

Child Care Services in New Brunswick

New Brunswick needs a provincial development plan for child care services. Currently, government takes on a limited licensing and financing role in the child care sector. A quality sustainable child care system requires a coherent action plan and public funding. Programs must be based on developmentally appropriate programs, and services must be affordable and responsive to the needs of parents and children in rural and urban New Brunswick.

New Brunswick spends significantly less than the national average on regulated child care spaces. Despite the high demand for child care services, many centres have difficulty keeping afloat. Child care facilities receive no start-up or operating grants. The bulk of their revenue comes from parent fees. The Early Childhood Development Agenda launched in 2001 includes various measures to improve child care services, along with other prenatal and childhood services. The provincial Quality Improvement Funding Support Program provides funding to child care facilities. Facilities must use no less than 73% of funds to support wages of staff working with children, and the rest on professional development and equipment and material. The amount given to each centre depends on the number of approved child spaces, types of programs, etc. The average funding received by child care centres in 2003 - 2004 ranged from \$1,900 to \$30,500. Under the Early Childhood Initiatives Program, child care facilities may also access funding on behalf of children who require additional support. N.B. child care workers earned on average \$8.44/hour in 2003 - 2004. Early childhood training or experience will be required for the director or one in four staff employed by April 2006. New centres seeking approval must now meet this training requirement prior to approval. The average fee for full-time care of a 3-year old in a regulated centre was \$422/month (\$19.65/day) in 2003. Families with a net annual income of \$22,000 or less are eligible for the maximum daily subsidy (from \$22 for full-time infant care to \$10.75 for after-school care).

A quality sustainable child care system requires a coherent action plan and substantial public funding. Government-regulated and coordinated services must be based on early childhood development and care principles. They must also be affordable and responsive to the needs of parents and children. Child care must be available to residents of urban and rural areas, Anglophones, Francophones and Aboriginal peoples, shift and seasonal workers, full-time and part-time employees, infants, children with special needs and school-age children in after-school care.

Spending on child care is an investment rather than a consumption expenditure. The test of any investment is whether the rate of return justifies the expense. ... Good child care generates two types of returns. The first is the productivity of the parents freed to enter the labour force. The second is the increase in future productivity of children who receive early educational experiences. ... When benefits and costs are both accounted for, public expenditures on good child care generate at least a 2-for-1 return, producing \$2 in benefits for every \$1 in new spending.

- Gordon Cleveland and Michael Krashinski, *Fact and Fantasy: Eight Myths About Early Childhood Education and Care*, 2003, University of Toronto, Childcare Resources and Research Unit.

Early childhood development programs are rarely portrayed as economic development initiatives, and we think that is a mistake. ... Most of the numerous projects and initiatives that state and local governments fund in the name of creating new private businesses and new jobs result in few public benefits. In contrast, studies find that well-focused investments in early childhood development yield high public as well as private returns.

- Rolnick, A. and Grunewald, R. *Early Childhood Development: Economic Development with a High Public Return*, p. 1 January 2004.

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236 King Street
Fredericton, New Brunswick
E3B 1E2

Tel: 506-444-4101
Fax: 506-444-4318



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Three things we know about child care services:

1. Most children in New Brunswick are in some kind of child care since about three-quarters of parents with young children are currently in the paid labour force. In New Brunswick, there are government-regulated child care spaces for about 11% of children aged under 12. Evidently, most children are being cared for in settings that are not inspected or held to minimum standards. (The Canadian average is only slightly better: 12% of children aged 0-12 in 2001; Quebec stands out with regulated spaces for 21% of children aged 0-12 in 2001).
2. A large body of research shows that the first six years of life are crucial to the future educational, career and social success of individuals. A child's brain development in the years from 0 to 6 sets the foundation for life-long learning, behaviour and health. So if children are spending a lot of their time away from their parents, in child care, then we must ensure that child care offers developmentally appropriate stimulation in a safe and nurturing environment.
3. Investment in early childhood education leads to major payoffs down the road. Through savings on social programs, increased productivity and higher tax revenues, we all gain. It is estimated that for each \$1 spent on quality child care, there is a \$2 future return to society (Gordon Cleveland and Michael Krashinsky in *The Benefits and Costs of Good Child Care*, 1998). The governor of the Bank of Canada, economist David Dodge, a strong defender of early childhood development, says that the "human development" setting that gives the biggest payback to our investment is early childhood development. When youngsters enter the school system ready to learn and succeed, it makes schools more effective. This becomes important in our aging society with a proportionately smaller labour force.

