



**national  
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The National Union of Public and General Employees is an affiliate of the Canadian Labour Congress and a member of the Public Services International



# Early Childhood Education and Care



Canada needs a national, affordable and high quality Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) program.

Research shows that every dollar invested in high quality childcare generates a \$3 return in social and economic benefits to children, parents and society.

Research shows that early childhood education and care is the most cost-effective way to reduce poverty and foster economic growth.

Research shows a cost saving of eight times the original investment in quality childcare for at-risk children, in terms of social responsibility, crime reduction, success at school and success in employment.

Research shows access to quality childcare enhances children's development in every way — intellectually, physically, emotionally and linguistically.

To achieve all of this, our governments must commit to three core concepts.

### 1. Federal funding

We believe Canada can and should invest much more in early childhood education and care.

ECEC is a long-term investment. It will create and nurture human capital. The returns on investment in the early child development period exceed investment in any other period of human development.

Income support for parents with young children is important. But it's not enough. We need an investment in creating more spaces.

The federal government has the financial resources to make this investment. And yet among developed countries, Canada comes dead last in spending on early childhood programs.

The federal government can afford a national ECEC program.

### 2. Federal legislation

Six principles:

**Quality:** high quality can only be obtained through a not-for-profit and publicly funded program.

**Universality:** no matter what region or province a child lives in, their parents should not have difficulty finding high quality and affordable ECEC.

**Accessibility:** costs should not be a barrier to access. All children must benefit from quality ECEC regardless of their parents' income.

**Accountability:** the provinces must be held accountable for spending federal ECEC money. ECEC centres must be accountable to children, parents and the community.

**Inclusiveness:** an ECEC program must be inclusive of children with disabilities and sensitive to Canada's diverse populations. All children must benefit from quality childcare regardless of their abilities or backgrounds.

**Development:** learning does not begin at the age of six. Quality standards in ECEC must be such that Canadian children are intellectually stimulated.

### 3. Unionized workers

The current ECEC workforce endures:

- Low wages
- Difficult working conditions
- High levels of job insecurity
- Limited career opportunities
- Health and safety concerns
- Uncertain employment status
- High staff turnover.

Unionization has always played a critical role in improving wages, benefits, training opportunities and working conditions.

Better wages, benefits and working conditions contribute positively to job performance and long-term commitment. This, in turn, provides for higher quality of services to children.

“Good early learning and developmental supports are essential to improving all of the so-called ‘determinants of well-being’ and a life well-lived.” - Roy Romanow, 2006

