

CHILD CARE MATTERS TO EVERYONE



2015

A snapshot of child care in Ontario

A highlight report bringing together recent data and community voices

Child care matters to everyone

A SNAPSHOT OF CHILD CARE IN ONTARIO

INTRODUCTION

This report brings together recent data on child care in Ontario with community voices talking about lived experience. We weave together both numbers and personal perspectives to create a living snapshot of the state of child care in Ontario.

The latest data from the Childcare Resource and Research Unit's *Early Childhood Education and Care in Canada* series and municipal data from the Ontario Municipal Benchmarking Initiative (OMBI) form the core of the numbers. These are presented together with community voices from around the province - individuals or groups that the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care has engaged with over the past year as part of our work around the province showing the value of licensed child care and early childhood educators to local communities. Each one of these people is a child care champion: parent, educator, community activist, faith leader, or economist. Together we are building a united movement around a simple idea – child care matters to everyone.

Early childhood education and care (ECEC) in Ontario has seen an unprecedented number of changes in the last several years, for both good and ill. While the Ontario government has incrementally increased funding going to child care, most recently with an announcement of more capital funds to build child care in schools, all is not rosy.

2009's Pascal report was hailed as a game changer for ECEC in Ontario, but its truncated implementation left many key recommendations unfulfilled. Full-day kindergarten, new legislation and a new funding formula have all re-shaped the ECEC landscape in Ontario. While each of these changes has been positive by some measure or has brought good news for some, they have also led to instability for others. The impact of some of these changes has been harsh on licensed child care, and funding formula changes have created winner and loser municipalities across the province.

Regulated spaces continue to be too few, with spaces for only 17.7% of children 0-12 years. While space coverage has crept up incrementally each year, if we continue at the current rate of growth we will have spaces for 50% of children in 2065 – in fifty years. As the old slogan goes “Kids can't wait!”

We see disparity too in where spaces are located, with “daycare deserts” in places where it is not financially viable to operate. The closure of public child care has only exacerbated that problem. Something is broken when longstanding, high quality centres, built with collaboration between provincial, municipal and community partners 30 or 40 years ago begin to disappear.

How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years has been widely and warmly embraced by early childhood educators across the province. But while educators have risen to the challenge of increased expectations both from this pedagogical framework and from their professional College, ECE's still face an average wage of just \$17.47/hr, with a wide disparity across the

sector. Part-time and precarious work has become the norm for too many in the early childhood workforce, with only 59% having access to extended medical benefits and only 46.6% having access to a pension.

The child care market does us all a disservice as it limits government responsibility and leaves public planning and coherent delivery on the sidelines. In a child care market, non-profit and public centres – natural allies – become pitted against each other as both compete for limited funds.

In response to this era of change and uncertainty a resurgent child care movement is forming around a consensus that early childhood education and care matters to all of us. Longtime child care advocates have been joined by new voices who understand the importance of child care as a public good and a public resource. Community and citizen groups, labour, social justice, faith communities and economists are all speaking up for child care.

Together we are calling for a real early childhood education and care system, locally, provincially and nationally. And with a new federal government that has committed to working together with provinces, territories and Indigenous communities to create a national framework, there is a palpable sense of excitement, expectation and also nervousness as we see the possibility of a national child care strategy on the horizon. We – both province and community – must be ready to make it work.

Ontario must be ready to join the threads together, to set forth a coherent child care policy aimed at building a real system based on the principles of universality, quality, and comprehensiveness. We need a system that addresses *both* affordability for parents and decent wages for staff, that increases *both* access to spaces and quality of programs, and that supports *both* expansion of new centres and sustainability of existing programs. We need to move beyond the laissez-faire child care market, to embrace public planning and public governance of child care.

The community voices gathered in this report show that the community is ready. An early childhood education and care system for Ontario: build it right, build it now.

