



National Progress Report on  
**Early Learning  
and Child Care**  
2020 to 2021



## **National Progress Report on Early Learning and Child Care 2020 to 2021**

Large print, braille, MP3 (audio), e-text and DAISY formats are available on demand by [ordering online](#) or calling 1 800 O-Canada (1-800-622-6232). If you use a teletypewriter (TTY), call 1-800-926-9105.

© His Majesty the King in Right of Canada, 2024

For information regarding reproduction rights: [droitdauteur.copyright@HRSDC-RHDCC.gc.ca](mailto:droitdauteur.copyright@HRSDC-RHDCC.gc.ca).

PDF

Cat. No.: Em17-3E-PDF

ISSN: 2563-9536

# Table of Contents



- 5 Minister's message**
- 7 Overview of federal early learning and child care initiatives**
- 11 Federal ELCC programming**
- 15 Results by province and territory**
- 45 Summary**





## MINISTER'S MESSAGE



The COVID-19 pandemic has been the most severe challenge our country has faced since the Second World War, rivalling the economic shock of the Great Depression and the public health crisis of the Spanish Flu. The initial lockdown meant the closure of most schools and child care operations across the country, severely affecting families with young children.

The implementation of new public health practices and the uneven return of children in care have resulted in financial challenges for many early learning and child care (ELCC) providers and made more precarious the work of over 200,000 early childhood educators and child care workers across the country.

We have witnessed first-hand the toll this crisis has taken on parents, mostly mothers, and their families. The pandemic's impacts have underscored the critical need for access to affordable ELCC. Critical to Canada's recovery are investments for youth and care providers to ensure that families in Canada have access to the affordable and high-quality ELCC services to support their participation in our country's workforce.

Since the pandemic, the Government of Canada's commitment to supporting families with high-quality, affordable, flexible, and inclusive ELCC has only grown stronger. Our investments in Budget 2017 of \$7.5 billion over 11 years are designed to support provincial, territorial, and Indigenous partners in addressing local and regional priorities by expanding access to these essential services.

This year, 2020 to 2021, has set the stage for a robust Canada-wide ELCC system, promising a sustainable framework for generations to come. The 2020 Fall Economic Statement (FES) introduced measures such as a one-time workforce funding of \$420 million and permanent bilateral extension funding, establishing a solid foundation for future development. The federal government also provided \$400 million in 2020 to 2021 for continued support through bilateral agreements, alongside \$625 million in emergency pandemic aid to provinces and territories. Our commitment to innovation in ELCC continues with a \$100 million investment to explore and develop new approaches to improve service quality and accessibility. Additionally, the 2020 FES announced \$70 million over 5 years and \$15 million per year ongoing for Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care governance and the Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care Secretariat; \$75 million in 2021 to 2022 to improve the quality, accessibility, and inclusivity of Indigenous child care programs; and \$210 million per year ongoing by making previous funding permanent at 2027 to 2028 levels, beginning in 2028 to 2029.

Now is the time to make long-term, sustained investments so that every family in Canada has access to affordable and high-quality ELCC. Canada cannot be competitive until all those in Canada who need it, have access to the affordable child care necessary to support their participation in the workforce. Access to affordable child care helps create jobs and grows the economy. In fact, investments in child care create more jobs compared to similar levels of investment in other industries, by not only creating direct employment for child care workers, but also enabling growth in women's labour force participation. We can only all do better when every one of us is contributing to our full potential.

Despite the disruptions caused by the initial COVID-19 closures, our partnership with provinces and territories has led to significant achievements, including the creation of over 58,000 new affordable child care spaces since 2017. This progress underscores the vital role that ELCC plays in society and the Canadian economy. We also further advanced the goals and priorities stated in the Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care Framework, resulting in funding to Indigenous communities for a range of early learning and child care programs, services and supports.

The National Progress Report for 2020 to 2021 highlights these efforts and the critical steps we've taken moving towards a Canada-wide ELCC system. The Government of Canada remains dedicated to working with provincial, territorial, and Indigenous partners in enhancing ELCC services, recognizing their importance for Canadian families and our collective future.

The significant achievements outlined in this report reinforce my belief that we are moving steadily towards a future where families and children in Canada will have access to high-quality early learning and child care.

**Jenna Sudds**

Minister of Families, Children and Social Development

# Overview of federal early learning and child care initiatives



## From a recognized need to the implementation of a shared vision

The Government of Canada has maintained its steadfast commitment to advancing early learning and child care initiatives throughout the 2020 to 2021 fiscal year. Building upon foundational investments established in previous years, the Government of Canada has strengthened its collaboration with provincial, territorial and Indigenous partners to build capacity to support a Canada-wide early learning and child care system with the vision that all families have access to high-quality, affordable, flexible and inclusive early learning and child care no matter where they live.

The imperative for accessible and affordable child care is well recognized and the Government of Canada understands its pivotal role in both child development and the economic security of families, particularly those most vulnerable. It is not merely a service but a fundamental necessity for families striving to provide the best possible start in life for their children.

## Federal investments and setting the foundation for a Canada-wide early learning and child care system

Through Budgets 2016 and 2017, the Government of Canada invested \$7.5 billion over 11 years (up to 2027 to 2028) in ELCC, which was made permanent and ongoing in the 2020 Fall Economic Statement. These investments support and create more high-quality, affordable child care across the country, and strengthen Indigenous ELCC.

The provinces and territories are primarily responsible for the delivery of ELCC programs and services. The 3-year ELCC bilateral agreements were signed with provinces and territories covering fiscal year 2017 to 2018 to fiscal year 2019 to 2020, representing \$1.2 billion of federal investment. Over the course of these initial agreements, nearly 50,000 new and more affordable child care spaces were created, exceeding the federal target of 40,000 spaces by 2019. This funding also helped support the early childhood educator (ECE) workforce. During the first 3 years of the agreements, more than 14,300 individuals received bursaries, scholarships, or grants to pursue post-secondary

ECE credentials. More than 14,800 educators participated in professional development and in-service training and approximately 3,300 licensed spaces across Canada were providing more flexible child care arrangements by the end of March 2020.

The 2020 Fall Economic Statement introduced measures making permanent bilateral extension funding that laid the groundwork for a Canada-wide child care system in partnership with provinces, territories and Indigenous peoples. This includes investments to create a federal Secretariat on Early Learning and Child Care; supporting the existing Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care Secretariat; making the early learning and child care funding announced in Budget 2017 permanent at 2027 to 2028 levels; providing \$420 million in 2021 to 2022 for the provinces and territories to support the attraction and retention of early childhood educators; and an additional \$75 million in 2021 to 2022 to improve the quality and accessibility of Indigenous child care programs.

## **Pandemic impacts**

In March 2020, the World Health Organization declared a global health pandemic. In Canada, this led to the implementation of public health protection measures, including school and child care closures. Many families in Canada faced limited options for child care as this essential and women-dominated service sector was significantly affected, particularly during temporary closures. The pandemic underscored how important access to child care is to the functioning of Canada's economy. During 2020 to 2021, the care economy, including child care, faced many challenges related to closures, loss of hours, long shifts, and low wages, despite increased demands. The care economy continues to experience challenges in recovery.

