



CANADIAN FEDERATION  
OF NURSES UNIONS  
LA FÉDÉRATION CANADIENNE  
DES SYNDICATS D'INFIRMIÈRES  
ET INFIRMIERS

## POSITION STATEMENT

### Child Care

#### BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW

According to the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA), the cost of infant care in Toronto is nearly 10 times that of Montreal, where Quebec's universal child care program has been in place since 1997. In Toronto, the fee for an infant is \$20,220 per year; for preschoolers the annual fee is \$13,800.00.<sup>1</sup> Fees for daycare have risen faster than the rate of inflation in 61% of cities.<sup>2</sup>

In contrast, in Quebec the cost of a child care space for one child is about \$10.00;<sup>3</sup> similarly, B.C. is currently putting in place \$10-a-day daycare.<sup>4</sup> It is evident that affordable child care is possible if there is the political will to put it in place.

The economic and social benefits of universal child care are well documented. An evaluation found that enhanced government revenues in Quebec due to the increase in mother's labour force participation offsets 40% of Quebec's child care spending.<sup>5</sup> Evaluations of the Quebec child care model also show that universal child care helps reduce poverty rates for single-parent families by giving single parents the ability to remain in the workforce and potentially upgrade their education and skills. The provision of daycare also improves child development, and provides social and support networks for families. But for the full benefits of child care to be realized, the report concludes, low-cost daycare must be universally accessible as in Quebec.<sup>6</sup>

However, for universal child care to be realized the federal government needs to take the lead, bring together the provinces and territories to develop a plan modelled on existing programs in Quebec and B.C., and increase Canada's child care funding. These measures would not only help parents and children, they would also benefit the workforce, increase Canada's productivity and spur economic growth.<sup>7</sup>

Canada is currently spending about half of the internationally recommended spending benchmarks.<sup>8</sup> In 2013, public spending on child care services in Canada at 0.2% of GDP was the lowest of all Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries (tied with Turkey and Latvia), compared to the OECD average of 0.9%, 1.4% in the U.K., 0.8% in Australia, and 0.6% in the U.S.<sup>9</sup>

As a result, there are licensed child care spaces enough for only 25% of Canadian children under the age of six. The shortage is even worse for infants, children with special needs, rural families and parents who work non-standard hours.<sup>10</sup>

Meanwhile, in an effort to keep the pressure on both federal and provincial governments to move forward on developing and implementing pay equity, the Canadian Labour Congress has launched a campaign called Done Waiting,<sup>11</sup> which calls for an end to wage discrimination, action on child care, and an end to sexual harassment and violence.

## CFNU POSITION

The Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions (CFNU) recommends that:

- The federal government increase spending on child care annually over the next 10 years so that it closes the gap with international benchmarks.
- The federal government develop an overarching national policy framework and funding strategy, and work with the provinces/territories to deliver a robust child care and early learning model, actively engaging with parents and early childhood educators.
- The federal government develop a national policy framework and funding strategy to advance the principles of universal and inclusive entitlement to affordable child care (low- or no-fee), high-quality and comprehensive service to meet the needs of all children and their parents, regardless of their income, family status or diverse needs.
- In developing the national policy framework, the federal government needs to take into account the special circumstances of those who work non-standard hours, such as nurses who work shifts and those with precarious work, who may have difficulty maintaining their attachment to work, given the shortage of child care for those who do not have the traditional 9-to-5 work week.

## Endnotes

---

<sup>1</sup> Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. <https://www.policyalternatives.ca/newsroom/news-releases/study-reveals-highest-and-lowest-child-care-fees-canadian-cities-2018>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Quebec Government. <http://www.budget.finances.gouv.qc.ca/budget/outils/garde-net-en.asp>

<sup>4</sup> BC Government. <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/family-social-supports/caring-for-young-children/running-daycare-preschool/universal-child-care-prototype-sites>

<sup>5</sup> Child Care Now. <https://timeforchildcare.ca/>

<sup>6</sup> City of Toronto. <https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2017/ed/bgrd/backgroundfile-107205.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> Child Care Now. <https://timeforchildcare.ca/>

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Canadian Political Science Association.

<https://www.cpsa-acsp.ca/documents/conference/2018/844.Arsenault.Jacques.Maioni.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> Child Care Now. <https://timeforchildcare.ca/child-care-at-a-glance/>

<sup>11</sup> Canadian Labour Congress. <http://www.donewaiting.ca/>