



# CHILD CARE



This profile is intended to provide CUPE members with basic information about the sector they work in from a national perspective. Find all our sector profiles and more information online at [cupe.ca](http://cupe.ca)

CUPE child care workers are in both stand-alone and multi-sector locals. CUPE represents early childhood educators, assistants, cooks, and cleaners in the sector. The bargaining units tend to be small and the wages low. The employers can be not-for-profit volunteer-run boards, charitable, parent-run boards, or for-profit.

## By the numbers

- Number of members working in child care or ECE: **12,000**
- Number of bargaining units: **83**

CUPE represents 2500 members in dedicated child care centres. CUPE also represents many early childhood educators (ECEs) delivering child care programs in other sectors. We represent 2,020 school-aged child care members in Quebec who are employed by school boards. In Ontario, we represent almost 4,400 full-time

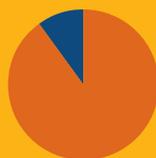
equivalent ECE members who deliver the full-day kindergarten program. In British Columbia we represent 350 members who deliver the StrongStart early learning drop-in program helping prepare children for kindergarten. Many Ontario municipalities deliver child care programs directly and CUPE represents about 2,000 members employed in their child care centres. We also represent child care workers at universities and colleges that directly provide child care services. Finally, many multi-service agencies deliver child care programs where CUPE represents the members.

In total, CUPE estimates that we represent 12,000 members that work in the sector or work delivering ECE programs. We represent members in the child care sector for every province except Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick.

## Early childhood educators working in child care centres



**90%**  
HAVE A  
POST-SECONDARY  
EDUCATION



**90%**  
HAVE STABLE  
EMPLOYMENT



**25%**  
HAVE A  
SECOND JOB  
TO ENHANCE WAGES



**98%**  
ARE WOMEN



**38**  
AVERAGE  
AGE

**2 FUNDING**  
Patchwork funding keeps child care unstable.

**2 MARKET MODEL**  
Markets don't deliver accessible, affordable, high-quality child care.

**3 WAGES**  
This predominantly female workforce is chronically underpaid.

**4 OUR VISION**  
Canada needs universal, publicly-funded child care.

Child care continues to be a patchwork of programs.

Countries that provide accessible, affordable, high quality child care are those that don't rely on markets to deliver child care.

*You Bet We Still Care!*, a recent study on early childhood educators working in child care centres, provides a wealth of information on the sector.

### Funding and governance

Child care continues to be a patchwork of programs. Funding comes from the federal government through a notional allocation of the Canada Social Transfer (CST) to provinces and territories.

Although there has generally been growth in provincial and territorial public funding for child care over the years, public expenditure on child care is low. Parent fees remain the main source of revenue for most child care centres outside of Quebec.

Eight jurisdictions have responsibility for child care in their ministries of education: Newfoundland and Labrador, PEI, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Ontario, Saskatchewan, the Northwest Territories and Nunavut.

Seven provinces now offer kindergarten for a full school day: Newfoundland and Labrador, PEI, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Quebec, Ontario, and BC. The Northwest Territories and Yukon have some full-day provision. The NDP government in Alberta has promised to fund full-day kindergarten when the province's fiscal situation improves. Ontario is the only province with full-day kindergarten for all four-year-olds.

Five provinces or territories offer some publicly delivered (municipal or school board) child care: Alberta, Saskatchewan, Ontario, Newfoundland and Labrador, and the Northwest Territories. However, Ontario's municipally-operated child care sector has dropped from 11 per cent of total spaces in 1998 to 2.6 per cent of total spaces in 2012.

The majority of child care centres are run by not-for-profit boards. Many CUPE members in the child care sector work with voluntary boards and there is

large turnover leading to instability. The introduction of full-day kindergarten has also put these centres under tremendous stress to meet changing demands.

For-profit care is also expanding across the country. In six provinces and territories, half or more of all child care spaces are provided by for-profit corporations. For-profit care is nearly 30 per cent of total centre spaces in Canada. In Ontario, CUPE represents the 270 members at Kids & Company, a large for-profit privately held corporation.

### ISSUES

#### The market model for services

In a child care market, services are a commodity and parents are treated as consumers – they must “shop” for services offered by a variety of competing “suppliers.” Governments have limited interest in or influence on how child care is set up, maintained and delivered. Outside of Quebec, Canada's child care services are run as a market.

Countries that provide accessible, affordable, high quality child care are those that don't rely on markets to deliver child care. These models are often publicly-managed, operated and funded.

Countries that rely on markets are much more likely to rank lower in international studies. UNESCO, OECD, and UNICEF reports show that Canada's child care spending ranks among the lowest.

