union of Education Norway (*Utdanningsforbundet*), and assistants by the Norwegian Union of Municipal and General Employees (*Fagforbundet*). Approximately 80 percent of child care teachers are a member of their union. Unionized and non-unionized staff are paid the same according to the negotiated wage scales, as are staff in municipal and private centres.

Staff also receive comprehensive benefits and pension plans. In keeping with benefits available across Norway, all staff (and parents) are entitled to five weeks of paid vacation per year, and family leaves of 10 days/year for one

⁶⁸ Moser & Martinsen. (2010).

child and 15 days/year for two or more children, to allow for children's illness, doctors' and other appointments. Maternity/parental benefits are available for 49 weeks at 100 percent of regular salary (to a ceiling of six times the basic amount in the National Insurance Scheme – NOK 599,148 – approximately CAD \$87,685) or 59 weeks at 80 percent. Each parent is entitled to three days paid leave to support their child's transition from home to child care, and again when their child moves from child care into the school system.

The two employer associations representing child care staff bargain centrally, which results in a main agreement with the unions. While there may be small differences among municipalities, wages, pensions and working conditions are very similar within similar job positions.

The child to staff ratio is included in regulation, but not the ratio of "kindergarten teachers" to children. However, there is a required standard. In 2019, the requirement was a minimum of 1 teacher for every 7 children under three years and 14 children from 3-5 years. In 2018, 41 percent of all staff were trained kindergarten teachers. About 34 percent of assistants had diploma-level qualifications in child and youth care. There is still a shortage of qualified staff and a number of efforts are underway to increase the supply through increased availability in universities and workplace opportunities. There is no tuition for post-secondary education in Norway.

Family child care providers do not require formal education, but are supervised and mentored by a trained kindergarten teacher, who visits on a weekly basis. These supervisors provide oversight to providers for a maximum of 30 children.

Quality and the for-profit sector

Quality in for-profit centres does not seem to present the same concerns as it does in Canada as a result of strong regulations and accountability measures. Affordability is not an issue as maximum fees apply to all municipal and non-municipal facilities. Wages and working conditions are very similar across all types of

programs as a result of central bargaining and high rates of unionization.

However, since all non-municipal child care centres are funded at the average rate of municipal centres, some amount of profit can be made by hiring less experienced staff who are lower on the pay scale, and by serving fewer children with additional support needs. It would appear that considerable profit can be made through property development and the increased value of real estate. For example, *Trygge Barnehager* (Safe Kindergartens) is a construction company that has established 501 child care centres for municipalities, non-profit organizations, private individuals and companies. A separate arm of the company, FUS, owns and operates 180 centres in 82 municipalities. The *Læringsverkstedet* chain, opened its first centre in 2003 and now operates more than 200. In recent years, several small non-profit and for-profit operators have sold their centres to the larger chains.

In 2012, the government amended the Kindergarten Act to ensure that public funds are used to benefit the children in child care and meet a number of accountability measures. All non-municipal operators have to submit financial statements to the Directorate of Education and Training, which are used to monitor the use of public funds and parent fees. In spite of all the checks and balances in place, there is concern about public funds ending up as private profit.

Summary

Norway has built a comprehensive system over time and through changes in government. The guiding regulation, The Kindergarten Framework Plan, is built on the intrinsic value of childhood, and from a child rights perspective. It has clearly defined roles and responsibilities, and is focussed on process quality elements rather than structural elements. All children have the right and the opportunity to experience high quality ELCC programs from a young age, that are affordable for all parents.

Norway has built an accessible, affordable, quality system for all children. Elements of that system include:

- An overall plan, framed by articulated values and principles to guide development
- Political support across all parties to facilitate implementation over time
- Adequate resources to ensure viability for programs and affordability for parents
- A well-qualified, fairly-compensated, engaged and supported workforce
- A quality framework and measures to ensure equitable access to quality programs for all children and families
- Regular consultation and engagement with all key stakeholders
- Ongoing data collection, monitoring and assessment to determine if goals are being met, and to inform ongoing quality improvement.

While challenges remain, Norway has built a high-quality system that has broad public support and support across all political parties - a system where all children are valued for who they are today as well as for who they will become, a system that allows women to fully participate in the labour force, and a system that is aligned with other social and educational programs and supports. The experience with for-profit child care in Norway would suggest that even when regulatory measures, policies and funding address many of the concerns related to quality and affordability often found with for-profit care, the rapid growth of large chains is of concern.

6

For Discussion

Building a quality ELCC system takes the ongoing engagement of many stakeholders. It cannot be done by government alone, nor can the full responsibility rest with parents, the child care sector or private businesses. It takes time to discuss and reach agreement on values, goals, priorities and targets. It requires a solid infrastructure of human and financial resources, a critical mass of knowledgeable policy makers, pedagogical leadership, regular data collection, monitoring, research and evaluation to support ongoing decision-making. It has to build on the past and present experiences and context, and on the services that currently exist.

Given the experiences of other jurisdictions in Canada and internationally, and building on the strengths and addressing the challenges in the current delivery of ELCC in Alberta, much can be done to further a quality agenda. The now completed regulatory review in Alberta, while narrow in focus and time, provides a timely opening for broader discussions on quality to take place. Regulations, while necessary to provide a strong foundation, are only one small element of a quality system.

We know that there is no perfect system that will meet everyone's needs. We know that system-building takes time, and that concerns of availability, affordability and quality have to be addressed simultaneously.

This section provides some questions and considerations to stimulate dialogue on how regulatory and other mechanisms can be used to enhance quality early learning and child care at a systems level in Alberta. It is intended to advance the development of a quality child care agenda and recognizes the need for the commitment and ongoing involvement of multiple stakeholders. It outlines measures that could be addressed in the short-term, through regulatory change, and measures that need to be addressed over the longer term, through system-building.

The considerations are put forward with the understanding that government is committed to the development of quality early learning and child care that is equitably available to all families and children, and that:

- The shared long-term vision and principles contained within the Multilateral Framework of Early Learning and Child Care will guide future ELCC development.
- Based on the findings from international studies and reviews, and a review of ELCC in selected jurisdictions, a systems-level approach is needed to increase quality, accessibility (including availability, affordability, suitability and inclusiveness) in early learning and child care. This requires the active involvement of both government and stakeholders in creating a comprehensive plan.
- Federal funding under the Canada-Alberta Early Learning and Child Care Agreement will enhance and not replace provincial spending.
- Any plan to increase quality, accessibility and inclusivity must take into account the current context and circumstances and service provision.

Improving quality through regulation

Regulations are necessary to ensure the basic health and safety of children, providing consistent and understandable conditions for all licensees and appropriate reporting requirements to ensure accountability. Many of the regulations in Alberta focus on basic health and safety measures, and on administrative procedures. The regulations related to staffing and the physical environment are the key regulations that address structural elements of quality. Based on lessons from other jurisdictions, stakeholder interviews and international recommendations changes and additions to those regulations could be a starting point for raising quality.

Staffing

While a longer-term plan is needed to raise the level of education and certification requirements for staff, the following changes could be made in the short term.

- Require all staff to have first aid certification, rather than the current one of two program staff.
- Require directors to have a minimum amount of experience while certified as a Child Development Supervisor before being able to hold the position of director in a child care facility.
- Require certification to be renewed every three years, and to be eligible for renewal, require completion of a minimum amount of approved professional learning.
- Examine the feasibility of requiring all staff to have completed the required online orientation or post-secondary course to be certified as a child development assistant, and to have applied for certification prior to employment in a child care centre.

The level of qualification of early childhood educators is a key predictor of quality, and the specific knowledge and skills related to early childhood education are associated with better outcomes for children. Increased educational requirements would contribute significantly to improved quality. This would require the development of a long-term feasibility and implementation plan, as part of an overall workforce strategy. In the short term, there are three components of current regulation where changes could be considered.

- Eliminate the current equivalency process. The current list of credentials deemed equivalent to an ECE certificate and diploma for the purpose of certification do not reflect the need for education in, for example, child development, pedagogy or working with families. The equivalencies are not stipulated in regulation, only that the director may certify

an applicant who has completed course work considered to be equivalent. Eliminating the current equivalencies and requiring any alternative credential to include adequate course work in those areas would help ensure that certified staff would have the necessary knowledge in those areas critical to providing quality child care.

- Develop a workplace training model that would allow experienced CDAs to acquire an early childhood credential while remaining employed.⁶⁹
- Phase in a requirement for one primary staff per group in full-day child care to be certified as a Child Development Supervisor. This would begin the process of moving toward international targets of at least 50 percent of staff with a minimum of three years post secondary education.

Child to staff ratios

The child:staff ratios and group size are in keeping with other jurisdictions and international recommendations, but it should be noted that the qualification requirements of staff in Alberta are generally lower. Ratios, group size and qualifications need to be considered as a whole.

In addition to the current requirement for one in three staff to be certified as a Child Development Worker, require at least one Child Development Worker with every group of children. Currently the requirement is at a centre level and so it is possible to have groups of children without any staff who have a postsecondary ECE qualification.

The reduced ratio requirements when children are sleeping should be reviewed. Under current regulations, depending on group size, only one staff is required for a group (for example 12 children 19 months to less than 3 years). An additional staff member should be immediately available should an emergency arise.

⁶⁹ Such a model has proved very successful in Manitoba, and has had a positive impact on retention.

Space requirements

The outdoor space requirements in Alberta, especially for infants, are well below recommended amounts, and are far less than the requirements in any other jurisdiction in Canada. Two square metres/child for 50 percent of enrolled children is most inadequate. Increasing the outdoor space requirements for all new facilities to at least 6 square metres/child would be in keeping with international standards. Either in regulation or through guidelines, requirements for outdoor space, such as varied surfaces, provision for rain and shade, opportunities for both gross motor play and other forms of learning in nature could be considered. A requirement for contiguous indoor-outdoor space whenever possible is known to increase the use of outdoor space, thereby ensuring that children experience the many benefits of outdoor activity.

Use of the early learning framework

Making the *Flight* curriculum mandatory and providing staff with the necessary coaching and mentoring for its successful implementation would support quality programming and ensure a level of consistency across programs. Children's Services has already announced the increased availability of online training and coaching to support the implementation of *Flight*, but both supporting and requiring its use would be a positive step in improving process quality. It would also develop a base upon which to develop quality improvement and staff development plans.

