



Why and How Cities Matter for Early Learning and Care

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Introduction

Quality, accessible, affordable, culturally relevant, inclusive, and flexible education has long been understood to be a precondition for healthy communities and healthy economies.¹ Indeed, the business case for this has often been made with respect to strong secondary and postsecondary graduation levels having a high correlation with fewer hospital admissions, lower crime rates, lower poverty rates, and less child welfare involvement in families.² The contributions and impact of early learning and care (“ELC”)³ to these outcomes have largely been left out of public discussion. In part, this gap is due to the assumption that ELC is “childcare” – that is, that child care is merely custodial supervision and not a form of education. Until recently, this assumption made it difficult to have wide-ranging public conversation about the need, value, and possibility of government investment and leadership in ELC. However, COVID-19 sparked a renewed interest in, and awareness of, the necessity of ELC to families. This circumstance gives significant latitude for municipalities to involve themselves in the planning, management, and support of ELC and, by doing so:

- give a strong start to children and families;
- invest in economic recovery;
- provide unique research and knowledge mobilization; and
- support existing municipal strategies, frameworks, and policies.

This report focuses on the unique role of municipalities in creating and leading ELC policy development. Specifically, this report outlines why cities can and should play a role in early learning and care, it presents an analysis of municipal involvement in ELC in Richmond, Vancouver, Edmonton, Whitehorse, Saskatoon, and Ottawa, and it provides a summary of the many ways in which the City of Edmonton is already involved in implementing frameworks, strategies, policies, regulations, and bylaws that impact early learning and care. Through its review of the role that municipalities play in early learning and care, this report also presents information on current municipal approaches to early learning and care and promotes a discussion of the potential for these approaches to play a greater role in early learning and care across Canada.

¹ Beach, Jane (2020), *An Examination of Regulatory and Other Measures to Support Quality Early Learning and Child Care in Alberta*. See also: OECD (2001), *Starting Strong: Early Childhood Education and Care*, Starting Strong, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/starting-strong_9789264192829-en

² Ibid.

³ In this report, early learning and care includes those programs and services for children below the mandatory school age of six that include the elements of both physical care and education. However, as Buschmann (2020) notes, while ELC is often seen as being for pre-kindergarten children, many parents use out-of-school-care for children up to age 12.

Background

COVID-19 and Early Learning and Care

The phrase “unprecedented times” is now a familiar one. COVID-19 was a “global social and economic disrupter” that “magnified inequities and significantly disrupted families and family life.”⁴ Parents around the world are confronting how to manage job and income loss, changing work hours and/or responsibilities, child care, and education. Many are doing so without adequate financial or social resources, like ELC. While COVID-19 has impacted everyone, certain families’ experiences are more acute because of systemic inequalities along lines of age, class, race, gender, language, ability, and sexuality. Many parents, guardians, and caregivers worked hard to absorb the impact of these challenges but despite these herculean efforts, children and youth bore the brunt of many COVID-19 challenges. Specifically, COVID-19 had a significant impact on children’s access to ELC and k-12 education. Children and youth were often in unsafe situations and frequently did not have the resources they needed to succeed, such as computers or other technology required for their learning; reliable and accessible work spaces; developmentally appropriate toys and books; experienced, supportive, and educated adults to support and facilitate learning; social, physical, and intellectual stimulation; and connection to peers.⁵ COVID-19 laid bare the reality that early learning and care is not simply custodial supervision, but *education* and *care* provided by highly trained educators in licensed and regulated facilities. Indeed, recent studies found that:⁶

- 80% of families in Alberta reported difficulty managing homeschooling, working from home and other activities (All Our Families Study, 2020);
- 58% of families in Alberta had reduced income because of job loss or reduced hours (All Our Families Study, 2020);
- 12% increase of police-reported incidents of domestic violence in Edmonton compared to 2019 (Edmonton Police Service, 2020);
- 11.8% unemployment in Edmonton, the highest in the province (Statistics Canada, 2020); and,
- Compared with previous estimates, the prevalence of maternal depression and anxiety among mothers in a Canadian cohort increased during the COVID-19 pandemic (All Our Families Study, 2020).

Can the market provide?

Market-based solutions to early learning and care are often promoted by governments and businesses based on offering more ‘choice’ to families. However, extensive research shows that the market does not deliver early learning and care solutions that work for all families.⁷ Choice is constrained

⁴ “An Inclusive Economic Recovery for Families.” *CUP IMPACTS Newsletter* 2021, 1. Online: <https://www.ualberta.ca/community-university-partnership/media-library/community-university-partnership/resources/impacts-documents/cup-impacts-2021.pdf>

⁵ Children’s Mental Health Ontario. (n.d.). “How the Pandemic Impacts Children’s Mental Health.” <https://cmho.org/how-the-pandemic-impacts-childrens-mental-health/>

⁶ As reported in CUP IMPACTS 2021 Newsletter.

⁷ Friendly, M. (2019). A bad bargain for us all: Why the market doesn’t deliver child care that works for Canadian children and families.

– not expanded – by market solutions. For example, Friendly found that while public funding for ELC has grown “modestly” in the last few years, “Canada’s public spending for [early childhood education and care] still remains quite limited when compared to families’ need for child care and with international benchmarks.”⁸ As a result, there are not enough spaces for children, parent fees are not affordable in most provinces and territories, and fees are rising higher than the rate of inflation.⁹ This phenomenon is global: Countries with market-based approaches to child care have higher parent fees, lower staff wages, insufficient spaces, and issues surrounding the quality of care. Additionally, this model runs the risk of diverting public funds to for-profit organizations, like ABC Learning in Australia.¹⁰ Curiously, Canada—one of the most prosperous countries in The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (“OECD”)—regularly rates poorly in the delivery of ELC when compared to other OECD countries.¹¹ In fact, even though Alberta is one of the most prosperous provinces in Canada, it rates poorly compared to other provinces and territories in the provision of ELC. As a result, Canada is one of the few OECD countries that has not developed a national implementation plan for helping families “care for and educate its youngest citizens.”¹²

Canada’s ELC community has been cautiously optimistic in the wake of the federal government’s 2015 commitment to ELC.¹³ As promised in Justin Trudeau’s election campaign, the Liberal government released the Multilateral Early Learning and Child Care Framework (“MLF”) in June 2017. The 2017 federal budget laid out an accompanying 11-year funding allocation.¹⁴ The MLF sets out five principles that the federal government and provinces/territories will work toward: accessibility, affordability, quality, inclusivity, and flexibility. It also serves as the basis for bilateral agreements between the Government of Canada and each province/territory. Each agreement includes an Action Plan designed by each province/territory regarding the federal transfer funds. In 2018, a separate Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care Framework was negotiated between the federal government and Indigenous groups.¹⁵ Though promising, bilateral agreements do not prevent the failures of market-based approaches. Alberta’s response – which does not commit to a \$10/day universal model like British Columbia or Yukon – demonstrates that these agreements do not ensure the provision of affordable, accessible, and quality ELC for all families.

Why do cities matter?

Over 80% of Canadians live in urban areas.¹⁶ Cities are the home to some of the “most pressing” economic and social challenges, like access to housing and health care, the provision of social services, and the availability of jobs (all of which typically fall under provincial/territorial and/or federal jurisdiction). In fact, cities like Edmonton are already heavily involved in areas like housing and mental health, despite it being a provincial jurisdiction. Much like housing and health care, ELC is formally the jurisdiction of provincial/territorial and federal governments. However, in addition to having unique

⁸ Ibid., 1.

⁹ Macdonald, D. & Friendly, M. (2017). *Time Out: Child care fees in Canada 2017*. Ottawa: Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

¹⁰ Friendly 2019, 7; See also: Brennan, D. (2007). The ABC of child care politics. *Australian Journal of Social Issues*, (42)2, pp. 213-225; Yerkes, M. A. and Javornik, J. (2018). *Creating capabilities: Childcare policies in comparative perspective*. Journal of European Social Policy; and Lloyd, E., & Penn, H. (2012). *Childcare markets: Can they deliver an equitable service?* Bristol, UK: Policy Press.