The recruitment and retention of ECEs, over 96% of whom are women, has been an ongoing challenge across Canada. Before the pandemic, the ELCC sector faced workforce challenges related to recruitment, low retention rates, low wages, and limited career advancement opportunities. The pandemic further worsened these challenges, and the sector continues to face significant staffing shortages. According to Labour Force Survey estimates, the employment level among ECEs and Assistants in Canada declined nearly 15% between April 2020 to March 2021. There were approximately 36,000 fewer ECEs working in the sector by the end of the fiscal year.

In every Canadian city there was a significant decline in enrollment of children in child care in the fall of 2020 compared to February of that same year prior to the beginning of the pandemic. As many parents were able to work from home, or may have been temporarily unemployed, children were less likely to be enrolled in child care<sup>1</sup>. The loosening of public health protections and the return to more in-person work later in the year saw an increase in enrollment slowly returning to pre-pandemic levels.

---

<sup>1</sup> According to the March 2021 report [\*\*Sounding the Alarm, COVID-19's impact on Canada's precarious child care sector\*\*](#), by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.



## **Federal investments in pandemic response**

Despite these challenges facing the ELCC sector, and building on the success of previous investments, the Government of Canada continued to provide funding support to each province and territory through bilateral agreements that reflect their unique early learning and child care needs. In 2020 to 2021, 1-year bilateral agreements were signed, representing a federal investment of \$400 million, as an extension to the initial 3-year agreements. As part of these agreements, the Government of Canada has provided additional flexibility to provinces and territories to help respond to the unique demands of the pandemic in their respective jurisdictions. The Government of Canada has also provided \$625 million in emergency pandemic support to the provinces and territories for the child care sector through the Safe Restart Agreements. The funding aimed to address the reduced availability of child care spaces and the unique needs stemming from the pandemic.



# Federal ELCC programming



## Innovation

Since 2018, the Government of Canada has been investing \$100 million over 10 years to enable innovative practices in ELCC. The objective of the ELCC Innovation Program is to support early learning and child care programs and service delivery projects that:

- explore, test, and develop innovative approaches
- aim to improve the quality, accessibility, affordability, inclusivity and flexibility of early learning and child care programs and services

The scope of the projects can be local, regional, or national. They must target the needs of children under 6 years of age and their families. Results from projects are expected to allow for best practices to emerge. To be later repeated across the country, in addition to bridging service gaps, and better informing data and research.

The Minister of Families, Children and Social Development launched a call for proposals (CFP) for the ELCC Innovation Program on October 29, 2020. The CFP will fund innovative projects that foster cutting-edge practices to support the changing nature of ELCC.

Considering the pandemic, projects supporting emerging needs and preparedness activities were prioritized for the recovery of the sector. Consideration was also given to projects that address affordability, flexibility, accessibility, and inclusivity in ELCC. This is in addition to projects that promote cultural diversity, respect and inclusion, gender equality as well as projects that support the next generation of ELCC sector leaders; and projects targeting families with unique child care needs, including:

- Indigenous children and their families
- children and their families from official language minority communities
- newcomer families
- families that include children with disabilities and with varying abilities
- families in underserved communities
- low-income families
- families working non-standardized hours

## Official Language Action Plan (OLAP)

Under the Action Plan for Official Languages 2018 to 2023, the Government of Canada invested \$20 million over 5 years in early learning and child care. This investment aimed to improve access for francophone families in language minority settings. This investment supports professional development opportunities and training for early childhood educators. It provides support to ELCC entrepreneurs (social entrepreneurship) to maintain and open more daycares spaces.

The Association des collèges et universités de la francophonie canadienne (ACUFC), the organization responsible for the implementation of the “Training and Capacity Building for Early Childhood Educators – Phase 1” project completed the project on March 31, 2020. The purpose of the project was to create an inventory of the training programs and services of early childhood educators in Francophone minority communities. A multi-year funding agreement with the ACUFC was implemented for Phase 2 of the project. Since July 15, 2019, the ACUFC has collaborated with 4 partner organizations (the Commission nationale des parents francophones, Fédération nationale des conseils scolaires francophones, Réseau de développement économique et d’employabilité, and Société Santé en français) to supporting the implementation of initiatives in the early childhood sector within Acadian and Francophone minority communities across the country.

## Data and research

Employment and Social Development Canada continues to work to address knowledge gaps by funding data collection and research activities, primarily in collaboration with Statistics Canada. These activities complement work being undertaken in parallel by both the provinces and territories and non-government organizations, providing a national picture of the ELCC landscape.

In 2020 to 2021, data were collected as part of 2 national surveys: the Survey of Early Learning and Child Care Arrangements (SELCCA) and the Canadian Survey on the Provision of Child Care Services (CSPCCS) pilot. The SELCCA asks parents and guardians about the arrangements they use for their child, including preferences and difficulties they may have faced when looking for child care. The CSPCCS collects information from licensed and unlicensed home-based and centre-based child care providers regarding services provided, daily fees, enrollment, and staffing. Data from these surveys are used to continuously track and improve implementation of the Canada-wide system.

In addition, 7 research reports were completed—some of which were later published by Statistics Canada, including:

- [Use of before and after school care in Canada](#)
- [Gender differences in sociodemographic and economic characteristics of early learning child care workers](#)
- [Exploring the business dynamics of self-employed child care service providers](#)

## **Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care (IELCC) transformation initiative**

### **Focus on COVID measures**

In September 2018, the Assembly of First Nations, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami and the Métis National Council with the Government of Canada, endorsed the jointly released co-developed **Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care Framework**. This Framework was the result of consultation with Indigenous people across Canada. It envisions First Nations, Inuit and Métis children and families as happy and safe, with a strong cultural identity. It sees children and families supported by a comprehensive and coordinated system of early learning and child care. Policies, programs, and services that are Indigenous led, rooted in Indigenous knowledge, culture, and languages. These are supported by strong partnerships of holistic, accessible, and flexible programming that is inclusive of the needs and aspirations of Indigenous children and families. This Framework guides federal action in this space. To advance its implementation the Government of Canada has committed \$1.7 billion over 10 years to strengthen ELCC programs and services for Indigenous children and families, starting in fiscal year 2018 to 2019.

### **Achievements**

The Indigenous ELCC Framework is a historic accomplishment. It enables greater control, influence, and self-determination by Indigenous peoples. It establishes early learning and child care systems to be more affordable, accessible, high-quality, flexible, and inclusive for Indigenous peoples.

In working from a nation-to-nation relationship, an innovative partnership model was designed. The National and Regional Partnership Tables emerged with First Nations, Inuit and the Métis Nation that consist of leadership and technicians that work alongside

the Government of Canada. These Partnership Tables advance goals and priorities stated in the Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care Framework. During 2020 to 2021 this resulted in:

- funding to First Nations communities for a range of early learning and child care needs
- continued funding to improve existing early learning and child care services in Inuit Nunangat
- new Métis-specific early learning and child care programs, services and supports
- increased support to the Aboriginal Head Start in Urban and Northern Communities program

A Call for Proposal was also launched. Thirteen Quality Improvement Projects received funding to support Indigenous-led best practices and to improve Indigenous ELCC.