- Carolyn Ferns, Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care

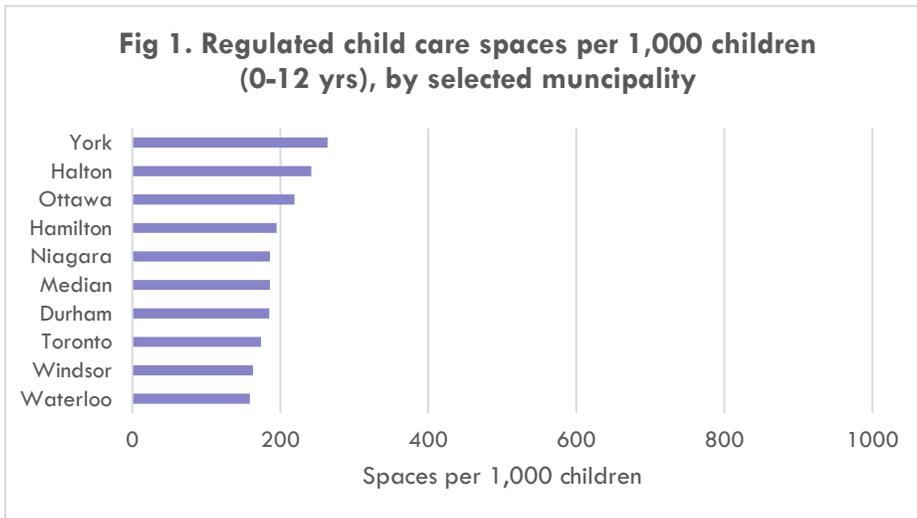
Data sources: Data for Figures 1, 3 and 5 come from the Ontario Municipal CAO's Benchmarking Initiative (OMBI), which gathers comparative data on local services, including child care, from participating municipalities. Data for Figures 2, 4, 6 and 7 come from: Friendly, M., Grady, B. & Macdonald, L. (2015). *Preliminary data: Early childhood education and care in Canada 2014*. Toronto: Childcare Resource and Research Unit. Data for the Snapshot of the ECE Workforce come from: Varmuza, P. (2013, May). Low wages- the price of caring? Presented at AECEO Annual General Meeting, Toronto, ON.

Cover photo: Joel Clifton, part of the OCBCC's *Portraits of Child Care* project.

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SNAPSHOT: RECENT DATA AND COMMUNITY VOICES

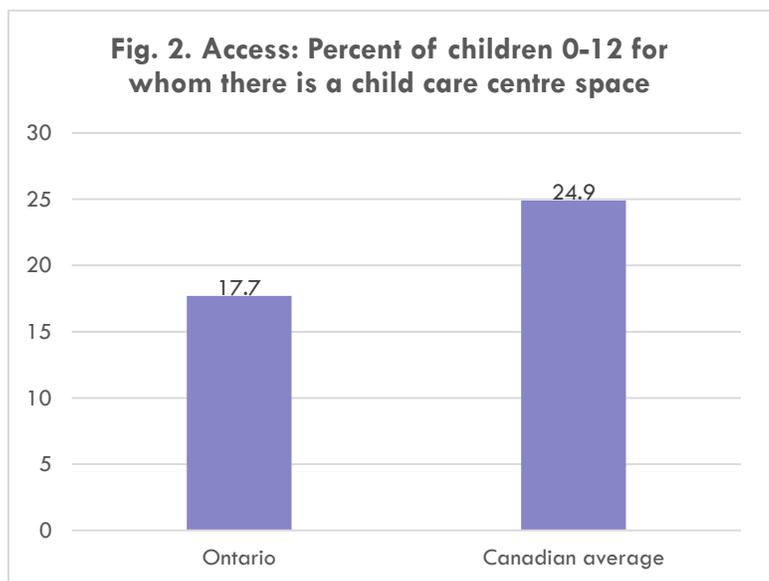


“Sometimes we overlook the value of things in our community until they are under threat or until they are thrown into question. And indeed in just three weeks we have seen a widespread groundswell of support throughout our region for these [Regional Children’s] centres.... **Instead of discussing closures, I think we can start talking about creating more child care for everyone, for the next**

45 years.... I think we can start here, and right in this room. What I hope comes out of tonight is Council’s re-commitment - almost like renewing your wedding vows – to these Children’s Centres and a commitment to bring us all together again soon but in a really different forum to plan the next five decades of supporting our youngest citizens.” - **Angela Carter, Waterloo parent, speaking to Waterloo Regional Council about proposed closures of Regional Children’s Centres. Regional Council voted 14 to 1 to keep the centres open.**

“What investments would make the most difference for children and their families? We believe investment in child care outweighs all other initiatives....

