

WHAT WE HAVE NOW

In Canada today, there is no national ECEC program or policy. Each province/territory has its own child care policy and provides spaces in centres and regulated family child care; most also regulate nursery schools/preschools. These are supported by a variety of funding arrangements. Each jurisdiction also provides publicly-funded kindergarten, mostly for five-year-olds.

Over the years, provinces/territories, local governments and early childhood organizations have developed many ECEC initiatives aimed at expanding access, improving quality, restructuring public funding, and strengthening training and policy. Many of these initiatives have been significant. The most noteworthy is Quebec's program that funds services rather than subsidizing individual families. Also of note is Ontario's expansion of its kindergarten for all four- and five-year-olds to a full school-day. Other initiatives include: Manitoba's and PEI's unique approaches to base program funding; Toronto's quality improvement scheme; Vancouver's child care planning process and the strong support for a community plan proposed by advocates to transform ECEC in British Columbia. As well, ECEC groups, unions, and some governments have made inroads to improve the notoriously low wages and benefits of program staff, although much more needs to be done. Most recently, integrating child care and education has been a priority in much of Canada; eight¹ provinces/territories have moved to full school day kindergarten while ministries of education are now responsible for child care in eight provinces/territories.

Despite these efforts, child care and kindergarten are still separate programs. High quality child care remains limited in supply and financially out of reach for the majority of families.

Canada has never had a national ECEC program or policy. We made a very modest start in 2005, when a Liberal government tabled the national Foundations program. At that time, all provinces/territories developed action plans and agreed to proceed, supported by new federal funding. However, the following year, the newly elected Conservative government cancelled the bi-lateral federal/provincial/territorial agreements that were the basis of the evolving program.

¹Of these, two territories provide some full-day kindergarten.



Globally, Canada is one of the world's wealthiest countries but international reviews from groups such as UNICEF (2008) rank us at the bottom when it comes to ECEC. Cataloguing the problems across Canada has become clichéd: severe shortages of places, especially for infants, children with disabilities, Indigenous and rural/remote communities, and families working non-standard hours. Underfunding and consequent high user fees that put regulated child care out of reach for many families and threaten the financial viability of programs. Difficulty attracting and retaining qualified educators because the occupation is not highly valued and pays poorly. Weak program quality that cannot be

considered educational or developmental. Service gaps that encourage expansion of for-profit, sometimes corporate big-box, child care. Widespread reliance on unregulated child care—the only affordable and available option for most parents. Kindergartens that fail to recognize the importance of the early years or parents' work schedules, as they operate only part-work-day and mostly for five-year-olds.

MARKET-BASED APPROACHES DON'T WORK

Canada's reliance on a child care market—in which governments take limited responsibility—is the key explanation for this persistent patchwork. Rather than building a coherent public system with long-term goals, planning, substantial public funding and public management, market forces and a consumerist approach shape, create, maintain, deliver and finance Canadian child care services. Federal and provincial/territorial child care policy encourages this dependence on markets, flying in the face of clear evidence that public management of child care, including public/non-profit delivery, is a much more effective and fair way to deliver services.

THINK ABOUT IT

1. What works and what doesn't work right now?
2. Which groups are left out of ECEC?

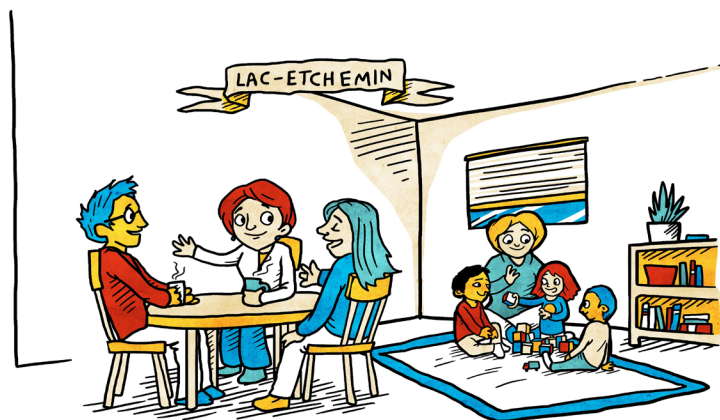
A VISION

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CHILD CARE IN CANADA IN 2020

It's a May morning in 2020. High quality early childhood education and child care (ECEC) has become a reality for most children and families across Canada's six time zones. In Joe Batt's Arm on Fogo Island, Newfoundland, a nutritious lunch is being served to the toddlers at the new early childhood centre in the school. In small-town Lac-Etchemin, Quebec, and suburban Markham, Ontario, home child care providers arrive at early childhood hubs to meet with their networks while the children enjoy outdoor activities. In Winnipeg, a stay-at-home mom with a new baby arrives at nursery school with her three-year-old daughter while at Haida Gwaii's Skidegate Children's Centre, an educator greets the First Nations parents and children as they arrive.