In 2020 to 2021, the COVID-19 pandemic and natural disasters (flooding and forest fires) affected the implementation of the Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care Framework. In response, the Government of Canada distributed \$120 million in emergency funding to Indigenous communities and to Aboriginal Head Start in Urban and Northern Communities sites. This funding supported the safe reopening of Indigenous ELCC programs and services and made sure COVID-19 public health measures were followed. This funding was distributed as follows:

- \$71.01 million to First Nations
- \$10.90 million to Inuit ELCC
- \$29.88 million to the Métis Nation
- \$8.21 million to the Aboriginal Head Start in Urban and Northern Communities (AHSUNC) program

The emergency funding helped to make sure that child care spaces were available. It addressed the high costs associated with implementing COVID-19 public health measures such as cleaning and sanitization practices. This investment was in addition to the \$1.7 billion over 10 years announced in 2018 in support of the co-developed Indigenous ELCC Framework. It was also in addition to the existing federally funded Indigenous ELCC programs:

- First Nations and Inuit Child Care Initiative (FNICCI)
- Aboriginal Head Start on Reserve (AHSOR)
- Aboriginal Head Start in Urban and Northern Communities (AHSUNC)

# Results by province and territory



The following section provides highlights of provincial and territorial accomplishments for the 2020 to 2021 fiscal year, reported as per the shared principles informed by the Multilateral ELCC Framework. More information on any of these programs can be obtained directly from the provinces and territories.

## ● **BRITISH COLUMBIA**

On September 18, 2020, British Columbia (BC) and Canada extended the bilateral ELCC Agreement for 2020 to 2021. This Agreement builds on the successes of the prior 3 years. It provides an additional \$52.4 million to support ELCC in the province. BC's priority areas of investment under the Canada-British Columbia ELCC Agreement 2020 to 2021 were to:

- maintain the affordability of child care, prioritizing facilities offering care to infants and toddlers
- maintain enhanced equity through targeted investment in underserved communities, specifically Indigenous families, and families with children with support needs

### **Affordability**

In 2020 to 2021, Universal Child Care Prototype Sites (now called \$10 a Day Child Care BC Centres or Sites) continued to provide child care to about 2,500 children. In 2020 to 2021, there were over 50 facilities throughout the province. Each site was required to offer licensed care for a maximum of \$200 per month per child for regular full-time care. Some families were eligible to receive more support through the province's income-tested Affordable Child Care Benefit. The average enrolment at Prototype Sites was 94% in 2019 to 2020 and dropped to 54.9% for a period in 2020 to 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Most \$10 a Day ChildCareBC centres rebounded back to close to full enrolment by September 2020.

The positive financial impact on families with children attending \$10 a Day Child Care BC centres is significant. The median monthly parent fee for licensed care in a group setting in fiscal year 2020 to 2021 was \$1,390 per infant and \$1,350 per toddler. The \$10 a Day ChildCareBC initiative allows parents to access the same type of care for \$200 a month for full-time, licensed child care, less than 20% of the costs of care at facilities outside of the initiative. The majority of families using \$10 a Day Sites reported improved financial well-being, including increased savings, household and disposable income, housing stability, reduced debt, and improved participation in the workforce and school.

Some families with children with support needs attending \$10 a Day Sites also benefited from BC's Supported Child Development (SCD) and Aboriginal Supported Child Development (ASCD) programs. SCD and ASCD programs provide consultation services and extra staffing supports when needed to enable children with support needs to participate in child care programming. In fiscal year 2020 to 2021, an average of 105 families per month that attended a \$10 a Day Site received SCD services; in addition, an average of 35 Indigenous families per month attending a \$10 a Day Site received ASCD services.

### **Inclusion**

The SCD and ASCD programs enable children who require additional support to participate in inclusive child care. ASCD is designed to specifically meet the needs of Indigenous children with support needs in a manner that promotes cultural safety.

In collaboration with key stakeholders, a conceptual model was developed to outline supports that are integral to inclusive child care. This model includes universal supports for building knowledge, skills, and capacity for inclusive child care among child care providers. It also includes enhanced supports to enable full participation of children who may require periods of direct support within their day, delivered through the SCD and ASCD programs. In 2020, the BC Ministry of Children and Family Development held engagement sessions to inform this model with over 50 participants, parents, service providers and representatives of inclusion organizations. The model received overwhelming support and participants highlighted the importance of strong partnerships between child care providers, early intervention providers, and families.

In 2020 to 2021, BC supported the First Nations Health Authority and Aboriginal Head Start Association of BC to continue to provide operational funding for 643 Aboriginal Head Start (AHS) spaces in First Nations communities and Indigenous organizations. The AHS programs include community level design and delivery of the 6 AHS components: culture and language, education, health promotion, nutrition, social support, and parent and family involvement.



## Quality

BC awarded more than 2,300 bursaries through the ECE Education Support Fund in 2020 to 2021. As of March 31, 2021, there were 21,502 ECEs and 9,022 ECE Assistants certified in BC. As of April 2021, nearly 9,400 bursaries have been distributed through the ECE Education Support Fund since summer 2018.

## ● ALBERTA

In July 2021, Alberta signed its Bilateral Extension Early Learning and Child Care Agreement. The Bilateral Extension Early Learning and Child Care Agreement provides \$235 million to support ELCC in the province.

### **Access**

In 2020 to 2021, Alberta increased access to ELCC by providing a COVID Financial Relief Grant and Space Creation Grants.

In January 2021, the financial relief grant supported licensed ELCC programs that were affected by public health measures imposed during the COVID-19 pandemic. This grant was used to offset both the costs associated with the closures, and operating costs associated with the resumption of child care. More than 2,800 programs received this support. The support helped mitigate increases in fees paid by parents and potential permanent closures by operators.

An expression of interest provided space creation grants in areas of need. The grants prioritized communities with few options for licensed child care, and where demand for child care far exceeded available supply. These grants supported more than 1,300 child care spaces and 160 overnight child care spaces.

### **Affordability**

As of March 31, 2021, there were 22,967 children from 16,892 families receiving subsidies to reduce child care fees for Alberta parents. This exceeds the target of 20,000 children and represents 31% of enrolled children attending eligible, licensed child care programs in the province.

### **Quality and inclusion**

Progress on these 2 principles was achieved through enhancements to Flight: Alberta's Early Learning and Care Framework. Flight is a curriculum framework that guides the work of ECEs in Alberta. Flight is a voluntary framework available to any ECE or child care program in Alberta.

In addition, capacity building supports were provided to support the inclusion of children with diverse needs.

Specific achievements in 2020 to 2021 included:

- continued provision of an existing basic level Flight training delivered to 1,051 ECEs across 267 child care programs
- delivery of an advanced level, 22-week Flight course to 1,091 ECEs in by MacEwan University
- development of an intermediate-level professional workshop series in an online format to an estimated 3,000 students per year beginning in 2021 to 2022
- 490 child care programs participated in capacity building supports in evidence-based inclusive child care, with 774 children supported in these programs. The number of children impacted was lower than anticipated (1,300) due to decreased child care enrolment during the COVID-19 pandemic



## ● SASKATCHEWAN

Saskatchewan signed its Bilateral Extension Early Learning and Child Care Agreement in August 2021. The Agreement will provide an additional \$68 million to support ELCC in the province.