Children with special needs

There is no requirement in regulation for centres to accept children with additional support needs in their program, nor are there any regulations that address their needs, should they be enrolled. As a first step, regulations could be developed to ensure that any child with additional support needs has access to qualified early childhood educators with foundational education related to inclusion, to intervention professionals (if required), resources and supports, and an

individual care plan developed and undertaken in consultation with the child's parents and appropriate health professionals. A further step would be to ensure that regulations prevent discrimination based on a child's ability or disability and include provisions that require service providers to serve all children who require early learning and child care.

Improving quality through system building

Provision of quality ELCC requires much more than regulation. It needs a system guided by a set of values and principles, with goals and objectives for provision and a solid infrastructure, policy framework and funding to support that provision, and regular data collection and reporting both to monitor quality and support ongoing quality improvement.

Building a quality system is complex and it takes significant time and resources for a system to be fully realized. It requires the ongoing commitment of government to develop appropriate policies and funding mechanisms that support system planning, implementation and oversight. Identifying priorities and developing a multi-year agenda can provide a framework for action and for reviewing and evaluating progress. It is beyond the scope of the current discussion paper to develop such agenda, particularly since it was prepared without significant government participation (beyond a key informant interview) and in the absence of expressed government interest in an increased public role. Instead, the paper identifies three main areas to help frame the discussion and development of an agenda to build a quality system. They are:

- Values and principles
- Questions for sector and stakeholder engagement
- Objectives to advance quality provision

Values and principles

Having agreed-upon values and principles can help guide policy development and identify priorities. Values and principles should be built in a collaborative manner by multiple stakeholders, and the following are presented only as examples to begin the discussion. They are intended to be amended and enhanced as appropriate to ensure collective ownership and investment.⁷⁰

Values

Albertans believe that:

- Child care is a public good. It contributes to the economy, and supports the labour force participation of women, gender equity, social inclusion, the development and well-being of young children, and is an important part of any poverty reduction strategy.
- All children are valued and have rights. All children and families in Alberta should have equitable access to affordable, high-quality child care and related early years supports.
- A well-qualified and fairly compensated workforce is key to quality provision.
- While the primary responsibility for child care rests with senior government, local government, communities, families and the private sector all have roles to play.

Principles

ELCC services are:

- *Centred on the best interests and rights of children*, while supporting parents in their parenting role, and enabling them to work and study
- *Evidence-based*, reflecting current knowledge and research about components of a quality early learning and child care system, with mechanisms in place to ensure effective implementation

⁷⁰ The Edmonton Council for Early Learning and Care has developed a set of guiding principles that may be useful to inform the discussion. See Appendix G.

- *Equitably available to all Alberta families*, regardless of income, culture, family status or characteristics, or the neighbourhood in which they live, with particular attention given to families living in conditions of risk or vulnerability
- *Responsive to the needs of diverse families*, including families who have children with additional support needs, and those from different cultures and backgrounds. Addressing the specific program needs of Indigenous children should recognize the right to self-determination
- *Coordinated and partnership-driven*, maximizing efforts by ensuring collaboration among key stakeholders, including senior levels of government, and other public and community stakeholders, ELCC providers and organizations, and families
- *Sustainable*, ensuring ELCC services are supported with adequate financial and human resources, to develop, coordinate, manage and oversee the implementation of ELCC services in centre and homes in a planned, proactive and integrated manner
- *Accountable*, through ongoing planning, data collection and analysis, monitoring and public reporting.

A universal approach has the potential to improve things for children in all SES ranges. But in practice, children in higher SES ranges tend to benefit more than those in lower SES ranges. This is because lower SES families are more likely to face obstacles to accessing services – these might be physical, cultural, or social. Using a universal approach without addressing barriers to access, one that provides the same service to all, can actually steepen the gradient, and create greater differences in child outcomes between SES ranges.

Human Early Learning Partnership, University of British Columbia

Questions for sector and stakeholder engagement

There is an important role for the stakeholders to play, regardless of the provincial government's level of support for child care. Building consensus among varied stakeholders may have a greater impact on government than numerous individual positions and efforts.

In engaging stakeholders, consider the role of local government, including municipalities and school boards. A number already are actively engaged in supporting and delivering quality ELCC; consider how leaders in these sectors can encourage and facilitate increased engagement of others.

Following are some key questions to discuss in developing a plan for quality ELCC including:

- How do the services get there and what are the roles and responsibilities of the respective stakeholders?
 - Who should determine where and how to open a child care centre or a family day home agency?
 - What role should parents, individuals, community groups and businesses play in the development of centres and family day home agencies?
 - What type of planning should be done to ensure equitable distribution of spaces?
 - How should need/demand for services be determined?
 - Should targets for coverage be developed?
 - Should local government, school boards and other public entities play a role in planning or developing services?
 - Can the market provide adequate access to quality ELCC? If not, what does public planning and management look like?

- Who pays for ELCC provision and how?
 - What proportion of costs should be borne by government and by parents?
 - What funding mechanisms best support viability and sustainability of programs?
 - How should affordability be defined and ensured?
 - What accountability measures should be in place to ensure appropriate use of public funds?
- Who participates in early learning and care and what are the barriers to access?
 - What are the characteristics of families using licensed/approved child care?
 - Are all families able to participate in or access child care? Is cost, location, individual family circumstances or program quality a barrier to participation?
 - What additional supports are needed to ensure programs are inclusive of and responsive to all children and all families?
- Who are the staff and what supports do they have and need?
 - What proportion of staff have early childhood education post-secondary qualifications?
 - Are staff representative of their communities, in terms of language and culture?
 - Is professional development suitable, affordable and readily available?
 - Do all staff have access to education, training, pedagogical leaders and coaching to support implementation of the *Flight* framework?
 - Are there barriers to enrolment in post secondary ECE programs and courses, and if so, how might they be addressed?
 - What are appropriate wages and benefits for program staff and directors? Are wage scales appropriate and feasible?
- What are the turnover rates among staff and how might they be reduced? What supports would staff require to stay working in the sector?
- What data are currently collected and how are they used?
 - What are the data gaps that need to be addressed?
 - How will progress towards goals be assessed?

Objectives to advance quality provision

In keeping with the findings from the international literature and from experiences in Alberta and the selected jurisdictions, six objectives and related actions are proposed to advance access to quality provision.

ECEC staff play the key role in ensuring healthy child development and learning. Areas for reform include qualifications, initial education, professional development and working conditions.

OECD. (2012). (p. 11).

1. To develop a policy framework to guide the development and delivery of a comprehensive and coherent approach to early learning and care provision

- Identify values and principles
- Develop a definition of quality and agreed to components of quality to guide both service and system development
- Identify the needed infrastructure
- Identify priorities for action
- Identify needed resources and funding approaches
- Develop a long-term plan for implementation.

2. To develop a qualified, competent and stable workforce, through a comprehensive workforce strategy

- Revise education and certification requirements in keeping with best practice
- With community partners, ensure appropriate opportunities for ongoing learning are available to enhance the capacity of the child care workforce, including opportunities for professional learning that lead to higher qualifications
- Increase the education levels and use of qualified pedagogical leaders to support the ongoing development of educators in an in-service setting
- Develop and advocate for a provincial wage scale for staff, based on education and experience
- Conduct regular surveys of early learning and care staff to monitor job satisfaction, professional learning needs, turnover rates, wages and benefits

- Define roles and responsibilities for centre directors, educators and assistants: revisit and revise CCHRSC occupational standards for ECEs and Administrators
- Develop mandatory qualifications for early childhood educators working with children with additional support needs and their families.

3. To develop targets for children's participation in quality ELCC programs, and identify necessary measures to support equity of access

- With community and public partners, develop a common definition of affordability
- A significant increase in affordability and increased sustainability will require fundamental changes to the way child care is operated and funded, moving from private responsibility and provision to public planning, management and funding
- Identify barriers to access resulting from family circumstances, such as employment status, income, cultural and linguistic background, geography, or child's unique ability
- Develop an inventory of vacant space in public buildings including schools, suitable to create additional child care spaces, including purpose-built modular facilities on public land.

4. To support and enhance program quality in child care provision

- Build on the relevant articles in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and

ensure the rights of children underpin the approach and practice in service delivery

- Examine mechanisms to ease transitions for children between home, ELCC and primary school in partnership with school officials and parents
- Ensure all educators have the opportunity for coaching and mentoring, by qualified professionals, to implement the *Flight* curriculum
- Develop continuous quality improvement processes
- Provide support through pedagogical leaders to identify quality gaps and identify quality goals and a plan to achieve them
- Engage staff, parents and children in regular internal assessment of quality
- Develop child care design guidelines to ensure new facilities reflect international standards and best practices regarding space design, layout and flow.

5. To support opportunities for parental and child involvement in ELCC services, in order to

- Build relationships to facilitate continuity in experiences for children at home and in child care
- Address perceived assumptions related to gender, culture and economic and social status
- Facilitate democracy in decision-making and provision.

6. To develop a data and research agenda

A comprehensive and accountable child care system requires consistent collection of data, focused research activities and regular monitoring to determine if goals are being met, if the intended outcomes are being achieved, and if the investments in the system are effective. Data include:

- Child population by neighbourhood
- Full-and part day centre-based child care spaces by age category and family child care spaces by neighbourhood
- Number of new spaces opened and spaces lost/closed by age category and care type, including licensed family child care
- Child care spaces by age category in schools or on school land and in any other public facilities
- Average parent fees by care type
- Data on the workforce, including turnover, qualification and wages by job role, by facility type
- Characteristics of families with children enrolled in child care services
- Patterns of use – continuity, hours of care
- Compliance with regulations and nature and frequency of non-compliance.

What are the next steps?

The objectives and actions are not based on a linear approach. Early learning and child care is complex, and strategies to build a system are necessarily complex, inter-related, and multi-pronged. Government sets the direction and identifies priorities for investment; the degree to which they engage stakeholders in the process of decision-making has an impact on the ability to reach common ground and move a quality agenda forward.

