Disclaimer
The conclusions presented in this research report are those of the authors and do not represent the views of the Government of Canada.

Note to readers
Precise information and statistics on child care co-operatives is difficult to find. Readers may find some differences in the numbers used throughout this report because we have quoted from different sources. Rather than eliminate any reference to these numbers we have included them all in order to provide a needed overview of child care co-ops in Canada.

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Executive Summary

*Child Care Co-operatives in Canada 2007* examines the situation of co-operative child care in Canada. Through research based on qualitative methods, including interviews with child care co-operative spokespersons and government officials, as well as the latest statistical data available, the report paints a complete portrait of co-op child care and provides an analysis of the enabling environment and possibilities for future development. The situation of co-operative child care in New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States is also examined and lessons drawn for possible application in Canada.

The report first sets out a typology of co-op child care. It outlines the origins and history of the movement in Canada, and then provides a brief history of child care policy at the federal level and looks at key provincial policy decisions. It also portrays the overall situation of child care across Canada and charts recent trends. It notes the wide differences in development between provinces both in overall space creation and in spending. The dominance and generally superior quality of the non-profit model (80% of spaces), which includes all co-operative child care centres, is also examined.

The heart of the report is a comprehensive examination of co-op child care in Canada and in each province. As child care is regulated by the provinces and territories, regulations and funding vary greatly and this, along with a series of factors such as the strength of co-operative culture and the support mechanisms in each province, contributes to the strengths or weaknesses of co-operative child care in each province.

The report examines the situation of the over 400 child care co-operatives (over 500 if we include parent-run child care centres, which are not legally co-operatives but operate like them in BC, Alberta, and Ontario). The report notes that while not increasing in membership or quantity of centres, co-operative child care has generally maintained its numbers and, in 2005, had about 34,000 family memberships. Ontario, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba have the largest concentration of formal child care co-operatives, with British Columbia having a considerable number of co-op-like organizations. We have estimated that about 9% of Canadian child care spaces are in centres operated by co-operatives.

With the exception of Quebec, child care co-ops operate with parent fees, in-kind contributions by parents, fundraising, and in a few provinces, a limited amount of government revenue. Parent fees for preschool age children for one month range from a high of $541 in Ontario to $376 in Manitoba. Quebec has a different scale for fees with each child charged $7 per day.

Ontario and British Columbia child care co-operatives and parent-run centres have developed their own co-operative support systems independent of any government funding. Through their interest in advocating the benefits of co-operative child care, these two provinces have organized themselves into regional councils to provide members with important services such as insurance, training, training materials, conferences, networking, and communication opportunities.

Internationally, the research for this report focused on the United States, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom. In the US, there are approximately 1,000 child care co-ops, most of which are part-time programs with a heavy reliance on parent participation in the
classroom. In the United Kingdom in 2003, the national co-operative society, Co-operatives UK, in response to the British government’s new focus on child care, sought funding from the government to conduct research over two years. The research has led to an attempt to inject new life into a sector that had been in decline since the early 1990s. In New Zealand, the Federation of New Zealand Play Centres (co-op child care) has been receiving funding for parenting education programs for many years and is now working on providing a greater range of training programs for parents. Twelve per cent of licensed centres in that country are co-operatives.

The report concludes by attempting to synthesize the advantages of co-operative child care such as enhanced parent participation as well as providing opportunities for social economy delivery of public programs. It then looks at which types and models of co-operative child care have a chance of further development. It examines the enabling environment for co-op child care across Canada at the federal and provincial levels, and develops a matrix which ranks provinces in terms of their respective environments. It develops an analysis of some of the key factors necessary for co-op child care development. Finally the report examines some of the wider challenges co-operative child care will face in the future.
CHAPTER ONE - Introduction

Parents and child-oriented organizations are demanding more government action on the provision of child care services because there are neither enough spaces nor alternatives for Canadian families. While many people are aware of the standard ways of providing child care, most — including decision-makers — are unaware of child care co-operatives organized primarily by parents in communities across Canada.

When planning child care policy and programs, it is important to look at all the possible methods for meeting needs. The goal of this paper is to shed some light on this important organizational model and provide the federal government with current information and analysis.

The Research
This paper will examine the place that child care co-operatives currently hold in Canada’s child care delivery system, and their future potential. To set the context we start with defining child care co-ops, the different ways they can be organized, and their history in Canada. We also examine the overall Canadian environment for child care in general, including policy, history and the current delivery system.

The rest of the paper provides a portrait of child care co-ops in Canada with profiles of each province contrasted with information on child care co-ops in the United States, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom. The final chapter contains analyses and conclusions with some new work on the best enabling environment for new child care co-ops.

The research involved both qualitative and quantitative methodologies such as:
• Reviewing existing material such as studies, reports, compilations, and assessments
• Interviews with co-operatives, including their umbrella organizations
• Interviews with selected child care experts, child care organizations, workers, parents and employers
• Statistical analysis of data from Co-operatives Secretariat, provincial governments and child care organizations

The Authors
The Canadian Co-operative Association was contracted to undertake this research on co-operative child care by the Co-operatives Secretariat in conjunction with Human Resources and Social Development Canada (HRSDC). The work was carried out by the Canadian Co-operative Association, in partnership with the Organization for Parent Participation in Childcare and Education, Ontario.

The Canadian Co-operative Association is a Canadian co-operative organization whose mandate is to promote, develop, and unite co-operatives and credit unions for the benefit of people in Canada and around the world. CCA is a hub of the Canadian co-operative movement. A not-for-profit co-operative owned by its 33 members, CCA represents more than seven million co-operative and credit union members from over 3,000 organizations. Canadian co-ops and credit unions have over $225 billion in assets and employ 155,000 people. Canada has one of the highest ratios of co-op membership in the world — four-in-ten Canadians belong to a co-op or credit union.
CCA recently produced a background paper on child care co-ops, *Child Care Co-operatives: A Place in Canada’s Universal Child Care Plan*, and organized a delegation of experts to meet with HRSDC staff from the Childcare Spaces Initiative in September 2006.

The Organization for Parent Participation in Childcare and Education, Ontario (OPPCEO) is the organization for co-operative child care in Ontario and represents co-operative child care centres. It is a voluntary association of three regional councils and their independent member centres, serving approximately 8,000 families. OPPCEO provides services such as board training and networking opportunities to its members. Through its affiliation with the Ontario Co-operative Association, Government Relations Committee, and the Common Table of Child Care Associations, the organization lobbies for improved legislation and child care services for the families.

**Child Care Co-operatives Defined**

Child care co-operatives are the same as other co-ops in that they are democratic organizations owned and controlled by their members to meet their members’ needs for goods, services or jobs. While co-operatives can be for-profit or non-profit, all child care co-ops are non-profit and use any surplus funds to increase or improve their services.

Organized by the users and community members who will benefit, child care co-ops are part of a group of community service co-ops (also known as social co-ops), which deliver primary health care, seniors home care, ambulance services and children’s services.

Child care co-ops are found in urban, rural, workplace and university settings. They can serve infant, toddler, preschool and school-aged children, including children with special needs.

The co-op members elect a board that decides on staffing, the type of program/instruction to be offered and how much families will have to pay. The supervision and curriculum design is generally developed by a hired early childhood educator.

**Types**

Based on the services delivered, there are three basic types of child care co-ops:

1. Preschool co-ops (also called play schools, nursery schools, or parent participation preschools) – operate half day programs
2. Daycare co-ops, – provide full daycare, including before and after school programs
3. Purchasing and service co-ops – provide services for a group of child care co-ops and non-profit organizations

The most common type in Canada is a preschool co-op where children attend only part of the day for educational and socialization activities.
Models

The various models of child care co-ops refer to ownership and governance. Based on different kinds of membership, there are five models of child care co-ops:

1. Parent-run – co-op members are the parents of children who attend the child care service
2. Worker – owned by the professionals who operate the child care service
3. Multi-stakeholder or coops de solidarité – members involve two or more categories of people who benefit and support the co-op, such as parents, workers, and other interested stakeholders (community organizations, representatives of community service agencies, local municipality, or interested citizens)¹
4. Subsidiary of another co-operative – the child care centre is owned by an existing co-operative, although it may have a different name (only in UK)
5. Purchasing or servicing co-op – co-op members are child care centres that need services or group purchasing (only in Quebec)

Almost all the child care co-ops in Canada are parent-run because parents want to have some control over, and involvement in, their children’s care and education. In some co-ops, parents include the staff in an advisory capacity. There are currently no worker child care co-ops in Canada, although there is a good example with the Childspace Management Group in Philadelphia, described in the United States section of Chapter Three.

The multi-stakeholder co-op model has not been used extensively in Canada because it is a relatively new co-op model. It is predominately used when parents and workers are willing to share responsibility for the management of a child care centre, although other people could also be involved. It is well-suited to daycare co-ops where working parents need other people and groups to share in the decision-making and running of the co-op. This research uncovered four multi-stakeholder co-ops in Canada and a grouping of child care co-ops in Ottawa that function as multi-stakeholder although they are legally parent-run.²

In the UK, multi-stakeholder co-ops are part of a resurgence in child care co-ops. This model is one of four models promoted by co-operatives in the UK. There is more on the multi-stakeholder model as used in the United Kingdom section in Chapter Four.

A new innovation is purchasing and service co-ops in Quebec, which provide collective purchasing and service delivery for both non-profit and co-op child care centres. The latter will be described in more detail in the Quebec section in Chapter Three.

¹ The Canadian Worker Co-op Federation defines a multi-stakeholder co-op as a co-op that has two or more classes of members and the membership classes may include workers, consumers, producers, investors and/or other possible stakeholders. www.canadianworker.coop/english/4/index_e432.html
² These co-ops are River Avenue Co-operative Day Nursery in Winnipeg, and Coopérative de solidarité du Centre de la petite enfance Le Bilioquet, Coopérative de solidarité du Centre de la petite enfance Jeunestrie, and Coopérative de solidarité du CPE Jardin D.A.M.I.S. de Rock Forest located in or near Sherbrooke, Quebec. One of the Ottawa co-ops that is functionally multistakeholder is Centretown Parents Daycare in Ottawa. The latter is a case study described in Appendix One.
Benefits
There are few studies on the benefits of child care co-ops or a comparative analysis of the different ownership types for child care services, namely private, government, non-profit, or co-operative.

Proponents of child care co-ops describe benefits such as an inclusive environment for all children with cost-effective delivery and a consistent style and quality of care between home and the child care facility. Parent-run co-ops encourage social development for both children and adults, and give parents opportunities to share information and experiences about child development, child guidance and parenting techniques. They give children more individual attention due to higher adult/child ratios.