### **Access**

To support access to child care the province provided one-time and recurring grants to regulated child care facilities. These grants offset the start-up costs for new facilities and assist with ongoing operating costs for all regulated child care facilities. Regulated facilities have access to grants for:

- meeting fire, health, and safety standards
- nutritious meals and snacks for children
- toys, equipment, and craft supplies
- developing and renovating new spaces
- offsetting the costs associated with furnishings, inspections, and other costs

In response to the pandemic, supplementary grant funding was made available to 47 school-based centres which enabled them to provide child care to essential workers.

Access to Early Years Family Resource Centres (FRCs) was also expanded. The province invested in 2 new centres in the communities of Estevan and Humboldt, which are in addition to already-existing FRCs in the Battlefords, Meadow Lake, Moose Jaw, Nipawin, Prince Albert, Saskatoon, and La Ronge. FRCs provide families with access to no-cost programming. During the 2020 to 2021 year, FRCs continued to provide services, including online programs, take home learning kits, and supported child development and play at home.

### **Quality**

Saskatchewan continued to improve the quality of regulated child care throughout the province by directly investing in high quality programming and through the provision of training and resources.

Over the course of the fiscal year, SK invested in early learning and literacy initiatives for children who would not otherwise have access to these opportunities. These are fundamental to a child's present and future learning. The results of initiatives from 2018 to 2021 included:

- one-time literacy grants enabled 621 regulated child care centres and child care homes to purchase new books to support children's early literacy

- targeted programs through Kids First Regional delivered in-person and take-home language activities to parents and caregivers living in communities with limited access to high-quality learning, where nearly 10,000 people participated in 421 sessions in 261 communities across Saskatchewan

Training in 2020 to 2021 focused on online learning available through the Saskatchewan's Early Years Portal, with no in-person events offered due to the pandemic. However, from 2018 to 2020, more than 170 family child care home providers registered in one-day Play and Exploration in-person workshops. These workshops supported family child care home providers to implement high-quality, play-based learning experiences.

In-person leadership training sessions were also not offered in this fiscal year, but previously more than 200 child care facility directors were trained. Sessions were designed to enhance their skills in communication, coaching, developing teams, and managing change. These skills are essential to the development and retention of skilled, trained ECEs. Indigenous Awareness training was offered to ECEs throughout the ELCC sector in support of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada Calls to Action. Nearly 900 ECEs attended in-person workshops and 100 attended online.

## **Inclusion**

Through the 2020 to 2021, Saskatchewan continued to invest in programming designed to support children who are experiencing disability, including:

- Enhanced Accessibility Grant – This grant (up to \$2,000/month) is provided to regulated facilities to support the actual cost of staff required to support children with particularly challenging needs or behaviours
- Children Communicating, Connecting, and in the Community (4C) Pilot – Provides early educational support for children who are deaf or hard of hearing to reduce barriers when communicating with their families, children, or others in the community. The pilot is focused on 2 programs for preschool-aged children in Regina and Saskatoon
- Rural and Northern Inclusive Early Learning Pilot – Provided a total of 10 children (2 in 2020 to 2021) experiencing disability living in remote communities with access to regulated preschool spaces

In addition, to support Francophone Minority Language inclusion, the province provided start-up costs for new Francophone child care centres, and translated existing resources to help parents support their child's learning at home.

## ● MANITOBA

Manitoba signed its Bilateral Extension Early Learning and Child Care Agreement in February 2022. The Agreement will provide close to \$79 million to support ELCC in the province.

### **Access**

Manitoba's efforts to increase access were limited due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic public health measures. Through its COVID-19 Response Grant, Manitoba provided financial support to 927 licensed child care facilities that remained open between March 23 and June 30, 2020, to provide child care services to the children of essential service workers. In addition, the COVID-19 Response Block Grant provided funding to 233 non-profit child care centres that faced financial risk during the pandemic. Together, these 2 grants supported and maintained more than 30,500 of the province's licensed child care spaces. Manitoba provided federal funding to 7 capital projects that were completed in 2020 to 2021. The projects created a total of 390 new licensed child care spaces for infants and preschoolers in underserved rural communities and low-income urban communities.

### **Affordability**

To increase affordability Manitoba has financial supports available. The number of children that received funding to support inclusion was 1,159. The Child Care Subsidy Program provides provincial support to eligible families to help with the cost of care by reducing child care fees for children from the ages of 12 weeks to 12 years. The average number of children per 4-week period receiving subsidy for licensed child care parent fees was 3,485. This is lower than previous fiscal years due to a significant number of subsidized children not attending licensed care due to the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Quality**

Through its partnership with the Red River College, Manitoba continued to offer the Science of Early Childhood Development curriculum. This online textbook is updated regularly. It includes modules and research related to early childhood education and development. In the 2020 to 2021 fiscal year, nearly 7,000 unique, first-time users accessed the Science of Early Childhood Development portal. This corresponds to an increase of more than 30% when compared to the previous year.

The province also provided subsidies for students enrolled in the Introduction to Science of Early Child Development course required for certification as a Child Care Assistant. Of the 326 students who received these subsidies in the 2020 to 2021 fiscal year, 303 successfully completed the program. This corresponds to an in-year success rate of nearly 93%.

Manitoba provided support to strengthen the delivery of quality home-based care through their mentorship program. Manitoba also provided funding to the Manitoba Child Care Association to continue to provide online training in effective board governance for members serving on the board of directors in non-profit child care facilities.

## **Inclusion**

During the 2020 to 2021 period, Manitoba spent more than \$2.9 million on diversity and inclusion initiatives. The focus was to support children diagnosed with disabilities including autism spectrum disorder.

The Inclusion Support Program provides child care centres with funds to improve equipment and facilities, as well as specialized training and enhanced staffing. This ensures children with disabilities can be included in the ELCC experience with their peers. Under this program, federal funding supported 568 children.

The province continued its work with the St. Amant Centre, a not-for-profit organization that provides support for Manitobans with developmental disabilities. Manitoba provided funding to St. Amant Centre to offer training in Applied Behavior Analysis, a methodology designed to assist in skills development while reducing the risks of potentially harmful behaviours. The Centre and the province nearly doubled the number of staff trained in this methodology when compared to the previous year, training 421 educators from 74 licensed child care facilities by developing an online training.

Manitoba provided grant funding to 24 self-identified Indigenous licensed early learning and child care facilities to support their Indigenous programming and curriculum.

## ● ONTARIO

In July 2020, the governments of Canada and Ontario agreed on a 1-year extension of the Canada-Ontario ELCC Agreement. This allocated nearly \$147 million in 2020 to 2021 for ELCC investments. The funding supported 3 main action areas:

- access to affordable, high quality licensed child care
- access to EarlyON Child and Family Centres
- innovative approaches to providing access to high quality training and professional learning opportunities for the ECE workforce

### **Access**

In 2020 to 2021, 464,538 licensed child care spaces for children 0 to 12 years were available in Ontario. There were 75.2% of licensed child care centres were not-for-profit (operated by not-for-profit organizations and First Nations) and 24.8% were for-profit. This included:

- 35,463 spaces in centres that offer services in French
- 7,237 spaces in centres that offer bilingual services
- 3,306 spaces in centres in First Nation communities

As of March 2021, the province was funding 96 First Nations to support child care and child and family programs on reserves, of which:

- 31 received funding for child care only
- 21 received funding for child and family programs only
- 44 received funding for child care and child and family programs

The province increased access by creating 1,736 new spaces. As of March 2021, 96% of the licensed child care centres and 93% of the licensed home child care agencies reopened following the emergency closures resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

EarlyON Child and Family Centres offer free drop-in programs for caregivers and children from birth to 6 years old. There were 1,083 centre locations across Ontario. There were 419 main locations, 664 mobile and satellite locations, and 198 offered virtual services to support families across the province.

