



A GREAT PLACE TO GROW PUBLIC CHILD CARE

Saskatchewan profile

Public child care and early childhood education

Almost all child care in Saskatchewan is delivered privately on a non-profit basis. While there is no specified municipal role in child care delivery, administration or funding, there are four publicly-operated child care centres. These municipalities include the village of Vibank, the towns of Bengough and Carnduff, the rural municipality of Pittville No. 169 (with a population of fewer than 300 people), and a new centre under development in Pangman.

Saskatchewan offers another form of public early childhood education: part-day kindergarten is provided for all five-year-olds through school divisions. In addition, pre-kindergarten programs for an estimated 2,500 vulnerable three- and four-year-olds are available in some school divisions (2008). Pre-kindergarten has grown from 26 programs when it began in 1997 to 155 in 2008. School divisions have the option of partnering with a community organization to provide pre-kindergarten (10% of the programs are provided in this way).

Why public early childhood education and child care?

Most people don't think of non-profit community-based child care centres as "private", but they are. That's because parent or voluntary groups—not public entities such as municipalities or school boards—bear the responsibility for creating and maintaining centres. Almost all of Canada's patchwork delivery of regulated child care services is private, relying on for-profit or non-profit services. And today, Canada is experiencing an alarming trend—a surge in for-profit child care. In some provinces, almost all new spaces are for-profit.

Children and families would be far better served by a public system that blends early childhood education and child care—in other words, publicly funded and delivered early childhood education and care programs managed and mostly operated by local governments or education authorities.

Here's what well-designed public systems can deliver:

- Integrated early childhood education and kindergarten programs.
- Better access and inclusion of families – no matter where they live or their language, origins or abilities.
- More consistent quality.
- With small or no fees, all parents who want child care can afford it.
- Services that are planned and accountable to communities.

What we want

Our vision is a public system where every child can attend a program that blends early childhood education and care. The research and experience shows that systems based on privately funded and delivered child care are not a foundation for building blended, high quality ECEC programs.

Support public child care—it's the way to go for a great place to grow.



Who provides child care?

In 2008, all 6,843 spaces in Saskatchewan were operated on a not-for-profit basis. For-profit care has always been in the minority in Saskatchewan. The sector slowly declined over the years—from a high of 6% of the spaces in 1992 (205 spaces)—while non-profit centres expanded.

Public funding

Saskatchewan's public funding for child care was static or grew quite slowly until it more than doubled between 2006 and 2008; the 2007/2008 child care budget was more than \$47 million.

In 2008, Saskatchewan provided more public funding per child care space than any other province—\$5,138 per space. Saskatchewan, however, has the lowest coverage of any province—there are only spaces for 9.1% of children zero to five years (6.3% of children zero to 12). (Note that Saskatchewan does not regulate nursery schools/preschools, so these are not reflected in coverage figures.) There is no specific plan for expansion. The government has announced that there will be an expansion of 1,000 spaces this year.

