



# LET'S GET IT RIGHT!

*Early Childhood Education  
for the Next Generation*

**Everyone  
depends  
on someone  
who depends  
on childcare.**

FOR THE PAST 50 YEARS, women and many others have been organizing and advocating for universal access to quality and affordable Early Childhood Education – including childcare, kindergarten, and family resource centre programs.

For generations, Early Childhood Education has been considered an individual responsibility, a women's issue, a children's issue, or a worker's issue. The pandemic taught us that Early Childhood Education is everybody's issue, and a critical public policy issue for governments.

More than 1.5 million women lost jobs in the first two months of the pandemic. As workplaces and services began to reopen, it was difficult for families to get back to work without adequate access to childcare and other types of Early Childhood Education. The burden of that reality fell on women. We know that women in Canada contribute about 40% of household income. **Early Childhood Education is key to the economy, and economic recovery.**

**Without high-quality Early Childhood Education, children, families, and communities don't reach their full potential.**

Parents (mostly mothers) leave the workforce to make sure that children have a safe and nurturing place to spend their early years. Children miss crucial developmental opportunities to socialize and learn with their peers. Families with young children leave our communities and province and seek out places where they can pursue their careers and raise their children. With high-quality Early Childhood Education, current and future workers, families and communities, the labour market and the economy all benefit.

**It's time to guarantee Early Childhood Education to every child and family in Newfoundland and Labrador.** The federal and provincial governments agree. In July 2021 they signed an historic deal to invest over \$347 million into our province as part of a Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care system so families can have access to high-quality, affordable, flexible and inclusive early learning and child care no matter where they live.

By 2023, childcare costs will drop to an average of \$10 per day. By 2026, there will be 5,800 new childcare spots. Full-time pre-kindergarten will be available for all 4-year-olds. This new investment will build on a decade of progress in the sector, which saw the introduction of full-day kindergarten, play-based learning, and \$25-a-day childcare.

**Early Childhood Education is the best investment we can make in our province's future.**

We can expect women's labour force participation to increase, as women return to work and pursue higher education. Families will keep more money in their pockets, breaking cycles of poverty that span generations. Children will avail of play-based learning that exercises their bodies and minds and lays the foundation for the rest of their lives. Reliable, high-quality Early Childhood Education is crucial infrastructure that makes it easier to raise a family anywhere in the province, and especially in rural and remote communities.

**There is a lot to be excited about, but we're not there yet.**

**By coming together, to tell our stories, share our experiences and ideas, we can get it right.** To make the most of this investment, we need input and coordinated action from governments, colleges and universities, unions, not-for-profit organizations, business and civil society. By designing Early Childhood Education that works for all families, we can make progress on outcomes in health and education, poverty reduction, economic development, and rural revitalization.

## Methodology

**The Jimmy Pratt Foundation has been convening conversations on Early Childhood Education in Newfoundland and Labrador for over a decade.** In 2013 and 2014, we published two discussion papers – “The Early Years Last a Lifetime” and “Growing Education Down to Include the Early Years” – to spark action and debate across government, academia, and civil society.





### What is Early Childhood Education?

Early Childhood Education consists of programs for young children based on an explicit curriculum and pedagogy, delivered by qualified staff, and designed to support children's development and learning. Settings may include child care centres, HeadStart, nursery schools, preschools, pre or junior kindergarten, playgroups, family resource centres, and kindergarten. Attendance is regular and children may participate on their own, or with a parent or caregiver.

*(Early Years Study 4)*

In light of the bilateral Early Learning and Childcare agreement signed in 2021, we turned to the community to identify priorities for a new decade. We needed to hear what's working and what isn't – directly from the people closest to young children and their families.

**We consulted with over 250 people and over 40 organizations across Newfoundland and Labrador who work with children and their families.** We spoke to parents, educators, non-profit organizations and other advocates in person, by phone, by email, through surveys and on Zoom.

**We focused our consultations especially on communities who are underserved by existing Early Childhood Education options.** This led us to conversations with women's centres, Family Resource Centres, Friendship Centres, Indigenous governments and elected representatives in rural and remote areas.

We held 4 forums and administered surveys to reach specific communities in partnership with organizations including Child Care Now!, the Gander Women's Centre, the Association of Early Childhood Educators of Newfoundland and Labrador, and the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Labour.

**The priority areas listed here are those that were top of mind for stakeholders across Newfoundland and Labrador.** The recommendations of this report, taken together, do not represent the opinions of any one person or group that we consulted. We expect, however, that every conversation we had is reflected here in some way.

## Leadership

**Early Childhood Education is a public good that's funded with public money. It's a monumental investment in our province that needs leadership to succeed. Here's what that looks like:**

- Government-planned expansion of not-for-profit and public Early Childhood Education, housed in the Department of Education;
- A holistic approach with input from relevant provincial government stakeholders, including the Departments of Education; Children, Seniors and Social Development; Immigration, Population Skills and Growth; Health and Community Services, and Municipal and Provincial Affairs; the Minister responsible for Labour, and the Office of Women and Gender Equality;
- A transparent Action Plan, sustained public engagement, and robust citizen oversight;
- Clear and timely communication with current for-profit, non-for-profit, and family childcare providers about policy changes that will affect their operations;
- A plan to collect data and monitor the implementation of the Federal-Provincial Action Plan on Early Learning and Childcare

## Inclusion

**Every child and every family deserves access to reliable, accessible Early Childhood Education, through childcare programs or elsewhere. We need specific strategies and resources to ensure high-quality Early Childhood Education for underserved children and families including**

- Mi'kmaq, Inuit and Innu families, and urban Indigenous communities;
- Newcomer and racialized families;
- Children and families in rural and remote communities;
- Families with infant children;
- Parents who do seasonal work, rotational work, part-time work, precarious work and shiftwork;
- Children with special needs;
- Low-income families and families facing poverty.

# Workforce

**Early Childhood Education is a place for children to play, learn, and grow. We need to recruit and retain a workforce of Early Childhood Educators whose specialized training equips them to educate and care for our most precious asset: our children. For Early Childhood Education to be a viable and sustaining career, Early Childhood Educators need:**

- Benefit packages that include paid sick days, holidays, health and dental coverage and pension plans;
- A wage grid that standardizes pay across workplaces, and that reflects training and experience;
- Recognition and public awareness for the important skilled work that they do;
- Affordable, high-quality training and professional development opportunities that are evaluated on a regular schedule;
- Strong workplace protections that ensure a dignified work environment.

# About Us

**The Jimmy Pratt Foundation** is a small family foundation based in St. John's. We support research, policy and conversations that help children and youth in Newfoundland and Labrador flourish.

Early Childhood Education is a cornerstone of resilience and is where the Foundation focused the first decade of its work. As a member of the national Early Child Development Funder's Working Group, the Jimmy Pratt Foundation contributed to the production of Early Years 3, a document consolidating the evidence for universal, publicly funded Early Childhood Education. Building on this national initiative, the Foundation convened professionals from government, academia and beyond to advocate for full-day kindergarten in Newfoundland and Labrador. With input from the Jimmy Pratt Foundation, the provincial government implemented full-day kindergarten in 2015.



**Early  
Childhood  
Education  
is play with  
purpose.**

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