



ECEC in Saskatchewan

Early Childhood Education and Care: One System – Multiple Benefits

**A public discussion paper
commissioned by the Muttart
Foundation**

A great change is coming over childhood in the world's richest countries. Today's rising generation is the first in which a majority are spending a large part of early childhood in some form of out-of-home child care. At the same time, neuroscientific research is demonstrating that loving, stable, secure, and stimulating relationships with caregivers in the earliest months and years of life are critical for every aspect of a child's development. Taken together, these two developments confront public and policymakers in OECD countries with urgent questions. Whether the child care transition will represent an advance or a setback – for today's children and tomorrow's world – will depend on the response.

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ECEC in Saskatchewan

- Across the globe – and across the country – there are many models and lessons for Saskatchewan to consider in the development of one ECEC system with multiple benefits.
- How will we respond to the UNICEF challenge?

Imagine... Saskatchewan with one public early childhood program where:

- Children are engaged in play-filled developmental exploration...



- Hours meet the needs of parents who are working or studying

- It is available in every community just like schools and libraries



- Affordable



- Children's days are seamless. They receive care and education in one location without being shuttled back and forth between programs.

Currently, Saskatchewan has 3 ECEC programs:

- KidsFirst – targeted to vulnerable families
- Pre-K – targeted but growing; not universally available like K
- Licensed child care (centres and homes)

How can we blend these programs into one and grow it to meet the needs of children and parents?



Where are the children?

Saskatchewan has one of the highest rates of working mothers – and the lowest rate of availability for ECEC – even if we include public education (pre-K). The vast majority of children are in some form of unregulated, “unknown” ECEC.

Where are the children?

Other than kindergarten, which is available for every five year old, availability of ECEC for Saskatchewan children is abysmally low.



Regulated child care spaces by province/territory and percentage of children (0-12 and 0-5) for whom there is a regulated child care space – 2008

P/T	Centre 0-5	SA	FCC	Total regulated	spaces for 0-5	spaces 0-12
• NL	4,840	735	397	5,972	9.2	17.3
• PEI	3,530	859	35	4,424	22.2	41.0
• NS	10,913	2,688	110	13,711	11.6	22.1
• NB	7,999	7,162	345	15,506	16.2	19.9
• Que	117,146	162,992	88,771	368,909	36.1	25.0
• ON	159,604	81,292	19,760	256,7483	13.6	19.6
• MB	15,970	7,574	3,645	27,189	15.5	20.6
• SK	5,844	999	2,330	9,173	6.3%	9.1%
• AB	42,832	19,482	11,667	73,981	13.7	17.4
• BC	44,670	28,233	14,635	87,538	15.4	18.3
• NWT	915	453	400	1,768	20.5	23.3
• NT	878	135	0	1,013	11.2	20.2
• YT	533	253	232	1,2624	27.9	28.3
• CND	415,674	312,857	142,327	867,194	18.6	20.3

Who cares for and educates the children?

Other than the proportionally few public ECEC spaces in pre-K which employ professionally recognized, educated and paid teachers, most children are in the care of poorly trained, poorly remunerated people.



What do we need?

- Money
- Policy – a plan