

Child Care

Unifor 2018 Lobby Document



Unifor represents more than 315,000 workers across Canada. Our membership includes workers that are parents, grandparents, guardians and child care workers. In conversations all across Canada our members consistently raise issues of affordability, accessibility and quality of care.

Unifor members with children with special needs, Indigenous members and shift-work members all face particular barriers in finding good, quality care. But, our union also knows that it isn't just these members who are affected by a broken child care system.

What's the issue?

Everyone relies on someone who relies on child care, and Canada's child care system is in crisis.

The federal government needs to take action to ensure there is high quality, universal, affordable and inclusive child care all across Canada.

Unifor welcomes the federal government's initiative to establishing a multilateral, national child care framework with the provinces. However, much more needs to be done to address the magnitude of the child care crisis in Canada. **The 11-year child care funding plan in the 2017 federal budget allocated only \$540 million for child care in 2018-2019, rising to \$550 million by 2021-2022.**



That is far short of what is needed and does not even come close to the previous Liberal government's commitment to the provinces. Back in 2005, the Liberal government committed to a child care framework that amounted to \$1 billion annually in 2005 dollars – the equivalent to over \$1.25 billion in today's dollars.

The 2018 federal budget did not inject new money for child care so the funding gap remains.

How can the government solve this?

Advocate for change

The benefits of accessible, high-quality child care are well-documented and broadly accepted in Canada. Accessible child care enables parents to work or get the education and training they need to secure good jobs. Making child care more affordable opens up more opportunities for families, improves women's equality and helps reduce poverty. Investing in child care is an important economic driver and strengthens our local communities. The best way to ensure universality, affordability, inclusivity and high quality is through a publicly funded system that is delivered by public or non-profit providers.

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Apply child care principles

The federal government should be approaching child care with the following core principles in mind:

- **Universality:**
Every family in Canada deserves access to child care no matter where they live, regardless of a parent's employment status or a child's spoken language.
- **Affordability:**
Cost should not be a barrier for any family to access child care. Child care can help families climb out of poverty and live more stable lives.
- **Inclusivity:**
Child care services must be flexible and have the resources to accommodate the needs of all children, including those with physical or mental disabilities.
- **High quality:**
Children should be engaged in interesting and stimulating activities in a safe environment, with highly-skilled and appropriately compensated staff.

Recommendations

- U **Allocate \$1 billion** in the 2018-2019 fiscal year as an initial baseline. Most of this would be transferred to provinces/territories/Indigenous communities to begin building a comprehensive early learning and child care system.
- U **Replace the 11-year child care funding plan** that was set out in the 2017 budget with a new plan that would increase spending by \$1 billion in each subsequent fiscal period until Canada reaches the international benchmark of 1% of GDP in current dollars. This benchmark is used by the OECD, UNICEF and other international bodies.
- U **Shift the earmarked funding for the Canada Child Benefit (CCB)** to the provinces in order to create new regulated child care spaces.
- U **Ensure that a national early learning and child care system is based on the principles** of universality, affordability, inclusivity and high quality.