The key element and asset of a child care co-operative is the parent involvement at the board, committee and classroom levels. Parents come to understand their own children and their development much better through their active participation and learning within the co-op. In most cases, child care co-operatives do not differ in program, facilities or equipment from any other form of child care.

History of Child Care Co-operatives in Canada
To provide more context, it is important to look at the history of child care co-ops in Canada. It is not generally known that there have been child care co-ops in Canada for 70 years. They first started in the United States and spread to Canada in 1937.

Educators in the United States were very interested in the work of Maria Montessori, in Italy, and the MacMillan sisters, in England, with preschool-aged children. In 1916, a group of faculty wives at the University of Chicago received permission from the University administration to create a parent/child education program for their preschool-aged children, in part to free them up for war work. It was organized as a co-operative and lasted until the end of the war when the university took over the program. Professionals at other universities were attracted by the concept and, in 1927, child care co-ops were established in California, Oregon, Washington State, Michigan, Maryland, Indiana, Virginia, New York, Connecticut, and the District of Columbia.

In Canada, parents in British Columbia, Ontario, and Quebec traveled to the US and observed child care co-ops. After an incubation period under the sponsorship of the Junior League, Manor Road Co-operative Nursery School in Toronto, began operation in 1937. It is thought to be the oldest program in Canada. The Bettye Hyde Cooperative Nursery School, in Ottawa, started in the mid-1940s and has been in continuous operation for more than 60 years. Bettye Hyde was an educator who developed and ran the school’s program for more than 20 years and subsequently established the Early Childhood Education Program at Algonquin College, in Ottawa.

3 Katharine Whiteside Taylor, Parents and Children Learn Together
4 See Toronto Star article on Manor Road Co-operative Nursery School’s 70th anniversary in Appendix Four (Sharing, learning together, Kristin Rushowy)
In both the US and Canada, the parent-owned co-operatives were largely established without public funds or endowments. The full cost of start-up and operation was borne by the co-operating families.

During the 1950s the co-operative nursery school movement grew. Professional leadership was sought to add value to the programs and the women looked to educational institutions for quality training. British Columbia families created partnerships with the University of British Columbia and the University of Victoria for parent education and early childhood education programs.

The women who started the programs recognized the need to collaborate with others. In British Columbia, the Association of Co-operative Play Groups of Greater Vancouver was founded in 1945 and the Vancouver Island of Co-operative Preschools was formed in the late 1940s to further parent education in the preschool field and to assist the member groups in developing a high standard of preschool education. In Ontario and Quebec, informal meetings among parent groups were held.

In the United States, the same thing occurred and councils were established in Maryland, Seattle, and Oakland, California. The movement spread across the United States and Canada with little publicity or fanfare. Katharine Whiteside Taylor, one of the founders of Community Co-operative in California, estimates that there may have been as many as 5,000 co-ops in North America in the 1960s.\(^5\)

In 1960, Columbia University called a conference of persons interested in parent co-operatives and the American Council of Parent Cooperatives was formed. Because of the extensive Canadian participation, the name was changed to Parent Cooperative Preschools International (PCPI) at their meeting in 1964.

In Ontario, informal groups met in Toronto and Hamilton during the 1960s and by the late ’60s Ottawa, London, Niagara, Mississauga (known as Shoreline), and Kitchener/Guelph areas were also having meetings. PCPI hosted their annual meeting in Hamilton in 1971 and this led to creation of an informal organization, the Committee of Councils of Parent Participation Preschools of Ontario. Its objective was to provide support to the local councils that had sprung up around the province with a newsletter and biannual meetings.

There was rapid growth in the parent co-operative movement in Ontario and by 1980 there were approximately 225 member centres with a family membership of almost 20,000. In 1989, the Organization for Parent Participation in Childcare and Education, Ontario (OPPCEO) was incorporated. The Education Committee created a training course for teachers and parent board members known as “Learning Co-operatively”. In 1997 the first staff person was retained to assist the volunteers at each council with board training, administration duties, and networking. She was also given the mandate to promote the parent co-operative model at the provincial government level and within the co-operative movement.

\(^5\) ibid page 323
In other parts of Canada, child care co-ops were being founded but little contact was made between the various communities. Except for British Columbia, no regional or provincial organizations were founded.

At the PCPI meeting in Vancouver in 1991, attendees from each Canadian province created the Association of Canadian Child Care Co-operatives. Under the leadership of Pat Fenton, from Toronto, and with grants from the Co-operative Secretariat, a board was formed and the new association was incorporated. Newsletters were written and distributed. However, the grassroots members were unable to afford membership and outside of Ontario, little support was shown in the fledgling association. Without financial support, the Association of Canadian Child Care Co-operatives “faded out of sight” and ended in 1999.

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6 Gail Pike former Board member and currently President Newfoundland – Labrador Co-operative Federation
CHAPTER TWO – The Child Care Environment in Canada

To fully appreciate the role of co-operative child care it is necessary to understand the overall child care environment and the development of child care policy in Canada at the federal level. Child care co-operatives depend on the growth of a regulated child care environment, an adequate source of government funding for quality spaces, and the encouragement at the policy level for spaces delivered by centres through group care, preferably by non-profit centres including co-operatives.

Today, in Canada, child care is generally viewed as a service that is delivered by the provinces and territories except in areas such as Aboriginal communities where the federal government has a fiduciary role. But while the provincial governments are responsible for assuring the on-the-ground regulation of child care, the federal government has always played an important role. During the Second World War and since the start of the Canada Assistance Plan of 1996, the federal government has acknowledged an important role in funding and setting standards.

Child care as an important policy issue
Child care, outside the home and in regulated centres in Canada, has been around since the 19th century. It is only in the last 30 years that child care for children under school age has become an important policy issue. This has happened for many reasons. In the literature three reasons particularly stand out: the second wave of the women’s movement and the demand for equality in the labour market; the expansion of women’s participation rate in the labour market; and the decline of the male breadwinner family. With the huge bulge in the baby boom generation, there were millions of women that could participate in the labour force (see Table 1).

TABLE 1: Labour force participation rates by sex, 1971-2001

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Woman</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>59.0</td>
<td>44.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>76.4</td>
<td>75.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>79.4</td>
<td>78.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>77.3</td>
<td>77.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>73.0</td>
<td>70.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>69.5</td>
<td>66.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>60.5</td>
<td>62.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

http://www12.statcan.ca/english/census01/teacher's_kit/activity13_handout2_statement1_chart.cfm

7 Meg Luxton, Feminist perspectives on social inclusion and children's well-being, Laidlaw Foundation 2002
Labour force participation rated by mothers has grown to become even stronger than the average participation rates for all women (see Table 2). At the same time, Canadian society was changing as the second wave of the women’s movement demanded the right for women to participate equally in the job market.

**TABLE 2: Labour force participation of mothers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1995 (%)</th>
<th>1998 (%)</th>
<th>2001 (%)</th>
<th>2003 (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>With youngest child 0-3 years</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With youngest child 3-5 years</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With youngest child 6-15 years</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Terms such as employment equity and pay equity became part of the policy landscape. Changing economic patterns began to break down the high paying jobs for men in certain industries and families now often needed two jobs to survive and prosper. ⁸ Employers looked to women as well to fill jobs in the expanding public and para-public sectors. Lastly, a growing body of literature and research concluded that access to quality early learning and organized interaction with other children could be a positive factor in child development. ⁹

In order for women with young children to participate they needed access to regulated quality daycare.

**History of Child Care in Canada**

Until the Second World War, organized child care was largely available only to middle class children in the form of kindergarten. This was generally the case in all provinces. It was in the provinces of Ontario and Quebec that a more expansive view of child care first developed. It happened in these provinces first because of the need to increase the participation of women in the war industry. This led to the creation of a widespread child care centre network in these two provinces, with the federal government sharing costs on a 50-50 basis. At the end of the war, with the withdrawal of federal funds, the Quebec network was closed. Protests in Toronto led to the passage of the *Ontario Day Nurseries Act*, in 1946, and Ontario became the first province to develop standards in order to provide provincial funds for nursery schools. Ontario remained the only province with a child care policy until the passage of the *Canada Assistance Plan* (CAP), in 1966. CAP offered 50-50 spending for regulated child care but only Ontario and Alberta took advantage of this opportunity from 1966-1970. While other provinces later used the CAP until its abolition in 1996, the 50-50 split proved difficult for poorer provinces to use. ¹⁰

The next major milestone at the federal level was the report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women, in 1970. The Royal Commission recommended the federal

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government immediately take steps to enter into agreement with the provinces leading to the adoption of a *National Daycare Act* under which federal funds would be made available on a cost-sharing basis for the building and running of daycare centres meeting specified minimum standards. The federal government would pay: a) half the operating costs, and b) during the initial seven year period, 70% of the capital costs;”\(^{11}\)

The report also recommended that each province and territory establish a Child Care Board to manage the system and that the federal government provide advisory services to the province. In 1971 the first national daycare conference further developed these recommendations.

By the 80s, not only were parents allowed to declare parental out-of-pocket child care expenses as a tax deduction, but for the first time, mothers could use the limited maternity leave provisions of the *Unemployment Insurance Act*. By the 80s, most children at age four were enrolled in public kindergarten, which was generally integrated into the public education system. Since that time, Ontario has advanced even further and children can now start in Junior Kindergarten at age of four.

During the period 1984-1995, successive federal governments, under Trudeau, Mulroney and Chrétien, set in motion processes and promises that seemed to herald the birth of a national child care system. The recommendations of the Task Force on Child Care (1984-1986), the Special Committee on Child Care (1986), and the Liberal Party’s 1993 Red Book of election promises, all articulated the need to create a new national child care system. However, no government moved ahead to the application phase.\(^{12}\)

The abolition of the Canada Assistance Plan, in 1996, by the Chrétien government was another setback as the new Canada Social Transfer which replaced it on the social spending side was a no-strings attached transfer. This meant that there was no longer any oversight as to how the funds for social policy issues would be spent and whether any of this money would be spent on child care.

During this period, the Quebec government moved ahead to create its own child care program with the goal of creating 200,000 subsidized spaces at a cost to parents of $5 per day per child. After 2004, it increased to $7 a day. With these developments, Quebec distinguished itself from all other provinces in offering a quality and accessible child care program to most parents who wanted it (see Quebec section of Chapter 3). The other provinces are all at varying stages of development as far as child care services are concerned as we will show in this and the next chapter.