As of Summer 2020, 81 new EarlyON Child and Family rooms in 45 locations were either in the process of being established or funded under the Canada-Ontario ELCC Agreement.



## Affordability

In 2021, approximately 30% of children in licensed child care centres received a child care fee subsidy. So did 54% of children in licensed home child care. This helped to reduce licensed child care fees to allow more lower-income families to access child care.

To offer more support during the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, Ontario also established emergency child care. This was paid for by the province and at no cost to parents to support frontline workers, over 3 different time periods between March 2020 and June 2021. There was also financial support that helped parents pay for extra costs associated with school and child care closures. The Support for Families program provided a 1-time payment of \$200 per child and \$250 for those with special needs from April 2020 to August 2020.

In 2019, the most recent year for which data is available, 150,474 children in Ontario received fee subsidies for licensed child care. Of those children, 9,480 were supported through funding provided by the Canada-Ontario ELCC Agreement.

## Quality

In 2020 to 2021, 2,036 applications were approved under the ECE Qualifications Upgrade Program. This is an increase of 30% from the fiscal year 2018 to 2019 to fiscal year 2020 to 2021. The Program supports individuals in obtaining an ECE diploma and becoming eligible to be a member of the College of ECEs and prioritizes individuals working under Director's approvals or Letters of Permission. It also provides leadership development opportunities for those already RECEs (Registered Early Childhood Educators). Funding is prioritized for Francophone and First Nations, Métis and Inuit applicants living or working in these communities.

To support professional learning for Francophone and Indigenous professionals, \$1.5 million in federal funding was provided to 3 organizations in the early years and child care sector:

- Association francophone à l'éducation des services à l'enfance de l'Ontario for early years and child care professionals working in francophone settings
- FIREFLY for early years and child care professionals in First Nation communities on-reserve
- Ontario Aboriginal Head Start Association for early years and child care professionals working with First Nation, Metis, Inuit or Indigenous in off-reserve settings

## Inclusion

Flexibility in child care service delivery is important for meeting the needs of parents and caregivers who work non-standard hours. A small proportion of licensed child care centres and home child care providers offer care during non-standard hours:

- 9% of child care centres reported the availability of weekend care
- less than 1% reported the availability of care during the evening or overnight
- 10% of home child care providers reported the availability of weekend care
- 11% reported the availability of evening care and 6% reported the availability of overnight care

Ontario provides Special Needs Resourcing funding to support children with special needs in licensed child care settings. This is at no cost to parents or guardians. A total of 37,508 children were funded through the Special Needs Resourcing between January 1, 2019 and December 2019 which is the most recent available data.

A total of 22 licensed child care centres reported that they were Indigenous-led organizations. As part of Ontario's commitment to reconciliation with Indigenous peoples, the province established or enhanced 65 programs in First Nation communities (5 enhanced and 60 new child and family programs) and 61 programs in urban and rural communities (10 child care programs, 14 joint child care and child and family programs, and 37 child and family programs).

As of March 31, 2021, a total of 307 centres offered French-language programs and 97 centres offered bilingual programs.

There are 381 EarlyON Child and Family Centre locations that offer non-standard hours. There are 132 that offer French-language programs and 176 that offer Indigenous programs.

## ● QUEBEC

### **Plan to accelerate access to child care spaces**

In 2020 to 2021, the Ministry of Families continued to roll out its plan to accelerate access to spaces in educational child care services by doing the following:

- launching a targeted call for projects on October 5, 2020, aimed at creating 4,359 subsidized spaces
- establishing the Direction du soutien au développement du réseau (network development support directorate), reflecting the importance the Ministry places on this issue
- continuing the project office, set up in 2019 to 2020, to support applicants in a sustained manner and to ensure a better follow-up of the projects by focusing on respecting the deadlines
- updating data from the model used to estimate supply and demand for spaces in educational child care services. Data is now available at a more precise geographic level, permitting the Ministry to better understand the regional allocation of spaces in educational childcare services, which will permit a better estimate of the needs for these services

### **Converting unsubsidized spaces into subsidized spaces**

The Ministry will convert 3,500 unsubsidized spaces to subsidized spaces at a rate of 1,750 spaces per year during 2020 to 2021 and 2021 to 2022. A targeted call for projects was launched on October 23, 2020, to convert 1,750 spaces in 19 coordinating office territories.

### **Reviewing the *Accueillir la petite enfance* educational program**

In May 2019, the Ministry released online the latest version of its *Accueillir la petite enfance* educational program. The update's purpose was to enrich this program with new knowledge about early childhood development and working with young children, and on documents published by the Ministry since its last edition. The Ministry has provided training to educational child care services on the new curriculum. In-person training was offered until March 2020. Web-based training with equivalent content has been offered since November 2019 and will be offered until March 31, 2022.

## **Measures to support the integration of children with disabilities in child care**

The increase in the budget allocated to measures to support the integration of children with disabilities in childcare demonstrates the importance that the Ministry places on this issue. For example, the total budget allocated to the integration of children with disabilities in child care has increased from \$11.2 million in 2005 to 2006 to \$128.4 million in 2019 to 2020. The total number of children benefiting from this allowance has increased from 2,274 to 11,720 over the same period.

The province has also increased the amount allocated for children with exceptional needs. The budget for this measure has increased from \$360,000 in 2005 to 2006 to \$18.1 million in 2020 to 2021, and the number of children who have received it has increased from 104 children to 1,125 children over the same period.

## **Workforce availability and training**

During the 2021 to 2022 budget speech, the Government of Quebec announced that \$63.6 million, including \$33.6 million in additional funding, would be used to increase the number of qualified child care educators. This amount will be used over 5 years to implement several measures that will be made possible particularly through the collaboration of the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Solidarity and the Ministry of Higher Education.

## **Additional financial support for community-based family organizations and community drop-in daycares**

The Ministry of Families supports the overall mission (and operations) of 288 community-based family organizations (OCFs) and groups as well as 235 community-based organizations offering community drop-in daycare activities. In November 2020, the Ministry announced \$85 million would be granted over 5 years to further support community-based organizations that work with families. This is in addition to an additional \$30 million over 3 years granted in November 2018. Moreover, to offset salary increases, \$3.4 million in financial assistance was granted over 5 years to community-based family organizations and community-based organizations offering community drop-in daycare activities. In 2020 to 2021, this amounted to \$786,000. The total budget for 2020 to 2021 is \$43.4 million for OFCs and \$6.6 million for community-based organizations offering community drop-in daycare activities, including emergency support to these organizations during the pandemic.