¹¹ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, (2006). *Starting Strong II: Early childhood education and care*. Directorate for Education.

¹² *Supra* note 6 at 6. See also: OECD (2006) and UNICEF. (2008). *The child care transition: A league table of early childhood education and care in economically advanced countries* (Report Card 8). Florence: UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre.

¹³ *Supra* note 6.

¹⁴ Ibid., 3.

¹⁵ *Supra* note 6 at 3.

¹⁶ “Canada Goes Urban”, *Statistics Canada*. Online: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11-630-x/11-630-x2015004-eng.htm>.

knowledge of its populace, municipalities are also “the locale in which resources can be allocated to support policy decisions” and they do so more easily than other levels of government.¹⁷ Jenson and Mahon note that this success is partly a result of the access that municipal staff have to community development processes.¹⁸ These processes enable municipalities to “connect with local stakeholders and develop meaningful frameworks and strategies to deliver on those policy decisions.”¹⁹ Additionally, while council members may personally align with particular political parties, the governing council does not have a “party platform”. This provides increased opportunities for creative policy responses that may be difficult in traditional partisan politics.²⁰

ELC provides unique opportunities for thinking about how municipal governments can meet pressing local needs; participate in policy discussions that require municipal support; contribute to “innovation in the knowledge-based economy”; identify new patterns of governance; build partnerships between public and private sectors; promote social inclusion; and support families.²¹ The provision of affordable, accessible, and quality ELC is both relevant to cities and *requires* cities. Researchers from a variety of disciplines – early childhood development, sociology, economics, political science, public policy, human ecology, and education – have found that “child care services form a vital part of our social infrastructure.”²² Municipalities can play a key role in leading ELC policies that promote healthy early childhood development, support local economic growth, contribute to existing municipal strategies, and support parents in balancing work and family life and reducing poverty.

Summary of Methodology

The findings of this report are based on a review of municipal policies, frameworks, bylaws, regulations, and other related documents or materials from municipalities across Canada. A detailed description of the methodology is available in Appendix 1.

The Municipal Context in Canada

The economic, social, and educational benefits that children and their families gain from access to high quality early childhood education and care are well-documented.²³ Empirical studies demonstrate that high quality, affordable, and accessible ELC gives children an intellectual and emotional ‘head start’, provides resources for families balancing the paid workforce and child care responsibilities, and “ensures that communities remain supportive and vibrant places for young families.”²⁴ And yet, many families (Albertans included) have difficulty accessing quality and affordable ELC. Even with significant federal and provincial/territorial commitments to funding, the demand for early learning and care spaces continues to outpace the supply. Where high quality learning and care is available it is often too expensive for many families to afford.

¹⁷ Jenson, J., & Mahon, R. (2002). *Bringing Cities to the Table: Child Care and Intergovernmental Relations*. Canadian Policy Research Networks, i.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid., 3.

²² Ibid., 4.

²³ Pascal, C. (2009). *With Our Best Future in Mind: Summary of the Evidence*. Toronto, ON: Government of Ontario.

²⁴ “Municipal Child Care in Alberta: An Alternative Approach to the Funding and Delivery of Early Learning and Care for Children and their Families”, *Muttart Foundation* 2011, 1. See also: Pascal, C. (2009). “With Our Best Future in Mind: Summary of the Evidence”. Toronto, ON: Government of Ontario.”

Challenges and Opportunities for Municipalities

Provinces and territories are renewing Early Learning and Child Care Bilateral Agreements with the Government of Canada to “to support early learning and child care programs consistent with the Multilateral Early Learning and Child Care Framework.”²⁵ The Government of Canada is providing provinces and territories with \$1.2 billion over the course of three years to support early learning and child care programs consistent with the Multilateral Early Learning and Child Care Framework. These Agreements “outline the unique priorities of each jurisdiction and guide the investment of funds”²⁶, presenting a unique opportunity to examine “how the enhanced roles for municipal service delivery” is an “option worthy of consideration.”²⁷ For example, some provinces and territories have agreed to a \$10/day child care program, which is provides federal funding from a *different* pool than the Bilateral Agreements.

Agreements were signed for 2017-2020 and again for 2020-21. Alberta’s Agreement indicates that “Alberta is responsible for planning, determining the objectives of, defining the contents of, setting the priorities for and evaluating their programs in early learning and child care.”²⁸ In doing so, Alberta commits to “address[ing] *local*, regional and program priorities with consideration for those families more in need by increasing the *affordability, accessibility, quality* and *inclusivity* of early learning and child care and by promoting, defining and *delivering innovative approaches*.”²⁹ Alberta’s commitment to “delivering innovative approaches” that “address local” needs is conducive to more municipal involvement and leadership. That said, Alberta has resigned its bilateral agreement and has not yet signed on to access the large funding opportunities.

Cities can provide a great deal of infrastructure to ELC policy. Examples include:³⁰

- Bylaws
- Neighbourhood development
- Regulations
- Action plans
- Community-based organizations (“CBO”)³¹
- Community economic development (“CED”)³²

²⁵ Government of Canada, n.d., Online:
<https://www.canada.ca/en/early-learning-child-care-agreement/agreements-provinces-territories.html>

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ *Supra* note 23 at 1.

²⁸ “Objectives, Early Learning and Child Care objectives and areas of investment”, *Canada-Alberta Early Learning and Child Care Agreement - 2020-2021*. Online:
<https://www.canada.ca/en/early-learning-child-care-agreement/agreements-provinces-territories/alberta-2020.html#h2.1>

²⁹ Ibid. (emphasis added).

³⁰ This list is adopted from the City of Richmond’s “2017-2022 Child Care Needs Assessment and Strategy.”
https://www.richmond.ca/_shared/assets/2017-2022_Richmond_Child_Care_Needs_Assessment_and_Strategy48036.pdf

³¹ CBOs are community-based organizations (non-profit, non-governmental, or charitable) associated with a particular need or issue, relevant to the local community. CBOs can advocate, represent, support, and educate on relevant issues. See: Wilson, M.G., Lavis, J.N. & Guta, A. “Community-based organizations in the health sector: A scoping review.” *Health Research & Policy Systems* 10, 36 (2012) for an exploration of health-based CBOs.

³² CED “refers to a range of practices that are used by governments, municipalities and organizations around the world to build stronger, more sustainable communities.” The goal of CED is to “to improve the long-term economic future and quality of life for a community” based on five principles: locally owned, participative, inclusive, holistic, and long-term. Sawridge First Nation, Town of

- Adopting municipal child care policies;
- Convening child care planning tables;
- Advocating to senior governments on local child care needs;
- Undertaking child care needs assessments, strategies, and actions plans;
- Providing grants to child care providers;
- Amending zoning bylaws to facilitate development of child care spaces;
- Making space available in municipal facilities, at nominal or below market rates, for the provision of child care;
- Securing built child care spaces or cash in lieu from developers through the development approval process (e.g. by providing bonus density in exchange for child care contributions);
- Seeking funding and facilitating the creation of early childhood development hubs (e.g. child care centres in conjunction with other child and family oriented services);
- Supporting a child care website or link with information targeted both to child care operators and interested parents;
- Providing planning tools and resources for existing and prospective child care operators; and
- Establishing family-friendly policies for municipal employees (e.g. compressed work weeks, and flexible scheduling to accommodate employees' child care needs).

Municipal Policies and Programs Related to Early Learning and Care

This section presents a high-level analysis of different municipalities and their approach to ELC. Each presents an analysis of relevant ELC policies, regulations, and/or frameworks in those cities and an explanation of what is unique about the city's approach. The analysis of relevant ELC documents is presented in a table in each section. Documents are categorized under different policy categories, according to the table in Appendix 2. Some documents may be applicable to multiple policy categories. For clarity, they are not listed in duplicates.