A formal mechanism for regular consultation and problem solving could help the Ministry and other stakeholders develop and implement a multi-year ELCC plan in a sustainable manner, and maximize the strengths and expertise of stakeholders for successful implementation. The selected jurisdictions included in this paper all have government-initiated consultative bodies that provide advice on various policy matters. The Edmonton Council, The Muttart Foundation, and relevant sector organizations might make a formal request to government for such a mechanism to be put in place. If such a mechanism is not forthcoming, it will be necessary for sector organizations and other stakeholders to begin a process of sector-led engagement, to seek agreement on common goals and priorities, and to develop an action plan to propose to government. In the absence of clearly articulated goals and plans for improving the quality of and access to ELCC by government, community and sector organizations will need to explore options and build on opportunities as they arise.

An immediate step that could be taken by community and sector organizations is to form strategic relationships to work towards consensus on priorities and actions. A coalition of representatives from the child care sector, women's and other equity seeking groups, foundations, education, labour, Indigenous groups, disability organizations, local government would provide a strong voice to advocate for change and quality improvement.

There is no quick fix and no single solution to meet every need. Defining, striving for and assessing quality is an ongoing process that needs to engage all in the ELCC sector, supported by knowledgeable policymakers, researchers and other stakeholders. And it requires political commitment on the part of all parties to make the vision of a high quality, accessible child care system a reality. High quality ELCC is an essential part of the social infrastructure and is needed now more than ever. The future health and well being of all Albertans depends on it.

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Appendix A. List of key informants

Nicki Dublenko	Vice-chair, Association of Early Childhood Educators of Alberta; Executive Director Child Development Dayhomes; member Edmonton Council for Early Learning and Care
Corine Ferguson	Executive Director, Alberta Resource Centre for Quality Enhancement
Kathleen Flanagan	Child and Family policy specialist, Prince Edward Island
Sandra Friesen-Peters	Early Learning Consultant, High Level
Darlene Frith	Director, Manning Regional Childcare Association
Brenda Goodine	Manager, Early Childhood Development Services Unit, Children's Services
Kristen Hodgins	Principal, Early Learning, Edmonton Catholic Schools, member Edmonton Council for Early Learning and Care
Donna Lero	University of Guelph Professor Emeritus
Manna Middleton	Chair, Association of Early Childhood Educators of Alberta
Bernice Taylor	Program Manager, Drayton Valley Early Learning Early Learning Childhood Development Centre
Annalise Yuzda	Vice President Child Care, YMCA of Northern Alberta, member Edmonton Council for Early Learning and Care

Appendix B. Members of the working group of the Edmonton Council for Early Learning and Care

Jeff Bisanz	Professor Emeritus, University of Alberta; board member, The Muttart Foundation; co-chair, Edmonton Council for Early Learning and Care
Rob Buschmann	Public Policy Research Associate, Community-University Partnership for the Study of Children, Youth, and Families, University of Alberta; member Edmonton Council for Early Learning and Care
Gloria Chalmers	Edmonton Early Years Coalition; member, Edmonton Council for Early Learning and Care
Nicki Dublenko	Vice-chair, Association of Early Childhood Educators of Alberta; Executive Director Child Development Dayhomes; member, Edmonton Council for Early Learning and Care
Christopher Smith	Associate Executive Director, The Muttart Foundation; member, Edmonton Council for Early Learning and Care
Tara Stang	Senior Program Officer, The Muttart Foundation
Shea Wicks	Executive Director, Southside Mothers' Day Out; member, Edmonton Council for Early Learning and Care
Annalise Yuzda	Vice President Child Care, YMCA of Northern Alberta; member Edmonton Council for Early Learning and Care

Appendix C.

List of Abbreviations used in the report

AECEA	Association of Early Childhood Educators of Alberta	OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
AECEO	Association of Early Childhood Educators, Ontario	PCCC	Provincial Child Care Council
AFFCA	Alberta Family Child Care Association	PUF	Program Unit Funding
AIT	Agreement on Internal Trade	SACERS	School Age Care Environmental Rating Scale
ARCQE	Alberta Resource Centre for Quality Enhancement	VSOCC	Vancouver Society of Children's Centres
CAP	Canada Assistance Plan	YBIC	You Bet I Care!
CCCABC	Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC		
CCFRI	Child Care Fee Reduction Initiative		
CCOF	Child Care Operating Funding		
CCPA	The Centre for Public Policy Alternatives		
CIS	Caregiver Interaction Scale		
CCRR	Child Care Resource and Referral		
CLASS	Classroom Assessment Scoring System		
CUP	Community and University Partnership, for the Study of Children, Youth and Families, University of Alberta		
ECDA	Early Childhood Development Association		
ECE	End Poverty Edmonton		
ECEBC	Early Childhood Educators of British Columbia		
ECEC	Early Childhood Education and Care		
ECERs	Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale		
ELCC	Early Learning and Child Care		
EU	European Union		
EYC	Early Years Centre		
FCCERS	Family Child Care Environmental Rating Scale		
HCCO	Home Child Care Association of Ontario		
ITERS	Infant Toddler Environmental Rating Scale		
MCCA	Manitoba Child Care Association		

Appendix D.

Overview of child care in select provinces and territories

Prince Edward Island

Context

Responsible department:

Education and Lifelong Learning
Social Development and Housing
(for child care subsidy)

Legislation:

The Early learning and Child Care Act, 2017

The Early Learning and Child Care Act Regulations, 2017

The Social Assistance Act, 2015

Overview:

In 2009, PEI began to develop a vision and framework for early childhood development and a re-designed and revitalized early childhood sector. Following an extensive consultation process and report, PEI developed a new policy direction in 2010, towards a publicly managed, community delivered system:

- The Prince Edward Island Preschool Excellence Initiative, *Securing the Future for Our Children* was launched in 2010 and identified a vision for children and initial areas of concentration
- Early Years Centres were established, on a voluntary application basis, and had to meet certain conditions for designation including
 - A centre of at least 40 spaces
 - Uses the PEI Early Learning Framework *Relationships, Environments, Experiences: The Curriculum Framework of the Preschool Excellence Initiative (2011)*
 - Provides infant and toddler care
 - Includes children with extra support needs
 - Has a parent advisory committee
 - Charges provincially established fees
 - Pays wages and benefits according to the provincial wage scale
- Early Years centres receive core funding through a funding formula from government: staff wages and benefits account for 78% of an EYC's funding (wages are determined by the provincial wage scale, which is based on qualifications and years of experience), and 22% for all other operating costs. Revenue

from the set parent fees is deducted from the total amount received. It is in the centre's interest to hire staff with higher level education as they receive more wage funding and therefore more operating funding as it is tied to the amount of funding for wages

- Maximum fees are \$34/day for infants and \$27/day for preschool age children. Fee subsidies are available for lower income families; families eligible for full subsidy do not pay any fee
- 68% of all centres are Early Years Centres; the remaining private centres continue to receive the previous levels of funding and are not tied to the wage and fee scales
- Overall, about 41% of spaces are non-profit and 59% are run as a private business – however there are no for-profit chains
- There is virtually no licensed family child care in PEI (2-3 individually licensed providers)

Provincial Statements on Children and Child Care

First articulated in *The Early Years Report*, the Department of Education and Early Learning adopted the following Vision for Children:

"Children in Prince Edward Island are healthy and happy, curious and creative, playful and joyous.

They are loved and respected, and are safe and secure in their families, homes and communities.

Children are our collective responsibility. They are valued for who they are today, and as the future parents and leaders of tomorrow."

The Minister's statement in the Canada-Prince Edward Island Early Learning and Child Care Agreement Action Plan states: "The Government of Prince Edward Island is committed to supporting the future generations of our province from their earliest years. We are proud to provide quality early learning and child care to young children from our skilled and dedicated early childhood educators. Together, we can ensure that every Island child has the opportunity to develop and achieve at the fullest of his or her potential."

Ontario

Context

Responsible department:

Ministry of Education

Legislation:

Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014

O. Reg. 137/2015: General (current to May 8, 2020)

O. Reg. 138/2015: Funding, Cost Sharing and Financial Assistance

Early Childhood Educators Act, 2007 (current to January 1, 2020)

Overview:

- As of 2010 Ministry of Education responsible for child care, and child and family programs
- Ontario is the only jurisdiction with province-wide full school day kindergarten for 4-year olds
- Municipalities have mandated role for child care and early years and contribute some funding. There are:
 - 37 Consolidated Municipal Service Managers (CMSMs)
 - 10 District Social Services Administration Boards (DSSABs)
- A number of municipalities directly operate some child care centres and family home child care agencies
- As of September 2017, there is a requirement for schools to provide school age care for children 6-12 where there is sufficient demand. It may be offered directly by the school or contracted to a third party
- 78% of centre spaces are non-profit and 22% are operated as private businesses. There are a number of for-profit chains
- There is no maximum parent fee
- There is a maximum number of subsidized spaces available, resulting in waiting lists in larger urban areas
- There is no maximum subsidy rate and parents receiving a full subsidy cannot be surcharged;

rates are determined by the lower of the actual cost of care or the full fee charged to parents. To provide subsidized care, centres and homes must have a purchase of service agreement with their local municipality

- Ontario provides major capital to non-profit organizations for child care expansion
- Ontario is the only jurisdiction with a self-regulating body for early childhood educators

Provincial Statements on Children and Child Care

The 2017 Revised Early Years Policy Framework contains the following Vision for the Early Years and Child Care:

“All children and families have access to a range of high-quality, inclusive and affordable early years and child care programs and services that are child- and family-centred and contribute to children’s learning, development and well-being.”

Manitoba

Context

Responsible department:

Department of Families

Legislation:

The Community Child Care Standards Act, C.C.S.M. c. C158

Child Care Regulation, M.R. 67/2016

Child Care Worker Retirement Benefits Regulation, M.R. 20/2011

Overview:

- In 1983, Manitoba became the first province to establish maximum province-wide fees. In 1999/2000 the unit funding model was introduced. It takes into account the regulated parent fee and the differential in staffing composition for regulated age groups, providing programs with funding equity across age groups. Each “unit” is made up of the fee subsidy, the parent fee and the operating grant multiplied by the number of children in the unit, based on legislated child to staff ratios. Currently, the unit amount is

\$289/day.

- Approximately 95% of centre spaces are non-profit and 5% operated by a private business.
- Wage scales have been developed by the Manitoba Child Care Association and updated annually. They formed the basis for funding amounts to centres; however, the amounts have been frozen for some years.
- Manitoba has an online province-wide child care registry and waiting list that is used for planning purposes to determine where the need is the greatest relative to supply.
- Maximum fees in funded centres are \$30/day for infants, \$20.80/day for preschoolers and up to \$10.30/day for school age. Families who receive a full subsidy pay \$2/day/child.