The Ministry of Families supports the overall mission (and operations) of 262 community-based family organizations and 8 national groups through its *Programme de soutien financier à l'action communautaire auprès des familles* (Programme OCF). The total annual budget of the Programme OCF is \$19.8 million. Through its *Programme de soutien financier aux activités de halte-garderie communautaires* (Programme HGC), the Ministry supports 242 organizations offering community drop-in daycare activities (171 OCFs and 71 other community-based organizations).

The annual funding envelope allocated to the Programme HGC is \$4 million. Moreover, to offset salary increases, \$3.4 million in financial assistance over 5 years starting in 2018 to 2019 was granted to community-based family organizations and community-based organizations offering community drop-in daycare activities.



## ● **NEW BRUNSWICK**

In August 2020, New Brunswick (NB) signed its 2020 to 2021 Bilateral Extension Early Learning and Child Care Agreement. This Agreement provides an additional \$9.7 million to support ELCC in the province.

### **Access**

New Brunswick continues to make progress towards a universally accessible and affordable ELCC system. While the pandemic has affected occupancy rates in designated facilities, by the end of fiscal year 2020 to 2021, they are slowly returning to pre-pandemic rates. As of March 2021, 15,692 preschool children (0 to 5 years) had access to regulated child care spaces and early learning programs.

As of March 2021, 508/589 (86%), of both Anglophone and Francophone ELCC facilities were designated. Parent advisory committees were established and implemented; however, the COVID-19 pandemic affected this effort. Some ELCC facilities maintained their committees through online platforms. A total of 41% of NB Early Learning Centres have established parent advisory committees.

The Operator Portal was established in November 2020 as a digital solution to facilitate the interactions between operators and the government of New Brunswick and to manage funding to operators. Operators report monthly on the occupancy and vacancy of their spaces. This information is used to inform parents of availability of spaces.

### **Affordability**

As of March 2021, 3,158 children were receiving financial supports to ensure access to ELCC designated facilities. The Parent Subsidy program provides free childcare to families with a gross income of \$37,500 or less. There is a sliding scale for the subsidy for families with an annual gross household income of \$37,501 and above. It also ensures no family will pay more than 20% of their gross annual household income on childcare for children enrolled in a designated facility.

The Parent Portal, the online digital platform for parents, was enhanced to give parents the ability to search for available childcare spaces in their community. Parents are also able to view which facilities are designated and to download a Parent Subsidy application. The Parent Portal increases access to available spaces in designated facilities, where parents can benefit from the Parent Subsidy program.

## Quality

During 2020 to 2021, 57% of educators without formal training completed the 90-hour mandatory online course, “Introduction to Early Childhood Education.” There were 320 professional development activities delivered based on identified needs from the sector, with 5,123 educators participating.

## Inclusion

A provincial inclusion policy was developed and will be legislated within the provincial *Early Childhood Services Act* as a requirement for all facilities in 2021. The 2 distinct Curriculum Frameworks are offered to both Francophone and Anglophone communities. As of March 2021, 6,762 Anglophone and 3,895 Francophone children were enrolled in a designated facility.



## ● NOVA SCOTIA

In December 2020, Nova Scotia (NS) signed a 1-year extension to the Canada-Nova Scotia Early Learning and Child Care Agreement. This Agreement builds on the successes of the prior 3 years and provides an additional \$11.6 million to support ELCC in the province.

In 2020 to 2021, NS focused on 3 priority areas:

- making child care more accessible and affordable for Nova Scotian families
- supporting quality through workforce development
- embedding inclusion in ELCC environments

### **Access**

The Strategic Growth Initiative (2018 to 2020) expanded infant care access and increased child care options for families. In 2020 to 2021, the funding maintained the progress made. It also supports new family home child care provider sites opened under the initiative.

As of March 2021, 11 Strategic Growth projects were completed creating 303 spaces. There are still 3 projects in process which are expected to add 85 child care spaces upon completion. There has also been growth in family child care homes, adding an additional 18 in 2020 to 2021. The Strategic Growth (Infant Incentive Grant) also supported funding for 951 infant spaces in centres. Also, there will be an additional 133 infant spaces in family home child care as of March 2021.

### **Affordability**

In 2020 to 2021, NS focused on providing funding for more families to access increased financial support to pay for child care. NS maintained and expanded the eligibility of the Nova Scotia Child Care Subsidy Program. By increasing the maximum annual income from \$20,000 to \$35,000 and increasing per diem rates for all income levels up to \$70,080 per year. They also expanded eligibility to include part-time early learning programs. As of March 2021, 3,796 children receive the maximum child care subsidy. This is approximately 73% of the children in the subsidy program.

The COVID-19 pandemic also significantly affected operations as all regulated child care centres. Providers were ordered to close effective March 17, 2020, to June 5, 2020. During that time, Nova Scotia continued to fund child care centres as well as provide subsidy allocations for families. Families were not charged parent fees while the centres were closed.



## Quality

Nova Scotia also focused on building a strong and skilled workforce. By working with the Nova Scotia Poverty Reduction table to address barriers to education, a pilot was launched. The pilot used the existing Level 1 certificate program to provide people already working in the sector with an opportunity to obtain their Level 1 classification. There were 175 seats were funded. The seats were in both English and French, for Mi'kmaq/Indigenous students, Black/African Nova Scotian students, Francophone students and general admission.

The ECE Diploma program did a 1-time expansion for seats, which resulted in 60 funded training seats. Funding support for students in Early Learning Education was also provided for 68 students. Additionally, 1,495 ECEs were engaged in professional development on the Early Learning Curriculum Framework in 2020 to 2021.

## Inclusion

The Inclusion Support Grant had 272 centres (78%) apply. The grant provided funds to support centres in their commitment to increase capacity of inclusive programming for children with complex needs and from diverse backgrounds. The funding assists centres in investing in resources and additional staffing to support developmental, social, and physical inclusion for children who may require specialized supports.

The Pyramid Model for promoting Social Emotional Competence in Infants and Young Children focuses on building environments and relationships required to intentionally teach children social emotional skills. Twenty sites received ongoing individual coaching and professional development opportunities in 2020 to 2021 to support Pyramid Model implementation.

## ● PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

In September 2020, Prince Edward Island signed its Bilateral Extension Early Learning and Child Care Agreement. This provided an additional \$3.6 million to support ELCC.

### **Access**

Prince Edward Island (PEI) surpassed the goal to create at least 200 licensed spaces by 2020. The annual funding provides ongoing support to maintain the operation of those funded spaces.

PEI focused on designating new Early Years Centres (EYC), allocating additional designated EYC spaces to existing centres, and approving new licenses for ELCC centres. In 2020 to 2021, an additional 5 ELCC centres received Early Years Centre designation. There were 3 new early childhood centres and 1 new family home centre opened in 2020 to 2021. From 2017 to 2021 funding supported a total of 929 new licensed child care spaces on PEI.

The province also responded to the needs of families who work non-standard hours and seasonal employment. Licensed Early Years Centres were invited to submit applications for “Alternative Hours Demonstration Sites.” The working definition of non-standard hours is regulated care provided outside the hours of 7 am to 5 pm from Monday to Friday. There were 10 centres participated in the Alternative Hours program from 2020 to 2021. A total of 165 children from 138 families benefited from accessing child care during extended hours or seasonal programming.