ECEC programs in each of these communities have unique features but share many common characteristics. Although there are still waiting lists, parents across Canada know that a space will be available before too long. Substantial service expansion means that all parents—whether or not in the paid workforce—can now find a space. Sustained public operational/base funding to services means fees are much lower than before and affordable.

Under the new Canada-wide policy framework, provinces, territories and Indigenous communities receive federal funds. Each has a well-worked-out long-term plan with expansion targets. To meet them, provincial/ territorial officials work closely with local governments, school authorities, other service providers, early childhood educators and parent/ community groups, as well as with the federal government.



MORE PUBLIC MANAGEMENT

With provincially set parent fees and salary scales, and collaboration between provincial governments, municipalities and school boards, today's ECEC is now more publicly managed. Planning, developing and supporting high quality programs for the families who choose to use them is a local responsibility within overall provincial/territorial plans. Parent committees have input on key issues but the days when parents and volunteers were responsible for raising funds to cover basic operating costs are long gone.

Although there are still quite a few non-profit programs, many more ECEC services across the 0 - 5 age range are now delivered by school boards and municipalities. These work in partnership with early childhood educator and teacher organizations to ensure that curriculum and service delivery are based on inclusive, appropriate best practices.

The for-profit sector has stayed small, diminishing as the public non-profit sectors expand. Some for-profits closed when their owners retired while a handful were supported to become part of the publicly managed not-for-profit system. Only public, non-profit and existing for-profit programs are eligible for the new base funding.

As the supply and affordability of regulated ECEC has grown, parents' reliance on unregulated care with no public oversight has diminished substantially. Many previously unregulated home child care providers have now become part of the funded, regulated system.

The mix of full-day ECEC centres (including kindergarten), part-day preschools, home/family child care, school-age and family resource programs is determined at the local level based on a planning process taking into account community needs and priorities. Services that seamlessly provide "care" and "learning" for children are offered across Canada, with parenting support resources integrated into service provision. The specific arrangements vary by province/territory, but all are designed to meet parents' schedules while providing terrific care and learning environments for young children.

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY ECEC?

We use "early childhood education and child care" (ECEC) unless referring specifically to child care. ECEC is an aspirational term that means all full- and part-time care and learning services for children from birth to compulsory school age, including centres, preschools and nursery schools, regulated family child care, kindergarten and family resource programs. The paper also references the need for outside-school-hours services up to age 12. The vision is that these programs—which play multiple roles for children, families and society—can be blended, so that care and education for young children are inseparable. International examples show that no matter what the name, well-designed ECEC can successfully blend care, learning, and support for children and families at one and the same time.

ENHANCED QUALITY

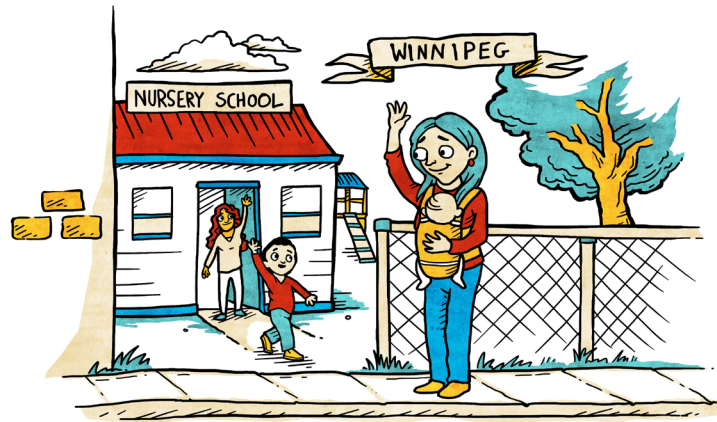
Quality has improved across Canada. Broad curriculum frameworks designed to be adapted at the program level to support local choices are regularly fine-tuned. Children with disabilities and from diverse cultural backgrounds are fully included in all programs with extra support when needed. The ratio of educators to children is favourable to ensure that children's needs are well met at all ages.