Slave Lake and Municipal District of Lesser Slave River No. 124 (Alberta) are examples of municipalities already using CED to work towards economic recovery, deepening relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada, and creating "integrating planning, economic development and communications" ("What is community economic development?", *Stronger Together: A Toolkit for First Nations-Municipal Community Economic Development*, *Federation of Canadian Municipalities and Cando*, n.d., 13). Online: <https://fcm.ca/sites/default/files/documents/resources/tool/stronger-together-toolkit-cedi.pdf>. Additionally, the Edmonton Community Development Corporation is another example of a CED. The ECDC non-profit organization that works with inner-city neighbourhoods to support their economic development, job training and creation, affordable housing, social infrastructure (e.g. child care centres, community kitchens and gardens) to add social and economic value to its residents.

Edmonton

Alberta's regulated Early Childhood Services ("ECS") refers to educational programming for children before they enter Grade 1. ECS includes pre-kindergarten programming to children who require additional supports and kindergarten. It attempts to 'level the playing field' of educational readiness for entry to Grade 1. This is often referred to as Program Unit Funding ("PUF") for individual children who require specific educational and social interventions to enhance school readiness. Support for ELC as a system is not included in this funding envelope.

As of December 2019, approximately 105,351 children were enrolled in approximately 138,081 licensed and approved child care spaces across Alberta in either facility- or home-based programs.³³ Across Alberta, there are approximately 2,912 licensed and approved child care programs.³⁴ Approximately 18,140 certified child care staff work in these programs and all staff who work directly with children in licensed day care programs, out-of-school care programs, and preschool programs must be certified at one of the three levels of certification.³⁵ The Government of Alberta supports Alberta's regulated child care system through the Child Care Subsidy Program and the Child Care Grant Funding Program.³⁶ The Child Care Subsidy Program provides funding to low-income families to offset the cost of child care in licensed and approved child care programs. The Government of Alberta provides child care subsidies to the parents/guardians of 28,648 children (of the approximately 105,351 enrolled in a licensed program). Of the 28,648, approximately 81% receive a full subsidy and 19% receive a partial subsidy.³⁷ That said, 33% of Edmonton families live in "child care deserts"—postal codes where there are three or more children per licensed space.³⁸

Currently, municipalities in Alberta play a limited role in the funding and delivery of ELC, though this was not always the case.³⁹ In the 1960s, the growing demand for non-parental child care outpaced the number of available spaces and as a result, municipalities became "important leaders in developing high quality child care programs across the province."⁴⁰ By the mid 1970s, approximately 60 municipalities in Alberta supported some form of ELC.⁴¹ Municipally supported ELC programs became part of a "network of child care services across the province" and the success of municipalities in the provision of ELC meant that almost 50% of Preventive Social Services Funds were allocated to support child care by the mid-1970s.⁴² Today, there are a small number of municipalities who are heavily involved in ELC: Beaumont, Jasper, Drayton Valley, and the Municipal District (MD) of Opportunity introduced ELC services after the provincial government assumed responsibility for the regulation and funding of ELC.⁴³ Other municipalities are involved in ELC 'adjacent' activities. The City of Edmonton has only one specific ELC policy, the [Employee Child Care Policy](#), but has several policies that support ELC through other initiatives. These contributions are categorized and summarized below.

³³ "Alberta's child care system— Overview", *Canada-Alberta Early Learning and Child Care Agreement - 2020-2021*. Online: <https://www.canada.ca/en/early-learning-child-care-agreement/agreements-provinces-territories/alberta-2020.html#h2.14>

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid. As outlined in the *Canada-Alberta Early Learning and Child Care Agreement - 2020-2021*, these levels are: Child Development Supervisor (two-year Early Learning and Child Care diploma); Child Development Worker (one-year Early Learning and Child Care certificate); and Child Development Assistant (completion of child care orientation course).

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ MacDonald, D. (2018). "Child Care Deserts in Canada." *Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives*, 8.

³⁹ *Supra* note 23 at 5.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid., 5-6.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid., 7.

Edmonton's Approach to ELC

Policy Type	Document(s)	Connection(s) to ELC
Early Learning and Care	Employee Child Care Policy	This policy demonstrates the City's commitment to ensuring employees have access to quality, affordable, and reliable child care supports employees' effectiveness and wellbeing.
Equity	Edmonton's Urban Wellbeing Plan: RECOVER EndPovertyEdmonton Equity and the Zoning Bylaw Community Mental Health Action Plan Involve Young People in Civic Matters	Children have the right to equitable learning opportunities that help them achieve their full potential as engaged learners and valued members of society. Equitable opportunities require the wider community to embrace diversity and inclusion, uphold principles of fairness and justice, and work to eliminate structural inequities that limit learning opportunities and access to support. ⁴⁴ Creating mentally healthy communities, ending poverty, and designing accessible communities support early learning and care in this way.
Governance	Edmonton Council for Early Learning and Care	ECELC strengthens and creates municipal efforts to manage, plan, develop, and support the development of "high-quality early learning and care services" with a particular focus on the needs of lower-income and vulnerable families.
Occupational Health and Safety	Suicide Prevention Strategy and Implementation Plan: "Living Hope: A Community Plan to Prevent Suicide in Edmonton"	The foundations of mental wellness are built in childhood, and yet mental illness affects approximately 1.2 million of our children and youth in Canada. ⁴⁵ Initiatives designed to promote mentally healthy communities support children in developing a mental health foundation in their early years.
Programs and Services	Child Friendly Edmonton	CFE promotes the safety and wellbeing of children and youth and collaborates with government and community to create "the best possible results for children and their families."
Project and Planning	Child-Friendly Civic Precinct The City Plan	Part of the City Plan aims to "enable accessible child care facilities in a variety of locations throughout the city."
Strategic Planning	Economic Action Plan Economic Action Plan Grant	The EAP aims to "promote affordable, accessible, high-quality, and inclusive early learning and child care" and acknowledges that "accessible and affordable child care" is critical to removing barriers

⁴⁴ The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). (2019). "Advancing Equity in Early Childhood Education Position Statement." Retrieved: <https://www.naeyc.org/resources/position-statements/equity>.

⁴⁵ Mental Health Commission of Canada. (n.d.). "Children and Youth" <https://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/English/what-we-do/children-and-youth>.

		<p>for employment and labour force participation.</p> <p>An EAP Grant provides matching funds to projects and programs that support the outcomes of the Economic Action Plan.</p>
Zoning and Land Use	<p>District Planning</p> <p>Zoning Bylaw Renewal Initiative</p>	<p>As a method of urban planning, zoning potentially plays a large role in determining how “child friendly” communities are. The ZBRI aims to: reduce employee parking requirements for child care services; allow more flexible drop-off/pick-up spaces; and easing the location criteria for child care services in residential areas to increase sites.</p>

Analysis

The City of Edmonton has several ELC “adjacent” policies, strategies, and/or frameworks. Though most of these initiatives are not housed under the umbrella of early learning and care, they are key to the success of high quality, affordable, and accessible early learning and care services. For example, The Suicide Prevention Strategy and Implementation Plan plays a fundamental role in creating communities that foster early childhood education and development. This Strategy reflects the Mental Health Commission of Canada’s assertion that “the first six years are critical to growth, development, and mental health across the lifespan.” Further, early childhood mental health is critical for developing secure peer and adult relationships; experiencing, managing, and expressing emotions; and *learning*.⁴⁶ Additionally, EndPovertyEdmonton’s focus on ELC reflects empirical research that access to affordable and quality ELC is integral to lifting families out of poverty. A study in Aotearoa New Zealand found that the “gains” from participating in quality ELC programs are greatest for children from low-income households.⁴⁷ For example, access to ELC programs can provide parents with the ability to engage in paid employment, which helps lift children and their families out of poverty.⁴⁸

While these strategies are potentially helpful, they fall short of what municipal ELC policy can deliver. Siloed efforts prevent the City from developing a cohesive approach, vision, and strategy for ELC. As a result, even promising strategies are stymied, as it is difficult to create meaning and harness the synergies of all the relevant strategies.