Provincial Statements on Children and Child Care

Manitoba’s vision for child care as articulated in the Canada-Manitoba Early Learning and Child Care Agreement is as follows:

“The Manitoba government is committed to the ongoing development of new initiatives directed at advancing the quality of ELCC services and helping to build accessible and affordable ELCC spaces to meet the changing needs of our province’s diverse population.”

Alberta

Context

Responsible department:

Alberta Children’s Services

Legislation:

Child Care Licensing Act, 2007 (current to September 1, 2019)

Child Care Licensing Regulation 143/2008 (current to September 1, 2019)

Overview:

In 2017, Alberta launched a pilot program of 22 Early Learning and Child Care Centres to test innovative concepts in the areas of access, affordability and quality, including additional supports for children with diverse needs and

more flexible hours for parents. Maximum fees of \$25/day were established for parents, and subsidy remained available for lower income families. As part of the Canada-Alberta Early Learning and Child Care Agreement an additional 100 sites were established. Each site is required to participate in an evaluation of the initiative. The year 1 evaluation found that the initiative had led to improved quality, affordability and accessibility, positive impacts on children, increased parent satisfaction, reduced financial burdens on families and parent stress, and increased labour force attachment.

Child Care Accreditation Standards were introduced in 2004. Prior to April 1, 2020, the Ministry's support for ELCC was directed primarily to parent fee subsidies and the Child Care Accreditation Program, which includes standards to support quality in a child care setting. Accredited centres and family child care agencies received funding that supported staff wages and provider remuneration. Effective April 1, 2020, following the discontinuation of the provincial accreditation program, all licensed daycare, out-of-school care, group family child care, and approved family day home agencies can apply for grant funding to support the recruitment, retention and professional development of their staff. Funding includes wage top up and funding for professional development.

Overall, about 40% of centre spaces are non-profit and 60% are run as a private business; however, 65.3% of full-day spaces are run as a private business. There are two large corporate chains. All of the \$25/day Early Learning and Child Care Centres are operated by non-profit organizations.

Provincial Statements on Children and Child Care
The 2017 Canada-Alberta Early Learning and Child Care Agreement states:

"Alberta believes accessible, affordable quality child care is essential to positive early childhood development, labour force participation of parents, women's equality, social integration and inclusion of newcomers, and poverty reduction -

all aspects of social and economic growth."

While no longer in place, the Accreditation Guide contained the following vision statement:

"Children enter the world full of potential and thrive in families, communities and child care programs that offer environments which are nurturing and respectful while providing opportunities for growth and exploration."

British Columbia

Context

Responsible department:

Ministry of Children and Family Development

Ministry of Health

Ministry of Education

Legislation:

Community Care and Assisted Living Act (current to May 27, 2020)

Child Care Licensing Regulation, 2007 (current to June 2, 2020)

Child Care Subsidy Act, 1996 (current to May 27, 2000)

Child Care Subsidy Regulation (last amended May 4, 2020 by B.C. Reg. 104/2020)

Child Care BC Act, 2001 (current to May 27, 2020)

Overview:

The regulatory environment for early childhood programs in BC is complex and multiple ministries are involved in implementation and delivery.

- The Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) is responsible for child care policy and funding, including the Child Care Operating Funding (CCOF), fee subsidies, and minor and major capital. It is also responsible for the Early Childhood Registry, which issues and renews Early Childhood Educator certification. In addition to the Minister of MCFD, there is a minister of State for Child Care.
- The Ministry of Health is responsible for child care legislation, with licensing and monitoring undertaken by regional Health Authorities.
- The Ministry of Education is responsible for

StrongStart BC, which is a no-cost, drop-in program, located in schools for children under school age who are accompanied by a parent or caregiver. It led the development of both the 2008 and the revised 2019 Early Learning Framework. The revised framework is expanded to focus on children from infancy to eight years old, and it connects with the new K-12 curriculum. It has an increased focus on reconciliation and Indigenous worldviews and on inclusive practice. The framework is mandatory in all StrongStart facilities.

In 2017, the newly elected provincial government announced a commitment to move towards universal, affordable, accessible, high quality child care. The government announced that they would:

- Start with increased support for Infant/Toddler care
- Create 22,000 new spaces over three years
- Invest in the workforce through training, education and fair wages.

The government also indicated a commitment to lasting reconciliation with First Nations in BC, which has implications for the development and delivery of child care services for Indigenous children and their families.

Budget 2018 announced details of the first steps towards the goal of universal child care, contained in *Child Care B.C. Caring for Kids, Lifting up Families: The Path to Universal Child Care*. The document notes that "...quality is about more than licensing. It's also about supporting children's healthy development and early learning..." The first steps towards universal child care included:

- The Child Care Fee Reduction Initiative which provides additional funding to reduce parent fees in group care by \$350/month for infants/toddlers and \$100/month for children 3-5, and in family child care by \$200/month for infants/toddlers and \$60/month for children 3-5. Approved providers also received a 10% increase in their base operating amounts for spaces enrolled in the initiative

- The Affordable Child Care Benefit, which replaced the Child Care Subsidy program, and increased the maximum benefit rates starting first with licensed infant and toddler care. Further rate increases are to be phased in over three years to include other types of licensed care
- The creation of new spaces: Funding was made available to eligible non-profit, public and for-profit organizations to support the creation of 22,000 new child care spaces over the next three years
- Universal Child Care Prototype Sites: As part of the Canada-BC Early Learning and Child Care Agreement, the Province converted approximately 2,500 licensed child care spaces to low cost spaces at existing child care facilities, approving over 50 sites in October 2018. (see further details under the heading Other Quality Measures)

Approximately 51% of the spaces across the province are non-profit, including a small number that are publicly operated, and 49% run as a private business.

In some Health Authorities a separate licence is issued for each group of children (e.g. separate licences for the infant, toddler and preschool age groups in the same centre).

A number of municipalities, most notably the City of Vancouver, undertake planning for child care, work with developers to create new facilities, and provide grants to support quality delivery. Facilities developed in the City of Vancouver must confirm to the City's child care design guidelines, which were developed to ensure quality physical environments.

Provincial Statements on Children and Child Care

While there is no provincial vision statement for children or child care, the Ministers' message in the Child Care BC plan includes the following:

"Our child care strategy is guided by three principles – quality, access and affordability. These

principles reflect our commitment to deliver the kind of care our kids deserve, where parents need it, and at a price they can afford. Together, in partnership with Indigenous communities, other governments, the B.C. Green caucus, families, advocates, and our hard-working child care providers, we're going to care for kids, lift up families, and advance reconciliation by delivering the affordable, quality child care people need."

Appendix E. Recent provincial initiatives in support of quality early learning and child care in selected provinces

Prince Edward Island

A Feasibility Study on the PEI Early Childhood Education and Care System

As part of moving forward on the PEI-Canada ELCC Agreement, the Department of Education and Lifelong Learning recognized the need to analyze ongoing evidence regarding the importance of the early years in human development, and the current social, economic and demographic factors needed to inform public policy. In 2018, the following project was undertaken: Moving Forward – The Early Years in PEI: A Feasibility Study on the PEI Early Childhood Education and Care System. It set out to address eight questions:

1. What do we know about optimal early learning and development experiences for young children?
2. What does the evidence suggest is the best path forward for PEI's Early Learning System in order to provide children with high quality early learning experiences?
3. What is the nature of the relationship between PEI's early childhood education programs and the PEI kindergarten program? What is the level of consistency in curriculum and learning experiences, transitions, assessment approaches, inclusionary practices, human resources, and parent involvement?
4. What is required for PEI to enhance the provision of early learning experiences for Island children?
5. How do these options consider the unique needs of Island families and children with respect to developmental abilities, culture

and language?

6. How should the province define indicators of success?
7. What data are required?
8. What type of evaluation strategy should be initiated in order to monitor success?

The report proposes a policy framework focussed on:

- **Governance** – including legislation, regulation, monitoring, and consistent messaging regarding PEI's vision for children, image of the child, and the purpose and intent of ECEC programs
- **Quality** – including pedagogical direction, human resources, and approaches to continuous quality Improvement
- **Access** – including both availability of programs and spaces, and affordability for parents and families, with attention to linguistic and cultural needs, and the needs of under-served populations
- **Sustainability** – including ongoing quality measurement, data collection, evaluation in order to accurately inform ongoing policy decisions and directions

The recommendations related to quality in the proposed new policy framework include:

- Further explore Kindergarten curriculum and pedagogical practice. Consider transfer of responsibility to EC Division for curriculum, PD, and child assessment for both.
- Professional Development: multi-sessions for ECEs and K teachers; PD for principals and other key staff re: play based learning
- Develop an "Educators' Guide" to the PEI's Early Learning Framework
- Partner with Atlantic provinces re: online curriculum resources
- Workforce Strategy
- Mandatory qualifications for inclusion staff; bursaries for newcomers; PD on Indigenous matters and newcomers

- Revise certification to focus on levels and not job title. Expand description of new level 4.
- Specify requirements to be inclusion staff or director.
- In depth PD series
- Continuous Quality Improvement

The Workforce Strategy Project

In 2019, the PEI Workforce Strategy Project was undertaken in response to a recommendation in the feasibility study. The project's purpose was to prepare analysis, advice, and recommendations on a wide number of topics related to the workforce including;

- Supply, demand and demographic data about the workforce
- Analysis of the roles, responsibilities, degree of decision making, and impact of decisions taken for the certification levels and propose a scope of practice for each
- Development of a research tool to analyze current turnover
- A data strategy to create a comprehensive data base on ECEs in PEI
- Analysis of ECEC expansion plans, targets for increased access, and determine future forecast of labour supply of qualified staff
- Identify professional development needs including mentorship
- Provide short, medium- and long-term recommendations for recruitment and retention strategies.

The report contains numerous recommendations

organized under the following four categories

- System level changes
- Recruitment
- ECE Qualifications and post-secondary training
- Retention and support.

Ontario

Ontario's Renewed Early Years and Policy Framework 2017

Following public consultations held in the fall and winter of 2016-2017, the province developed a new early learning and child care policy framework intended to enhance Ontario early years. It identified seven action areas to be undertaken over the following five years:

1. Increasing access to early years and child care programs and services
2. Ensuring a more affordable early years and child care system
3. Establishing an early years workforce strategy
4. Determining a provincial definition of quality in the early years
5. Developing an approach to promoting inclusion in early years and child care settings
6. Creating an outcomes and measurement strategy
7. Increasing public awareness of Ontario's early years and child care system.