Affordable and accessible child care is the only social program that directly benefits the healthy development of the child, improves economic health of the family and acts as a spur to the economy.... When you provide child care, both parents can afford to work, a third person in the child care field is added, and all three pay taxes.” - **Judith Bishop, former Hamilton Wentworth school trustee and school board chair and lifelong advocate of education issues, writing in the Hamilton Spectator.**



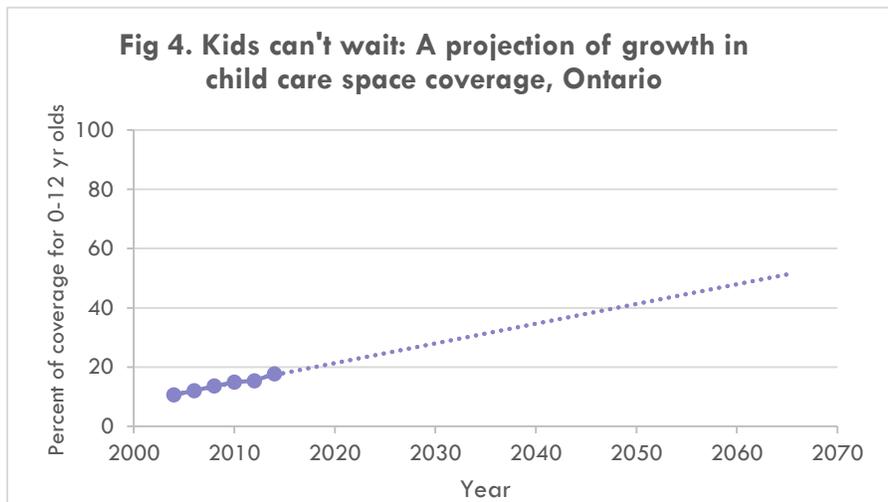
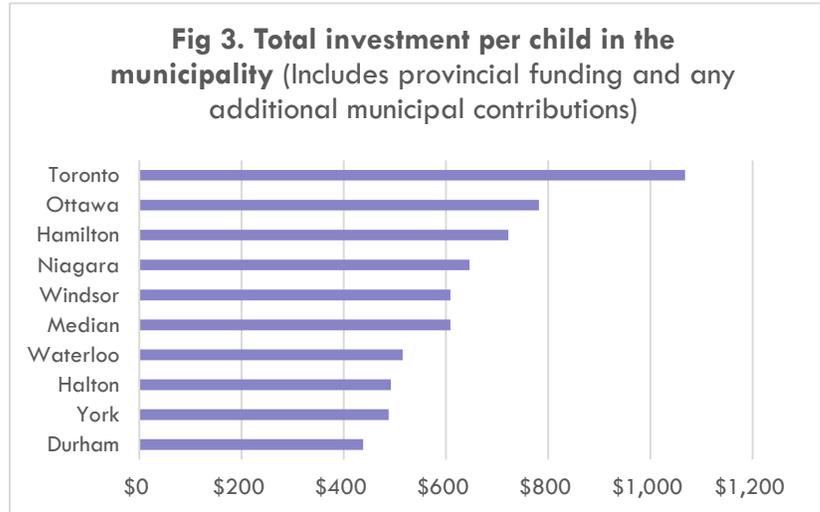
“In order to function, non-profit child care must have access to quality publicly funded space and support.

Unfortunately, right now this is often left up to the whims and changing priorities of lower and upper tier municipalities.

Without some kind of mandate or direction from higher levels of government, the security of these spaces can be fragile.

Some municipalities see these centres as a financial loss or liability. What we need to do is open everyone’s eyes to the hard facts that child care centres boost our local economies by providing meaningful

employment for the teachers who work there and of course, by allowing mothers and fathers to return to the workforce. We are seeing an unsettling trend of municipalities backing out of commitments to child care. Commitments that were made decades ago are being eroded by extreme short sightedness and a lack of vision. As a parent of young children and as a working mother, I’m fearful that these non-profit centres, regulated by the Ministry and fully staffed by qualified teaching professionals will become a thing of the past and the scales will tip towards unregulated and lower-quality child care centres.” - Elise Ho-Foong, Markham mother of three, reflecting on the closure of her children’s centre Town’s Little Children Daycare, after the city chose not to renew the centre’s lease at the Markham Civic Centre in favour of turning the space into offices.



At the current rate of growth, Ontario will have child care spaces for 50% of children 0-12 years by the year 2065 - fifty years from now.

“I was a bit worried that my perspective wasn’t really universal enough to make me a “parent representative”. I did a straw poll of my friends with kids: “What do we want from the government?” The answer was instantaneous and it boiled down to three things: Affordability, Availability, and Quality.... Let me talk a little bit about what it means not to have access to high quality care - to have no access to quality child care because those first two key elements, availability and affordability, aren’t in place. As a parent it means making these

terrifying and heartbreaking compromises and hoping for the best because there is no other option....

Affordability, availability and quality. We need them and we need them now.” - Erin Filby, Toronto mother, speaking at a public forum for Early Childhood Educator and Child Care Worker Appreciation Day.