Saskatoon

Saskatoon is home to a variety of child care centres, family child care homes, permitted child care centres, and discretionary child care centres.⁴⁹ The City of Saskatoon does not require a business license for the operation of a Child Care Centre or Family Child Care Home but there are development standards

⁴⁶ Mental Health Commission of Canada. (n.d.). “Early Childhood Mental Health” Retrieved: <https://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/English/early-childhood-mental-health>

⁴⁷ Neuwelt-Kearns, C. and Ritchie, J. (2020). “Investing in children? Privatisation and early childhood education in Aotearoa New Zealand.” *Child Poverty Action Group*, 5. <https://www.cpag.org.nz/assets/Backgrounders/CPAG%20Backgrounder%20-%20Privatisation%20and%20early%20childhood%20education%20in%20Aotearoa%20New%20Zealand%20.pdf>

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ City of Saskatoon. (n.d.). “Child Care Centres.” <https://www.saskatoon.ca/business-development/business-licenses-permits/business-licenses/child-care-centres>

and building code requirements that apply to all centres.⁵⁰ Saskatoon does not have an overarching municipal childcare policy and is considered a “child care desert” with one licensed child care space for every 4-5 children.⁵¹ This means that all children in Saskatoon live in a child care desert; none of the city’s 11 postal codes have more than one licensed space per three children.⁵²

Provincially, Saskatchewan’s regulated ELC programs include kindergarten and prekindergarten, licensed child care centres, and regulated family child care. The Early Years Branch within the Ministry of Education is responsible for kindergarten, prekindergarten, and regulated child care. Kindergarten (for 5 and 6-year-olds) and prekindergarten (3- and 4-year-olds). Prekindergarten is aimed at offering educational opportunities for “vulnerable children and families.”⁵³ Both programs are funded by the Ministry of Education and are free.⁵⁴ Regulated child care is termed “licensed child care”. Unlicensed providers are permitted to care for up to eight children in their home but they do not receive funding. Further, preschool programs are exempt from licensing, legislatively restricted to 3-hour/day operation, and are not funded.⁵⁵ Historically, the majority of regulated child care centres in Saskatchewan have been not-for-profit, this may be because for-profit services do not receive funding for operating grants or fee subsidies.⁵⁶ In March 2018, Saskatchewan signed an early learning and child care bilateral agreement with the federal government. In this agreement, the Government of Saskatchewan received just over \$41 million to increase accessibility, inclusivity, and quality of ELC services.⁵⁷ More specifically, this funding aimed to support “inclusion and minority languages, training additional early childhood educators, improve physical activity and literacy skills.”⁵⁸ Saskatchewan also signed-on to the \$10/day child care agreement to be implemented by 2025-2026.

Despite the challenges facing Saskatoon families, outlined in the introduction to this section, there are some unique ways in which the city is supporting ELC through community-based organizations, early learning programs in public schools, and development policy.

Saskatoon’s Approach to ELC

Policy Type	Document(s)	Connection(s) to ELC
Community Based Organization	Saskatoon Regional Early Childhood Intervention Program	The Early Childhood Intervention Program receives federal and provincial funding to support local families’ needs. The goals of Saskatoon’s ECIP are to Enhance childhood development; identify family needs and strengths; support and empower families; and Provide links to community services.
	Family Resource Centre	The Family Resource Centre welcomes new parents, caregivers, single parents, low-income families, Indigenous families, children with disabilities, and newcomers offering play space as well as opportunities

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Macdonald, D. (2018). “Child Care Deserts in Canada.” *Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives*, 5.

⁵² Ibid., 14.

⁵³ “Saskatchewan.” *Childcare Resource and Research Unit*, 2016, 81.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

		to connect with ELC educators. The FRU is funded in part by CFS Saskatoon, Saskatoon Public Schools, and YWCA Saskatoon.
Early Learning and Care	Early Learning Centres in Saskatoon Public Schools	Saskatoon Public Schools offers different ELC programs in schools, like early learning centres and preschools (though these are operated by outside agencies). The availability of ELC programs in public schools increases families' access to ELC programs, makes use of existing infrastructure for program delivery, and creates accessible communities.
Zoning and Land Use	Business License Categories: Child Care Centres	Child Care Centres that are connected to places of worship, schools, or community centres permitted in most residential areas. Further, Family Child Care Homes with 8 (or fewer) children are permitted in all residential areas. These allowances increase access for families and creates family friendly neighbourhoods.
Zoning and Land Use	District Planning Zoning Bylaw Renewal Initiative	As a method of urban planning, zoning potentially plays a large role in determining how "child friendly" communities are. The ZBRI aims to: reduce employee parking requirements for child care services; allow more flexible drop-off/pick-up spaces; and easing the location criteria for child care services in residential areas to increase sites.

Analysis

According to a 2019 report by the *Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives*, the Canada-Saskatchewan Early Learning and Child Care Agreement – which promised to create an additional 2,500 licensed child care spaces – would still leave the province short by OECD standards. In this report, Courtney Carlberg and Jen Budney found that the Agreement aimed to "simplify the child care subsidy process for parents" but this offers little when the system is already ineffective and unable to manage issues like extended- or 24-hour care and families in low-income communities.⁵⁹ Strengths of Saskatoon's approach are the provision of ELC programs in some public schools (an excellent example of creating child-friendly communities and increasing accessibility for parents) and the provision of ELC care and resources through CBOs (which fosters resilience in children and families and also facilitates "flow through" funding from national and provincial investments to address local needs).

A formal municipal policy and/or strategy for ELC would remedy the gaps in accessibility and quality highlighted by Carlberg and Budney. A municipal policy would also strengthen existing efforts – like the work of CBOs and ELC programs in public schools – by potentially offering strategic planning, funding, and other necessary resources for the delivery of quality, accessible, and affordable ELC.

⁵⁹ Carlberg, C. and Budney, J. (2019). "Saskatchewan's Failing Report Card on Child Care." *Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives*, 8. <https://www.policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/Saskatchewan%20Office/2019/02/Failing%20Report%20Card%20on%20Child%20Care%20%2801-23-19%29.pdf>

Whitehorse

Compared to other jurisdictions in Canada, Whitehorse has a relatively high rate of ELC spaces, at 61%.⁶⁰ In fact, 79% of Yukon's children – under the age of five – live in Whitehorse.⁶¹ David Macdonald suggests that this coverage rate might be due to Whitehorse's flexible licensing arrangements.⁶² Centres are licensed for total capacity, many of which provide care for both school-aged children (in after-school care) and non-school-aged children.⁶³ In situations where age differentiation isn't possible, all spaces are included, likely boosting the non-school-aged space count.⁶⁴ Notably, Yukon recently introduced a universal child care system, part of a \$25-million annual investment in its early learning and child care system.⁶⁵ The federal government is also going to contribute nearly \$42 million over five years to support the territory's plan to provide \$10/day parent fees for full-time regulated ELC spaces for children under age six.⁶⁶ The bilateral agreement also commits to the expansion of "quality, affordable, flexible and inclusive early learning and child care programs and services."⁶⁷ This includes creating 110 new regulated ELC spaces within five years.⁶⁸ Given the freshness of the universal child care system, it will take some time before the impacts can be assessed. That said, a review of the city's involvement in ELC revealed relevant policies related to the city's involvement in occupational health and safety, strategic planning, and zoning.