The Social Union agreement in 1999 between the federal government and the provinces once again left the door open for the federal government to play a role in child care, which was generally accepted as a provincial jurisdiction.

By 2004, the Martin government revived the idea of a national child care strategy and proceeded to sign child care agreements with nine provinces for $5 billion in transfers over five years. The federal government adopted the ‘QUAD’ principles of quality, universality,
accessibility and developmentally appropriate services as the standard for signing agreements. However, there were few accountability mechanisms regarding the kind of child care to be delivered and only Manitoba and Saskatchewan pledged to keep the funding only for non-profit centres.  

The new Conservative Government, elected in 2006, decided to keep these child care agreements only until March 2007 when they were terminated. Instead, the federal government opted for a $100 a month transfer for all children under the age of six, and announced that $250 million per year from 2007-08 for the creation of new spaces with business or non-profits. The creation of new spaces plan never reached the implementation stage and, in the March 2007 Federal Budget, the government decided to allocate the $250 million directly to the provinces for child care while keeping the yet unused subsidies of up to $10,000 per space or 25% of cost for businesses and non-profits to create new spaces. In the 2007 Budget, the government also talked about drawing up new criteria for accountability on how the money will be spent by the time the child care transfer is rolled into the Canada Social Transfer (CST) in 2008-09. The CST transfer was also increased through equalization of per capita awards for each province and the transfer has officially designated child care as one of its targets. Budget 2007 states: “Funding will flow through the CST, beginning in 2008–09, upon completion of discussions with provinces and territories on how best to make use of those new investments and to ensure reporting and accountability to Canadians. While these discussions are ongoing and to fully honour the commitment made in Budget 2006, Budget 2007 provides a transition payment to provinces and territories of $250 million for 2007–08 to support the child care spaces objective, allocated on an equal per capita basis.”

Child Care in Canada Today
A recent Statistics Canada survey, based on the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth (NLSCY), analyzed that in 2002-2003, 54% of all children aged six months to five years were in some form of non-parental child care, up from 42% in 1994-1995 (see Table 3).

TABLE 3: Growth of Child Care


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http://www.childcarecanada.org/pubs/op21/index.html

The study also noted that between 2000-2001 and 2002-2003, the number of children under the age of one saw a decline in non-parental care rates, possibly due to the increase in mothers and fathers using the parental leave provisions in force for children born after December 30, 2000. Only Alberta did not show overall increases in non-parental child care rates (see Table 4). Rural and urban children now have similar rates of child care.\textsuperscript{15}

**TABLE 4: Children in daycare centres six months to five years**

```
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N.L.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P.E.I.</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N.S.</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N.B.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Que.</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ont.</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Man.</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sask.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alta.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.C.</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
```

Source: Statistics Canada: National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth (NLSCY) 2006

The study also confirmed that while the gap has narrowed, almost 70% of children in high income families used child care compared to less than 40% of poor children (see Table 5).

