

you bet

I CARE !

**Caring and Learning
Environments:**

**Quality in Child Care
Centres Across Canada**

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Quality in Child Care Centres
Across Canada**

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Summary of Guiding Principles and Recommendations

The recommendations presented below are based on the findings of this study and reflect what we believe must be done in order to enhance quality in Canadian child care centres. While child care remains a provincial/territorial responsibility, we also believe that funds from the federal government as well as the provincial/territorial governments are critical for the implementation of our recommendations. We urge the reader to review Chapter 6, in particular, in order to understand the reason for each recommendation.

Guiding Principles

1. There must be a concerted and sustained public and political will to create more and better child care programs for the children and families who are served by them. This political will must manifest itself in raising child care to a more visible and active place on the agendas of the federal, provincial and territorial governments, and in viewing high quality child care services as a positive investment in children, families and communities.
2. There must be coordination among ministries and departments, and between all levels of government. Child care touches on many aspects of child and family policy, that include but are not limited to health, education, labour and social services. Coordination is needed to ensure that a reasonable, rational, consistent and complementary set of incentives is introduced across government departments.

3. The extreme variation in both child policies and child care quality across jurisdictions must be addressed. The variation in areas such as adult:child ratio, group size and required levels of ECCE-specific education for staff contributes to the variations in quality observed in this study. It is essential that *all* children, regardless of where they live or their family's income level, have access to high quality early childhood education and care programs that not only protect their emotional and physical well-being but also support and encourage their development.

Recommendations

Recommendations on Regulations

1. By the year 2007, all provincial and territorial governments must require that all child care staff at the rank of "teacher" (that is, a person responsible for a group of children) have completed the equivalent of a two-year, post-secondary, ECCE-specific education program.¹
2. By the year 2010, all provincial and territorial governments should require that all child care staff at the rank of "teacher" have completed the equivalent of a four-year, post-secondary, ECCE-specific education program.²
3. All provincial and territorial governments must continue to regulate and enforce acceptable group sizes and adult:child ratios at levels consistent with those demonstrated by research as being associated with the provision of quality child care programs.³

Recommendations on Pre-Service Staff Education and Continuing Professional Development

4. Colleges, universities and other institutions providing post-secondary ECCE education, assisted by governments, must immediately address the current barriers of availability and accessibility faced by people wishing to obtain basic ECCE-specific credentials. Addressing these barriers must include:
 - the provision of both on-site and distance education programs for both full-time and part-time students;
 - the delivery of programs through a variety of different educational formats, such as correspondence courses, courses on the internet etc.;
 - the provision of supervised practicum experiences within reasonable distances from the students;
 - the provision of financial assistance and incentives to students in two-year post-secondary or equivalent ECCE education programs. This should include the provision of scholarships, bursaries and loans while in the educational program, and wage enhancements for graduates of such programs who are working in child care settings.

5. All provincial and territorial governments must immediately begin to provide financial assistance to centres to encourage them to hire graduates from two-year post-secondary ECCE programs, and to enable them to pay such staff higher wages.
6. Colleges, universities and other institutions providing post-secondary ECCE-specific education must immediately ensure that their programs include training for specific child populations, such as infants, children from diverse cultures, children who have special needs, and children of school age.
7. Colleges, universities and other institutions providing post-secondary ECCE-specific education must provide advanced training in program leadership and administration for people who are, or wish to become, centre supervisors or directors.
8. Colleges, universities and other educational institutions, governments, professional associations and child care programs must work together to ensure that in-service and continuing professional development opportunities are available and accessible in all jurisdictions for both staff and directors.

Recommendations on the Financial Aspects of Child Care

9. Governments must provide direct operating grants to child care centres in all jurisdictions so that the centres have a stable base of operating revenue.
10. Governments must provide centres in all jurisdictions with wage enhancement grants.
11. Governments must commit to funding the recommendations relating to improving the availability and accessibility of ECCE education and the payment of incentive grants to centres to encourage them to hire staff who are graduates of a two-year or equivalent post-secondary ECCE education program.
12. Governments should provide incentives for property owners to reduce or eliminate child care centres' costs of rent and utilities, and to facilitate the co-location and sharing of resources between licensed child care programs and schools, colleges, universities and other public and quasi-public institutions.

Recommendation on Administration

13. Governments should encourage and support child care centres to serve as ECCE student-teacher practicum sites through financial recognition of the additional staff costs incurred in the provision of supervision, guidance and mentoring for students.

Recommendations on Job Satisfaction and the Work Environment

14. Governments, centre boards of directors and owners, and centre administrators must recognize the importance for quality programs of meeting the personal and professional needs of teaching staff and, as a first step, must allocate funds for this purpose.
15. Centre boards of directors and owners, perhaps in association with professional organizations and governments, must develop mechanisms to ensure that all regularly employed child care staff can participate in benefit plans, such as disability insurance, that would help to attract and retain employees.
16. Centre directors and staff must make the creation of a supportive work environment a high priority. This includes ensuring that staff know the formal and informal avenues for expressing concerns and addressing issues that affect their own and their collective well-being.
17. Governments and centre operators must encourage and enable centre directors to take specialized training in leadership and administration.
18. Recognizing that feelings of isolation and inadequacy are not uncommon in highly demanding service professions such as child care, ECCE educational programs must assist students to recognize the importance of their feelings, and impress upon them the need for personal reflection and interpersonal communication with other staff and the centre director.
19. Governments and professional associations must immediately undertake a public education campaign that links the importance of children's experience during their early years and the value of people who work in the child care field.

Notes

- 1 The equivalent in Québec is currently a three-year course that starts after Grade 11 rather than after Grade 12 as in other jurisdictions.
- 2 The equivalent in Québec is currently a two-year college course after completion of Grade 11, followed by four years of university.
- 3 See Canadian Child Care Federation 1991, p. 9 for recommendations, based on the research literature, for adult:child ratio and group size by age group.