Whitehorse's Approach to ELC

Policy Type	Document(s)	Connection(s) to ELC
Occupational Health and Safety	Whitehorse Fire Department Day Care Centre Fire Safety Requirements	This policy describes the frequency of fire drills for employees and children, and the location and maintenance of fire extinguishers. The standardized requirements for all ELC centres ensures that all children, educators, and parents are in facilities that comply with the National Fire Code of Canada.
Strategic Planning	Official Community Plan: Whitehorse 2040, Emerging Directions	This plan is focused on creating "liveable communities" – a pillar of which is available ELC centres within walking distance of other community facilities like recreation and cultural centres.
Zoning and Land Use	A bylaw to amend Zoning Bylaw 2012-20	This bylaw allows for the introduction of child care centres as a principle use activity. The accessibility of ELC centres for parents is critical for building child

⁶⁰ *Supra* note 52 at 27.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ Department of Finance Canada. (2021). "Canada and Yukon announce major expansion of \$10 a day child care." *Government of Canada*.
<https://www.canada.ca/en/departement-finance/news/2021/07/canada-and-yukon-announce-major-expansion-of-10-a-day-child-care.html>

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

Analysis

Whitehorse is an important municipality to observe and learn from as it responds to the territory's universal model. In particular, Whitehorse needs to address accessibility, availability, and inclusivity. I suggest that it will also be worthwhile to observe how other municipalities in the territory, which have much less coverage for ELC services and are more remote, are creating affordable, accessible, and inclusive ELC programs and services. Curiously, Whitehorse's Official Community Plan notes the importance of childcare spaces for "liveable communities" but does not elaborate on how to operationalize this plan. Perhaps this is due to the municipality's assumption that ELC is under territorial jurisdiction. If that is the case, Whitehorse would benefit from approaching ELC strategic planning, leadership, and advocacy in a similar way to Richmond and Vancouver (see below). Richmond and Vancouver demonstrate the necessity and value of local leadership for provincial mandates.

Ottawa

The City of Ottawa has high ELC coverage in the downtown core, but much of the rest of the city suffers from limited accessibility. Only 25% of Ottawa's children live in child care deserts and there are 21,211 licensed spaces in the city for 41,055 preschool-aged children. Thus, there is one licensed space for every two children.⁶⁹ In Ontario, social services like income support, child care and early years services, and social housing are planned, managed and co-funded by municipal Service System Managers. These responsibilities were transferred to municipal governments in 1998.⁷⁰ For ELC, Ottawa is a Consolidated Municipal System Manager (CMSM) and is thus responsible for the planning and management of a local ELC system that responds to local families' needs while also aligning with the Province's vision.⁷¹ In 2017, Ontario invested an additional \$13.6M under the Child Care Expansion Plan (CCEP) and Canada-Ontario Early Learning and Child Care Agreement (ELCC) to support fee subsidies and increase child care access and affordability.⁷² In 2018, the province invested an additional \$10.3M. Also in 2018, Ontario's Ministry of Education announced that Ministry-funded child and family programs would be transformed to an "integrated system of services and supports for children ages 0-6 and their parents and caregivers."⁷³ Under this system, Ottawa became responsible for "EarlyON Child and Family Centres." To prepare for this role, Ottawa conducted a needs assessment and found that families needed more locations, less travel time, extended and flexible hours, and additional playgroups. To support the City's work in meeting these needs and minimizing service disruption during the transition, City Council (ACS2017-CSS-GEN-0007) approved a one-year plan allowing additional time to work with community partners to create the new ELC system.⁷⁴ As the CMSM for ELC, the City is required to implement provincial policy while also meeting the local needs of children and families. Some provincial changes that have impacted Ottawa's provision of ELC are the implementation of full day kindergarten, the Provincial Capital Investment, the Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014 (CCEYA), and changes to family support programs.⁷⁵

⁶⁹ Ibid., 15.

⁷⁰ "About OMMSA", *Ontario Municipal Social Services Association*. <https://www.omssa.com/about.php>

⁷¹ Burelle, J. (2018). "Child Care and Early Years Transformation: A Report Submitted to Community and Protective Services Committee." *City of Ottawa*, 3. <http://ottwatch.ca/meetings/file/515360>

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ "Children's Services Child Care Service Plan 2016-2017." *City of Ottawa*, 10.

Ottawa's investment in ELC is robust, as a result of being a CMSM. The City also operates ELC programs, has historically allotted funds for ELC capital projects, and creates its own service and delivery plans.

Ottawa's Approach to ELC

Policy Type	Document(s)	Connection(s) to ELC
Early Learning and Care	Ottawa-Carleton District School Board Child Care City Operated Child Care Child Care Programs for LINC/ESL/LBS Ottawa Child Care Registry and Waitlist	<p>The OCDSB operates two Infant, Toddler and Preschool Programs. Both programs offer high quality licensed child care and extended hours (7 a.m. - 6 p.m.), half- or full-day, and care during holidays may be offered depending on staff availability.</p> <p>The City of Ottawa also operates 10 ELC centres, licensed by the Ministry of Education under the Child Care and Early Years Act. Centres are open Monday-Friday, offer programming in English and French, provide meals, and are for children from 18 months - 5 years.</p> <p>The City manages an online waitlist for parents looking for licensed providers. Through this centralized portal, parents can: choose from home-based care, centre-based care, school care and or nursery/pre-school care and apply for full fee (registry) or fee subsidy (waitlist) via one application.</p>
Funding and Fundraising	Child Care Capital Grant Policy Child Care Capital Reserve Fund City of Ottawa Child Care Provider Guide 2016-2020	<p>Historically, the City of Ottawa has reserved funds for ELC. These funds were used for capital development, providing fee subsidies to families, and creating new ELC programs.</p>
Strategic Planning	Child Care and Early Years Service System Plan 2019-2021	<p>The Service System Plan provides guidance to the city with respect to the management and planning of ELC services. The Plan focuses on providing Ottawa families with accessible, affordable, quality, and responsive ELC programs. In this context, responsiveness refers to meeting the needs of children with disabilities, Francophone children, and Indigenous children.</p>

Analysis

As a Consolidated Municipal Service Manager, the City of Ottawa is responsible for the delivery of ELC services for the Province of Ontario. The Community and Social Services Department oversees the

delivery of the ELC programs and services, as outlined in the Child Care and Family Support Program Service Agreement with Ontario. Via this Agreement, Ottawa enters into agreements with local service providers to deliver the programs and services that are outlined in the provincial Agreement.⁷⁶ In this way, the City plays a significant role in the provision of ELC services and is able to meet local needs while addressing provincial policy and legislation. One of the ways in which it addresses local needs is through needs assessments and setting strategic priorities for ELC. For example, the 2019-2023 Service Plan is guided by the following principles:⁷⁷

1. Priority on children and families
2. Inclusive and respectful services for all children and families
3. Equitably availability of services across the city
4. Evidence-based decision making using best practices
5. Strong partnerships and collaboration with stakeholders
6. Monitoring of outcomes

The City of Ottawa is a strong example of municipal involvement in ELC. While most of the funding and legislation is set by Ontario, Ottawa plays a key role in meeting local needs, establishing priorities for the provision of ELC services, and providing leadership and advocacy for ELC services, children, and families.

Richmond

The City of Richmond has played a role in ELC since the early 1990s. This engagement is reflected in the City's Official Community Plan, Social Development Strategy, and Child Care Policy. The [Richmond Child Care Needs Assessment and Strategy](#) notes that advocating for the city's children, youth and families requires municipal commitment and partnership with senior levels of government, parents, private businesses, and the nonprofit sector. These partnerships help develop and maintain child care opportunities in the city. However, there is still a need for more licensed spaces; approximately 24% of children under the age of 12 have access to licensed spaces. Additionally, high fees are a problem. More positively, the city reports increased economic stability and growth with an increase in licensed ELC programs.⁷⁸ In spite of these challenges, the city plays an enormous and active role in ELC. Some of the key roles played by the City of Richmond are:⁷⁹

- Identifying child care needs of residents, students, employers and employees based on demographic information and insights from the community;
- Ensuring that the City's plans, policies, and regulations facilitate the establishment of child care facilities;
- Facilitating development of City-owned child care facilities (e.g., by working with developers) to be operated by non-profit child care operators;
- Facilitating the direct delivery of child care services by Community Associations at City facilities;

⁷⁶ Ibid., 6.

⁷⁷ "Child Care and Early Years Service System Plan 2019-2023." *Children's Services*, 71.

⁷⁸ "2017-2022 Richmond Child Care Needs Assessment and Strategy", 11.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 15.