Child care, just like a transportation system, is a part of the urban infrastructure that enables people to get to work. Employers need child care, since their bottom line is hurt when they can't recruit and retain staff. Children benefit in demonstrable ways from early childhood care. Good quality child care, research shows, is good for children, good for mothers, good for their families, and good for society. Investments in early childhood development yield high public as well as private returns. Economists have estimated returns between two to seven times the original investment.

- S. Prentice and M. McCracken (2004) Time for Action: An Economic and Social Analysis of Childcare in Winnipeg, Child Care Coalition of Manitoba, Status of Women Canada, p. 2.

If we get child care right,
everyone benefits

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New Brunswick has a few examples of employer or union supported child care centers. While no assistance is presently available to set up new child care centers in New Brunswick, they may qualify for financial assistance for salary supplements, professional development, and the purchase of equipment.

First Steps Childcare Centre at the Moncton Hospital was created in 1991 with parents who worked at the hospital. The hospital provides and maintains the rooms. The Centre gives priority to children of hospital employees but in 2004, community children occupy 20% of the spaces. Non-hospital employees pay more per day.

Innovations in Child Care

College Hill Daycare Co-Operative, affiliated with University of New Brunswick and St. Thomas University, opened in 1994 after the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission gave the universities the funds to build the centre. The universities own the facility but the centre is run by parents who rent the facility. Priority is given to anyone affiliated to the university and in 2004, 20% of spaces are filled with children from the general public. A small membership fee is required.

The Centre de jour l'Éveil at the Université de Moncton, Moncton Campus, is a non-profit child care service run by a parents' committee. The university provides the space and gives a monthly subsidy for child care services for its full-time students. Priority is given to students, followed by university staff and alumni.

Bright Beginnings Daycare, in NB Power's Fredericton building, is affiliated to NB Power and the IBEW (International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers) union. Established in 1993, it is run as a non-profit organization. NB Power chairs the Board of Directors, which also includes representatives of the union and of parents. NB Power and IBEW jointly funded the startup of the daycare, and both provide ongoing financial support. Priority is given to siblings of current children in care; children of NB Power workers; and community children. The public pays more than NB Power affiliated parents.

The Preschool Centre in Fredericton South and North receives assistance since 2002 from the Union of Postal Communication Employees and CUPW (Canadian Union of Postal Workers). The start-up costs for the centres on the North Side were covered by the Unions. For the past 2 years, priority is given to children of members of the sponsoring union. CUPW also sponsors home-based childcare, through a dozen private-care providers affiliated with the preschool centre. The centre provides training, lends equipment and regulates the home-based providers.

Portland Community Childcare in Saint John, while not an employer or union initiative, is of interest because it is based in the Centennial Elementary School. It is a non-profit organization that offers a pre-school program, structured after-school program, parenting program and a summer camp. Districts 6 and 8 school boards have sponsored the programs for the last 14 years by providing electricity and use of the library and gym.



A significant number of children of working parents are receiving inadequate care. Partly because of this, they enter school behind other children and never catch up. This causes two problems. First, there is an unacceptable inequity among young children. ... Any argument for equal opportunity must start with high quality child care. Second, these children are not prepared to participate in the advanced economy of the 21st century. If Canada is to maintain and improve its competitive position internationally, it must invest in the human capital of today's children. Dollars spent on education for young children are far more effective than dollars spent at any other time in a person's life. Thus any reasonable industrial and educational strategy requires high quality child care.

- Gordon Cleveland, and Michael Krashinsky (1998), The Benefits and Costs of Good Child Care: The Economic Rationale for Public Investment in Young Children – A Policy Study, University of Toronto.

Integrated Hub Model – Kids 'N Us (South East Grey County, Ontario)

Kids 'N Us is an innovative idea especially for non-urban areas: it is a network of sites that provide child care and other services to several small communities, with a central office that manages and collects fees. The services include:

- Child care: licensed centre-based care, support to home-based child care providers (toy & resource lending, monthly newsletter), parent-relief child care for at-home parents, school-break programs/child care, preschoolers' workshops.
- Parent/caregiver education and support: Community education (local newspaper columns on family issues), telephone "warm" line (information on child development, choosing child care and providing home child care), playgroups, parent education and family workshops.

Child Care