**TABLE 5: Income and Child Care**

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Below LICO</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal to &lt; 2 times LICO</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 to &lt; 3 times LICO</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 times LICO or above</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
```

Source: Statistics Canada: National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth (NLSCY) 2006

\textsuperscript{15} Tracey Bushnik, Child Care in Canada, Statistics Canada, 2006
Provincial Data on Child Care

Another way of measuring the number of child care spaces is from government administrative data. Using this data, in 2004, only 15.5% of Canadian children aged 0-12 could be accommodated in a regulated child care space, compared with 7.5% in 1992 and 12.1% in 2001. These figures are based on a total of 745,254 regulated child care spaces in 2004, an increase of 151,824 from 2001. Over half of the increase in spaces occurred in Quebec. Some 43% of all regulated spaces in Canada are in Quebec.

The percentage of regulated spaces varied widely between provinces. There is an astounding difference in availability of access by children 0-12 to regulated child care spaces. Access to spaces ranges from 4.9% of children in Saskatchewan to 29.9% in Quebec (see Table 6). 16

**TABLE 6: Percentage of children with access to a regulated child care space**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Provincial Territory</th>
<th>2001 (%)</th>
<th>2004 (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Newfoundland &amp; Labrador</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prince Edward Island</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>18.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nova Scotia</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>9.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Brunswick</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>11.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quebec</td>
<td>21.1</td>
<td>29.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ontario</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>10.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manitoba</td>
<td>12.4</td>
<td>14.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saskatchewan</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alberta</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>9.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British Columbia</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>13.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northwest Territories</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>13.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nunavut</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>11.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yukon Territory</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>29.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>15.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Friendly and Beach 2005*

Table 7 shows the growth of child care spaces over the last two decades. In Quebec, the number has grown by 310%. In PEI the number has remained the same while in Ontario the number has grown by only 41%. In Alberta the number of regulated spaces for non-school age children has actually shrunk.

16 Martha Friendly and Jane Beach, Early childhood education and care in Canada 2004, CRRU, 2005
### TABLE 7: Number of Regulated Child Care Spaces in Canada

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Newfoundland &amp; Labrador</td>
<td>3,568</td>
<td>4,202</td>
<td>4,275</td>
<td>4,226</td>
<td>4,921</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prince Edward Island¹</td>
<td>4,123</td>
<td>3,888</td>
<td>3,717</td>
<td>4,270</td>
<td>4,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nova Scotia</td>
<td>10,826</td>
<td>10,645</td>
<td>11,163</td>
<td>11,464</td>
<td>12,759</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Brunswick</td>
<td>7,162</td>
<td>7,952</td>
<td>9,204</td>
<td>11,086</td>
<td>11,897</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quebec²</td>
<td>78,388</td>
<td>111,452</td>
<td>175,002</td>
<td>234,905</td>
<td>321,732</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ontario</td>
<td>145,545</td>
<td>147,853</td>
<td>167,090³</td>
<td>173,135³</td>
<td>206,743³</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manitoba</td>
<td>18,977</td>
<td>18,846</td>
<td>20,490</td>
<td>23,022</td>
<td>25,634</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saskatchewan</td>
<td>6,418</td>
<td>7,266</td>
<td>7,124</td>
<td>7,166</td>
<td>7,910</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alberta</td>
<td>51,656</td>
<td>51,088</td>
<td>47,033</td>
<td>47,693</td>
<td>47,959 (65,726)⁴</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British Columbia</td>
<td>42,927</td>
<td>59,794</td>
<td>68,978</td>
<td>72,949</td>
<td>80,230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northwest Territories</td>
<td>963</td>
<td>1,286</td>
<td>1,351</td>
<td>1,234</td>
<td>1,219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nunavut</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>932</td>
<td>1,014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yukon Territory</td>
<td>1,020</td>
<td>1,060</td>
<td>1,307</td>
<td>1,348</td>
<td>1,369</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>371,573</td>
<td>425,332</td>
<td>516,734</td>
<td>593,430</td>
<td>745,254</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 Kindergarten was introduced in Prince Edward Island in 2000. It is now part of the regulated child care system.
2 Quebec’s figures include school-age spaces which are under the Ministry of Education.
3 Ontario’s figures for total regulated spaces may not be comparable from year to year. In some years, ON was not able to determine whether regulated family child care spaces were or were not included in total regulated spaces.
4 School-age child care in Alberta became regulated for the first time in 2004. For purposes of comparison with previous years, the 2003/04 figure for Alberta uses the number of spaces without school-age care; the figure including school-age care appears in brackets. However, the figure including school-age care has been used in calculating this table’s totals.

Source: Friendly and Beach 2005

Table 8 shows how the regulated child care environment is made up of three separate components. Centre care makes up less than 50% of the total regulated care, school age care makes up the next important piece followed by family child care.
TABLE 8: Regulated Child Care Spaces in Canada¹⁷

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province/Territory</th>
<th>Centre Based full and part day child care for preschool-aged children</th>
<th>School – aged child care</th>
<th>Regulated family child care</th>
<th>Total regulated spaces</th>
<th>Percent of children 0-12 for whom there is regulated child care space (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Newfoundland &amp; Labrador</td>
<td>4,103</td>
<td>578</td>
<td>240¹⁸</td>
<td>4,921</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prince Edward Island</td>
<td>3,365¹⁹</td>
<td>695</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>4,1019¹⁹</td>
<td>18.9¹⁹</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nova Scotia</td>
<td>12,600</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>12,579</td>
<td>9.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Brunswick</td>
<td>11,747²⁰</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>11,897</td>
<td>11.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quebec</td>
<td>97,711</td>
<td>141,977²¹</td>
<td>82,044</td>
<td>321,732</td>
<td>29.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ontario</td>
<td>124,292</td>
<td>62,613</td>
<td>19,838</td>
<td>206,743</td>
<td>10.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manitoba</td>
<td>15,299</td>
<td>6,126</td>
<td>4,209</td>
<td>25,634</td>
<td>14.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saskatchewan</td>
<td>4,666</td>
<td>874</td>
<td>2,370</td>
<td>7,910</td>
<td>9.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alberta</td>
<td>41,405</td>
<td>17,767</td>
<td>6,554</td>
<td>47,959 (65,726)²²</td>
<td>(12,7)²³</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British Columbia</td>
<td>39,769</td>
<td>23,089</td>
<td>17,372</td>
<td>80,230</td>
<td>13.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northwest Territories</td>
<td>802</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>256</td>
<td>1,219</td>
<td>13.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nunavut</td>
<td>919</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>1,014</td>
<td>11.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yukon Territory²¹</td>
<td>743</td>
<td>243</td>
<td>383</td>
<td>1,369</td>
<td>29.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>357,421</td>
<td>254,218</td>
<td>133,615</td>
<td>745,254 (calculated)</td>
<td>15.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: The Big Picture, Early Childhood Education and Care in Canada, Child Care Resource Unit, University of Toronto 2004

The average spending per space in each province is another important measure of how provincial governments’ spending on this issue and of the importance they accord to child care quality.

Spending ranges widely from a high of $4,849 per space in Quebec to a low of $1,142 in PEI (see Table 9). Only Quebec has approached a level of spending necessary for a province to have a low-cost high-quality network of child care spaces.

¹⁸ Includes individually licensed and agency approved settings
¹⁹ For the purposes of comparisons with other provinces the figures 1,266 part-day spaces (excluding part-day kindergarten spaces) has been used in calculations.
²⁰ This figures includes school-age child care as breakdown is not available
²¹ Nursery schools (part-time) are not regulated in Quebec, Saskatchewan and Yukon so are not included in these figures
²² School-age children 5-12 is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education (MEQ)
²³ School-age child care in Alberta became regulated for the first time in 2004. For purposes of comparison with previous years, the 2003/04 figure for Alberta uses the number of spaces without school-age care; the figure including school-age care appears in brackets. However, the figure including school-age spaces has been used in the total space calculations and percentage calculation in this table
TABLE 9: Spending per Regulated Space

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province/Territory</th>
<th>2001 $</th>
<th>2004 $</th>
<th>% change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Newfoundland &amp; Labrador</td>
<td>1,835</td>
<td>1,958</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prince Edward Island</td>
<td>1,384</td>
<td>1,142</td>
<td>-14.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nova Scotia</td>
<td>1,125</td>
<td>1,543</td>
<td>37.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Brunswick</td>
<td>1,066</td>
<td>1,168</td>
<td>9.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quebec</td>
<td>4,651</td>
<td>4,949</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ontario</td>
<td>2,608</td>
<td>2,409</td>
<td>-7.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manitoba</td>
<td>2,731</td>
<td>2,848</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saskatchewan</td>
<td>2,279</td>
<td>2,483</td>
<td>9.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alberta</td>
<td>1,206</td>
<td>1,199</td>
<td>-3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British Columbia</td>
<td>2,258</td>
<td>1,754</td>
<td>-22.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yukon Territory</td>
<td>3,294</td>
<td>3,796</td>
<td>15.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northwest Territories</td>
<td>1,298</td>
<td>2,095</td>
<td>60.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nunavut</td>
<td>2,001</td>
<td>1,761</td>
<td>-12.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>3,165</td>
<td>3,223</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Friendly and Beach 2005

Types of child care centres
Today, about 80% of all centre spaces in Canada are non-profit. There are few state operated spots except in Ontario where some municipalities operate child care centers and in Quebec where school boards offer some after school programs (see Table 10). In four provinces — Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, and Ontario — non-profit spaces increased during 2001-2004.

The co-operative child care centres we discuss in the next chapter are all non-profit and thus require an enabling environment that minimally favours, or at least encourages, the establishment of non-profit centres.

The identification of the kind of centre is also important because in a number of recent studies, analyzed by Susan Prentice, the quality of non-profit centres was generally found to be superior to for profit centres.24 “A growing research literature in several countries documents the clear trend of higher quality in non-profit child care, in large part because of the tendency of for-profit programs to “skimp” on a wide range of quality indicators, including those associated with staff.

TABLE 10: Number of not-for-profit (including co-operative) child care spaces compared to for profit child care spaces in each province

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province/Territory</th>
<th>Not-for-profit and publicly-operated¹</th>
<th>For-profit</th>
<th>Percent not-for-profit (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Newfoundland &amp; Labrador</td>
<td>1,242</td>
<td>3,439</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prince Edward Island¹</td>
<td>1,902</td>
<td>2,869</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nova Scotia</td>
<td>6,987</td>
<td>5,613</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Brunswick</td>
<td>not available²</td>
<td>not available³</td>
<td>30⁴</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quebec</td>
<td>210,251</td>
<td>29,437⁵</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ontario</td>
<td>146,786</td>
<td>40,345</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manitoba</td>
<td>19,678</td>
<td>1,747</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saskatchewan</td>
<td>5,540</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alberta</td>
<td>18,843</td>
<td>22,562</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British Columbia⁸</td>
<td>not available</td>
<td>not available</td>
<td>not available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northwest Territories</td>
<td>963</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nunavut</td>
<td>1,014</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yukon Territory</td>
<td>729</td>
<td>257</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada⁹</td>
<td>396,935</td>
<td>106,269</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Full- and part-time spaces may be included in these figures because some provinces cannot provide breakdowns.
2. For the purpose of comparison with other jurisdictions where kindergarten is in the public education system, this figure does not include part-day kindergarten. See PEI section for details.
3. Breakdown of for-profit and not-for-profit spaces not available.
4. Percentage estimate provided by provincial officials, based on the Quality Improvement Funding Support project. See NB section for details.
5. This figure includes school-age spaces which are under the aegis of the Ministry of Education.