“City council is often pondering ways to keep young people in our community. **Maintaining high quality municipal daycare attracts young professional families to Sault Ste. Marie.** These centres are model facilities that raise the bar for child care in our community across the board.... They are also exemplary learning environments for local college students who are studying to become early childhood educators. These are just a few examples of how these centres impact early learning in our community.... I hope Council makes the decision that over a dozen other municipalities in the province have made - to support municipal childcare and send a message that its doors are open to young families.” - **Rachel Punch, Sault Ste. Marie parent, speaking out in support of municipal child care in the Sault Star.**

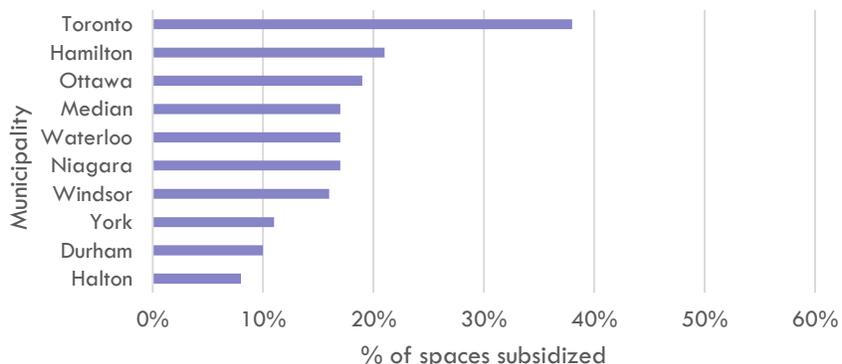
“ECEs are the key to quality child care programs, and yet we are underpaid and many do not have benefits or a pension. In fact, less than half of the child care workforce have access to a pension. Many ECEs face split shifts or permanent part-time positions. How can any profession cultivate a quality workforce under such realities? The result is often burnout and staff turnover, which is not in the best interests of anyone looking to build a quality service. **Without passionate ECEs who plan curriculum, teach it, and provide the emotional support young children need, where would child care be?** Families count on us to help care and teach their children. The economy depends on us to provide parents with the ability to go to work. With ECEs being the key to quality child care, how can anyone be silent on the child care workforce?” – **Christie Saikaly, Ottawa RECE, speaking out as part of the national day of action of the child care workforce in the Hamilton Spectator.**

Snapshot of the ECE workforce

- \$17.47 average hourly wage
- 46.6% have a pension or RRSP contribution plan
- 46.5% have paid breaks
- 58.8% have additional medical coverage
- 23.2% have maternity leave top-up
- 27.4% are looking for another job

“Child care is a national issue, not a women’s issue only. Yes, universal ECEC would substantially enhance women’s equity, power, and well-being. **But child care benefits all of us: children, communities and the economy.** When we align all our resources behind this demand, we will win it – and we’ll all be better off.” –**Jim Stanford, Unifor economist, speaking at the Ontario Child Care Policy Summit.**

Fig 5. Percent of child care spaces that are subsidized by municipality, 2014

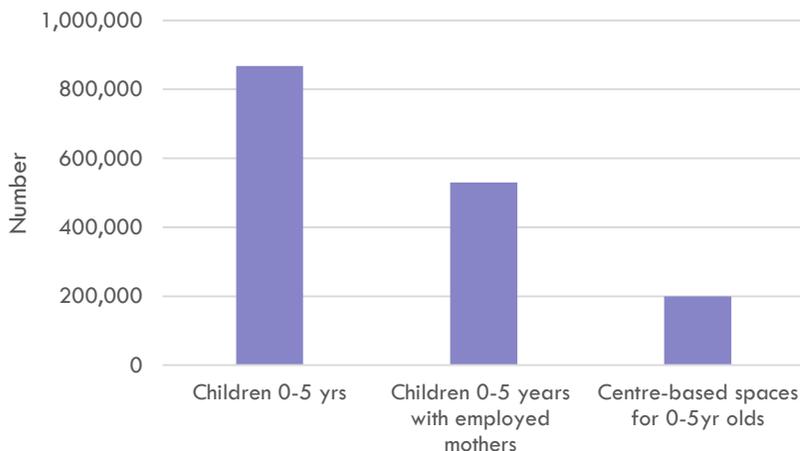


*“Families across Oshawa and Durham Region are struggling to afford child care. The wait list for subsidized child care in Durham Region has grown to over 3,600 and many children remain on the list for well over two years. Parents and caregivers are working harder and longer than the previous generation while **Indigenous Peoples, newcomers, women, and children with disabilities are disproportionately affected**”*

