

KEY POINTS

Quality child care is good for children, but poor quality child care can be harmful. With the majority of young children experiencing care outside the home, it is critical that we get it right.

- Children have a right to quality early experiences for who they are today. Their early experiences also lay the foundation for physical and mental health, emotional security, cultural and personal identity, and developing competencies.
- The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) insists “that ‘care’ and ‘education’ are inseparable concepts and that quality services for children necessarily provide both.”
- The OECD *Starting Strong* report promotes a universal approach to access, with particular attention to children in need of special support, including Aboriginal and disadvantaged children and those with special needs.

All of Canada’s children deserve to be in quality environments: nurturing spaces where they share diverse experiences with new friends; where they are included, appreciated, celebrated, supported, respected and encouraged to have fun; where they are guided in a caring way to bring out their creativity, to learn new concepts, and to understand routine.

CANADA’S OBLIGATIONS

Federal, provincial and territorial governments in Canada have made commitments to honour children’s right to access quality early care and learning through various agreements. All agreements recognize that parents have primary responsibility for their children and that government’s role is to ensure that families have the support necessary to carry out their responsibilities.

Canada’s commitments to early care and learning were originally outlined in 1991 in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

In 2005, the UNCRC released *General Comment 7 – Implementing Child Rights in Early Childhood (GC7)*, which interprets the right to education during early childhood as beginning at birth and closely linked to young children’s right to maximum development. GC7 notes that “in order to ensure that young children’s rights are fully realized during this crucial phase of their lives... state parties are urged to adopt comprehensive, strategic, and time-bound plans for early childhood within a rights-based framework. This requires an increase in human and financial resource allocations for early childhood services and programmes.”

GC7 also highlights the expectations of Canada and other UNCRC signatories, including obligations to:

- recognize that the right to survival and development can only be implemented in a holistic manner, through the enforcement of all the other provisions of the Convention, including rights to health,



10% of young children and their families are living in poverty



This is the first generation of young children in which a majority are in out-of-home care



education and play as well as adequate nutrition, social security, an adequate standard of living and a healthy and a safe environment.

- monitor and regulate the quality of services to ensure that children’s rights are protected and their best interests served.
- undertake systematic child rights training for children and their parents.

WHAT THE UNITED NATIONS SAYS ABOUT CANADA

The UN is particularly concerned about lack of access to quality, affordable early care and learning in Canada. In 2003, the UNCRC released Concluding Observations which encouraged Canada to:

- compare services provided at provincial and territorial levels in order to identify variations and their impact on children
- devise a coordinated approach to ensure that quality child care is available to all children, regardless of their economic status or place of residence.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

More than three quarters of Canadians believe that the lack of affordable child care is a serious issue. While Canadian governments have made promises and signed commitments, they have not delivered a universally accessible, quality, affordable early care and learning system which would advance the rights of children.

CALL TO ACTION

1. **Raise your voice** – talk to those around you about the denial of children’s rights in Canada. Talk to your employer, your union, your neighbours, your friends, and more.
Then go to www.weneedchildcare.ca and tell your story.
2. **Stand up with child care advocates** around the country – join the Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada and the Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC or your provincial child care advocacy organization today. Together we can create change.
3. **Vote** – keep child care on the political agenda in all federal, provincial and municipal elections.
4. **Read and endorse our UN Brief, *A Tale of Two Canadas: Implementing Rights in Early Childhood***, found at: www.cccabc.bc.ca/res/rights.html

CHILD CARE
IS A **RIGHT**

www.ccaac.ca | www.cccabc.bc.ca



COALITION OF
child care
advocates
OF BC



Children and youth under 18 make up about 20% of the population, yet almost 40% of food bank users



More than half of single mothers with children under six live in poverty