6. This figure includes all spaces in non-CPE centres which may be for-profit or non-profit. The majority of garderies are for-profit.
7. This figure includes municipally-operated centre spaces.
8. Information no longer available.
9. Totals do not include British Columbia or New Brunswick. Therefore, the sum of non-profit and for-profit spaces in this table does not equal total spaces in centres in Table 9. Note that both NB and BC – the two provinces that do not provide figures on auspice – have a substantial proportion of for-profit child care.

Source: Friendly and Beach 2005

In a 2005 Canadian study, Cleveland and Krashinsky examined a wide range of non-profit centres including parent-run co-operatives (see Table 11) and found that, on the whole, non-profits including co-operatives had a generally higher standard of quality than for profit centres.²⁵ The Infant-Toddler Environment Rating Scale (ITERS) and the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS), which are global measures of the developmental potential in the classroom, were used to compare the non-profit and commercial child care sectors. This table highlights that co-operative child care centres have a higher rate of quality than most commercial and non profit centres.

TABLE 11: Comparison of child care centre quality between non-profit (including co-operative) and for profit child care centres

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Centre</th>
<th>Average ICERS and ECERS Score</th>
<th>Number of Rooms Represented</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commercial</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single Proprietorship</td>
<td>61.0</td>
<td>29.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partnership</td>
<td>43.0</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporation</td>
<td>56.0</td>
<td>44.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Commercial</td>
<td>45.6</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non Profit</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent Nonprofit</td>
<td>62.3</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Co-operative</td>
<td>60.3</td>
<td>61.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Non profit</td>
<td>63.7</td>
<td>41.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


A study of Quebec centres including co-operatives showed similar trends in quality of care (see Table 12).

TABLE 12: Non-Profit Versus For-Profit in Quebec

![Quality of child care services (N = 1022) Centre-based: non-profit versus for-profit](image)

Source: Christa Japel, Early Childhood Development and Child Care: What Do We Know? Roundtable – Institute for Research on Public Policy, Vancouver March 27th, 2006

**OECD Criticism of Canada**

Canada’s underdeveloped child care system has also come under attack from a major international organization for lagging behind in providing needed child care services. During the last decade, the Organization of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), which represents 30 major industrialized countries, has twice strongly criticized Canada on its backwardness on child care policy. In its 2004 review, OECD experts said
“...it is clear that national and provincial policy for the early education and care of young children in Canada is still in its initial stages. Care and education are still treated separately and coverage is low compared to other OECD countries. Over the coming years, significant energies and funding will need to be invested in the field to create a universal system in tune with the needs of a full employment economy, with gender equity and with new understandings of how young children develop and learn”.

The OECD team also spoke in favour of a non-profit system: “A protective mechanism used in other countries is to provide public money only to public and non-profit services, and then to ensure financial transparency in these services through forming strong parent management boards. At the same time, the provision of services across a city or territory – not least in terms of mapping where services should be placed – should be overseen by a public agency.”

In 2006, the OECD returned with a similar charge and noted in its report that Canada should:

- “Strengthen the present federal/provincial/territorial agreements and focus them as much as possible on child development and learning.
- Encourage provincial governments to develop, with the major stakeholder groups, an early childhood strategy with priority targets, benchmarks and timelines, and with guaranteed budgets to fund appropriate governance and expansion.
- Build bridges between child care and kindergarten education, with the aim of integrating ECEC both at ground level and at policy and management levels.
- Substantially increase public funding of services for young children, ensuring the creation of a transparent and accountable funding system, and for parents, a fairer sharing of ECEC funding.
- Devise an efficient means of funding a universal early childhood service for children 1-6 years, delivered equitably by mixed providers, governed by public agencies”.

---

CHAPTER THREE - Child Care Co-ops in Canada

Portrait of Child Care Co-operatives
According to statistics provided by the Co-operatives Secretariat, there were 410 registered child care co-operatives in Canada in 2005. To this number, one can add three different types of “coop-like” child care organizations:

1. The 68 BC parent participation centres that are non-profit parent-run organizations, very similar to the Ontario preschool co-operatives. Current provincial legislation does not allow for non-profit co-operatives in BC so these centres have no choice but to incorporate as non-profit societies. 29.
2. The 16 Alberta “co-operative playschools” and “co-operative preschools” that are exclusively parent-run, espouse a co-operative philosophy, and use co-operative in their name but are incorporated as non-profit organizations.
3. The 32 parent participation centres in Ontario that are incorporated as non-profit organizations.

Using both these types, there are approximately 526 child care co-operatives and coop-like organizations in Canada.

TABLE 13: Child Care Co-operatives by Province

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>Formal child care co-ops (reporting to governments)</th>
<th>Co-op-like organizations*</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>British Columbia</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alberta</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saskatchewan</td>
<td>104</td>
<td></td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manitoba</td>
<td>42</td>
<td></td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ontario</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quebec</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Brunswick</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nova Scotia</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prince Edward Island</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newfoundland/Labrador</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>410</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>526</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Co-op-like child care organizations are parent participation centres in BC that can become not incorporate as co-ops, co-operative playschools in Alberta, and parent participation centres in Ontario.

Source: Co-operatives Secretariat, parent participation organizations, and provincial governments.

Ontario, Saskatchewan and Manitoba have the largest concentration of formal child care co-operatives, while British Columbia has a considerable number of co-op-like organizations. There are no child care co-ops in the three territories.

Number of co-ops
In the 20-year period between 1984 and 2004, the number of child care co-operatives across Canada grew by 55%, memberships increased by 47%, and employee numbers rose over 67%. In the five-year period between 1999 and 2004, although the number of co-
operatives had dropped slightly, the revenues increased by over $15 million.\textsuperscript{30} While the number of formal child care co-ops (390 reporting in 2004 and 410 in 2005) has declined since the mid-90s, the total has gone down only slightly and remains higher than in the early-90s and before (see Table 14).

**TABLE 14: Child care Co-ops in Canada (1984-2004)**

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{Childcare_Co-ops_in_Canada.png}
\caption{Childcare Co-ops in Canada}
\end{figure}

Source: CCA with statistics from Co-operatives Secretariat 2007

**Memberships**

The number of family members has risen over the last decade and is now back to the late eighties highpoint of over 34,000 families. Co-op child care spaces make up about 6% of all spaces. In Saskatchewan the 12,000 family memberships are an extraordinary force (see Table 15).

However, if we look at the bigger picture, it also means that because the total number of child care spaces have expanded over the years, co-op child care spaces are less important as a percentage of overall child care than it was about a decade ago.

\textsuperscript{30} Co-operative Secretariat Statistics provided in March 2007
TABLE 15: Child care co-op membership in Canada (1984-2004)

![Childcare Co-op Membership in Canada](image)

Source: CCA with statistics from Co-operatives Secretariat 2007

**Staffing**

In 2004, the co-op child care staff level of 1,913 is only slightly down from the high of 2,067 in 1998. The latest report from the Child Care Human Resource Council shows that 96% of Early Childhood Educators are women.

Average wages for child care workers have improved dramatically in Quebec due to a 40% unionization rate and are now around $20 an hour. In the rest of the country, the wages are much lower in co-op centres. Top wages would be about $20/hour for supervisory personnel in preschool centres, while the average wage is more like $11 and benefits are non-existent. Because of these low wages, Ontario job tenure is now at 2.5 years according to the Association for Early Childhood Educators. When all full time daycare centres in Ontario are taken into account, the average wage in the field of early childhood education in Ontario is about $13/hour. Salaries remain extremely low. Centre-based staff earns about 62% as much as all women do:

- All occupations: $38,978
- Women: $34,892
- Centre-based ECEs and assistants: $21,519
- Home-based ECEs and assistants: $14,916

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31 Co-operative Secretariat, 2005 Figures
33 Ibid
Funding

Except for Quebec, the majority of the co-ops’ income comes from parent fees and is supplemented by fundraising, in-kind contributions by parents, and in some cases, government revenue. The latter is predominately in the form of subsidies paid by provincial or municipal governments to daycare co-ops for low-income families who are means-tested. In Ontario, the 47 municipalities provide the subsidies, while in other provinces, such as BC, Manitoba, and Quebec, the subsidies come from the province. There are also wage subsidies paid by the provinces to the centres to increase staff salaries and sometimes extra money for children with special needs.

The fee-for-service system means that child care is unaffordable for many moderate income parents whose incomes are above the cut-offs for subsidies (generally in the $20 – 25,000 range) Therefore child care co-ops work hard to keep fees moderate. This, in turn, affects staff wages and benefits, which account for at least 75% of a child care centre’s budget. Fees vary from province to province and are often different in rural and urban areas.

The latest comparable figures on fees come from the Early Childhood Education and Care report and the following table shows the variation of monthly and daily medium fees across the country. Given that these figures are from 2001, it is estimated that the fees are now approximately 25% higher (see Table 16).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Infants (0-17 months)</td>
<td>$705 $29</td>
<td>$600</td>
<td>$513</td>
<td>$560</td>
<td>$783</td>
<td>$5</td>
<td>$502 $23.20</td>
<td>$24.55</td>
<td>$642 $30</td>
<td>$975 $45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toddlers (18 mos-3 yr)</td>
<td>$662 $28</td>
<td>$532 (19 – 83 mos.)</td>
<td>$443</td>
<td>$603</td>
<td>$5</td>
<td>$490 $22.60</td>
<td>$22.82</td>
<td>$470 $22</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preschool (3-5 years)</td>
<td>$494 $26.74</td>
<td>$409</td>
<td>$376</td>
<td>$541</td>
<td>$5</td>
<td>$425 $19.65</td>
<td>$22.57</td>
<td>$428 $20</td>
<td>$455 $21</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School-Age (3.5 – 11 yrs.)</td>
<td>$288</td>
<td>$244</td>
<td>$217</td>
<td>$10.00</td>
<td>$20.54</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


There have been some provincial programs that provide one-time funding for facilities and equipment or grants for emergency repairs or relocation. Many have been cut as provincial governments have tightened their budgets.
Networks and Regional Councils
Child care co-ops are not well known or understood by the provincial and national child care associations that lend their support and voice to a variety of child care options. As a result, during the recent policy consultations on child care policy, child care co-ops were not invited nor included in the consultations by either governments or general child care organizations.

In British Columbia and Ontario, regional and provincial councils provide support to member child care co-operatives. Through membership fees and some fundraising, these councils are able to provide a variety of important services such as insurance, training, training materials, conferences, workshops, resources, networking and communication opportunities. Councils provide some support for the development of new child care and preschool co-operatives but they lack adequate resources to do this well.

Employer Involvement in Child Care Co-ops
There are a few examples of employer involvement in the start-up and running of co-operatives. Confederation Building Co-operative Day Care, in St Johns, which started in 1987, was supported by the Government of Newfoundland in order to ensure there was child care for its employees. It provided financial assistance to set up the centre and purchased equipment and supplies. It still assumes responsibility for the upkeep and maintenance of the building, and pays for utilities. A government representative attends board meetings.

Campus Child Care Co-operative, of Guelph, is another example of an employer-involved child care co-operative. Thirty-two years ago, the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and the University of Guelph helped start the co-operative. The actual history of the inception has been lost but it is understood that the co-op started with physical space and equipment provided by these two employers. Currently there is no employer involvement, although the bylaws of the co-op require that Ministry and University employees be given priority for the child care spaces. The governance is the same as any non-profit, parent-run and operated child care co-operative.

Co-op Kids, a workplace-based co-op for employees of The Co-operators Group Limited, was founded in 1987. A committee of employees of The Co-operators was formed to survey the staff and determine the need for a daycare centre. The committee approached The Co-operators to provide space in one of their buildings in downtown Guelph. The Co-operators renovated the building to meet the requirements for a child care centre. It continues to maintain the space and provides it to the co-op rent-free. A representative of The Co-operators sits on the board with the elected parents. Preference is first given to employees and then spaces are opened to the community. Currently the enrolment is 60% The Co-operators’ employees. The licensed capacity of the centre is 50 children.