Studies show that non-profit centres are more likely to have better child-staff ratios, better-educated staff and directors, and higher rates of professional development for staff.

### Unionization

The 2012 You Bet We Still Care! survey showed 21.5 per cent of child-care staff identified themselves as union members. Unionization is highest at 30 per cent in Quebec, where the Confédération des syndicats nationaux (CSN) is the dominant union, and 29.4 per cent in BC where the government employees' union (BCGEU) represents the majority of the sector. CUPE represents the largest number of members delivering child care and early childhood education services in child care centres as well as other programs.

Unionization rates for child care workers remain low. The You Bet We Still Care! study found a number of key differences between unionized and non-unionized child care employees and their workplaces, difference including: higher staff retention and job satisfaction, higher wages and benefits, and better workplace practices.

### Wages

Child care workers' wages are very low. On average, in 2012, wages for staff in unionized centres were \$4.61 an hour higher than those in non-unionized centres (\$20.11/hour compared to \$15.50 for non-unionized staff). The biggest difference was in Ontario, where unionized staff was paid an average of \$23.06/hour, while non-unionized staff were paid \$15.77/hour.

CUPE has created structures and strategies for more effective coordination, bargaining, and campaigns in our sector.

In Ontario, settlements reached between 2014 and 2016 had an annual average wage increase of 1.77 per cent per year, slightly higher than the rate of inflation. However, changes to the funding model for wage grants in Ontario are also putting not-for-profit child care centres at risk, at the same time that cuts to municipal funding are threatening the stability of municipal child care centres.

### BARGAINING

CUPE has worked to create structures and strategies that will provide more effective coordination, bargaining, and campaigns for the child care sector. In Nova Scotia, most child care workers are represented by one local. Ontario child care sector members are represented on the social services workers' committee. One large local in Toronto has 30 sites and represents 350 members. In Ottawa, one local represents approximately 300 child care workers at 13 centres, and has set up a common bargaining table. One local is representing all the

workers for the private-for-profit centre Kids & Company across Ontario. Manitoba has a local representing around 90 members at five child care centres. Although CUPE represents few child care locals in BC, they are covered under province-wide community services bargaining. Outside of the Ottawa local and BC, coordinated bargaining is rare.

The not-for-profit child care sector is under extreme pressure. Many locals face pressure for concessions at the bargaining table, despite the need to make significant bargaining gains. Locals are facing two-tier proposals for both new hires and casual employees.

### PENSIONS

Pension coverage for the unionized child care sector is low outside of Quebec and BC. CUPE locals have made some headway with the Multi Sector Pension Plan (MSPP) in Ontario and Manitoba. Just over 53 per cent of CUPE members in the child care sector have access to a registered pension plan, although only 22 per cent have a defined benefit plan. Approximately seven per cent of CUPE members have access to an RRSP, but nearly 27 per cent receive no retirement benefits at all from their employer.

### CAMPAIGNS

CUPE has been a leader in campaigns for child care, working in coalition with many groups. Along with our partners, CUPE has been a major contributor to the Rethink Child Care campaign. During the 2015 election, we worked hard to make the vision of a national child care system an election issue.

CUPE has also been involved in anti-privatization campaigns, including campaigns focused on the large for-profit corporations that continue to threaten the development of a strong public national child care program. In Ontario, CUPE has campaigned to protect municipal child care centres.

Provincially, CUPE has been active in wage campaigns in Nova Scotia, Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and BC. The not-for-profit child care sector is very fragile across most of Canada. CUPE has been involved in many campaigns to prevent the closure of centres at the local level.

### Future of the sector

The Liberal government is giving cash benefits to families with its new Canada Child Benefit program. Although the benefit provided to families has increased, it still doesn't go far enough in addressing the high costs of child care, and doesn't address the need for a comprehensive, affordable, public child care system.

The Liberals have promised to develop a National Early Learning and Child Care Framework, in cooperation with the provinces. The 2016 federal budget committed \$500 million to child care in

Our union has been a leader in campaigns for child care, working in coalition with many groups.

CUPE has been involved in many campaigns to prevent the closure of centres at the local level.

2017, with 20 per cent of that funding earmarked for Indigenous child care. This is a welcome investment after years of underfunding by federal and provincial governments, but it hardly begins to address the need for affordable child care spaces.

CUPE is also concerned that this funding might simply be used to prop up the current patchwork system of care across the country. Funding needs to be long-term and sustainable, to ensure that more child care spaces

are developed, high quality is assured, and child care truly becomes more affordable to parents.

CUPE will continue to work with our partners and our allies to advocate for a well-designed, publicly funded universal child care program.

### Visit [cupe.ca](http://cupe.ca): Resources for members

- More information for your sector
- Tools to help you and your local
- Success stories from across the country
- And more!