

## KEY POINTS

In Canada, family income has not kept pace with the ever increasing cost of living, even though families have steadily worked more hours over the last 30 years. Not surprisingly, household debt is higher than ever before.

- Inequality between the rich and poor is growing at the second highest rate of any developed country during the last decade.
- Existing supports and services are not enough to keep families out of poverty.
- Paid leave to care for a new baby is a crucial family support, yet 1 in 3 families cannot afford to use, or are not eligible for, the current parental leave benefits.
- When parental leave ends, most families struggle to find quality, affordable early care and learning programs.
- Lack of access to parental leave and quality early care and learning programs places children's healthy development at risk and increases stress on families.

Canada relies on working families, but does not provide enough supports and services to keep them healthy.

## CANADA'S OBLIGATIONS

Federal, provincial and territorial governments in Canada have made commitments to honour families' right to access quality, affordable 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. To achieve this, parental involvement in developing early care and learning services is essential.

The first international agreement came with the development of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1991).

In 2005, the UNCRC released General Comment 7 (GC7), which recognized that:

- Early childhood is the period of most extensive (and intensive) parental responsibilities related to all aspects of children's well-being.
- Governments need to develop an integrated approach to supporting families, providing health and education services, along with policies for appropriate taxation, benefits, housing, and working hours.
- Disadvantaged and vulnerable families require particular attention to ensure they have full access to these supports.



**Canada's public support for families with young children is the weakest among the world's rich countries**



**Almost 10% of young children and their families live in poverty**



## WHAT THE UNITED NATIONS SAYS ABOUT CANADA

UNCRC Concluding Observations in 2003:

- welcomed “measures taken by the Government to provide assistance to families through expanded parental leave, increased tax deductions, child benefits and specific programmes for Aboriginal people.”
- expressed concern about child poverty and the high cost of, lack of access to, and missing national quality standards for child care.

These observations are consistent with other international reports which highlight the fact that the lack of access to quality, affordable early care and learning services is a crucial and missing piece of family support in Canada.

## 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 families.

## CALL TO ACTION

1. **Raise your voice** – talk to those around you about the denial of families’ rights in Canada. Talk to your employer, your union, your neighbours, your friends, and more.  
Then go to [www.weneedchildcare.ca](http://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](http://www.cccabc.bc.ca/res/rights.html)

CHILD CARE IS A **RIGHT**

[www.ccaac.ca](http://www.ccaac.ca) | [www.cccabc.bc.ca](http://www.cccabc.bc.ca)



COALITION OF  
child care  
advocates  
OF BC



More than 1/3 of children living in poverty live in families with at least one adult working full-time



Most families require two incomes to financially survive

