



CANADIAN COALITION FOR  
PUBLIC HEALTH  
IN THE 21<sup>st</sup> CENTURY

## PUBLIC HEALTH MATTERS

# Early Childhood Education & Care

Canada needs a federal government that is committed to sustained investment in public health across the country. The Canadian Coalition for Public Health in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century – a national network of 24 non-profit organizations, professional associations, health charities and research organizations calls on the next federal government to invest in strategies and programs that support strong healthy people in Canada regardless of their economic and social status.

### A higher standard for Canadian children

Early childhood care plays an important role in children's development and provides a valuable support to families with young children and yet Canada has no national program or overall approach to early childhood education and care (ECEC). While over 70% of Canadian mothers (of which almost 13% are single parents) are in the paid labour force, there are only enough regulated childcare spaces for just over 20% of young children. It's time for Canada to do better.

### Call to action

Early childhood is the most important phase of life during which the quality of future health and well-being is determined and every child deserves the best start in life. The Coalition is calling on the next Government of Canada to commit to a national early childhood education and care strategy that provides access to quality early childhood education and care services to those who need it, at a cost they can afford.

### Why it matters

Without high-quality early childhood education and care, many children start school without the basic skills they need to succeed. Youth in high risk neighbourhoods are more likely to drop out of school – 22% vs the average 15% which continues the cycle of poverty.

Every dollar spent on early child development saves \$9 on future spending on health and social issues... a return on investment of 800%.

Negative early life experiences lead to unhealthy futures, poor health, mental illness, failure at school, unemployment, addictions and unprepared parenthood. The absence of early childhood development programs can result in generations of families being caught in these cycles.

At only 0.25% of GDP, Canada's public support for young children, their families and early childhood education and care is the weakest among the world's richest countries. The recommended OECD standard is 1% of GDP.

Canada ranks 37 out of 39 OECD nations in public expenditures on early childcare.

Current costs for childcare range from \$1,000 per month in Ontario to \$150 per month in Quebec, with an average cost of \$685 per month.

**A Higher Standard for all Canadians**

Quebec's subsidized childcare program has provided a broad economic benefit to Quebec's population, increasing Quebec's GDP by 1.7%. For every dollar spent on early childhood programs and care, the provincial government harvests \$1.05 in provincial income and the federal government gets 44 cents for zero investment in the program.

### Questions for the candidates

1. Do you support the establishment of a national early childhood education and care strategy?
2. What specific steps will your party take to ensure equitable access to quality childcare regardless of income level or area of residence?
3. If elected, will your party work in collaboration with the provinces and territories to implement a national early childhood education and care strategy?
4. Will your party take the necessary steps to increase spending on early childhood education and care to at least 1% of GDP to give Canadian children the best start in life?

### About the Canadian Coalition for Public Health in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

The Canadian Coalition for Public Health in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (CCPH21) is a national network of 24 non-profit organizations, professional associations, health charities and research organizations that share the common goal to improve and sustain the health of Canadians. Formed in May 2003, it now includes 24 member organizations.

### Mandate

CCPH21 advocates for public policy to ensure that adequate public health functions are in place and information is made available to protect and promote health, and prevent disease and injury.

CCPH21 aims to help all stakeholders work together for the future of public health by generating ideas and potential policy directions for discussion among both the public and decision-makers.

### Principles

- Public health is a pan-Canadian responsibility requiring national leadership with a co-operative approach across sectors and jurisdictions.
- The public health system focuses on population health and complements the health care system.
- Communicable and non-communicable disease and injury are effectively addressed by public health approaches and must be considered together for a healthy population.
- Public health activities can reduce pressures on the health care system.
- Funding to public health is an essential and strategic investment for Canadians and the economy.
- Canada requires immediate and sustained action and investment in Public Health in order to protect, promote, and preserve the health of all people living in Canada.

**A Higher Standard for all Canadians**