Two key action items relating to the framework were undertaken before the government in power changed in 2018:

- An affordability study
- An early years workforce strategy

The affordability study undertaken in 2017 resulted in the comprehensive report, *Affordable for All: Making Licensed Child Care Affordable in Ontario*. The report contains 33 recommendations, a number of which are aimed at making improvements for the workforce, including additional avenues to train unqualified

staff, new classifications, a province-wide or region-specific salary scale, minimum training requirements for all staff and home child care providers, incentive grants for ECEs who have left the field for at least two years and who return to work in a non-profit centre, maximum parent fees and capital funding to municipalities and non-profits.

The primary recommendation was free centre and home child care for children of preschool age. The report concluded that free child care for children 2.5 years of age and older was the most effective way to move forward. The report also proposed establishing governance mechanisms to ensure substantial parental control, participation in regular evaluations and upgrades of quality

A workforce strategy undertaken in 2018 is contained in *Growing Together: Ontario's Early Years and Child Care Workforce Strategy*

The strategy contains seven recommendations including:

- Enhancing minimum qualifications
- Establishing an oversight body for the sector
- Developing a wage grid
- Revamping the funding model.

It should be noted that with the change in government in 2018, many of the actions proposed in the policy framework, the affordability study and workforce strategy have not proceeded.

In an effort to recruit and retain ECEs and other program staff the province introduced a wage subsidy for all licensed child care centres and home child care agencies in 2017. To be eligible for the maximum wage enhancement of \$2/hour and 17.5% in benefits, staff must be employed in a licensed centre or agency and have a base wage rate of less than \$24.68/hour.

Establishment of Centres of Excellence

As part of the Ontario-Canada Early Learning and Child Care Agreement, the government established Centres of Excellence for Early Years and Child Care, to support the professional learning across the early years sector. The following entities lead work in collaboration with multiple partners across the province:

- Provincial Centre of Excellence – Western University and Ontario Reggio Association
- Indigenous Centre of Excellence – Ontario Aboriginal Head Start Association and Kenjgewin Teg Education Institute
- Francophone Centre of Excellence – Collège Boréal and Association francophone à l'éducation des services à l'enfance de l'Ontario.

The Centres of Excellence:

- Support alignment with *How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years* and promote cohesion in pedagogical approaches and practices across early year programs
- Build the pedagogical leadership capacity of program staff in the early years sector through innovative models and strategies that are grounded in current research and result in positive, inclusive and culturally relevant early years experiences for all children and their families
- Create linkages to and/or develop professional learning resources that are responsive to the needs of the sector and accessible online through a Centre of Excellence portal.

The Early Childhood Educators Qualifications Upgrade Program

The Early Childhood Educators Qualifications Upgrade Program provides financial support to eligible applicants towards obtaining an ECE diploma. To be eligible, applicants must have worked for at least 6 months within a licensed centre or home-based agency, public or private school, or other formal early learning child care, child and family programs, or curriculum linked school programming. Funds are targeted to those working under "Director Approval" status. It provides:

- Education grant – up to the full cost of courses completed
- Training allowance – for those who leave employment to study full time, \$5,000; for those who remain employed part-time, \$300/course and a book allowance of \$150/course

Travel grants – students who must live away from home to attend their in-class session may be eligible to receive a meal allowance of \$45/day and reimbursement for hotel and travel costs

Manitoba

Early Learning and Child Care Commission

In 2015, Manitoba established the Early Learning and Child Care Commission. It had the following objective:

- Move towards implementing a universally accessible system capable of growing to meet the needs of all families looking for a licensed child care space, inclusive of centre- and home-based child care services
 - Support the highly valued community-based, non-profit model
 - Better integrate the ELCC and education systems
 - Maintain and improve quality of care within the ELCC system
 - Move towards implementing a universally accessible system

- Determine how best to maintain and improve quality

The Commission report proposed significant changes to the ELCC system. It proposed a policy framework build on the principles of:

- *Focus on the child* – as the primary purpose of ELCC programs is to provide high-quality early learning experiences for children
- *Equity* – for all children, regardless of income, family status, culture, language, ability, or where they live
- *Quality* – with special emphasis on qualifications and remuneration of Early Childhood Educators, pedagogical approaches, and indoor and outdoor physical environments
- *Non-profit provision* – a model that is valued by the early learning and child care sector, its professional organizations, and the provincial government, and may include public delivery
- *Accountability* – to government, funding agencies, and children and families in Manitoba through ongoing data collection and analysis, research and evaluation, program monitoring, and public reporting.

The policy framework was organized around four interrelated areas:

- Governance and local infrastructure
- Quality, including pedagogy and human resource development
- Availability, affordability and sustainability
- Data collection and analysis, research and evaluation

Plans for moving forward in each area were proposed in a phased approach. After the release of the report in January 2016, an implementation team was established to begin working on the recommendations; however, in April 2016 there was a change in government and all work on the plan was halted.

Manitoba's action plans

Since 1999, Manitoba has developed a number of multi-year action plans; each set priorities, goals, and targets. The last plan: *Family Choices 2014: Manitoba's Plan to Expand Early learning and Child Care*, built on previous plans and incorporated the results of a series of public consultations undertaken in 2013 on behalf of the Minister. The plan focused on:

- Building and expanding
- Supporting the workforce
- Supporting families and the licensed system they depend on
- Supporting licensed child care in homes
- Improving quality, diversity and inclusion
- Exploring future change

As part of the action plan the Commission on Early Learning and Child Care was established. Following the change in government, a new strategy was developed and forms the basis of the action plan in the Canada-Manitoba Early learning and Child Care Agreement.

The current ELCC strategy contains five pillars:

1. Supporting New and Newly Funded Affordable and Accessible Child Care Spaces
2. Building Sector Capacity and Stability
3. Rural and Northern Strategy
4. Diversity and Inclusion
5. Community Engagement and Public Reporting

The Department is undertaking a further review of the ELCC system, with results expected in mid-2020.

British Columbia

Plans to move towards a universal system of quality child care universal child care

In 2017, the newly elected provincial government announced a commitment to move towards universal, affordable, accessible, high quality

child care. During the election campaign, the party endorsed the \$10-a-Day Plan that had been developed by the Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC and the Early Childhood Educators of BC, and that had been previously endorsed by numerous organizations, school boards, labour groups, and municipalities, including the City of Vancouver. The government announced that they would:

- Start with increased support for Infant/Toddler care
- Create 22,000 new spaces over three years
- Invest in the workforce through training, education and fair wages.

Some of the initial steps in support of increased availability and quality provision in the Child Care BC plan included:

- Updating the Early Learning Framework to include children up to age eight, to ensure greater coordination and collaboration between child care and primary school
- Increasing capacity of Health Authorities to license new spaces and monitor compliance
- Undertaking a human resources strategy to address the recruitment, retention and wages of Early Childhood Educators
- Setting targets and providing capital funding for expansion
- Working in partnership with local governments and school districts to plan the expansion of child care
- Reducing parent fees and increasing funding to operators, who met certain eligibility criteria

The Ministry funds 53 Universal Prototype Sites to model the introduction of universal child care, with a maximum parent fee of \$200/month. Sites include non-profit, for-profit and publicly delivered centres and licensed family child care homes. In the prototype sites, the Ministry is testing different approaches to including children with extra support needs in child care. Families earning less than \$45,000/year pay no fee.

- In addition to receiving an enhanced level of

operating funding that will allow facilities to offer low- and/or no-fee child care, Prototype Sites received a Quality Improvement (QI) Grant to implement site-specific quality enhancements.

- Quality assessments are based on the City of Toronto's Assessment for Quality Improvement (AQI) tool, and the *Learn, Observe, Value, Inspire, Transform* (LOVIT) tool currently being developed by the Aboriginal Head Start Association of British Columbia.

The Ministry provides funds, which are administered by the Union of BC Municipalities, to local and regional governments to undertake needs assessments and develop child care plans, through partnerships and community engagement. To date 74 local governments have received funding.

The Community Child Care Space Creation Program provides local governments with up to \$1 million per project, to create new licensed spaces for children 0-5. Priority is given to infant and toddler spaces, programs that offer non-standard hours care, are operated by a public or non-profit body and benefit underserved populations. The Ministry also provides funds for the Childcare BC New Spaces Fund, which provides capital funding to non-profit and for-profit organizations to create new child care spaces.

Appendix F.

Key child care organizations in selected provinces

Prince Edward Island

The Early Childhood Development Association

The ECDA is a non-profit organization committed to promoting and supporting quality early childhood development programs and services for PEI's children and families. It is a membership-based organization, with a number of membership options for various stakeholders. It provides:

- Resources and professional development opportunities for early childhood educators
- Information for families on choosing child care
- A voice representing healthy child development for PEI children, their families and those educating them
- For educators, access to a group benefits plan, a resource library, discounts at local retailers, specialized member-only training each year.

They have produced the PEI Guide to Quality Child Care for parents and a Code of Ethics for members who work with children. The ECDA is an affiliate member of the Canadian Child Care Federation.

The ECDA administers the Early Childhood Education Training Grant. Staff working in a licensed centre are eligible to receive funding for a course towards upgrading their certification level.

The Department of Education and Lifelong Learning has a close working relationship with the ECDA. The Department provides the ECDA with core funding and office space. They have an annual contract, based on the ECDA providing professional development for the sector, serving on stakeholder committees, and participating in communication activities with the Department (for example, the ECDA prepared the PEI Guide to Quality Child Care in collaboration with the Department); they also receive funding to undertake specific projects.

Ontario

College of Early Childhood Educators of Ontario

In 2007, the Early Childhood Educators Act established the College of Early Childhood Educators, the regulatory body for ECEs. Registration with the College is mandatory for those working in a position of Early Childhood Educator. The college sets the requirements for registration, ethical and professional standards, requirements for continuous professional learning, and enforcing complaints and disciplinary processes. In 2017, the College developed a new *Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice for Registered Early Childhood Educators in Ontario*, replacing the original 2011 version.

Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care

The Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care advocates for a universal, affordable, high quality, public and non-profit system of early childhood education and care. The coalition is a member organization made up of child care centres, national and provincial organizations and individuals.