- Sharing community need information with private and non-profit child care operators to assist with child care planning efforts;
- Liaising and maintaining connections with local child and family service organizations to strengthen networks and facilitate joint planning opportunities; and
- Encouraging the provincial and federal governments to adopt policies and provide stable funding to enhance resources for local child care providers

Below are some of the specific ways in which the City of Richmond contributes to ELC.

Richmond's Approach to ELC

Policy Type	Document(s)	Connection(s) to ELC
Bylaw	Child Care Operating Reserve Fund Establishment: Bylaw No. 8877	Establishing ways to fund ELC programs and services is one of the ways municipalities can prioritize and advocate for ELC. Money from this fund is used for things like grants to non-profit societies to support ELC program development within the City and the creation of studies and/or reports related to ELC.
Early Learning and Care	Child Care Development Policy	This policy states that "quality and affordable child care is an essential service in the community for residents, employers and employees" and as such, the City of Richmond is committed to "Being an active partner with senior governments, stakeholders, parents, the private and non-profit sectors, and the community, to plan, develop and maintain a quality and affordable comprehensive child care system in Richmond." There are several other items on this list that demonstrate the leadership role that Richmond plays in ELC and how it navigates this role with the province and other stakeholders.
Funding	Child Care Grant Program	Annually, the city provides Child Care Capital Grants and Child Care Professional and Program Development Grants to support facilities, spaces, programming, equipment, and professional development support for ELC providers and educators.
Governance	Child Care Development Advisory Committee	This Committee provides information, options, analysis and recommendations to Richmond City Council regarding the planning, development, support and promotion of a range of quality, affordable and accessible child care in Richmond. There is a particular focus on responding to Richmond's cultural and linguistic diversity, the

		needs of parents, and community planning.
Strategic Planning	City of Richmond Child Care Design Guidelines 2019 2017-2022 Richmond Child Care Needs Assessment and Strategy 2021-2031 Richmond Child Care Action Plan Richmond 2041 Official Community Plan	<p>These plans all outline the ways in which the city is prioritizing the promotion and establishment of ELC programs and services. Specifically, the 2041 Plan focuses on developing a “comprehensive child care system to provide accessible and affordable quality programs” by, for example, negotiating for City-owned child care space within private developments. Additionally, annual updates are made to needs assessments and strategies to ensure that the municipality is responsive to needs.</p>

Analysis

Since 2009, Richmond has seen an increase in licensed child care spaces— from 3,974 spaces to 5,802 spaces in 2016. However, despite the increase in spaces, parents continued to face the challenge of finding affordable options, especially for infant and toddler care, school-age care, and care for children who required extra support. As a result, the City committed to seven strategic directions to enhance the accessibility, affordability, and quality of ELC programs:⁸⁰

- Enhancing child care policy and planning;
- Creating and supporting child care spaces;
- Undertaking advocacy;
- Improving accessibility and inclusion;
- Collaborating and partnering;
- Advancing research, promotion, and marketing; and
- Monitoring and renewing.

The city is also very clear about the benefits of advocating for affordable, accessible and quality ELC. The 2017-2022 Richmond Child Care Needs Assessment and Strategy notes that affordable, accessible, and quality ELC supports working parents and those who are advancing their skills with education and training; increases women’s paid participation in the workforce; and helps young families by providing the necessary support to maintain their employment. Richmond’s approach to ELC is robust and demonstrates how municipalities can take a leadership role in the provision of ELC and strategic planning for ELC, while also respecting and working with provincial and federal funding, legislation, and priorities.

⁸⁰ *Supra* note 78 at 5.

Vancouver

Overall, Metro Vancouver has a 33% coverage rate for ELC licensed spaces.⁸¹ This means that there are three children for every licensed space. More than half of the children in Metro Vancouver live in child care deserts.⁸² Since the 1970s, the City of Vancouver has been actively involved in the development of 3,925 non-profit child care spaces, half of which were created between 2007 and 2016.⁸³ Additionally, since 2007, the City has invested approximately \$114M to create ELC spaces.⁸⁴ These funds were provided through developers (Community Amenity Contributions and Development Cost Levies), City Capital Grants, and Provincial Grants.⁸⁵ The City's website notes that while ELC receives a lot of direction from the province, there are ways in which the City has been actively involved in advocating for ELC. For example, the City of Vancouver has:

- Partnered with non-profit organizations to deliver quality, affordable, and accessible childcare;
- Facilitated the development of infrastructure to support integrated childcare services, including licensed group care and other family support services;
- Used financial tools to leverage facilities and land, and offset some operating costs; and
- Encouraged senior governments to uphold their responsibility for childcare.

Below are examples of the City's involvement in strategic planning, asset management, and funding of ELC.

Vancouver's Approach to ELC

Policy Type	Document(s)	Connection(s) to ELC
Funding	Development Cost Levies Community Amenity Contributions in Vancouver	Creating opportunities for funding ELC programs and services is a key way in which municipalities can, and do, support ELC. Vancouver generates funding through initiatives like levies. This ensures that the municipality does not need to rely exclusively on provincial and/or federal funding.
Strategic Planning	Municipal Early Care and Learning Plan Healthy City Strategy: A Good Start Joint Council on Childcare	These plans demonstrate Vancouver's priority of promoting and advocating for ELC programs and services as well as how the city can be involved. For example, the Joint Council of Childcare "provides leadership in childcare and child development in Vancouver" and through the JCC, the City works with partners like the Park Board, the Vancouver Board of Education, and

⁸¹ *Supra* note 52 at 24.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ *Supra* note 78 at 21.

		ELC representatives to “support and deliver accessible, affordable, quality childcare spaces in the city.”
Occupational Health and Safety, Risk Management, Asset Management, Transportation	City of Vancouver Child Care Technical Guidelines	Of the publicly available data reviewed for this report, Vancouver’s “Child Care Technical Guidelines” is the most robust set of guidelines for OH&S, asset management, accreditation, transportation, and other relevant policies for ELC programs. This document is a strong model for other municipalities to create standardized guidelines to ensure equitable and safe ELC programs.
Program Specific	24-Hour Childcare Services City Hall Child Care Society	City Council committed to “encouraging and incentivizing” the development and operation of 24-hour and/or extended hours ELC centres in Vancouver to support families who would be otherwise unable to access childcare.

Analysis

Vancouver’s low coverage rate (33%) for ELC spaces is a challenge for parents and families. To respond to these challenges, the city has found numerous ways to advocate for increasing the availability and quality of ELC programs and services. The provision of funding, the development of technical guidelines, and the commitment to creating 24-hour ELC services make Vancouver a leader in municipal involvement. Compared to other municipalities, Vancouver and Richmond are unique municipalities for their rigorous involvement in ELC and because British Columbia is developing a universal child care system.⁸⁶ The provincial 2018 budget allotted over \$1B in new investments to ELC over three years.⁸⁷ To improve access to ELC and “support the transition” to licensed care, the provincial government aimed to:

- Increase funding to build new licensed facilities across the province;
- Work to increase retention of ELC educators;
- Provide start-up grants so that unlicensed programs can become licensed; and
- Expand the Child Care Major Capital program.

In July 2021, the province was the first to sign a bilateral agreement with the federal government and some of their commitments include:⁸⁹

⁸⁶ “Child Care B.C. Caring for kids, lifting up families: the Path to Universal Child Care.” *Government of British Columbia*. https://www.bcbudget.gov.bc.ca/2018/childcare/2018_Child_Care_BC.pdf

⁸⁷ Ibid., 4.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 5.

⁸⁹ “Canada-British Columbia Canada-wide Early Learning And Child Care Agreement.” https://www.bclaws.gov.bc.ca/civix/document/id/oic/oic_cur/0426_2021

- Increasing the number of \$10/day spaces by December 2022 to a total of 12,500, and reducing average parent fees for regulated and funded child care for children aged 0-5 by 50 percent, resulting in an average parent fee of \$21/day.
- Creating for children under age six at least 30,000 new regulated spaces by 2025-26; and creating at least 40,000 new regulated spaces by 2027-28.
- Developing and implementing evidence-based quality frameworks, standards, and tools for early learning and child care;
- Combining some federal contributions to provincial contributions will provide expanded support for children with support needs, and Indigenous-led child care.