All ECEC settings are staffed by early childhood educators, share common pedagogical approaches and provide enriching, caring, seamless and comfortable environments for children and parents. Outside-school-hours programs are mostly school-based and provide a range of enriching age-appropriate activities for older children up to age 12. Early childhood training for home child care providers has become the norm as has provision of equipment, resources, support and networking. And as public funding for regulated services has grown, wages and benefits for home care providers better reflect the value of their work.

All early childhood educators are now educated at the post-secondary level before they enter the profession; lead educators have four-year early childhood education degrees or more. Regular in-service learning opportunities are available for anyone working with young children. ECE is a well-recognized, mostly unionized profession with career ladders and good wages. All across Canada, ECEC program quality and staff morale are strong. The days of nonstop staff turnover are a thing of the past.

Many ECEC centres are now in purpose-built (or purpose-renovated) facilities, some in, or on the grounds of, elementary schools. Centres are designed with young children in mind—inviting rooms, big windows, easily accessible outdoor spaces, on-site kitchens so children can participate in meal preparation, good storage and equipment and dedicated staff rooms. Some architects now specialize in creative design of ECEC buildings and outdoor environments.

Federal, provincial and territorial governments have improved their legislated parental leave provisions to fit the varying needs and financial realities of families. Leaves, available to all new parents, are more flexible, and better paid. There is also an additional paid leave for new fathers only that must be taken shortly after the birth. Many improvements have been made to services and policies for parents who work non-standard hours, and a national task force set up to find more comprehensive solutions is well underway.



A COMMON VISION, DIFFERENT APPROACHES

Despite important commonalities, 2020's ECEC is not "one size fits all". Provinces, territories and Indigenous communities have designed their own ECEC programs within the framework of broad overarching Canada-wide principles and policies, legislation, funding and public reporting arrangements.

So while the broad strokes are similar, the specifics—schedules, mix of services, approaches to integration of care and education, and cultural emphases—are distinctive. At Skidegate Children's Centre, the community's Haida culture is central, while the Markham centre and its home-based providers' network reflect the community's varied cultural diversity. There is considerable focus on ongoing quality improvement while innovation and creative approaches are supported, encouraged and shared. Thus, through a Canada-wide outdoor activity initiative, centres in Lac-Etchemin, Winnipeg and Joe Batt's Arm are all experimenting with "forest kindergartens" and other outdoor programming, and sharing their results.

While Canada's national ECEC program is, and always will be, a work in progress, in 2020 it is enormously popular. Parents across the income spectrum see that their children are happy and benefitting. Communities and politicians like the societal benefits and the positive economic activity brought about through increased mothers' employment and spending in local communities. Everyone takes pride in this long overdue social program that is good for all children and families. When the President of the United States toured Quebec, she visited one of Lac-Etchemin's community hub centres and took the community's ideas back to Washington DC to inform the new approach to ECEC she has been promoting.

All in all, the national ECEC program is deemed a great success all around. It looks like it's here to stay.

THINK ABOUT IT

1. How does this vision fit with yours?
2. What difference could this vision make for children, parents, women, educators, your community, Canada?

Child Care is Good for the Economy

The evidence is overwhelming: building a child care system in Canada will boost the economy to everyone's benefit, and it will reduce economic inequality.

Child care is a bridge to employment

Child care leads to a boost in employment, especially women's employment. A study by Pierre Fortin, Luc Godbout and Suzy St-Cerny found that low-fee child care in Quebec in 2008 allowed nearly 70,000 more mothers to hold jobs than if no such program had existed. With more mothers working, the province's economy was 1.7% larger than it would have been, or \$5 billion richer. Recently, Finance Minister Bill Morneau's economic advisory council noted that raising women's labour force participation in the rest of Canada in line with Quebec's higher rate would generate a further \$13 billion to Canada's Gross Domestic Product. The council recommended universal child care as a way to achieve that end.

More mothers working means more tax revenue

Further, the additional numbers of women working generated a lot more tax revenue for both the provincial and federal governments. At the same time, government expenditures, like social assistance, designed to raise family incomes decreased. In fact, the provincial government did so well by the child care program that the financial benefits it received was greater than what it spent on the program.