The Coalition focuses its efforts on “3 Big Ideas:”

- Affordable fees for every family
- Decent work and professional pay for educators
- Expansion of public and non-profit child care

Membership in the Coalition provides:

- Tools to help advocate for better child care
- Access to employee benefits and RRSPs for member centres
- Discounted fees on fees and workshops
- Free access to online webinars and tools

The Coalition leads the National Network on Early Learning and Child Care Human Resources Innovations and Decent Work in partnership with the Association of Early Childhood Educators Ontario (AECEO). The Network developed HR Innovation Toolkit Resources to guide the creation of Human Resources policies that

support decent work, and support recruitment and retention across Canada.⁷¹

The Coalition receives no ongoing funding from government, but may receive project funding from time to time.

The Association of Early Childhood Educators of Ontario (AECEO)

The AECEO is a voluntary professional association, whose primary purpose is to advocate for respect, recognition and appropriate wages and working conditions for all ECEs.

The AECEO hosts conferences, conducts workshops, on-line learning modules and other professional learning activities. It has undertaken a number of projects and campaigns, including *Professional Pay for Professional Work, Mobilizing the early childhood workforce in the movement for decent work, a discussion paper on regional wage scales for RECEs working in regulated child care in Ontario, Leadership and Capacity Building project.*

The AECEO does not receive any ongoing government funding. It does receive project funding from foundations. It is an affiliate member of the Canadian Child Care Federation

The Home Child Care Association of Ontario (HCCAO)

The HCCAO represents licensed home child care agencies from across Ontario. The goals of the HCCAO are:

- To encourage and promote communication among individuals, groups, corporations, organizations, federal, provincial and municipal authorities engaged in the planning, financing and delivery of home child care services
- To encourage and promote the development of policies and programs in the home child care field
- To encourage and promote the adoption and maintenance of appropriate standards of practice in the provision of home child care

⁷¹ See https://www.childcareontario.org/toolkit_resources.

- To encourage and promote the continuing education and development of all individuals, groups, corporations, organizations and federal, provincial and municipal authorities involved in the provision of home childcare
- To encourage and promote social action as appropriate
- To encourage and promote research in the home child care field.

Membership in the HCCAO provides:

- Access to agency liability insurance
- A voice with municipal, provincial and federal governments
- Participation in the annual Provincial Conference at reduced rates
- Access to regional HCCAO workshops, information and resources
- Automatic membership in the Canadian Child Care Federation (CCCCF)
- Opportunity to join our committees and volunteer on the HCCAO Board of Directors
- Being a part of an organization that is promoting quality child care programs

The HCCAO is an affiliate member of the Canadian Child Care Federation.

Manitoba

Manitoba Child Care Association (MCCA)

MCCA is a non-profit, membership-funded organization, whose mission is to advocate for a quality system of child care, to advance early childhood education as a profession, and to provide services to members. MCCA provides to its members:

- A group benefits plan
- Code of Ethics
- Professional Development
- *A Human Resource Management Guide for Early Childhood Programs.*

MCCA worked with People First HR to develop a

market competitive wage scale for the sector. The scale includes an analysis of the knowledge, skills, and abilities required of Executive Directors, Early Childhood Educators, and Child Care Assistants. The scale is adjusted annually. In the past, the unit funding model was intended to allow operators to pay at the MCCA wage scale; however, currently average hourly wages are slightly below the recommended amounts, and no additional funds are provided for centres that staff beyond the minimum educational requirements, which acts as a disincentive to hire more than the minimum number of staff with ECE diplomas.

In March 2019, MCCA submitted a petition with more than 25,000 signatures urging the provincial government to increase funding for non-profit child care programs in recognition of the importance of ELCC and to improve quality and stability in the workforce.

MCCA receives no ongoing public funding and is largely supported by membership fees. They are an affiliate member of the Canadian Child Care Federation.

The Child Care Coalition of Manitoba

The Child Care Coalition of Manitoba is a public education and advocacy organization. Members include parents, the labour movement, women's groups, the childcare community, educators and researchers and organizations committed to social justice and community economic development. The goal of the Coalition is a fully accessible, publicly funded, non-profit system of comprehensive and high-quality childcare, with worthy wages and good working conditions for childcare staff.

The coalition receives no ongoing public funding but has received project-specific grants. It relies on fundraising, contributions and volunteer labour.

Alberta

Association of Early Childhood Educators of Alberta (AECEA)

The AECEA is a member-based organization representing the sector by advocating for higher educational standards, better compensation and working conditions, and comprehensive system supports. Its goal is to transform the workforce into a recognized profession.

Membership includes:

- Access to group health benefits (if their employer is an associate member)
- Reduced fees for selected educational and professional learning offerings
- Discounts on various workshops, home and auto insurance
- Reduced membership fees for professional members whose employer participates in the group health plan
- Opportunity for input into AECEA's advocacy activities
- Monthly association newsletter
- Free affiliate membership in the Canadian Child Care Federation

The AECEA:

- Provides a job board for employment opportunities
- Provides links to numerous resources and documents
- Has developed a 10-year framework for building a professional workforce
- Has prepared a position paper on proposed legislative changes as part of the upcoming regulation review

The *Getting it Right* position paper on legislative changes identifies three priorities for change:

1. raising education and education-related standards
2. legislating mandatory ongoing professional learning

3. adopting Alberta's early learning curriculum framework, Flight, within all licensed and approved early learning and child care programs in the province

Prior to April 1, 2020 the AECEA administered the Child Care Supervisor professional development fund. With the removal of the accreditation process, the fund is now administered by the Ministry.

AECEA is an affiliate member of the Canadian Child Care Federation. It does not receive ongoing government funding. It is funded through membership fees, donations and project-specific grants.

Alberta Resource Centre for Quality Enhancement (ARCQE)

ARCQE provides a variety of professional learning activities, resources and tools to the early childhood sector.

Its mission is "to creatively inspire professionals to build leadership and capacity by enhancing quality in programs and services that support children and families."

ARCQE provides a range of supports to programs to improve practice, improve programming and develop leadership.

ARCQE has provincial funding to provide a number of services, by way of a grant or contract, including:

- The Pedagogical Partner's Project, which supports staff in applying the key concepts of Flight: Alberta's Early Learning and Care Framework
- Leading Improvement Nurturing Knowledge (LINK), which includes onsite support and follow up support in the following program areas:
 - Effective supervision
 - Child-staff ratios
 - Staff qualifications
 - Child guidance

- Meeting the developmental needs of children
- GRASP – creating awareness of the Ages and Stages screening tool, including with family child care agencies

The Alberta Family Child Care Association (AFCCA)

AFCCA is a voluntary affiliation of Alberta family dayhome agencies. Its mission is “to promote and advance quality child care for all contracted family child care programs in Alberta through education, collaboration and support.”

It has developed training for consultants/home visitors and provides resource information for parents and professionals.

AFFCA is an affiliate member of the Canadian Child Care Federation.

British Columbia

Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC (CCCABC)

CCCABC is a voluntary organization of parents, child care providers, community organizations, and unions. CCCABC supports

- The development of a comprehensive, accessible and affordable community based, non-profit child care system in BC and across Canada.
- The right of every child and family to quality child care within their own community
- A range of inclusive choices including licensed family and centre-based care
- Stable, adequate government funding
- Child care workers’ rights to wages and working conditions which reflect the level of training, responsibility and value of work performed
- Parent and staff involvement in policy, procedure and program decisions.

In addition to writing numerous position and policy papers and briefs, the Coalition, along with the Early Childhood Educators of British Columbia

developed and continually refine and update the Community Plan for a Public System of Integrated early care and learning (known as the \$10-a-Day Plan). Last updated in 2019, the plan includes calls for:

- New child care legislation
- Universal entitlement of all children
- A new role for the Ministry of Education and Boards of Education, with a focus on a public mandate to plan, develop and deliver services
- Improved staff education, with a Bachelor of ECE as the educational standard, with a two-year diploma as the minimum credential, including for family child care providers and school age staff
- Fair compensation for the workforce, with an average wage of at least \$25/hour
- A maximum fee of \$10/day for full time child care
- The creation of neighbourhood networks to support integrated, coordinated delivery
- Capital budgets for child care
- Public delivery.

The CCCABC does not receive ongoing government funding. It is funded through membership fees, donations and project-based grants.

Early Childhood Educators of British Columbia (ECEBC)

ECEBC represents the early childhood education profession and is dedicated to building respect for early childhood education and for educators. It is committed:

- To advance education by providing scholarships, bursaries, awards and other forms of financial assistance to students undertaking post secondary studies in early childhood education and care.
- To advance and provide professional development opportunities in early childhood education across the province through workshops, conferences and seminars.

- To educate and inform the public about early childhood education and care.
- To engage in the research, development and dissemination of educational resources in early childhood education.

With the Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC, ECEBC co-developed the \$10-a-Day Plan.

In 2018 ECEBC received funding through Sector labour Market Partnerships to engage the child care sector in order to build a shared understanding of key labour market issues, to produce a sector research synthesis and develop research questions to be addressed in a second phase of the project.

ECEBC is funded through membership fees, providing professional development, and project-specific grants and funding from government. It is an affiliate member of the Canadian Child Care Federation.

Appendix G.