While other municipalities are not backed by such strong provincial leadership, much of Richmond and Vancouver's work with ELC came *before* the province's commitment to a universal child care system and before the federal government's commitment to ELC funding.

Why should cities contribute to ELC?

As these examples demonstrate, cities *already* play a role in ELC. In other words, even though ELC is the traditional purview of provinces, territories, and the federal government, municipalities have – and continue to – make important contributions to the development and provision of policies, regulations, bylaws, and frameworks related to ELC. Empirical evidence shows that municipal involvement in ELC:

- Drives the local economy;⁹⁰
- Provides a social return on investment;⁹¹
- Supports newcomer parents and children;⁹²
- Supports parents, particularly mothers, to pursue employment and educational opportunities;
- Contributes to poverty reduction and elimination;

⁹⁰ See: Government of Canada. (2020). Speech from the Throne and Stanford, J. (2020). "The Role of Early Learning and Child Care After COVID-19", *The Centre for Future Work*, 6.

⁹¹ See: Canadian Labour Congress. "Budget Watch 2015 Backgrounder." 2015.; "A Public Child Care System: Good for Parents, Children, Workers & the Economy", *Unifor Submission to the Nova Scotia Child Care Review*, May 2015; Maguire, R. and Vardakoulis, O. (2014). "The benefits of investing in Early Child Development: An SROI analysis of the Responsive Parenting Program ChildFund International, Ecuador", *ChildFund International*; "An Inclusive Economic Recovery for Families", *CUP IMPACTS 2021 Newsletter*; and Merenda, E. & Martyn, N. (2019). "Investment in child care yields countless social and economic returns", *The Conversation*.

⁹² Best Start Resource Centre. (2010). Growing up in a new land: Strategies for working with newcomer families; Brosinsky, Larissa et.al. 2018. "RAISED Between cultures: New resources for working with children of immigrant or refugee background" *Childhood Education* 94(2), 18–27; Brown, A et. al. (2020). "Newcomer families' experiences with programs and services to support early childhood development in Canada: A scoping review", *Journal of Childhood, Education & Society* 1(2): 182-215; Colbert, J. (2013). Settlement and social capital: Strengthening futures for newcomer children and society [RCIS Working Papers]. Toronto: Ryerson Centre for Immigration and Settlement; Falihi, A. (2019). Culturally responsive child and family support services for newcomers: A Saskatoon case study [Doctoral Thesis]. Saskatoon: University of Saskatchewan.

- Improves intellectual, emotional, social, and physical outcomes for children (and their parents and families);⁹³
- Provides essential infrastructure for communities;⁹⁴ and
- Supports additional municipal investments in poverty-reduction, housing, and strategic planning initiatives.⁹⁵

How can cities support ELC?

As previously noted, cities can and do support ELC. Thus, this brief makes the case for *continued* and *expanded* involvement. But how can cities do this? Fortunately, cities are also already involved in analogous efforts – like housing and k-12 education– that are also traditionally considered provincial/territorial or federal jurisdiction. Unsurprisingly, the success of these efforts is intimately linked to flourishing ELC services. Jenson and Mahon describe this phenomenon as the federal government’s “peek-a-boo” relationship with major Canadian municipalities.⁹⁶ Indeed, since the 1970s it has been clear that “urban spaces had particular needs but that much federal government activity was in fact located in cities.”⁹⁷ Edmonton’s response to the planning, management, and support of initiatives around housing and homelessness, ending poverty, and creating mentally healthy communities serves as models for how to approach ELC. Below is a summary of each initiative.

EndPovertyEdmonton is a community initiative aimed at: advancing reconciliation efforts; eliminating racism; ensuring Edmontonians have livable incomes; creating affordable housing, supporting accessible and affordable transit; ensuring access to affordable and quality child care; and developing access to mental health services and addiction supports. EndPovertyEdmonton is a joint initiative by the Edmonton Community Foundation, City of Edmonton, and the United Way, and it demonstrates how municipal involvement can support local initiatives.

Edmonton’s response to the planning, management, and support of housing and ending homelessness efforts serves as a model for how to approach ELC. Homeward Trust is a community-based organization that assists with meeting housing strategies of the province, federal government, and city at

⁹³ OECD. 2018. “Early Learning Matters”, Retrieved: <https://www.oecd.org/education/school/Early-Learning-Matters-Project-Brochure.pdf>; Melhuish, E. et al., (2008), “Effects of the home learning environment and preschool center experience upon literacy and numeracy development in early primary school”, *Journal of Social Issues*, No. 64, pp. 95-114; Makovichuk, L. et. al. (2014). Play, participation, and possibilities: An early learning and child care curriculum framework for Alberta. Retrieved: <https://education.alberta.ca/media/482257/play-participation-and-possibilities-reduced.pdf>; Sylva, K. et al. (eds) (2010), *Early Childhood Matters: Evidence from the Effective Pre-school and Primary Education Project*, Routledge, London/New York.

⁹⁴ Azzi-Lessing, L., 2009. “Quality Support Infrastructure in Early Childhood: Still (Mostly) Missing” *Early Childhood Research & Practice*, 11(1); Childcare Research Resource Unit. (n.d.). “Elements of a high quality early learning and child care system”, Retrieved: http://www.childcarequality.ca/wdocs/QbD_Elements.pdf; Gallagher, J. J., and Clifford, R.M. (2000). “The Missing Support Infrastructure in Early Childhood” *Early Childhood Research & Practice* 2, no. 1; Covert, B. “The Debate Over What ‘Infrastructure’ Is Ridiculous”, *New York Times* 26 April 2021. Retrieved: <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/26/opinion/biden-infrastructure-child-care.html>; and Peck, E. “Policymakers Used to Ignore Child Care. Then Came the Pandemic”, *New York Times* 9 May 2021. Retrieved: <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/05/09/business/child-care-infrastructure-biden.html>;

⁹⁵ City of Edmonton. 2017. “Child Friendly Edmonton Annual Report” Retrieved: <https://www.edmonton.ca/sites/default/files/public-files/documents/PDF/child-friendly-edmonton-annual-report-2017.pdf>; UNICEF. (2004). “Building child Friendly Cities, A Framework for Action” International child Friendly Cities Secretariat at UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, 2004; and Canadian Council on Social Development: *The Progress of Canada’s Children and Youth*, 2006; and Alberta Centre for Child, Family and Community Research. (2015). *Child and Youth Friendly Communities: Literature Review*. Edmonton, Alberta: Alberta Centre for Child, Family and Community Research for Alberta’s Promise.

⁹⁶ *Supra* note 18 at 25.

⁹⁷ *Ibid*.

a local level as well as researching, implementing, and knowledge mobilization and dissemination. As a local organization, Homeward Trust is well positioned to respond to immediate local needs. Homeward Trust is also an example of “flow through” funding, and the innovative efforts in treating homelessness in Canada demonstrates that there isn’t a “constitutional prohibition on federal-municipal relationships.”⁹⁸

The City of Edmonton took a leadership role in developing a suicide prevention strategy titled Living Hope: A Community Plan to Prevent Suicide. City staff worked alongside over 35 community stakeholders to develop and implement this plan. Though responding to health is typically seen as the jurisdiction of Alberta Health Services, the City of Edmonton saw suicide prevention as an important mental health *promotion* activity rather than a mental health *intervention* activity. This allowed for significant funding and time contributions from many partners over several years. As a result of these efforts, Edmonton is recognized as a leader in mental health promotion. In fact, the City of Edmonton was selected by the Mental Health Commission of Canada to be a [Roots of Hope](#) community and work with other national partners on evaluating suicide prevention activities.