Child care expansion will create tens of thousands of jobs

Economist Jim Stanford estimates that \$1 billion of Canada's Gross Domestic Product invested in child care would create 26,000 new jobs in the sector. The same amount invested in oil and gas, creates only 650 jobs. Further, the kind of child care system that we are demanding will create decently paid, secure jobs in the public and not-for-profit sector.

Child care addresses economic inequality

Parents need child care to pursue fully training, education and employment opportunities, but when child care is not accessible, unaffordable or unreliable, it is almost always the mother (with the lower income) who takes leave, works fewer hours, or exits the workforce. The impact on women's economic status is not short-lived, but last a life time, often into retirement because of lost pension contributions.

Canada can afford quality child care, parents can't

Parent fees are exorbitant and keep going up

The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives has been tracking child care parent fees since 2014 and found that they have risen an average of over 8%--three times faster than inflation. In all provinces except Quebec, the monthly fees for all age groups that child care is the second largest family expense after rent or mortgage for most families. A recent international study by the Organization for Economic Development reported that families in industrialized countries must set aside on average 13% of family income for child care. In Canada, families spend almost one quarter of their income on fees, in Sweden families pay 4.4% of their income.

Quality of care should not depend on parent fees

Child care in Canada is not delivered as a public service. Instead, it is bought and sold on a child care market. Provincial/territorial governments intervene in child care by setting standards through law and regulations. As well, they provide some financial support, usually in the form of fee subsidies to lower income parents. In a few provinces, public funding is also directed to the child care providers. For the most part, though, the child care providers rely on parent fees to fund their services. When providers improve the quality of care (by increasing the wages of early childhood educators, for example), the fees go up to cover the increased cost of the care and this puts the care out of the financial reach of parents. In other words, because of Canada's patchwork and market approach to the provision of child care, quality comes at the expense of accessibility and affordability. The only solution to this problem is to take child care "off the market" and for governments to fully fund child care as a public service where all parents have equal access to high quality programs. Parents could still be required to contribute to the child care costs of their children, but how much they pay should be tied to their income, not to the quality of the child care their children receive.

Canada has enough money, parents don't

There is no question that building a fully publicly funded child care system will cost governments a lot of money however we are not asking that it happen overnight. We can achieve affordable child care for all who want it over ten years by gradually increasing government child care spending each year. Also, the costs can be shared by provincial/territorial and the federal government, since child care yields significant economic benefits for both levels of government. Currently, government spending on public services is historically very low relative to the size of our economy. At the same time, family household debt is at a historic high. Governments are in a much better economic position to pay for child care than individual families.

Detailed Numbers

TABLE 1 Median fees by centre and home care (2016)

City Name	Province	All Monthly Fee (median)			Centre Monthly Fee (median)			Home Monthly Fee (median)		
		Infant	Toddler	Preschool	Infant	Toddler	Preschool	Infant	Toddler	Preschool
Vancouver	British Columbia	\$ 1,321	\$ 1,325	\$ 950	\$ 1,325	\$ 1,325	\$ 950	\$ 1,100	\$ 1,080	\$ 1,000
Richmond	British Columbia	\$ 1,200	\$ 1,210	\$ 875	\$ 1,235	\$ 1,294	\$ 875	\$ 900	\$ 859	\$ 800
Burnaby	British Columbia	\$ 1,200	\$ 1,200	\$ 850	\$ 1,250	\$ 1,240	\$ 855	\$ 950	\$ 925	\$ 850
Surrey	British Columbia	\$ 995	\$ 950	\$ 750	\$ 1,200	\$ 1,200	\$ 737	\$ 814	\$ 800	\$ 760
Calgary	Alberta	\$ 1,102	\$ 1,050	\$ 1,010	\$ 1,260	\$ 1,150	\$ 1,040	\$ 850	\$ 850	\$ 850
Edmonton	Alberta	\$ 835	\$ 835	\$ 825	\$ 985	\$ 865	\$ 825	\$ 790	\$ 790	\$ 790
Saskatoon	Saskatchewan	\$ 850	\$ 750	\$ 695	\$ 855	\$ 745	\$ 695	\$ 800	\$ 750	\$ 675
Regina	Saskatchewan	\$ 785	\$ 620	\$ 570	\$ 800	\$ 615	\$ 565	\$ 700	\$ 650	\$ 595
Winnipeg	Manitoba	\$ 651	\$ 451	\$ 451	\$ 651	\$ 451	\$ 451	\$ 482	\$ 395	\$ 395
Windsor	Ontario	\$ 977	\$ 846	\$ 749	\$ 977	\$ 846	\$ 749	\$ 868	\$ 868	\$ 738
London	Ontario	\$ 1,128	\$ 1,075	\$ 977	\$ 1,150	\$ 1,085	\$ 987	\$ 933	\$ 933	\$ 868
Kitchener	Ontario	\$ 1,320	\$ 1,140	\$ 1,031	\$ 1,365	\$ 1,215	\$ 1,031	\$ 1,085	\$ 1,085	\$ 651
Hamilton	Ontario	\$ 1,150	\$ 1,020	\$ 900	\$ 1,302	\$ 1,063	\$ 900	\$ 856	\$ 856	\$ 856
Brampton	Ontario	\$ 994	\$ 1,085	\$ 955	\$ 1,389	\$ 1,100	\$ 986	\$ 994	\$ 994	\$ 792