Simon Fraser Children’s Centres, in British Columbia, started in 1965 as a volunteer “family co-op” where adult students brought their children and acted as “duty-shift supervisors.” The university provided a room but no additional facilities such as washrooms. The unlicensed, unincorporated babysitting co-operative operated for many years. In 1975, the need for improved child care on campus increased. Various models were examined and the parent participation model continued to be preferred. The University Governors agreed to build a centre to accommodate up to 150 children.
During the next decade the university financially supported the building of on-campus childcare. At present, the Simon Fraser Children’s Centres is a non-profit facility providing quality care for the children of its students. In recent years, the advantages of a co-operative model that could include parents, staff and a third party, such as the university, has become better known but there are some legal blockages.
PROVINCIAL SUMMARIES

The use of the co-op model for child care delivery varies from province to province. The following section outlines available information on the number and type of child care co-ops, and the enabling environment based on regulation, legal constraints, provincial policy, and supportive child care or co-op organizations.

BRITISH COLUMBIA

Profile
British Columbia does not have registered child care co-operatives because the current British Columbia Co-op Act does not allow for co-ops that are non-profit and do not distribute their surplus. Instead of co-ops, there are 68 “parent participation” preschools (PPPs) across the province, providing preschool programs and incorporated as non-profit organizations. Some are registered charities.

Although the PPPs are not technically co-ops, they refer to themselves as co-ops and embrace the co-operative philosophy. The Council of Parent Participation Preschools uses co-op language to describe some of the attributes of a “parent participation preschool” as follows:

“which was founded by parents and is maintained by parents, …. in which the parents are able to make decisions about the operation of their child’s preschool, in which the parents participate directly in the administration and operation of the preschool,… which maintain a higher than required adult to child ratio … in which a creative learning environment is provided for both children and parents …”

Enabling Environment in British Columbia
The parent participation preschools are licensed under the Provincial Ministry of Health, Community Care and Assisted Living Act and the Child Care Licensing Regulations. Under such licensing, there is no specific provision for co-operative child care, either as preschools or daycare centres. However, according to Dawn Williams, Manager Special Project Child Care with the Ministry of Health, in Part 5, section 51 (2) of the Child Care Licensing Regulations, there is a specific reference to parent participation. All regulations must be met in addition to that section in order to receive a license. The umbrella organizations for the parent preschool programs report that the preschools exceed the Ministry minimum standards.

The Ministry of Children and Family Development funds over 4,000 licensed child care facilities across the province through the Child Care Operating Funding Program (CCOF). This provides a small per diem rate for each child in a licensed program. The fees were reduced by 27% in January 2007. The Ministry has also provided some capital funding for the creation of new child care spaces and up to $5,000 per fiscal year for minor repairs. The PPPs are eligible for CCOF.

34 Council of Parent Participation Preschools website, www.cpppreschools.bc.ca.
Amendments are being proposed to the *Co-op Act* to allow for non-profit co-ops as a separate category of co-op. It would require specific non- alterable provisions that are the same as those governing non-profit organizations under the *Societies Act*.

**Provincial Organizations in British Columbia**

The parent participation preschools are organized under two councils — the Council of Parent Participation Preschools in British Columbia, serving the mainland and interior of BC, and the Vancouver Island Co-operative Preschool Association. These councils are umbrella organizations that have supported parent participation preschools for over 60 years. Staff of the councils is very stable and committed. The purpose of the Councils is to unite and assist member preschools in providing a high standard of preschool education by the supported effort of parents and teachers in a planned adult education program.

The British Columbia Co-operative Association is promoting an amendment to the *BC Co-op Act* and it is supportive of all kinds of new social co-ops including child care co-operatives.

**ALBERTA**

**Profile**

Although the Co-operatives Secretariat does not list any child care co-operatives for Alberta, there are many “co-operative playschools” and “co-operative preschools” that call themselves co-operatives. Similar to the BC preschools, these are non-profit societies run by parents and requiring considerable parent volunteer time. A Google search revealed nine co-op playschools in Edmonton, three in Calgary and four in other parts of Alberta, for a total of 16. There could be more.

Examples are the Riverbend Cooperative Playschool, which has been in operation for over 25 years in Edmonton. It describes itself as “a community owned and parent operated co-operative playschool for children 3 and 4 years of age. We are a non-profit organization funded by tuition and casino proceeds, putting all our funds back into the playschool program”. The Strathcona Nursery School is another parent co-operative playschool that began operating in 1978. Its website says “As a co-operative, we rely heavily on parent involvement to keep our school up and running.”

**Enabling Environment in Alberta**

The Ministry of Children’s Services sets the standards for daycare centres, out of school care centres, family day homes, nursery school programs and drop-in centres that address the health, safety and well-being of children in care. According to interviews with a Licensing Officer and Senior Manager at the Children’s Services Ministry in Alberta, there is no separate distinction for co-operative child care in the *Child and Family Services Authorities Act 2004*.

The Child and Family Services Authorities oversee the delivery of child care in each region and provide parents with a range of child care options. Regulated and approved child care programs are monitored to ensure established standards are met and the children’s health, safety, and well-being are protected.

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35 More information can be obtained on the respective websites - [www.cpppreschools.bc.ca](http://www.cpppreschools.bc.ca) and [www.vicpa.org](http://www.vicpa.org).

All co-ops are incorporated under the *Cooperatives Act*, which is the responsibility of Alberta Government Services. According to Carol Murray, Resource Specialist with the Alberta Community and Co-operative Association, the *Co-operative Act* does not exclude child care but there is no separate distinction for child care co-operatives. There are three separate co-operative distinctions: employment, worker, and multi stakeholder co-operatives.

The Alberta Government has a five-point Early Childhood Development and Child Care Plan, which it announced in 2005. The plan includes increased child care subsidies, more support for pre-school programs and child care staff, and more information for parents. The only benefit for the existing co-op playgroups is that eligible stay-at-home parents can get a new benefit of up to $100 per month to help pay fees for licensed nursery school and other approved early childhood development programs. There is no funding for new centres

The Ministry of Children’s Services suggested that a child care co-operative would be encouraged to apply to the Wild Rose Foundation, a lottery-funded agency, for support, although the criteria for foundation grants does not mention co-operatives as eligible. The Community Initiatives Program in Alberta Tourism, Parks, Recreation, and Culture also provides funds from the Alberta Lottery Fund to enhance and enrich project-based community initiatives throughout Alberta. Funding of up to $75,000 per project is provided for project-based initiatives in the areas of community services, and children’s services and education are included in this category. Only community non-profit groups, municipalities and First Nations bands may apply. One of these supportive organizations could apply on behalf of a new child care co-op group.

**Provincial Organizations in Alberta**

The Alberta Community & Co-operative Association (ACCA) serves co-operatives, credit unions, and agricultural organizations by providing co-op development resources, and a range of other services. ACCA reports that there are no linkages at this time with Children’s Services, although they recognize that the co-operative model would work for child care services.

**SASKATCHEWAN**

**Profile**

There are currently 72 preschool co-ops and 40 daycare co-ops in Saskatchewan, for a total of 112 child care co-ops. This is the second highest number of child care co-ops in Canada. Co-operative child care centres account for approximately 27% of the licensed child care (full daycare) in the province. Child care co-operatives have maintained their numbers for the past 10 years and are still considered a major component of Saskatchewan’s co-op sector of 1,300 co-ops.

37 Co-operative Secretariat Statistics, 2007
Some of the child care co-ops were started because of the policies of the NDP government, which was in power from 1971 to 1982. Allan Blakeney campaigned on a New Deal for People, including improving health and social programs. This government had a policy favouring non-profit co-ops to deliver child care as they were setting up a system of child care services. Many parent-controlled child care co-ops became established in that era and still operate as the most visible child care centres in particular neighbourhoods. Unfortunately the government never provided meaningful support for the development of a federation of child care co-ops nor for training and resources for parent members of boards.

Enabling Environment in Saskatchewan
Child care is the responsibility of the Early Learning and Child Care Branch in the Ministry of Learning. It provides policy and program direction, financial, professional and evaluation supports, and community partnerships related to early childhood development, licensed child care, KidsFirst, and Prekindergarten programs and services. Saskatchewan does not license part-time preschool centres, as child care programs under three hours per day do not fall under the Child Care Act. Therefore, the pre-school co-ops do not require licensing from the province.

All full daycare is licensed and the Child Care Act requires centres to have parental involvement by a parent board of directors or a parent advisory committee. Saskatchewan is generally very supportive of the co-operative model of service delivery; however, in the child care area there is no distinction between non-profit and co-op models for child care. Amendments to the Child Care Act, in 2000, resulted in the collapsing of the non-profit and co-operative sections into one generic model. The government supports non-profit licensed child care centres through the Early Childhood Services Grant, funding for children with special needs, and fee subsidies to parents of a lower income.

In 2003-04, the provincial government announced Child Care Saskatchewan, the largest investment in child care in the history of the province. The goal was to develop 1,200 new licensed daycare spaces by March 2007 and by 2005 it had created 849 new spaces. With additional funding from the federal government in 2005, Saskatchewan renewed its commitment to enhance early learning and child care with the Early Childhood Development (ECD) Strategy, a major interdepartmental initiative. Its goal is to improve outcomes for Saskatchewan children, ensuring they grow up to become well-functioning, contributing members of society.

Even with the change in federal funding, the province is committed to moving forward with this initiative, albeit at a slower rate. On April 4, 2007, Learning Minister Deb Higgins announced a 37% or $11.6 million increase to the early learning and child care budget for 2007-08 for more child care spaces and enhanced programming to fulfill commitments made last year. New enhancements totalling $8.2 million include funding for 500 new child care spaces for 2007-08 at a cost of $1.4 million.

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38 Information from Brett Fairburn, Professor of History, University of Saskatchewan.
39 Brenda Doherty, Director, Program Support & Renewal, Early Learning and Child Care Branch, Department of Learning, Saskatchewan
40 The news release is available at [www.gov.sk.ca/news?newsId=e573b6d9-b3d2-4434-9e51-e0dd527aac1d](http://www.gov.sk.ca/news?newsId=e573b6d9-b3d2-4434-9e51-e0dd527aac1d)
This has resulted in some new co-ops such as Casper’s Early Learning Co-operative Centre, which is a new 26-space child care centre. It officially opened its doors in Carrot River on February 28, 2007. The co-op is located in a former bank building that was renovated with support from local business and volunteers. It can accommodate 11 preschool, seven school age, four infant and four toddlers for a total of 26 children. It took a year for the parents to organize this co-operative child care centre.\(^{41}\)

Saskatchewan is actively encouraging the creation of new child care co-operatives. The *Guide to Developing a Child Care Centre in Saskatchewan* states clearly that a child care organization may be a co-operative that is incorporated, registered and operated under *The Co-operatives Act*. New child care groups can submit a letter of intent to the Program Manager of the Early Learning and Child Care Branch and a community Program Consultant will then be assigned to assist groups through the development and licensing process.

Saskatchewan is also one of the few provinces that has a provincial unit focused on co-operatives and their development. It is located in the Ministry of Regional Economic and Co-operative Development. A Co-operative Development Assistance Program (CDAP) exists to encourage and support the development and expansion of all kinds of co-operative enterprises through funding of up to $10,000\(^{42}\). New co-operatives may receive funding for organizational development costs, feasibility studies, and business and marketing plans.

According to Wayne Thrasher, Manager of Co-operative Development in the Ministry of Regional Economic & Co-operative Development, one of the enabling factors for all co-ops is provincial government support. The branch is working on a new co-op development strategy and setting priorities. It will be working very closely with other government departments, and child care will be considered.

**Provincial Organizations in Saskatchewan**

Presently, the Saskatchewan Co-operative Association (SCA) is conducting a survey and has contacted child care co-operatives to determine the validity and extent of the issues and challenges affecting them. According to Verona Thibault, Co-operative Resource Officer, SCA is doing general development work in reaching out to the 1,300 co-operatives in the province and is trying to engage the child care sector. It wants to identify the issues and needs of child care co-ops and explore the need for a provincial council or federation. The ultimate goal is to develop new co-ops in all sectors with a particular focus on child care.

