Country: Canada

Project Name: Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC)

Project Reach: National;

Project Time Period: 06/2017 - 2028

Project Impact areas: Early Learning & Stimulation;

Project Funding: National Budget; $7.5 billion over 11 years


Project Description:

The Government of Canada is investing in early learning and child care to help Canadian children get the best start in life and have a fair chance to succeed. To better support Canadian families and communities, especially those most in need, federal government investments totalling $7.5 billion over 11 years were proposed in 2016 and 2017 to support and create more high-quality, affordable child care across the country.

In June 2017, federal, provincial and territorial governments reached an historic agreement on a Multilateral Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) Framework, which will guide new investments towards 5 key principles – quality, accessibility, affordability, flexibility and inclusivity.

The federal government has worked with each province and territory to enter into bilateral agreements to provide $1.2 billion over the next 3 years. 12 agreements have been announced so far.

As part of the proposed $7.5 billion investment, funding will also be dedicated towards specific initiatives, including:

- **$100M over 10 years for innovation**, which will support new innovative practices and help develop more effective services
- **$95M over 10 years to close data gaps** to better understand what child care looks like in Canada, supporting strong reporting on progress made in implementing the Multilateral ELCC Framework and a separate Indigenous ELCC Framework.
  - This Indigenous ELCC Framework has been informed by extensive work of expert working groups, reports and engagement processes on Indigenous ELCC over many years. The Framework was co-developed with Indigenous partners following a comprehensive national engagement in 2017, which consisted of more than one hundred engagement sessions across the country. This Framework provides a guide for communities, program administrators, service providers, policy makers and governments to work towards achieving a shared vision that all Indigenous children have the opportunity to experience high-quality, culturally-strong ELCC.

Up to 40,000 children could benefit from new subsidized child care spaces over the next three years.

**Legal Framework:**

The federal government is providing provinces and territories with $1.2 billion over three years to support early learning and child care programs consistent with the Multilateral Early Learning and Child Care Framework.

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1 While the provincial government of Québec supports the general principles of the Early Learning and Child Care Framework, it does not adhere to the Framework as it intends to preserve its sole responsibility in this area on its territory. The Government of Québec expects to receive its share of the federal funding and will continue to invest significantly toward programs and services for families and children.
The Early Learning and Child Care Bilateral Agreements outline the unique priorities of each jurisdiction and guide the investment of funds.


Program Evaluation:

Dates to be confirmed on the evaluation of ELCC as it has just come into place in 2017.

Lessons Learned:
An important finding of the Indigenous ELCC engagement process was there was limited information available to parents, service providers and governments about Indigenous ELCC. Among a complex patchwork of Indigenous ELCC, there is limited information about the ELCC programs that Indigenous children are attending, access or barriers to accessing services, the training of staff, the language and cultural content, and the quality of the services available. Many organizations providing ELCC services to Indigenous children and families reported an inability to undertake community-based evaluation, and also reported difficulty in accessing expert advice and knowledge of promising practices.

Better documentation of children’s experiences and learning, alongside community-based review or evaluation, is necessary to address data gaps, provide evidence for planning and create greater accountability to children, families and other partners. To determine whether Indigenous ELCC programs are meeting the needs of Indigenous children and the expectations of their parents and communities, a responsive approach to supporting improved documentation, program planning, data collection, performance measurement, and multiple levels of evaluation (particularly Indigenous-developed) will need to be created. New approaches for sharing this information with program administrators, parents and communities for decision-making purposes are also needed.

These approaches should be developed through a joint consultative process that involves federal, provincial, territorial and Indigenous governments, Indigenous organizations, service providers, and early childhood development experts, as well as centred around the experiences of those being served – Indigenous children and families.

The path forward is grounded in the Government of Canada’s commitment to achieving reconciliation through a renewed relationship with Indigenous Peoples, based on the recognition of rights, respect, cooperation, and partnership. Canada’s response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Calls to Action and its implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples will require transformative change in the relationships with Indigenous peoples.

This Framework and its implementation will respect both of these commitments through a distinctions-based approach and aligned with Canada’s ten Principles respecting the Government of Canada’s relationship with Indigenous peoples. As such, partners in this Framework are committed to ongoing collaborative working relationships with Indigenous governments, provincial and territorial governments, and with Indigenous organizations and service providers to support the improvement of ELCC for Indigenous children and families.