Mississauga	Ontario	\$ 1,330	\$ 1,111	\$ 986	\$ 1,384	\$ 1,164	\$ 995	\$ 911	\$ 911	\$ 651
Vaughan	Ontario	\$ 1,363	\$ 1,130	\$ 1,005	\$ 1,367	\$ 1,135	\$ 1,005	\$ 1,042	\$ 1,042	\$ 911
Toronto	Ontario	\$ 1,649	\$ 1,375	\$ 1,150	\$ 1,736	\$ 1,400	\$ 1,150	\$ 1,107	\$ 1,107	\$ 911
Markham	Ontario	\$ 1,454	\$ 1,137	\$ 996	\$ 1,454	\$ 1,137	\$ 996	\$ 738	\$ 738	\$ 738
Ottawa	Ontario	\$ 990	\$ 1,074	\$ 990	\$ 1,600	\$ 1,250	\$ 1,049	\$ 977	\$ 977	\$ 977
Gatineau	Quebec	\$ 179	\$ 179	\$ 179						
Laval	Quebec	\$ 179	\$ 179	\$ 179						
Montreal	Quebec	\$ 164	\$ 164	\$ 164						
Longueuil	Quebec	\$ 179	\$ 179	\$ 179						
Quebec City	Quebec	\$ 179	\$ 179	\$ 179						
Saint John	New Brunswick	\$ 864	\$ 738	\$ 681	\$ 864	\$ 738	\$ 690	\$ 846	\$ 687	\$ 651
Halifax	Nova Scotia	\$ 902	\$ 820	\$ 803	\$ 902	\$ 820	\$ 803	\$ 902	\$ 820	\$ 803
Charlottetown	Prince Edward Island	\$ 738	\$ 608	\$ 586						
St. John's	Newfoundland and Labrador	\$ 1,085	\$ 868	\$ 890	\$ 1,400	\$ 977	\$ 911	\$ 1,085	\$ 868	\$ 868

Note The fees for the cities in Quebec are calculated using the median income of families with young children in each city.

Child Care is especially important for women

Even in 2017, women still do most of the child care

Child care is not an issue of concern to women only, but the fact is many more women than men take hands-on responsibility for the care of young children. This means that any change in child care policy will have a direct and disproportionate impact on women.

There are numerous discriminatory reasons why care is more often left to mothers, including financial ones. Women on average earn about 71 per cent of what men earn. If in the absence of child care or paid parental leave one parent must stay home to look after children, it is almost always the lower-paid mother who does because families can't forego the higher earnings.

Child care is the ramp to women's equality

Almost 50 years ago, the Royal Commission on the Status of Women recommended a national daycare system, and more than 30 years since Rosalie Abella's Commission on Equality in Employment proclaimed "child care is the ramp that provides equal access to the workforce for mothers." The evidence then and today is conclusive: mothers' education, training and work options are dictated by their caregiving responsibilities but this is not the case for fathers. Mothers pay a much greater price when they do not have access to affordable, quality child care. It is mothers who go without wages and pension contributions; it is mothers who end up missing work (and promotions); it is mothers who are kept out of work (particularly full-time work) when families there are not child care alternatives, or when child care is unaffordable. Women are economically better off, relative to men, when they have child care. In Quebec, "the proportion of employed mothers in two parent families increased by 21 percent when the childcare program was introduced in 1997, more than double the national average" (Susan Prentice, Tackling Children's and Women's Poverty). While the participation rate of women in Canada has been steadily increasing even without a public system of child care, the rate is much lower than in countries such as Norway, Sweden or Denmark all of which have well-developed family policy.