### **Affordability**

PEI increased subsidy access for children from families that are in more need. This helped lower income families; lone parent families; and families with children of varying abilities. In the 2020 to 2021 program, approximately 247 children received support through this subsidy.

### **Inclusion**

In collaboration with Immigrant and Refugee Services PEI, (formerly the PEI Association for Newcomers to Canada), PEI led diversity and inclusion-themed workshops. They were offered broadly to the entire early learning and childcare sector. A sector survey was also distributed which had a 47% response rate. The survey sought to better inform resources and support on the topics of inclusivity, anti-bias practices, and how to best support newcomer children and their families in the context of child care centres.

The Family Resource Centre, Centre Cap enfants, was contracted to deliver the *Dès la naissance* project. This project supports Acadian and Francophone families. It allows children to be exposed to the French language and develop second language skills. As of March 2021, the program worked with 65 families. In 2020 to 2021, 14 new families joined the program.

From 2017 to 2021, access to the Early Years Autism Services and Special Needs Assistants programs expanded to support an additional 207 children with unique abilities.

## **Quality**

The Early Childhood Education Training Grant was available to casual, part-time, and temporary employees of licensed ELCC Centres. It helped to pay for courses towards certifications in the field. During 2020 to 2021, the ECE Training Grant program was the busiest yet and saw the approval of 265 training grant applications. Funding was also allocated to support ECEs working towards their Level 2 certification through Holland College.

The province partnered with the Early Childhood Development Association of PEI to deliver the Handle with Care Program. The program is a simple culturally relevant interactive parenting program. It promotes the mental health of young children from birth to 6 years and their parents and caregivers. During 2020 to 2021, 19 programs were provided across PEI, where 110 people participated. There was also 1 new Facilitator Training Workshop and 1 Refresher training held, each with 12 participants.

Quality Enhancement Grants were available to licensed early childhood centres, family home centres and preschool centres. They assist in providing quality programming to children and their families. As of March 31, 2021, a total of 15 early childhood centres were receiving the quarterly Quality Enhancement Grant, and 4 centres had received the annual grant.

## ● NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

In January 2021, Newfoundland and Labrador signed its Bilateral Extension Early Learning and Child Care Agreement, 2020 to 2021. This Agreement built on the successes of the prior 3 years. It provided an additional \$7.18 million to support ELCC in the province.

### **Affordability and access**

The province continued to expand the Operating Grant Program. Child care services participating in this program cannot surcharge parents for any additional services. Fees are further reduced through the Child Care Subsidy Program. Families eligible for full subsidy may receive child care services for free. Child care centres participating in the Operating Grant Program were delivering services at \$25-a-day as of January 1, 2021. By March 31, 2021, there were 3,085 centre-based spaces receiving bilateral funding under the Operating Grant Program. Overall, 92% of centres were participating in the Operating Grant Program. This is an increase of 26% from the previous year. This is an increase of 758 spaces receiving enhanced funding since March 31, 2020.

Regulated Family Child Care Services also became eligible to join the Operating Grant Program and the Child Care Capacity Initiative on January 1, 2021. By March 31, 2021, 93 of the 109 regulated Family Child Care services signed on to the Operating Grant Program. As of March 31, 2021, there were about 1,340 families in the province receiving the Child Care Subsidy benefit. This is about 1,622 children in receipt of subsidized care.

Approximately 30% of the 2019 to 2020 funding (\$2 million) was carried forward to 2020 to 2021. This was allocated towards addressing the COVID-19 pandemic. The Government of Canada also provided an additional \$10 million under the Safe Restart. This was to address temporary closures and loss of revenue while operations were suspended. The province created the COVID-19 Compensation Grant and the Essential Worker Child Care program. This helped to reduce immediate impact on ELCC services, employees and families, while enabling essential workers to provide critical services during the beginning of the pandemic. ELCC services participating in the Operating Grant Program continued to receive funding. There was also an additional Compensation Grant to cover the cost of lost parental revenue on the condition that staff wages and benefits remained in place. Between April and June 2020, 286 child care facilities were supported by the COVID-19 Compensation Grant. This provided over \$14.5 million to replace lost parental fees due to public health protections. Throughout 2020 to 2021, there were 246 families who accessed the Essential Worker Child Care Program, supporting 345 children in child care.

The Child Care Capacity Initiative also continued. By March 31, 2021, 3 services had received funding for 1 of the phases. The program is divided into 2 larger phases: exploratory phase and developmental phase. In the exploratory phase applicants assess the needs of the community they wish to serve in consultation with the Regional Early Learning and Child Care Office. This phase allows for a determination to be made whether to proceed to the developmental phase. The developmental phase includes all the preparatory work. If there is a service site identified, the applicant may request funding to develop the service or expand an existing service. If there is not a service site, a Needs Assessment of the community would be the first step. The Initiative's goal is to build capacity for child care spaces. Two of these facilities completed the process and created 52 additional spaces for school-aged children. The third remains in process, though with extended timelines due to the ongoing pandemic impacts. The Child Care Capacity Initiative further expanded to include Family Child Care services to better meet the needs of the underserved areas. Between January 1, 2021, and March 31, 2021, 2 Family Child Care services were developed through the Child Care Capacity Initiative, creating 12 spaces.

## **Quality**

The Quality Enhancement Program and its policies were approved in February 2020. The purpose of the program is to enhance quality in child care centres by consulting on program design, learning processes, interactions with children and enhancements to the physical environments. Those that are already enrolled in the Operating Grant Program will be able to participate in the Quality Enhancement Program. The program was paused from April 2020 to March 2021 due to resources shifting in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Capital Quality Renovation Grant is a program available to child care centres and family child care homes holding waivers for physical space quality improvements. Three delayed projects concluded their renovations in 2021 to 2022.

The Early Childhood Learning Framework was launched in August 2019. On September 23, 2020, the Early Childhood Learning Facilitator presented a webinar on outdoor play and the framework. There were 55 participants who attended. From October 21, 2020, to November 25, 2020, the Early Childhood Learning Facilitator presented a Train the Trainer webinar series. It spanned over 6 weeks. There were 8 participants.

The province also provided various bursary opportunities for those in the ELCC field. They awarded 20 ECE Graduate Bursaries, 16 ECE Field Placement Bursaries, and 172 ECE Trainee Bursaries.

## **Inclusion**

In 2020 to 2021, there were 198 children participating in ELCC programs who were supported by the Inclusion Program. The Inclusion program aids regulated child care services to ensure children with additional needs can participate to their fullest potential in a regular child care service program. The assistance that regulated child care services can access include funding for additional supports, and access to various training and professional development to assist in addressing various children's needs.



## ● NUNAVUT

On June 11, 2020, Nunavut signed its Bilateral Extension 2020 to 2021 Early Learning and Child Care Agreement. This Agreement builds on the prior 3 years and provides an additional \$2.4 million to bolster support for ELCC in the territory.

Nunavut's ELCC approach is grounded in years of culture and traditions, which strengthens connections to community and family. Nunavut is the only jurisdiction in Canada where most residents are Indigenous. The majority of residents have Inuktitut as their mother tongue.

