

Brief on Bill 35 – An Act respecting early learning and child care in Canada

**Submitted to The House of Commons
Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social
Development and the Status of Persons with Disability**



**Submitted by
The Canadian Federation of Business and Professional
Women
La Federation Canadienne des Femmes de Carrières
Commerciales et Professionnelles**

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*Working towards improving economic, political, social and employment conditions for
women*

March 17, 2023

Background:

A recent report by UN Women and the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs revealed that achieving full gender equality, one of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), could take close to 300 years if the current rate of progress continues (UN News, 2022).

The Government of Canada's commitment to invest in a Canada-wide early learning and child care system is therefore commended as a means to advance gender equality in Canada. The COVID 19 pandemic highlighted the fragility of our child care system as families (women in particular) were profoundly impacted by the lack of child care supports. This resulted in many women leaving the workforce and/or disrupting career advancement and educational pursuits to care for their children (Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives et al, 2020).

Universal access to affordable quality early learning child care supports women in their right to work, children in their right to benefit from early education in quality child care, and society overall through a robust economy.

A Canada-wide early learning and child care system requires an intersectional community-driven approach to ensure implementation represents and includes families in all their diversity, incorporates a workforce strategy that supports the education and training of child care workers to fill workforce gaps, increases child care spaces and provides mechanisms for on-going measurement and public reporting.

According to Oxfam Canada (2022), there are large gaps in data analyzing the specific challenges faced by marginalized, racialized, indigenous, gender-diverse women, newcomers and women living with disabilities in accessing child care. In a study by Kingsbury et al (2021), "children from immigrant backgrounds were less likely to be in child care. When considering only those in child care, children from immigrant families were more likely to be in licensed care than those from non-immigrant families." This highlights the importance of bringing the voices of underrepresented women and gender-diverse people to the forefront of policy discussions." (Oxfam Canada, 2022).

Attention must also be given to building a high quality and stable early learning educator and child care workforce strategy. Similar to many of the challenges faced by the broader "care economy", including the health care and long-term care sector, fair compensation and working conditions are paramount to implementing a sustainable national child care strategy (The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, 2020).

Recommendations:

1) A Canada-wide early learning and child care system requires an intersectional approach, including underrepresented and marginalized women, racialized, Indigenous, diverse gender, newcomers, and those living with disabilities.

Amend Guiding Principles,

7(c) Support the provision of early learning and child care programs and services that are inclusive and that respect and value of the diversity of all children and families and respond to their varying needs, including but not limited to underrepresented and marginalized women, racialized, Indigenous, diverse gender, newcomers and those living with disabilities;

2) Consider more specific language emphasizing a requirement for community engagement and using an intersectional lens to include the voices of underrepresented and marginalized women, racialized, Indigenous, diverse-genders, newcomers and women/children with disabilities.

Amend Section 14 (b) care to read:

(b) conduct engagement activities that are inclusive and representative of underrepresented and marginalized women, racialized, Indigenous, diverse-genders, newcomers and women/children living with disabilities on matters relating to the Canada-wide early learning and child care system.

3) A “qualified and well-supported early childhood education workforce” is mentioned in Funding, Guiding Principles 7 (1) (d). Consider addition Functions (14) to read:

“(d) support the development and implementation of an early childhood education workforce strategy”.

4) Section 16 refers to the annual report on the “progress being made”. To strengthen our system, it is also important to report on service gaps, such as underserved communities (with an intersectional lens), as well as barriers to child care, such as lack of qualified child care workers.

Amend Section 16 to read:

16 “The Minister must prepare and make public an annual report on the progress being made respecting the Canada-wide early learning and child care system, including the federal investments made in respect of that system, reporting on diversity and inclusion, evidence of changes to service gaps, and workforce strategy.”

References

The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA), Ontario Non-profit Network, and Fay Faraday. (July 2020). Re-setting Normal: Women, Decent Work, and Canada's Fractured Care Economy. <https://www.policyalternatives.ca/publications/reports/resettingnormal-report->

Kingsbury, M., Findlay, L., Arim, R., & Wei, L. (December 2021). Differences in Child Care Participation Between Immigrant and Nonimmigrant Families. Journal of Childhood Studies, 46(4), 46-58. <https://doi.org/10.18357/jcs464202120123>

Oxfam Canada (2022). Inclusive Child Care Project. <https://www.oxfam.ca/project/inclusive-child-care-for-all/>

UN News (September 2022). Without investment, gender equality will take nearly 300 years: UN report. [Without investment, gender equality will take nearly 300 years: UN report | UN News.](#)

About the Canadian Federation of Business and Professional Women

The Canadian Federation of Business and Professional Women ([BPW Canada](#)) is a non-sectarian, non-profit, and non-partisan organization that works to improve the economic, political, social and employment conditions of working women in Canada. We provide a training ground for developing professional, business and leadership potential in a safe and supportive environment, enabling members to build skills, networks and create lasting friendships.

BPW Canada was founded in 1930 and is one of BPW International's Founding Federations. As of 2021, BPW Canada has consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). BPW Canada has been recognized for its many [projects](#) over the years, from the [Women's Empowerment Principles](#) to equal pay awareness campaigns and submission of [Resolutions](#), (many related to child care). Most recently in a collaborative project titled "Strategic partnerships for a COVID-19 response to promote the full participation and economic recovery for women" BPW Canada is promoting an IDEAS4GenderEquality strategy to integrate Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Access Solutions into the Canadian workplace, marketplace and community.