*by the lack of affordable child care spaces. Faced with these challenges, We Are Oshawa has decided to add its voice to the growing coalition of child care advocates, workers, students, and community organizations across the country who are calling for a national child care program. It is time to recognize that investing in quality early learning and care would reduce poverty, increase workforce participation of women, stimulate the economy, and produce positive long-term outcomes for children.” - We Are Oshawa, **“Child care: It’s everyone’s issue”***

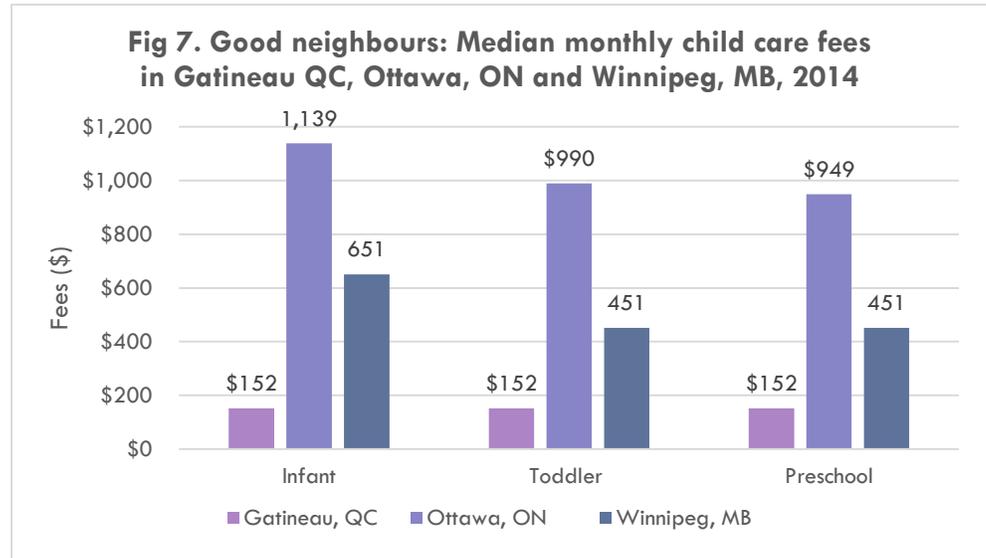
*“We must stand together. To show our united front against child care closures, we have created a campaign called **Unity in the Community - a united front of concerned RECEs, child care workers, parents, grandparents, guardians & concerned citizens against the closure of municipal child care programs - with the aim of showing city council, the province of Ontario and the Government of Canada just how valuable child care is to our community....***

Fig 6. The child care gap: Ontario children 0-5 years & regulated child care spaces, 2014



*We may have our differences. We may have different viewpoints from time to time. But on this topic we must show **Unity in the Community!** We must send a message not only to the City of Sault Ste Marie but to the Province of Ontario and the Government of Canada that child care cannot be taken away.” - **Stephanie Bingham RECE, Childcare Unity in Our Community – Sault Ste. Marie.***

Albanese and Rauhala (2015) interviewed mothers in two towns near the Quebec/Ontario border. They describe the situation of a mother of four who moved from Ontario to Quebec: “...her move to Quebec, which gave her access to \$7.00 per day child care, allowed her to choose to work fewer hours, spend more time with her children, and still manage to financially support her family. **In Ontario, the cost of child care made this impossible, even when she worked longer hours at higher wages.**” – Albanese, P. & Rauhala A. (2015). A decade of disconnection: Child care policies in changing economic times in the Canadian context. *International Journal of Child, Youth and Family Studies*, 6(2): 252-274.



“MOSAIC INTERFAITH decided that in addition to having events to learn about our different faith traditions, we as people of faith needed to come together and do what all our different faith traditions call us to do – to care for the poor, marginalized and to act – to be a force for change and to do this together as an interfaith initiative. We chose the issue of child poverty and then we narrowed it down to one aspect of child poverty – that being the need for affordable, quality child care. Why should we care about this issue? I myself never needed child care – I have two children and I had the luxury of being a stay-at-home mom. It might seem that the need for affordable and universal child care would not be an issue that would affect me directly. However it does affect me directly – it affects all of us directly. **We need to reflect on what kind of society we want. We need to change our attitude towards paying taxes – we need to think in terms of investing in our social infrastructure and increasing our “social capital” – investing in families and in our children. This costs money, and if it helps to break the cycle of poverty and raise some families out of poverty it is money well spent.**” – Natalie Doucet, Pastoral Associate, St. Luke’s Catholic Parish / MOSAIC INTERFAITH, York Region

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