As of March 2021, there are now 60 licensed ELCC facilities in 22 of 25 Nunavut communities. This is an increase from 58 the previous year. Licensed facilities include:

- 7 aboriginal head start programs
- 33 day cares
- 8 preschools
- 5 family day homes
- 7 after school programs

Nunavut provides ongoing financial support for licensed programs and ELCC community programs. Funded programs and services include:

- annual operations and maintenance for licensed child care programs
- Healthy Children's Initiative for licensed and community-based child care programs supporting healthy living and supportive services
- Young Parents Stay Learning Program is financial support to subsidize child care costs to ensure parents under the age of 18 can attend school

As of March 2021, 52 of the 60 facilities accessed the Operations and Maintenance Top-Up funding program administered through the Canada-Nunavut ELCC Agreement.

There are a total of 1,247 licensed child care spaces available in Nunavut as of March 2021. There was an increase of 10 from the previous year when there were 1,237 spaces.

## ● NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

The Northwest Territories (NWT) signed its Bilateral Extension 2020 to 2021 Canada-Northwest Territories Early Learning and Child Care Agreement in January 2021. Under this Agreement, \$2.4 million is provided to support ELCC in the territory which enhances the achievements of the previous 3 years.

The NWT have identified the following areas of priority:

- support for the delivery of high-quality ELCC experiences
- support for culturally relevant professional development and training for all staff working in licensed ELCC programs
- increase the number of qualified ECEs in licensed programs
- support access to ELCC opportunities within all communities in the NWT, including access to licensed programming for families working in essential positions during the COVID-19 pandemic

### **Access**

In the NWT licensed ELCC programs are community driven and operated by Indigenous governments, non-profit organizations, and local individuals. All licensed centre based ELCC programs are non-profit, while regulated family day homes, termed “licensed home day care facilities,” are operated as for-profit entities licensed individually.

As of March 2021, 6 licensed ELCC programs received specific funding for the creation of new ELCC spaces, supporting the creation of a total of 56 new licensed spaces.

### **Quality**

The NWT coordinated and provided consistent and ongoing flexible professional development and training opportunities for all licensed ELCC programs. Some professional development and training activities that were planned for 2020 to 2021 were not able to proceed and/or shifted to a virtual format because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The distribution of physical literacy resources to licensed centre-based programs was also put on hold due to the pandemic. DANCEPL3Y and YOGAPL3Y training sessions were offered online. Bushkids Forest and Nature School also offered regional professional development opportunities to ECEs. The total number of staff from licensed ELCC programs that received professional development and training from the Department was 56.



The NWT continued to encourage recruitment to the ECE field by providing funding for post-secondary learning. Aurora College provides post-secondary education in English within NWT. Through the Canada-NWT ELCC Bilateral Agreement and Action Plan, funding was provided to Aurora College to deliver a full-time face-to-face 2-year diploma in ELCC in Yellowknife, as well as a part-time distance ELCC Certificate program to all communities throughout the NWT. There were an estimated 64 students working towards a distance certificate at Aurora College. In 2020 to 2021, there were 27 early childhood scholarships awarded to NWT residents enrolled in a post-secondary ELCC program.



## ● YUKON

On June 11, 2020, Yukon signed its Bilateral Extension 2020 to 2021 Canada Yukon Early Learning and Child Care Agreement. This Agreement builds on the successes of the prior 3 years. It provides an additional \$2.4 million to support ELCC in the territory.

### **Access**

The Direct Operating Grant provides funding to licensed child care programs to address operational costs. In total, 68 licensed child care programs received increases to their Direct Operating Grant. This benefits more than 1,760 children in the Yukon.

The enhancement fund increases funding available to licensed child care programs for the health and safety of their environments. Primary emphasis was placed on radon testing and remediation. However, funds may also go towards other health and safety concerns.

### **Affordability**

To increase affordability of child care, Yukon provided grants for those who need child care. The grants were provided to guardians through several initiatives. The Grandparent Grant provides supplemental financial support for grandparents who are the primary caregivers for their grandchildren who are attending licensed child care programs. The grant is paid directly to the programs to cover child care fees not covered by the Child Care Subsidy program. Twenty grandparents received grants, resulting in supports for 28 children attending licensed child care programs.

The Teen Parent Grant was also available to support young parents 24 years and under. This grant allowed young parents to access licensed child care while completing their high school education. There was 1 parent, and 1 child supported during in this reporting year.

There was also the Intensive Treatment Child Care Spaces Initiative. It was available to parents or guardians who were taking part in a substance use treatment program. The initiative provided child care at no cost to those attending programs and supported 2 guardians and 2 children in 2020 to 2021.

## **Inclusion**

The Yukon supported 2 child care programs to increase inclusion in 2020 to 2021. The Supported Child Care Program provides licensed programs with additional supports to ensure that children with diverse needs are better positioned to meet their potential. In 2020 to 2021 this initiative supported 20 children.

Additionally, supportive programming offered by the Child Development Centre provided therapeutic services and supports the developmental needs of Yukon children. The Child Development Centre provided mentorship in designing developmentally appropriate learning environments and provided consultation on group dynamics to assist educators working in programs with children displaying behavioral differences.

## **Quality**

The Yukon allocated funding to the Yukon Child Care Association for a 2-day professional development conference for Yukon ECEs. However due to the COVID-19 pandemic the conference was deferred, and funding was reallocated to cover overages in the Direct Operating Grant spending.

During the 2020 to 2021 reporting period, 87 part-time bursaries were awarded to those pursuing ECE training programs. Yukon University (then Yukon College) was also funded to deliver in-community ELCC course work to rural ECEs. The funds for 2020 to 2021 supplemented the costs for the institution to provide ELCC educational supports to students in the communities of Mayo, Carcross, Pelly Crossing, Dawson, and Teslin.



# Summary



In 2020 to 2021, the ELCC agreements with provinces and territories resulted in:

- nearly 9,000 new and more affordable child care spaces across Canada, for a total of over 58,000 new and more affordable spaces created since 2017
- over 5,500 bursaries were provided to those pursuing ECE Credentials
- there were over 9,000 attendances logged of ELCC staff across Canada participating professional development opportunities

Though there were challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, the provinces and territories continued to pursue goals set out in their action plans to support families across the country.

The pandemic has demonstrated that access to ELCC is a universal issue that resonates across sectors, regions, and income brackets. Without access to child care, parents, particularly mothers, can't participate in the economy. While provinces and territories were able to leverage the funding through the bilateral agreements in 2020 to 2021 to support families in their jurisdictions, the high cost of child care remains a challenge for young families.

The pandemic shifted the public understanding of how access to ELCC supports children, their families, and our economy. The clear benefits of ELCC should not be a luxury for only the families that can afford it. Lack of access isn't a choice, nor are unaffordable fees. Furthermore, the pandemic is demonstrating that more needs to be done to make sure every child in Canada has the best possible start in life and to build an economy that is more productive, more competitive, and more dynamic.

The Government of Canada intends to build on achievements of the last 3 years. As announced in the September 2020 Speech from the Throne and the Fall Economic Statement, the Government of Canada committed to a significant, long-term, sustained investment to create a Canada-wide early learning and child care system. The Government of Canada will build on earlier investments, learn from the model that already exists in Quebec, and will continue to work with all provinces and territories to ensure that high-quality care is accessible to all.