

KEY POINTS

Those who provide early care and learning services in Canada should be valued and fairly paid. To Canada's shame, this is not happening.

- Early childhood educators earn about half the salary of other workers with similar levels of post-secondary education.
- With such low wages, it is no surprise that more than half of trained early childhood educators do not work in the child care sector.
- The resulting shortage of trained workers means that child care programs are increasingly hiring untrained staff.
- Staff training is a key indicator of child care quality. International benchmarks suggest that at least 50% of staff have a minimum of three years of relevant post-secondary education and that all staff have basic training. However, most Canadian provinces and territories do not meet these standards.

Quality early childhood experiences make a life-long difference to children's development, and child care staff are the most important ingredient in quality programming. Unfortunately, too many of Canada's child care workers are making poverty wages. They can't afford to take more training, they can't afford quality child care for their own children, and they can't afford to work in the profession they love.

CANADA'S OBLIGATIONS

Federal, provincial and territorial governments in Canada have made commitments in various agreements to honour child care workers' rights to be socially valued and fairly paid.

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 requires Canada and other signatories to ensure that:

- the institutions, services and facilities responsible for early childhood conform to quality standards, particularly in the areas of health and safety.
- staff possess the appropriate psychosocial qualities and are suitable, sufficiently numerous and well-trained.
- work with young children is socially valued and properly paid, in order to attract a highly qualified workforce of women and men.



**Respected,
well-trained staff
are key to achieving
quality programs**



**Early childhood
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about 50% less
than similarly
educated
professionals**



WHAT THE UNITED NATIONS SAYS ABOUT CANADA

Given the importance of well-trained, fairly paid, and socially valued staff to achieving quality in early care and learning, when we advance quality programs we are also likely to promote the rights of the workers within those programs.

In its 2003 Concluding Observations, the UNCRC:

- expressed concern for the lack of national standards around quality care.
- encouraged Canada to analyze the variations in care across the provinces and territories to understand their impact on children and to devise a coordinated approach across the country.

The analysis and coordinated approach have not happened.

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 child care workers.

CALL TO ACTION

1. **Raise your voice** – talk to those around you about the denial of child care workers’ 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**

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COALITION OF
child care
advocates
OF BC



More than
half of trained
early childhood
educators do not
work in the
child care sector



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