TABLE 1
Sponsorship of regulated centre-based spaces, Saskatchewan - 2008

Sponsorship	Spaces
Non-profit	6,843
For-profit	0
% For-profit	0

FIGURE 1
Sponsorship of regulated, centre-based child care, Saskatchewan - 2008

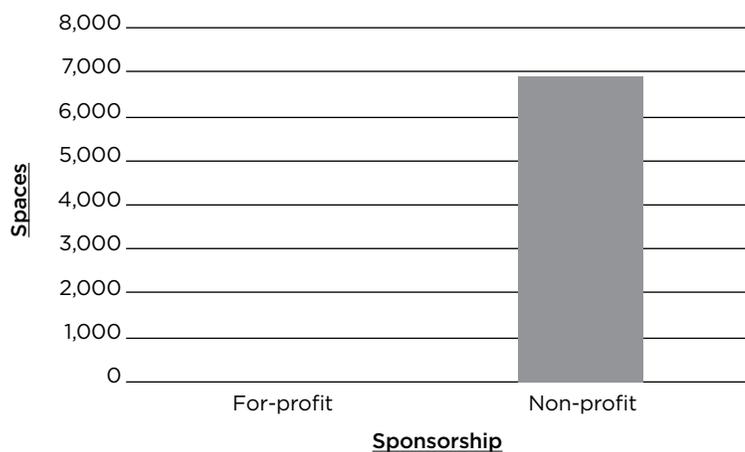
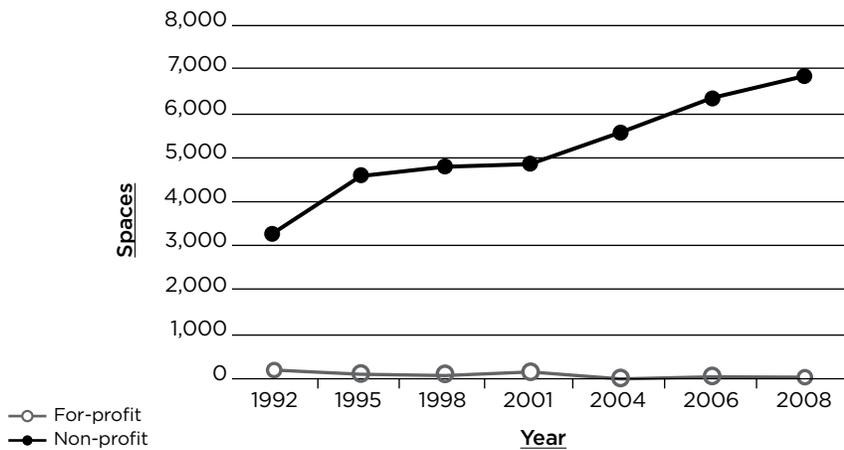




TABLE 2
Sponsorship of regulated centre-based spaces and proportion for-profit

Year	1992	1995	1998	2001	2004	2006	2008
Non-profit	3,230	4,530	4,841	4,878	5,540	6,292	6,843
For-profit	205	97	48	73	0	25	0
% For-profit	6.0	2.1	1.0	1.5	0	0.4	0

FIGURE 2
Sponsorship of regulated centre-based spaces, Saskatchewan – 1992-2008



Provincial funding policy

- Total provincial budget for regulated child care (2007/2008): \$47,133,989.
- All forms of funding (fee subsidies, recurring funding and capital funding) are available only to non-profit child care centres and family child care homes. Saskatchewan is the sole province to provide funds only to non-profit child care.

Of historical note

1975

New child care regulations were passed under the authority of the *Family Services Act*. Family day care homes and child care centres that were incorporated, non-profit and parent-controlled could be licensed and were eligible for funding.

1980s

This decade saw the growth of unlicensed centres. It was legal

to operate an unlicensed centre because at the time there was no set maximum number of children permitted in unregulated child care.

1990

The *Child Care Act* and regulations were enacted, requiring all centres to be licensed, but with public funding retained only by non-profit programs. (Note that part-day programs [pre-schools] were not, and are not now, required to be licensed.)



1997

The pre-kindergarten program was established in collaboration with school divisions; 26 programs were opened in schools in North Battleford, Prince Albert, Regina and Saskatoon.

2006

The provincial child care operation was moved from the Ministry of Social Services to the Ministry of Learning (now Ministry of Education).

Quality research

- According to the *You Bet I Care!* Study, Saskatchewan child care centres' mean quality score was 4.1 using the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS) (Goelman, Doherty, Lero, LaGrange and Tougas, 2000).
- Public pre-kindergarten programs appear to be of higher quality. In a separate study, the ECERS was used in 10 Regina pre-kindergartens. The total mean score was 5.94; it rose to 6.21 in a second observation (Krentz, McNaughton and Warkentin, 2002).
(In the ECERS, a score of 3=minimal, 5=good, and 7=excellent.)

Who's who in the for-profit sector

In 2008 there were no for-profit child care centres in Saskatchewan. In 2006, there was one for-profit centre of 25 spaces, but data indicate that this has now closed.

References

- Goelman, H., Doherty, G., Lero, D., LaGrange, A., and Tougas, J. (2000). *You bet I care!: Caring and learning environments – Quality in child care centres across Canada*. Guelph, Ontario: University of Guelph, Centre for Families, Work and Well-Being.
- Krentz, C., McNaughton, K. and Warkentin, B. (2002). *Interim report: Summary and recommendations of the first two years of a six year longitudinal study examining the effectiveness of the prekindergarten program in the Regina Public School Division #4*. Regina, Saskatchewan: Regina Public School Division #4.