

Background

Decades of under spending and the lack of a coordinated National Early Learning and Child Care System has left the Canadian child care sector in a state of disorder. The essential role of Early Learning Educators and the importance of access to affordable quality child care became increasingly clear during the Covid-19 pandemic (BPW Canada, 2021). Families (and women in particular) were profoundly impacted by the lack of child care supports, with many leaving the workforce and/or disrupting career advancement in educational pursuits to care for their children. Furthermore, 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. “It is critical to bring the voices of underrepresented women and gender-diverse people to the forefront of policy discussions.” (Oxfam Canada, 2022).

To promote the recovery and full participation of women in all their diversity in the Canadian workforce, in addition to providing access to affordable universal quality child care, attention must be given to building a strong and stable early learning educator and child care workforce strategy (IDEAS4GE BPW Canada 2023). 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).

With the introduction of the long advocated pan-Canadian Early Learning and Child Care Strategy, its \$30 billion investment, and the signing of agreements by all provinces and territories in 2022, the recommendations outlined in the Childcare Bill C-35 and the establishment of the National Advisory Council on Early Learning and Child Care are important steps toward a sustainable Early Learning and Child Care system for all (Bill C-35, 2023).

BPW Canada and the IDEAS team (2023) held a consultation with Child Care Now Canada, Oxfam Canada, City of Peterborough Municipal CCSM who introduced the project by Compass and New Canadian Centre to explore collaborative action as provinces and communities will begin to develop their ELCC implementation plans. To ensure that the transfer of funds and guidelines set out in the provincial agreements are fully transparent it is recommended that the Government of Canada, relevant Ministries and the ELCC National Advisory Council (2023) include the following in their Early Learning and Child Care System oversight:

- Operating and service delivery standards include important provincial & municipal transparency and monitoring factors to ensure the voices of underrepresented women, newcomers, racialized and gender diverse groups are included in the policy development, service planning and implementation at the municipal community level. (i.e. City of Peterborough Early Learning and Child Care Plan-(2019-2024).
- It is important that standards ensuring inclusive programs and services reflective of the diversity of the community are applied to both non-profit and for-profit early learning and child care providers i.e.;
 - That Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Access strategies are employed to ensure that child care service delivery models reflects the diverse needs of the community;
 - Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Access strategies are evident in the Early Learning and Child Care Workforce Strategy i.e. inclusive hiring strategy, competitive wages, benefits and training and development of Early Learning Professionals to meet established quality standards.

References:

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BPW Canada. (2021). National Early Learning and Child Care in Canada, Position Paper. [Retrieved from:https://bpwcanada.com/images/stories/advocacy/BPW_PositionPaperNationalChildCare2021March03](https://bpwcanada.com/images/stories/advocacy/BPW_PositionPaperNationalChildCare2021March03).

Child Care Now. (2020). A strategy for recovery: Making affordable child care for ALL a reality. Retrieved from: <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/20/06/strategy-recovery-making-affordable-child-care-all-reality>

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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. Retrieved from: <https://www.policyalternatives.ca/publications/reports/resettingnormal-report->

National Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) Standards for Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Access
BPW London
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WHEREAS access to affordable quality early learning and child care for women and their families is essential for a just recovery and the full participation of women in all their diversity in the Canadian workforce;

AND WHEREAS the guiding principles for the \$30 billion long-term funding are set out in Multilateral Early Learning and Child Care Frameworks and signed agreements with the provinces, territories and Indigenous governing bodies and other Indigenous entities;

AND WHEREAS Bill-C35 calls for the establishment of the National Advisory Council on Early Learning and Child Care to provide advice to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development regarding early learning and child care, including programs and services, funding and activities that support early learning and child care; conduct engagement activities on matters relating to the Canada-wide early learning and child care system and to support the Minister in producing and making public an annual report on the progress being made respecting the Canada-wide early learning and child care system, including federal investments made in respect to that system;

AND WHEREAS many communities have both for-profit not for-profit service providers;

AND WHEREAS the Government through guiding principles recognizes the importance of the provision of early learning and child care programs and services that are inclusive and that respect and value the diversity of children and families which respond to varying needs;

AND WHEREAS the Government further acknowledges the importance of engaging with civil society, including parents, guardians, tutors and other stakeholders, to assist it in its efforts to support a Canada-wide early learning and child care system;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Canadian Federation of Business and Professional Women (BPW Canada) urges the Government of Canada and relevant ministries, to develop and monitor a standard for the pan-Canadian Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) system that ensures the incorporation of the principles of inclusion, diversity, equity and access into a robust community-driven national child care and early learning strategy that:

1. Promotes community engagement and ensures an inclusive voice including underrepresented and marginalized women, racialized, indigenous, diverse-genders, newcomers and women with disabilities, to shape the delivery models for ELCC policies, programs and services;
2. Promotes access to ELCC resources and information that is sensitive to language, cultural, multi-generational and gender diverse barriers;
3. Requires education and awareness training for ELCC providers to promote cultural and gender diverse sensitivity;
4. Supports the development of innovative child care delivery models to engage new Canadians, racialized groups and low income women in establishing and delivering quality;
5. Includes a national ELCC workforce strategy to ensure a sustainable supply of high quality ELCC providers through, improved working conditions, wages and innovative collaborative training and certification initiatives with community colleges, new Canadian centers, and ELCC Centres.
6. Applies to all ELCC centres regardless of funding models.

Ministries to include Families, Children and Social Development; Finance; Employment, Workforce Development and Disability; Health; and Women and Gender Equality and Youth

Implementation: Provincial organizations and local clubs meet with the federal members of parliament, provincial representatives and municipal representatives or council to ensure an:

Inclusive, Diverse, Equitable and Accessible Child Care strategy is developed to meet the needs of diverse and marginalized women and their families and that an;

Inclusive, Diverse, Equitable and Accessible workforce strategy is implemented to value the essential contribution of ELCC Professionals. Ministries to include Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Minister of Finance, Minister of Health, Minister of Education, Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Youth

Contacts: Send feedback, friendly amendments or recommended enhancements to:

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