Selected regulatory requirements in provinces and territories

Educational and certification requirements in child care centres

NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR		
CERTIFICATION: ⁷² Child Care Staff Classification Services in the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development has responsibility for classifying child care staff		
Trainee certification: Orientation course and proof of registration in an early childhood education program at a post-secondary institution		
Level I: Orientation course, plus a one-year certificate in ECE from a post-secondary institution		
Level II: Two-year ECE diploma from a post-secondary institution		
Level III: Three-year ECE diploma, two-year ECE plus one-year post diploma specialization, or a degree plus a one-year program in ECE		
Level IV: Degree in ECE, or a degree plus two-year ECE diploma		
STAFFING REQUIREMENTS		
Front line staff	Directors	PD requirements
In infant rooms, all staff must hold at least Level I certification. In other age groups, at least one staff per group must hold at least Level I certification. Other staff must have at least trainee certification	At least Level II certification and at least two years experience	At least 30 hours professional development every three years to maintain certification Certification must be renewed every three years
PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND		
CERTIFICATION: The Early Learning and Child Care Board is responsible for certifying child care staff. The Board delegates to the Registrar (a person employed in the Department of Education, Early Learning and Culture) its responsibilities to review applications for certificates and renewal of certificates		
ECE Level I: Successful completion of approved 30-hour courses in each of the following subject areas: child growth and development, child guidance, and early childhood pedagogy		
ECE Level II: A one-year ECE certificate		
ECE Level III: A two-year ECE diploma, or a degree program in ECE		
Early Childhood Supervisor certificate: A two-year ECE diploma program, or a degree program in ECE, approved by the Board, or a degree program in child and family studies, which includes credit for a two-year diploma program in early childhood care and education and obtained at least 3,900 hours of experience providing services to children while holding a certificate or an equivalent authorization issued in the jurisdiction where the services were provided		
Inclusion support assistant: A one-year certificate or two-year diploma in early childhood studies, early childhood education and care, or human services		
STAFFING REQUIREMENTS		
Front line staff	Directors	PD requirements
As of 2017, at least one staff per centre must hold Level II or Level III certification. All other staff must hold at least Level I certification	Early Childhood Supervisor certificate	At least 45 hours of continuing education, approved by the Board, every three years Certification must be renewed every three years

⁷² Provinces use a variety of terms, including certification, classification and registration.

NOVA SCOTIA		
CERTIFICATION: Child Care Classification Services in the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development is responsible for classifying child care staff		
Entry Level: Completion of orientation training (approximately 25-50 hours), or post-secondary courses in ECE comparable to orientation training (16 interactive sessions supported by a learning coach)		
Level 1: Completion of orientation for child care staff and completion of course work set in standards, or have a one-year certificate in ECE		
Level 2: A two-year diploma in ECE, or successful completion of the recognition of prior learning program		
Level 3: A BA in early childhood education; or an area of study that qualifies a person to plan and deliver early childhood education programming for children from birth to 12 years of age; or a two-year ECE diploma and a degree in any discipline		
STAFFING REQUIREMENTS:		
Front line staff	Directors	PD requirements
2/3 of staff must hold Level 1 or 2 certification. Staff who are not classified are required to take orientation training after being hired	Must hold Level 2 or 3 certification	At least 30 hours professional development every three years Certification must be renewed every three years
NEW BRUNSWICK		
CERTIFICATION: None		
STAFFING REQUIREMENTS:		
Front line staff	Directors	PD requirements
The director, or one staff in four must have a one-year ECE certificate or equivalent. As of July 1, 2020, 50% of staff must hold a one-year certificate in ECE or equivalent. No orientation-level training is required for staff who do not hold early childhood qualifications	The director, or one staff in four must have a one-year ECE certificate or equivalent. As of July 1, 2020, the director must hold a one-year certificate in ECE or equivalent.	Not specified
QUEBEC		
CERTIFICATION: None		
STAFFING REQUIREMENTS:		
Front line staff	Directors	PD requirements
2/3 of staff must have a three-year Diplôme d'études collégiales or any other equivalent training; if fewer than three staff at least one must be qualified. A permit holder has five years from the issue of the permit to comply. Until then one in three staff must be qualified. There are no entry requirements for other staff	Not specified	Not specified

ONTARIO		
CERTIFICATION: Early Childhood Education is regulated by the College of Early Childhood Educators of Ontario, which is responsible for granting certificates of registration of ECEs		
Registered ECE: A two-year ECE diploma from an Ontario College of Applied Arts and Technology or equivalent, a degree relevant to ECE, or a combination of a diploma and degree demonstrated by the successful completion of an assessment process approved by the College		
STAFFING REQUIREMENTS:		
Front line staff	Directors	PD requirements
One staff per group must be a Registered ECE There are no entry level requirements for other staff	Must be a Registered ECE, plus have two years experience	The College of Early Childhood Educators of Ontario establishes the requirements for continuous professional learning Registration must be renewed every year
MANITOBA		
CERTIFICATION: Early Learning and Child Care Manitoba in the Department of Families is responsible for classifying child care staff		
Child Care Assistant (CCA): Must have 40-hours of approved early childhood training within their first year of employment		
ECE II: Completion of a two-year ECE diploma program approved by the Child Care Education Program Approval Committee, or an assessment program offered by the ELCC Program		
ECE III: a degree in an approved child care program, or ECE II classification and a post-diploma certificate in an approved area of a specialization		
STAFFING REQUIREMENTS:		
Front line staff	Directors	PD requirements
2/3 and at least one staff per group must be an ECE II or ECE III Other staff must be classified as a Child Care Assistant	Must be an ECE III and have at least one year's experience	At least 24 hours of professional development each year Certification does not expire
SASKATCHEWAN		
CERTIFICATION: The Ministry of Education is responsible for certifying staff		
ECE I: Completion of a 120-hour post-secondary introductory course in ECE or equivalent		
ECE II: One-year ECE certificate or equivalent		
ECE III: Two-year diploma in ECE or equivalent		
STAFFING REQUIREMENTS:		
Front line staff	Directors	PD requirements
30% of staff must meet or exceed the qualifications of an ECE II An additional 20% must meet or exceed the qualifications of an ECE III All other staff who work 65 hours/month or more must meet or exceed the qualifications of an ECE I	Must meet or exceed the qualifications of an ECE III	Not specified Certification does not expire

ALBERTA		
CERTIFICATION: The Alberta Child Care Staff Certification Office in the Ministry of Children's Services is responsible for certifying child care staff		
Child Development Assistant: one specified high school or college course, government-sponsored orientation course, or approved family day home provider training course. Child Development Worker: one year Early Learning and Child Care certificate from an Alberta public college or equivalent, and at least one post-secondary English/French course, or completion of the Life Experience Equivalency Process Child Development Supervisor: two year Early Learning and Child Care diploma from an Alberta public college, or equivalent, and at least one college/university-level English/French course		
STAFFING REQUIREMENTS:		
Front line staff	Directors	PD requirements
At least one in three staff must be certified as a Child Development Worker All other staff must obtain certification as a Child Development Assistant within 6 months of commencing work in a program	Must be certified as a Child Development Supervisor	Not specified Certification does not expire
BRITISH COLUMBIA		
CERTIFICATION: The Director of the Early Childhood Registry in the Ministry of Children and Family Development is responsible for certifying Early Childhood Educators		
Early childhood educator assistant certificate: At least one course of a basic early childhood education training program in child development, child guidance, or child health, safety and nutrition Early childhood educator certificate: One-year certificate from a recognized post-secondary institution and at least 500 hours of work experience relevant to early childhood education in the previous five years Special needs early childhood educator certificate and infant and toddler educator certificate: In addition to meeting the qualifications of an early childhood educator, must have a post-basic certificate in special needs early childhood educator training program or an infant and toddler educator training program		
STAFFING REQUIREMENTS:		
Front line staff	Directors	PD requirements
Child care for children under 36 months: one staff per group must be certified as an Infant Toddler Education; for groups of 5-8, one Infant Toddler Educator and one Early Childhood Educator; for groups of 9-12, one Infant Toddler Educator, one Early Childhood Educator and one assistant For children 30 months to school age: one staff per group must be certified as an Early Childhood Educator All other staff must be certified as assistants	Not specified	At least 40 hours of professional development every five years in order to renew certification as an assistant, ECE Assistants must also have at least 400 hours of relevant work experience and completed at least one additional course of a basic ECE training program Certification must be renewed every five years

YUKON		
CERTIFICATION: The Child Care Services Unit in Yukon Health and Social Services is responsible for certifying child care staff		
Child Care Worker I: 60 hour introduction to early childhood development or equivalent		
Child Care Worker II: one-year ECE certificate or equivalent		
Child Care Worker III: two or more years of training in early childhood development or equivalent		
STAFFING REQUIREMENTS:		
Front line staff	Directors	PD requirements
30% of staff must meet or exceed Child Care Worker II qualifications An additional 20% of staff must meet or exceed Child Care Worker III qualifications All other staff must meet or exceed requirements for Child Care Worker I qualifications	Not specified	Not specified Certification does not expire
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES and NUNAVUT		
CERTIFICATION: None		
STAFFING REQUIREMENTS:		
Front line staff	Directors	PD requirements
No educational requirements	No educational requirements	Not specified

Staff to child ratios and group size in full day child care centres

Jurisdiction	Requirements for 1 year olds		Requirements for 3 year olds		Requirements for 6 year olds		Maximum centre size
	Ratio	Group size	Ratio	Group size	Ratio	Group size	
NL	1:3	6	1:8	16	1:12	24	As of July 31, 2017, there is no maximum centre size
PE	1:3	6	1:10	Not specified	1:15	Not specified	80
NS	1:4	10	1:8	24	1:15	30	Not specified
NB	1:3	9	1:7	14	1:15	30	60
QC	1:5	15	1:8	30	1:20		80; a CPE may operate five centres, with no more than two in one building
ON	1:3	10	1:8	24			Not specified
MB	1:3	5	1:8	16	1:15	30	Not specified
SK	1:3	6	1:10	20	1:15	30	90
AB	1:4	8	1:8	16	1:10	20	Not specified
BC	1:4	12	1:8	25	1:15	30	Not specified
YT	1:4	8	1:8	16	1:12	24	64
NT	1:3	6	1:8	16	1:10	30	Not specified
NU	1:3	6	1:8	19	1:10	20	Not specified

Indoor and outdoor space requirements in child care centres

Jurisdiction	Indoor space requirements	Outdoor space requirements	Location of outdoor space
NL	3.3 m2/child	7 m2/child	On the premises, unless the program offers only part time care
PE	3.5 m2/child	7 m2/child	<p>Adjacent to the centre, or where there is no outdoor space immediately adjacent to the facility, other outdoor space may be used if it is safely accessible and within reasonable distance from the centre.</p> <p>Outdoor space may be used by another licensed centre as long as they are not used by more than one operator at a time</p>
NS	<p>2.753 m2/child</p> <p>Must not be above 2nd floor of a building</p> <p>Infant care must be located on the ground floor.</p>	7 m2/per child using the play space, large enough to accommodate the largest category of children who regularly attend the facility	At the facility or within a reasonable distance, that is suitable for the age range of children using it. Infants must have a separate outdoor play area, at the facility or in the immediate vicinity
NB	3.25 m2/child	4.5 m2/child to accommodate 50% at any given time	Immediately adjacent to the centre, or within a reasonable walking distance, depending on the age of the children (less than 350 m from indoor play space)
QC	<p>Under 18 mo – 4 m2/child</p> <p>18 mo or older – 2.75 m2/child</p>	4 m2/child to accommodate at least 1/3 of the maximum capacity at any time	Must be within 500 meters of the facility
ON	<p>2.8 m2/child</p> <p>Every licensee shall ensure that each room in each child care centre it operates that is for the use of licensed infant, toddler, preschool, kindergarten or family age groups or for the use of children with special needs is on or below the second storey, unless otherwise approved by a director.</p>	5.6 m2/child based on licensed capacity	Must be at ground level and adjacent to the premises, unless otherwise approved by a director