Women child care workers need a child care program

The child care workforce is predominantly female. Despite the high level of skill and training required, those who work in early childhood education have notoriously low wages, difficult working conditions, and few employee benefits. The introduction of a fully publicly funded child care system would make it possible to turn the situation around because the working conditions and pay of child care workers could be tied to the value of the work performed rather than to the income received from parent fees.

Child Care is good for ALL children and ALL parents

Key policy makers, including the Federal Minister for Families, Children and Social Development, have suggested that governments should take a “targeted” approach to making child care more affordable and accessible, rather than a universal approach. “Given the limited resources that all governments, including the federal government, are able to invest, we want to make sure that those investments in early learning and child care will benefit most those families that need the support most,” said M. Duclos in a CBC interview in September 2016. Yet, a robust body of research and policy analysis confirms the benefits of making child care a public service available to all families. Here in summary form, are the main arguments in favour of designing early childhood services as universal programs¹

1. All children benefit from high quality early-learning education and care regardless of ability, economic, cultural or linguist circumstances, or whether their parents are in or out of the workforce, studying or working non-standard hours. Some US research shows that high-quality child care may benefit vulnerable children more, but there is also strong evidence that poor quality is negative for all children.
2. The lack of high quality and affordable early learning and child care is a problem for parents and children of all family income levels.
3. Universal child care services tend to bring together children from different backgrounds rather contribute to social exclusion. Also, numerous studies have shown that universal child care is more beneficial for disadvantaged children who attend socio-economically “mixed” programs than it is for those at targeted programs.

¹ For a full discussion of universal child care, read Child Care for all of us: Universal child care for Canadians by 2020, by Anderson, Ballantyne & Friendly, published by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (policyalternatives.ca)

4. Historically, programs targeted for the poor are poor services. Universal services, on the other hand, are higher quality because they command broader and sustainable public support.
5. Children at risk of developing behavioural or learning problems are found in all socio-economic groups and they are not confined to certain geographical areas. Targeted child care services risk leaving out those who fall outside the target.
6. Child care funding in the form of parent fee subsidies based on income tests does not build a comprehensive high-quality child care system. Instead, public funding must be directed to the “supply side” of child care: that is, we need direct funding of child care service providers; funds for the training, recruitment and retention of qualified staff; funds child care infrastructure.
7. Universal systems can still give priority to disadvantaged and marginalized by ensuring additional funds to child care centres that serve low-income children or children with special educational needs.

PSAC Child Care Campaign

Goal:

- Win federal/provincial/territorial child care agreements. Both levels of government must cooperate to build and fund a system of early learning and child care for all. Child care must be high quality, affordable, accessible and inclusive.
- Win a system of high quality affordable child care for the Indigenous Peoples, responsive to their needs and aspirations, and governed by the Indigenous Peoples.



Immediate demands of federal/provincial/territorial governments:

- Significant but gradual increase in public spending on child care each year over the next ten years. After ten years, budgetary increases will be needed in line with increases in cost and economic growth.
- Public funding should be directed to the “supply side” of child care: for example, through base funding of programs sufficient to provide high quality care, properly compensate the workforce, and offer excellent learning and care environments.
- Make child care affordable. Access to child care must no longer be dependent on ability to pay fees or on eligibility for subsidies. Parent fees should be geared to what families can afford.
- No public spending on the expansion of the for-profit or unlicensed child care sector.
- Recognition and appreciation of cultural and linguistic diversity and the diversity of individual families.
- Full inclusion of children and parents with disabilities.
- A publicly-managed and planned system that is accountable to the public.

How our campaign works:

- PSAC campaigns with others under the umbrella of the Canadian Child Care Advocacy Association (CCAAC) and its provincial counterparts. We cannot win by ourselves.
- PSAC's seven regions develop a regional campaign plan to advance the goals and demands of the national campaign in their respective regions.
- PSAC's child care officer works with others to support campaign strategy and activity.
- The CCAAC campaign web site will serve as the PSAC's on-line campaign hub.
- PSAC's campaign focus in 2017 is to reach out to convince PSAC members to sign up on the campaign web site. Our goal is to sign up 20,000 members.
- Throughout the year, we will ask our PSAC campaign supporters to act at strategic times. Actions will include emailing/phoning/meeting with federal/provincial/territorial legislators; taking part in public events/rallies/demonstrations; engaging in other pressure tactics.