**MANITOBA**

**Profile**

According to recent data from the Province of Manitoba, there are 50 child care co-operatives with a total of 1,514 spaces. There is no breakdown for preschools and daycare centres. These centres employ 476 staff, which includes all full and part-time staff. With a total of 583 centres and 22,366 spaces in Manitoba, co-operative child care represents

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\(^{42}\) [www.recd.gov.sk.ca/Co-Operative_Development/Cooperative_Development_Assistance_Program.asp](http://www.recd.gov.sk.ca/Co-Operative_Development/Cooperative_Development_Assistance_Program.asp)
close to 9% of all child care in the province.\textsuperscript{43} Co-operative child care in Manitoba has risen 19% in the last 10 years and these co-operatives have over $6 million in revenues and $2 million in assets.\textsuperscript{44}

In general, the large daycare co-ops in the more urban areas follow the parent-board model with a focus on governance and fund-raising involvement. In the more rural and remote communities, there are more preschool co-ops with parent participation in the classroom and assistance to the early childhood educators. The latter allows for lower adult-to-child ratios that exceed the Ministry licensing regulations.

There are some multi-stakeholder co-operative child care models developing in Manitoba. River Avenue Co-operative Day Nursery, in Winnipeg, is a unique extended hour child care facility which runs 18 hours per day (7am-12:30am). It was established to help support shift workers, nurses, and retail workers in the community. It was supported by the Sistar Community Economic Development Co-op in its start-up.

**Enabling Environment in Manitoba**

Child care co-operatives in Manitoba are licensed and regulated by Manitoba Family Services and Housing. The *Community Child Care Standards Act* is the regulatory act for all child care including co-operatives. The *Co-operative Act* in Manitoba does not have a specific section to deal with child care but enables co-operatives to be incorporated to provide any service that the members choose. Once a co-operative is incorporated, it then must seek approval from Family Services and Housing to become a licensed child care provider.

The Manitoba Child Care Program oversees the operation of child care from 12 weeks to 12 years of age in the province. The program is committed to accessible, high-quality child care and offers a number of valuable services. Besides licensing, it provides grants and program assistance to eligible child care facilities and provides child care subsidies to eligible families to help with the cost of care through the Subsidy Program. It also provides supports to the governance structure of the co-operative child care centres should any issues arise around board relations, governance, policies, or skills development for board of directors. The focus is on non-profit governance but not necessarily with a co-operative emphasis.

In 2002, Manitoba launched a five-year Plan for Child Care (2002-2007) to support and expand Manitoba's child care system. The Manitoba Government committed to funding 5,000 more spaces, expanding nursery school programs for three and four-year olds, adjusting subsidy levels, and creating more child care subsidies. One of the priorities of the plan was to ensure the sustainability of existing non-profit early learning and child care centres in Manitoba. They state that “Research clearly demonstrates that a system based on non-profit provision of care is a key determinant of high-quality early learning and child care”\textsuperscript{45} The five-year federal funding commitment to early learning and child care (2005-06 to 2009-10) is built on this plan.

\textsuperscript{43} Margaret Fernilak, New Initiatives/Communications Co-ordinator, Dept. of Family Services and Housing
\textsuperscript{44} Co-operative Secretariat Statistics 2007
\textsuperscript{45} Manitoba’s Action Plan- Next Steps, Healthy Child Manitoba, July 2005.
Since 2006, Manitoba has had Growing Opportunities Teams (GO Teams) throughout the province. Co-operative child care is targeted as a sector to support and licensing specialists are connecting with the GO teams to tap into the wealth, experience and resources that they have to offer. A distinction between the non-profit model and the co-operative model is starting to emerge. There is renewed communication between child care officials and co-operative development officials in Manitoba Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives.

The Cooperative Development Services (CDS) unit provides pathfinding to new and expanding co-ops in matters relating to incorporation, bylaws relative to governance, compliance with co-op legislation, and programs available to assist in the start-up and expansion process. The Manitoba Co-operative Association is also working on this partnership to promote and support community capacity development strategies.

**Provincial Organizations in Manitoba**

The Manitoba Cooperative Association is a provincial association of co-operative organizations, created by its members to enhance and support the development of a united, growing and influential co-operative movement through focused, collective energies and resources. The child care co-ops do not have a provincial federation and none of them belong to the Manitoba Co-op Association. The Manitoba Cooperative Association, in partnership with the Conseil de Développement des Municipalités Bilingues de Manitoba, promotes and assists in the development of co-operatives through the Co-operative Development Initiative (CDI).

Manitoba Child Care Association (MCCA) is the largest voice for child care and is considered the child care voice among early childhood educators and the policy makers in the province. An informal committee meets regularly to discuss child care issues provincially. Representatives include teacher societies, members of MCCA, university and ministry staff. This group makes policy recommendations to the Minister on child care. Co-operative child care is grouped with non-profit child care and the co-operative child care voice is not represented at this committee level.

Frontline staff in the parent-run co-ops do not feel that their issues are being heard nor addressed within the child care associations or the co-operative associations. The need for networking and sharing common goals and concerns came out in the interviews with some directors of the co-ops. This is something that requires further work.

**ONTARIO**

**Profile**

There are 275 child care co-operatives listed by the Co-operatives Secretariat in their 2005 Directory – 20 daycare co-ops and 255 preschool co-ops. There are approximately 32 non-coop parent participation programs in Ontario. With approximately 8,000 families as members and over 500 staff, Ontario has the largest number of child care co-operatives in Canada.

According to information gathered by the Ontario Co-operative Association in conjunction with its Mapping Co-operatives of Ontario project, in 2003-04 co-operative child care is the

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second largest co-op sector in the province.\textsuperscript{47} Eight co-op programs and three parent participation programs have closed in the past two years. Co-op child care is a very small part of the licensed child care in Ontario, which now has over 20,000 licensed centres.\textsuperscript{48}

Ontario has the greatest variety of child care co-operative models in Canada. There are nursery schools, full daycare, and multi-stakeholder co-operatives programs such as the Centertown Parent’s Co-operative Day Care, in downtown Ottawa, where parents and staff are elected to the board. Parents maintain 51\% of the elected and voting positions, and staff the remaining 49\%. The Ottawa centre functions as multi-stakeholder co-op, but is formally incorporated as a parent-run centre.

The child care co-operatives in Ontario were leaders in the start-up of programs for the inclusion of children with special needs. Some feel this is due to the co-operative principles of being community-oriented. With parent participation in the classroom, the adult-to-child ratios are higher and this enables quality learning environments.

**Enabling Environment in Ontario**

Co-operative parent participation programs have been part of the child care sector in Ontario since the 1930s. Incorporation as a co-operative has been in the *Day Nurseries Act*\textsuperscript{49} since its first introduction in the 1950s. The Act specifically refers to those child care centres incorporated under the *Co-operative Corporations Act*.\textsuperscript{50} Some of the older parent participation centres, even those who use “co-op” in their name are incorporated under Part Three of the *Corporations Act*, which is the section for non-profit corporations.\textsuperscript{51}

All programs are based on parent participation in governance and in many nursery schools, parents are involved as teachers in the program. They adhere to the ratios established by the *Day Nurseries Act*, which in turn exceeds the minimum provincial standards for adult to child ratios in regular child care.

Ontario has a Best Start plan for child care, early learning and healthy development of children under six years of age. The plan includes a massive expansion of child care, more child care subsidies, Best Start neighbourhood hubs that provide one-stop services for families, and services to support healthy development, including infant hearing programs, preschool speech and language programs. The goal is to create 25,000 new spaces by April 2008 in co-operation with local municipalities, and there is a priority to create new centres in Ontario’s publicly funded schools. Almost 15,000 new licensed child care spaces province-wide were created by January 2007.

The Ministry of Finance handles incorporation of co-operatives through the Financial Services Commission of Ontario. There is no co-operative development program within the Ontario government, although work is currently underway to create a unit similar to those in Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Quebec.

**Provincial Organizations in Ontario**

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\textsuperscript{47} Denyse Guy, Executive Director, Ontario Co-operative Association

\textsuperscript{48} Janine Mitchell, Team Leader Children’s Services, Ministry of Children & Youth Services, Ontario

\textsuperscript{49} www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/DBLaws/Regs/English/900262_e.htm

\textsuperscript{50} ibid

\textsuperscript{51} ibid
In Ontario, child care is not represented by one umbrella association. There are at least 16 provincial associations focused on individual sectors or groups of child cares in the province, such as home care, unionized centres, family resource programs, and Early Years centres.

Ontario has unique infrastructure to support co-operative child care in Canada. In recent years, seven umbrella co-operative councils provided the preschool child care co-ops with a myriad of services such as technical support, consultation services, insurance, and educational opportunities to its membership. However, due to a reduced number of volunteers, only three councils remain, serving large geographical areas. Each of these regional councils varies in its membership fees, and services.

The Parent Cooperative Preschool Corporation (PCPC), with 81 members is able to hire an Executive Director and provide more technical support, board training and services than the two smaller councils. The Hamilton and District Council of Co-operative Preschools has a membership of 28 co-operative or parent participation preschools in Hamilton-Niagara- Lake Erie area of the province. Shoreline Co-operative Preschools Association’s membership is based in the City of Mississauga, Peel Region, Guelph-Kitchener-Waterloo area and London with 30 preschools/parent participation centres and child cares.

The Organization for Parent Participation in Childcare and Education (OPPCEO) is a provincial federation of the three regional councils and many independent member centres in Ontario, serving over 200 nursery school and child care centres, in addition to some auxiliary services, such as toy libraries, parent resource centres and school age daycare programs. The members represent approximately 8,000 families.

OPPCEO provides the councils with networking opportunities and connections to the larger co-operative sector through membership with Ontario Co-operative Association. OPPCEO and its three member councils strive to keep the co-operative child care model supported and marketed but struggle with fierce competition with other child care support organizations and lack of funding.

The Ontario Co-operative Association (OnCo-op) is a key resource for the development and enhancement of all co-operatives and credit unions, providing a common voice and support for Ontario’s diverse co-operative sector. OnCo-op staff sees unlimited possibilities for co-operative child care especially for rural areas and communities serving new Canadians. The OPPCEO is a member and the Executive Director is on the On Co-op Board.

Both OnCo-op and the Conseil de la cooperation de l’Ontario (CCO) receive Co-operative Development Initiative funding to assist with the development of new co-ops. CCO has been working with francophone child care co-operatives to create a federation to enable
them to network and address common issues. Centres in this network range from 20 families in the smallest co-ops to approximately 150 families in the largest.\textsuperscript{52}

OnCo-op has linked co-operative child care with the co-operative housing sector. Dale Regan from the Co-operative Housing Federation sees “enormous potential of the child care co-op model.” He suggests that new Canadians, who often are familiar with co-ops, are a potential market for child care co-ops.\textsuperscript{53}

\section*{QUEBEC}

\subsection*{Profile}
Child care centres in Quebec are known as Centres de la petite enfance or CPEs. There are 1,000 CPEs in the province. There are 15 child care co-operatives listed by the Co-operative Secretariat in their 2005 Directory. Of this number, 14 are child care centres with a total membership in 2004 of 2,088 parents. The organization of child care centres, Association québécoise des Centres de la petite enfance, (AQCPE) lists 16 on its records.\textsuperscript{54} While child care co-operative centre numbers have remained more or less static in the last decade, parent member numbers and children served are up.\textsuperscript{55}

Co-ops are really a small part of child care field in Quebec; however, it must be emphasized that all CPEs have taken on coop-like functioning in that the law mandates their boards to be two-thirds parents who are elected at annual meetings. The CPEs view themselves as social economy enterprises rather than part of the traditional private sector. As a statement from the AQCPE says: “Parents are masters of the work of educating their children. CPEs are private and autonomous social economy enterprises, non-profit and democratically administered by the parents, who use their services. Forming two-thirds of the boards of administration, parents are at the heart of all CPE decisions.”\textsuperscript{56}

Three of the co-ops are multi-stakeholder or solidarity co-operatives located in the Eastern Townships. Unlike the multi-stakeholder co-operatives in the Ottawa region, these are legal solidarity co-ops. They have a membership of workers, parents and community representatives. See case studies in Appendix One for more details.