Jurisdiction	Indoor space requirements	Outdoor space requirements	Location of outdoor space
MB	3.3 m ² /child	7 m ² /child and accommodates the greater of 50% of the number of licensed spaces or 55 m ²	Must be located within 350 metres of the centre
SK	Infants: 3.7 m ² /child Toddler, preschool, school age: 3.25 m ² /child	7 m ² /licensed child care space	At least half the space must be adjacent to the centre; the remainder must be within walking distance as determined by the youngest age group on the licence
AB	3 m ² /child	2 m ² /child under 19 mo; 4.5 m ² /child 19 mo or older; to accommodate 50% of the licensed capacity	Adjacent to or within safe and easy walking distance from the program premises
BC	3.7 m ² /child Note: City of Vancouver requires 6.8 m ² /infant and 5.1 m ² /preschool child	6m ² /child; if more than one care type is provided, must meet the requirements for the largest maximum group size Note: City of Vancouver requires 18.75 m ² /infant and 21.6 m ² /preschool child	Not specified. Note: the City of Vancouver requires outdoor space to be at the same level as the indoor space and contiguous with it
YT	4 m ² /child	5 m ² / child for each child using the outdoor space at any given time	Must be within easy and safe walking distance for the age groups involved
NT	2.75 m ² /child	5 m ² /child if adjacent to the facility	Must have safe access and be within easy walking distance if not adjacent to the facility
NU	2.75 m ² /child	5 m ² /child if adjacent to the facility	Must have safe access and be within easy walking distance if not adjacent to the facility

Regulatory models of family child care

Jurisdiction	Regulatory Model
NL	Agency model; individually licensed in geographic areas outside those served by the agency
PE	Individually licensed
NS	Agency model
NB	Individually “approved” but not licensed
QC	Agency model
ON	Agency model
MB	Individually licensed
SK	Individually licensed
AB	Agency model
BC	Individually licensed
YT	Individually licensed
NT	Individually licensed
NU	Individually licensed

Training requirements for family child care providers

Jurisdiction	Training requirements for providers
NL	30-60 hour entry level certification course and 30 hours of professional development every three years
PE	30-hour course related to the care and education of infants and preschoolers, approved by the Board
NS	Must complete a family home day care training course approved by the Minister no later than one year after the date their family day care home is approved
NB	None specified
QC	<p>45-hour program; at least 30 of the 45 hours must pertain to child development and the educational program</p> <p>Providers must take six hours of refresher training every year on specific topics including at least 3 hours on child development and the educational program provided for in the Act</p> <p>The home childcare provider must ensure that any assistant has completed, within six months after beginning work, child development training of at least 12 hours</p>
ON	None specified. Agencies may provide training
MB	40-hour course from a community college in family child care or early childhood education within their first year of operating
SK	<p>Providers must attend an orientation session with a provincial program consultant; take part in six hours of professional development each licensing year; and complete a 40-hour introductory early childhood education course within the first year of licensing.</p> <p>Group family child care providers must complete the 120 hour introductory course (Level 1) within three years</p> <p>Assistants must six hours of professional development each licensing year</p>

Jurisdiction	Training requirements for providers
AB	None specified. Agencies may provide training In group family child care, the licence holder and other providers must each hold a Child Development Assistant certificate
BC	20 hours of child care-related training In multi-age home settings, providers must have at least a one-year ECE certificate
YT	60-hour introductory early childhood development course, and a specific family day home course or equivalent within the first year of operation
NT	None specified
NU	None specified

Numbers and ages of children permitted in regulated family child care

Jurisdiction	Maximum number of children permitted
NL	Maximum of six children including the provider's own children not attending school full-time, if any children are infants or toddlers. If no infants or toddlers, a maximum of seven children. There may only be three children under three years, and only two under two years old. Providers may care for three children under two years if there are no other children being cared for at the same time. Maximum of five children where two are infants age range and 3 are toddlers Providers may care for up to nine school age children, including the provider's own children if no younger children are present
PE	Maximum of eight children including the provider's own children; no more than three under two years
NS	Maximum of seven six children up to the age of 12, including provider's own children. If a provider is caring for four to seven children, no more than 3 children may be under 3 years of age and of those three children no more than two children may be infants. If the provider is only caring for school-age children there may be a maximum of nine children including the provider's own children. If the provider is only caring for infants, there may be a maximum of three infants at a time, including the provider's own infant(s)
NB	Maximum of six including the provider's children, and no more than three infants, or five children ages 2-5. If caring for only school age, maximum of nine children over the age of six
QC	Maximum of six (including the provider's own children) under nine years with no more than two under 18 months In group family child care, maximum of nine children, including the provider's own children, with no more than four children under 18 months
ON	Maximum of six children under 13, including the caregiver's own children under age six; no more than two under two years If the caregiver's own children are under six years, there may be no more than five school-age children who are more than six years
MB	Maximum of eight children under 12 years, including the provider's own children, with no more than five children under six years, of whom no more than three children are under two years Group child care homes can have a maximum of twelve children under 12 years (including provider's own children) with no more than three children under two years.

Jurisdiction	Maximum number of children permitted
SK	<p>Maximum of eight children including provider's own children under 13 years. There may only be five children under six years and of those, no more than two children under 2.5 years. If three infants and toddlers are in care, all other children must be of school age</p> <p>Group family child care homes, may have a maximum of 12 children including the provider's and assistant's own children under 13 years; ten may be under six years or five under 2.5 years</p>
AB	<p>Maximum of six children, with no more than three children under three years and two children under two years.</p> <p>Group family child care can have a maximum of 10 children and minimum of two staff, one of whom is the license holder. Not more than three may be under three years of age, and not more than two may be infants</p>
BC	<p>Maximum of seven children. If any child is younger than 12 months, no more than three children younger than 48 months old and, of those three, no more than one under 12 months</p> <p>If no child younger than 12 months old is present, maximum is four children younger than 48 months old, and of those four, no more than two children younger than 24 months old</p> <p>A provider with a multi-age family licence may have a maximum of eight children</p>
YT	<p>Maximum of eight children, including the provider's own preschool children. No more than three infants if there are also three children who are preschoolers or school-age already enrolled. If there is an additional caregiver, there may be four additional school-age children.</p>
NT	<p>Maximum of eight children under 12 years, including the provider's own children with a maximum of six children five years and under, a maximum of three children 3 years and under, and a maximum of two children under two years</p>
NU	<p>Maximum of eight children under 12 years, including the provider's own children with a maximum of six children five years and under, a maximum of three children 3 years and under, and a maximum of two children under two years</p>

Appendix H.

Edmonton Council for Early Learning and Care: Guiding Principles

1. *Work toward developing an integrated system of early learning and care must be informed by, and conform to, human rights principles.* These principles are articulated in international agreements such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
2. *Indigenous perspectives and guidance are required because of the structural conditions created by our long history of discrimination.* Efforts to meet the unique and distinct needs of Indigenous children and their families must be grounded in the right to self-determination. Ensuring this right is upheld in all phases of the development of a system of early learning and care in the City of Edmonton is foundational to redressing the legacy of Indian Residential Schools, advancing the process of reconciliation, and building and rebuilding Indigenous communities that establish and control their educational systems in their own languages and cultural methods of teaching and learning.
3. *Individuals and families from diverse cultures must be engaged in advisory, planning, service delivery, and regulatory roles.* Dominant cultures inevitably influence the organization and delivery of services and can be a significant barrier to culturally diverse families and children.
4. *Special efforts are required to identify, engage, and respond to families who may be in need of and entitled to services but who, for whatever reason, are not accessing services.* Responsive supports are critical so that all children can be successful at home, in school, and in their communities.

5. *Supports that optimize early child development must be easily accessible as needed on a universal basis.* Young children who can benefit from early learning and care are not limited to certain geographic areas of the city or to particular economic or ethnic groups.
6. *Supports must be adapted as necessary for the specific needs of children and their families.* As examples, First Nations, Inuit, and Metis children and families have distinctive needs as a function of residential schooling, newcomer families have some characteristics that are specific to their ethnic communities, foster children have needs that arise from disruptive family histories, and children with differential abilities often require services designed to accommodate their specific needs.
7. *Supports must be high in quality.* Low-quality supports are not acceptable and do not contribute to meaningful long-term outcomes for children and families.
8. *Access to social, health, and educational systems must be equitable and timely.* These systems often are complex and unwelcoming. Barriers include language, culture, confidence, experience, discrimination, and inequitable levels of social and institutional capital and referent power that contribute to an imbalance of power. Although partners in early learning and care are working to reduce barriers, equitable and early access to early learning and care services often requires advocates, navigators, and/or companion workers who play an essential role in linking children and families to the supports they need to be successful at home, in school, and in their communities.
9. *Design, promotion, policy development, and implementation should be guided where possible by research-based evidence.* Expertise and research should be sought as necessary to guide this work.
10. *Eliminating childhood poverty requires the elimination of family poverty.* Stable and sufficient income is essential for ensuring quality of life and necessities such as adequate nutrition and housing. Stable, safe, and family- appropriate housing is essential for participating in communities, for succeeding in school, and for accessing supportive services. Early learning and care adds an important element to broad efforts by EndPovertyEdmonton and its partners toward eliminating poverty.
11. *Eliminating the experience of poverty from childhood requires structural change and long-term commitments.* A truly integrated system of early learning and care requires systemic changes and productive cooperation, coordination, and collaboration among levels of government and communities.
12. *Edmonton can lead by example.* Significant changes in early learning and care require cooperation, coordination, and collaboration from several levels of government and from other sectors. Municipalities can and must effect some changes and promote others. The City of Edmonton and other partners must take a leadership role in supporting early child development and eliminating poverty.