Recommendations

Based on the findings from this report, it is recommended that the City of Edmonton:

- Adopt an overarching municipal child care policy;
- Convene child care planning tables;
- Advocate to senior levels of governments on local child care needs;
- Undertake child care needs assessments;
- Provide grants to child care providers;
- Amend zoning bylaws and land use planning to facilitate development of child care spaces;
- Create space available in municipal facilities, at nominal or below market rates, for the provision of child care;
- Secure built child care spaces through the development approval process;
- Seek funding for, and facilitate the, creation of early childhood development hubs (e.g. child care centres in conjunction with other child and family-oriented services);
- Develop and support a child care website or link with information targeted both to child care operators and interested parents;
- Ensure that the City’s plans, policies, and regulations facilitate the establishment of child care facilities;
- Facilitate the development of City-owned child care facilities (e.g., by working with developers) to be operated by non-profit child care operator;

⁹⁸ Ibid., 26.

- Provide planning tools and resources for existing and prospective child care operators; and
- Establish family-friendly policies for municipal employees (e.g., compressed work weeks, development of cost levies, funding and supporting advisory committees on early learning and care, and flexible scheduling to accommodate employees' child care needs).

Conclusion

Research has shown that the early years of a child's life are foundational for their later development and learning and that quality, affordable, and accessible ELC stimulates the development of these skills. These skills help children flourish which in turn support the growth and wellbeing of parents, families, communities, and economies.⁹⁹

This report shows that all levels of government in Canada — federal, provincial/territorial, and municipal — have important roles to play in the creation, management, and delivery of ELC programs and services. Importantly, these findings also demonstrate that there is need for the local management of ELC programs and services as well as local advocacy, leadership, and strategic planning. This approach reflects the concept of "subsidiarity" — the jurisdictional principle that "tasks are best handled by the lowest level competent authority."¹⁰⁰ One of the many benefits of municipal management and leadership is the involvement of community members, parents, and children to respond to issues and needs most pressing for them. Additionally, community members and parents can also participate in strategic planning, setting program and service priorities, and planning and quality assurance.¹⁰¹ This approach also serves to support the OECD's suggestion that early learning and child care should be a publicly managed service in Canada.¹⁰²

Edmonton has an opportunity to become a municipal leader, like Richmond, Vancouver, and Ottawa, in the support, development, and provision of quality, affordable, and accessible ELC. This investment will maximize long-term outcomes for children, families, and communities including those who are most vulnerable. Edmonton can meaningfully make inroads into the ELC landscape, even with the complexity of jurisdictional issues, through zoning and land use, bylaws, advocacy, strategic planning, transportation, and funding (among other types of support). These investments would alleviate child-care deserts, increase women's labour market participation, and create child- and family-friendly communities.

⁹⁹ Bloem, S. (2016). "Starting Strong IV: Early Childhood Education and Care Data Country Note: New Zealand." *OECD*, 10. <https://www.oecd.org/education/school/ECECD-CN-NewZealand.pdf>

¹⁰⁰ Friendly, M. and Beach, J. (2005). "Elements of a high quality early learning and child care system." *Child Care Resource and Research Unit*. See also: Brouillet, E. (2011). Canadian federalism and the principle of subsidiarity: should we open pandora's box?. In *The Supreme Court Law Review: Osgoode's Annual Constitutional Cases Conference* vol. 54, no. 1: 21; and "Subsidiarity." *Centre for Constitutional Studies* (n.d.). <https://www.constitutionalstudies.ca/2019/07/subsidiarity/>

¹⁰¹ *Supra* note 96.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

Appendices

Appendix 1: Methodology

This background report was commissioned by the Edmonton Council on Early Learning and Care. The content of the report responds to the questions:

- Why do cities matter for the provision of early learning and care?
- What are cities already doing to support early learning and care?
- What more can cities do to support early learning and care?

I began by conducting a jurisdictional scan of municipal child care/early learning and care policies in Canada— if relevant policies could be found— and then examined the scope, benefits, and limitations of those policies. I also examined all current City of Edmonton policies, plans, regulations, or other municipal materials that are relevant to ELC. The information was sourced largely from publicly accessible municipal websites that provide information to parents and stakeholders about early learning and care; federal, provincial, and territorial reports and agreements; scholarly articles and books; and research reports, briefs, and public commentary. Based on a systematic review of those findings I chose to focus my analysis on Edmonton, Richmond, Vancouver, Whitehorse, Saskatoon, and Ottawa. These municipalities offered a diversity of approaches to early learning and care as well as three distinct provincial/territorial contexts and levels of involvement in the provision of ELC or leadership in the area. The report was developed under the guidance, and with the knowledge and expertise, of Rob Buschmann and Jennifer Fischer-Summers at the Community-University Partnership for the Study of Children, Youth, and Families (CUP) as well as Jeff Bisanz, Heather Raymond, and Gloria Chalmers of the Edmonton Council for Early Learning and Care (ECELC).

Appendix 2: Policy Categories

Policy Category	Description	Example
Accreditation Standards	Accreditation standards define best practices for policy and procedure. Compliance with standards is peer reviewed.	Vancouver
Asset Management	Asset management policies are general and contain broad principles; they identify roles and responsibilities; they identify how asset management is integrated in an organization.	Vancouver

Early Learning and Care	The purpose of early learning and care policies cover a variety of areas including: a municipality's commitment to supporting ELC or describing a particular program's curriculum and pedagogy.	Ottawa, Richmond, Vancouver, Saskatoon, Edmonton, Whitehorse
Employment Equity	Policy statements to ensure that recruitment strategies for paid and unpaid staff target women, people with disabilities, indigenous peoples, and visible minorities. Additionally, policy statements and procedures to support training on inclusion, diversity, unconscious bias, and historical trauma would be developed.	
Financial	Policy statements to describe the frequency of preparation of financial statements, auditing requirements, accounts payable and receivable.	Vancouver
Funding and Fundraising	Policy statements to describe how funding contracts and registration fees are used to support operations. These policies might state that fundraising must meet the ethical standards and fundraising code set by the Canadian Centre for Philanthropy.	Ottawa, Vancouver, Richmond
Governance	The policy describes how the organization is controlled, how it operates, and how employees and volunteers are held to account.	Vancouver, Edmonton, Richmond
Human Resources	The policy states how the workforce is managed and what employees can expect for benefits, training, conflict resolution, vacation and sick time, and health and safety support.	
Information Management	An information management policy gives employees direction for creating, capturing, and	Vancouver

	managing information assets (records, information and data) to satisfy organizational, legal and stakeholder requirements.	
Occupational Health and Safety	An occupational health and safety policy communicates the employer's commitment to the health and safety of employees.	Vancouver, Whitehorse
Priority Criteria	Policies outlining if, and how, communities will be served by the program. For example, Indigenous or LGBTQ2S+ communities.	Ottawa, Saskatoon
Privacy	A privacy policy states the way information is gathered, uses, manages, and discloses the data it holds. For example, only personal information relevant to care will be requested.	
Program Development and Evaluation	A program development and evaluation policy states how and when information will be systematically collected, analyzed, and reviewed for the purposes of program development and evaluation.	Richmond, Vancouver, Ottawa
Program Specific	Specific programs may have their own policies that are subsets of overarching organizational policies.	Ottawa, Richmond, Vancouver
Risk Management	A risk management policy statement is a tool that organizations use to identify and respond to risks or potential risks in a way that mitigates risk or minimizes their impact.	Vancouver
Stakeholder Engagement	A stakeholder engagement policy describes the meaningful, transparent, comprehensive, and consistent dialogue with individuals and community partners affected by its mandate.	

Strategic Planning	A strategic planning policy outlines the responsibilities to be followed when developing, implementing, and monitoring the organization's strategic plan.	Ottawa, Richmond, Vancouver, Edmonton,
Transportation	A transportation policy will describe how staff use transportation (for example, walking or chartering a bus), how and when transportation will be used during the course of their work, and how children will be supervised while using transportation.	Vancouver
Visitation	A visitation policy states when visitors may be on site and for what purposes.	Vancouver
Zoning and Land Use	A zoning policy states that the organization will comply with local zoning and bylaw requirements.	Edmonton, Richmond, Vancouver, Whitehorse, Saskatoon

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