Two of the co-ops are not centres. The Coopérative enfance famille\textsuperscript{57} is a co-operative that offers information services on family resources, health and child care availability as well as a registration system for the waiting list of several daycare services. The WWWWilliam Co-op is a purchasing co-operative formed in September 2006 and associated with the AQCPE. It has 430 child care centres as members.\textsuperscript{58} WWWWilliam Co-op already has sales of $100 million and hopes to save the CPEs $10 million.

As long as the Quebec government supports the CPEs with major funding and promotes the non-profit model as the preferred model for child care delivery, it is unlikely that child care co-ops will grow in numbers. However, it is a testament to the strength of the co-op

\textsuperscript{52} Dominique Guinette, Co-operative Developer, Conseil del la cooperation de l’Ontario
\textsuperscript{53} Dale Regan Managing Director, Ontario Region, Co-operative Housing Federation, interview
\textsuperscript{54} Interview with Jean Robitaille Executive Director of AQCPE April 2007
\textsuperscript{55} See Table in the Appendix
\textsuperscript{56} http://www.aqcpe.com/CPE/CPE-cest-quoi.html
\textsuperscript{57} http://www.enfancefamille.org/en/
\textsuperscript{58} Interview with Jean Robitaille Executive Director of AQCPE April 2007 and information from https://www.william.coop/fr/1041/index.php
movement in Quebec that other new co-ops, such as purchasing and service co-ops, have developed and this relationship will keep the co-op traditions linked to child care.

**Enabling Environment in Quebec**

After the Social and Economic summit of 1996, the Quebec government announced, in 1997, a family policy to create a Quebec child care system where parents could pay $5 a day per child. This latter figure was raised to $7 in 2004 and the system, in 2007, has approximately 200,000 spaces. Quebec has the highest percentage of children in organized child care at 29%.

Both the Liberal (PLQ) and Parti Québécois (PQ) promised to create 20,000 new spaces in the 2007 election campaign, the PLQ by 2012 and the PQ by 2010. The PQ promised to hold fees at $7. The ADQ did not promise to increase spaces but to help families not using child care. This target number of new needed spaces is also endorsed by the AQCPE.

The AQCPE claims that once this new target of regulated spaces is met, almost all children who need a regulated space will have one. Presently the lack of spaces is especially chronic in the Greater Montreal region.  

All CPEs are non-profit social enterprises chartered by the Quebec government. They receive $18 to $19 a day per child from the province along with the parental fee. The number of spaces allotted is fixed by the government. The law regulating child care (Bill 124 passed in 2004) makes explicit reference to co-operatives as one of the two models of governance allowed for CPEs and details the governance functioning.

The Quebec government has favoured the non-profit model for child care. This occurred in part because of the history of the CPE. Six hundred existing non-profit centres transformed themselves into CPEs starting in 1997. One co-op director said that the co-operative movement missed an important opportunity at the time of the CPE creation. The vast majority of the co-operatives that continue to exist were established before the 1996 reform. Only one child care co-op has been established since 2000. As well, several of the people interviewed for this paper said it was easier to form a non-profit than to form a co-op and that it was particularly easier to open up the board of a non-profit centre to community membership. This is not possible in a co-op unless the co-op is a multi-stakeholder model.

**Provincial Organizations in Quebec**

In Quebec non-profit CPE child care centres, including co-operatives, are represented by their umbrella organization, Association québécoise des centres de la petite enfance, which was created in 2003 and has 1000 members. AQCPE has 12 regional bodies as well as housing the purchasing co-op and a mutual organization, La Mutuelle de prévention des CPE. This co-op, with CPEs as members, was set up in 2002 to reduce the health and safety fees CPEs pay to the CSST (the Quebec Workers Health and Safety agency) by helping to reduce accidents.

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59 Ibid
61 Interview Jean Robitaille
There are no child care co-operative organizations in Quebec but co-operatives do participate in the regional Coopératives de développement régionale (CDRs). The CDRs are regional co-operative development organizations and they, in turn, are part of the Conseil québécois de la coopération et de la mutualité, the provincial co-operative organization. An attempt is now being made to develop a greater level of co-operation between child care co-ops, with the possible formation of an organization or federation. 62

The AQCPE is also part of the Chantier de l'économie sociale, the umbrella organization for the social economy in Quebec.

NEW BRUNSWICK

Profile
There are three co-operatives in New Brunswick — two daycare and one nursery school. The nursery school program includes children aged two to five years, and parents are part of the staffing complement. Parents assist the early childhood educator in each classroom according to the ratios established by the provincial legislation.

In the communities where a co-operative centre is located, it is a popular model. Enrolment has stayed steady and co-ops have been pro-active by accepting two-year olds when public kindergarten was introduced in 2001.

The West Side Co-op Preschool, in Saint John, has operated for over 25 years. This parent-run, play-based preschool centre cares for children from 18 months to four years of age. Literacy is a primary focus and the co-op won the Lieutenant-Governor Early Childhood Literacy Award in 1999. This co-op is described further in Appendix One.

Enabling Environment in New Brunswick
The Family Services Act Part II Community Placement Resources and the Day Care Regulation 83-85 provide the regulations for all licensed child care in the province. Non-profit daycare centres are regulated under section 26 (2) of the Day Care Regulation. It states that not less than 25% of the members of the Board of Directors shall be parents of children enrolled in the daycare centre. Legislation permits parent volunteers in co-operative programs to be counted in the staff-child ratio. Co-operatives are not explicitly named in the legislation, although it does not restrict or prohibit co-operative child care or parent participation programs.

The Department of Family & Community Services is responsible for child care in New Brunswick and provides subsidies for low income parents. It also operates the Quality Improvement Funding Support program, which provides funding for approved child daycare facilities to increase the availability and quality of child daycare services. The funding can be used to enhance wages of employees, provide professional development opportunities for all child daycare staff, and purchase equipment and materials for use by children.

62 Interview Bernard Beaupré, Director, Coopérative de solidarité, CPE Le Bilboquet
In April 2001, the provincial government launched *Greater Opportunities for New Brunswick Children: An Early Childhood Development (ECD) Agenda* with program enhancements and new initiatives to invest in the development of young children and give all children the strongest start possible. Federal funding was used to improve child care and many other services benefiting children such as improving the health of pregnant women and their newborns, supporting mothers and young children living in transition houses, and increasing the availability of community-based services. Funding for new spaces was not part of this agenda.

The quality and quantity of New Brunswick’s child care services are very low, with only enough regulated early learning and child care spaces for 14% of children under 12.\(^3\) In New Brunswick, over three quarters of mothers with young children are working, a higher rate than the Canadian average. In 1998, New Brunswick’s annual child care allocation of $46 per child was the second lowest in the country, compared with $255 spent by Quebec\(^4\)

While there is the need to start new child care centres in New Brunswick, there are no resources to help with their development or to assist with start-up funds.

**Provincial Organizations in New Brunswick**

There is no provincial English-speaking co-op organization in the province to represent and help co-operatives. The Conseil Acadien de la Coopération (Nouveau-Brunswick) is a federation of francophone co-ops in the province. Child care co-ops would like to network with other co-ops and child care centres in general.

The New Brunswick Child Care Coalition (NBCCC) is a bilingual, membership-based organization that promotes high quality, universally accessible, non-profit, publicly funded child care, with well-trained and well-remunerated staff, for all New Brunswick families who want or need it.

**NOVA SCOTIA**

**Profile**

In 2007 there is only one co-operative nursery school program in operation in Nova Scotia in spite of statistics that show there are three child care co-ops. One centre closed in the spring of 2006 and the other listed program has been inactive for over a year. La Frimousse Pre-School Co-operative Limited, incorporated in 2003, is located in the Acadian community of Pomquet, near Antigonish.

**Enabling Environment in Nova Scotia**


Child care is the responsibility of the Early Learning and Child Care Branch of the Nova Scotia Department of Community Service. The provincial government announced its Early

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\(^3\) Caring About Self-Sufficiency, New Brunswick Child Care Coalition Brief, March 2007

\(^4\) Annual allocation to regulated child care for each child in the province 0-12 years – 1998, *The Big Picture*
Learning and Child Care Plan in May 2006, with a commitment to spend more than $130 million to create 1,000 more licensed day-care spaces over the next 10 years. The plan also calls for increased subsidized spaces and ongoing support for the child care sector.

A child care operating grant is a key part of the Early Learning and Child Care Plan and is available to licensed commercial and non-profit full-day child care centres. Centres will receive $8 per day for each space occupied by an infant, and $3 per day, for children 18 months old to school age. The grant will replace the salary enhancement, equipment, infrastructure, and infant care grants that had been issued to non-profit child care centres.

A representative from Family and Community Services said there was nothing to prevent the start-up of a child care co-op but that she was not familiar with the concept of co-ops in the child care field. She also felt that the department’s staff should consider this as an area to research.

Fred Pierce, Business Development Officer with the Nova Scotia Co-operative Council reported that there are barriers in legislation for child care co-operatives. The Co-operative Associations Act requires limited liability insurance coverage for directors and officers, with a premium cost of over $1,000 annually. Because of this, groups who are starting up a daycare or nursery school prefer to incorporate under the Societies Act, which does not have this expensive requirement. Non-profit status is assured under either act.

**Provincial Organizations in Nova Scotia**

The Nova Scotia Co-operative Council is the provincial development arm of the co-operative and credit union system and represents approximately 250 co-operative enterprises. The Council provides supports and services to individuals and groups considering the co-operative model for their business and has three offices in the province. The Council has a good relationship with the Department of Community Services and would be willing to work with any group that was interested in developing a co-operative child care centre. The Conseil Coopératif Acadien de la Nouvelle-Écosse is a federation of francophone co-ops in the province.

The Nova Scotia Child Care Association is focused on professional development and services to early childhood educators. There does not seem to be any interest in the different organizational forms of child care.
PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

Profile
There is only one child care co-operative in the province and it provides a kindergarten program under contract with the Ministry of Education. Kids Co-op in Montague, PEI operates a program for five-to-six year olds, from September to May, in a nursery school setting. It is parent-owned and the board recently undertook a full review of its bylaws to better meet the guidelines of the Co-operatives Associations Act and comply with Ministry of Education requirements. A representative of the Ministry is on the Board.

A new development is the starting of the LEAP Co-op (Launching Entrepreneurial Advantage for Parents) on the east side of the island. It has set up a sheltered workshop and has a plan to start a child care support system. Funding from the Co-operative Development Initiative (CDI) and the CED Technical Assistance Program (CEDTAP) was used for the planning.

Enabling Environment in Prince Edward Island
The PEI Child Care Facilities Board is responsible for licensing child care and early childhood programs. The Board is also responsible for monitoring and investigating complaints. It reports to the Ministry of Education of Prince Edward Island. Licenses are issued as Type I or Type II. Type I centres are a facility where the primary objective is to provide an early childhood development program emphasizing age-appropriate activities. Type II licensing is for home care and before and after school programs.

The Department of Social Services and Seniors administers the Child Care Subsidy Program to help parents with the cost of licensed child care. A full or partial subsidy is available. Subsidies are used to pay tuition costs for early childhood programs licensed by the Child Care Facilities Board. This includes daycare centres, nursery programs, family daycare homes, and before and after school programs.

On February 15, 2007 the Premier of PEI announced a new plan for early learning and child care, Investments in Early Learning for Preschool Children and Families of Prince Edward Island. PEI will spend $4.2 million to support strategic investments in early learning over the next three years. The four key areas are better access and affordability for child care programs through increased subsidies, greater stability in the licensed child care sector by providing predictable, on-going funding through direct funding grants to licensed child care programs, an Early Years Information Campaign, and more research and evaluation. There was no commitment to create new spaces.

The revised funding system was developed in partnership with the Early Childhood Development Association, Early Learning Operators of PEI and La Federation de Parents de l’IPE.

The Co-operative Associations Act allows individuals to start a co-op but organizations such as the Ministry of Education or any other group can have representation on the board at a later date through bylaw changes. It is also possible for early childhood educators to create a worker co-op. There is no funding for the start-up of new child care centres.

**Provincial Organizations in Prince Edward Island**
The Early Childhood Development Association of Prince Edward Island is a professional association of early childhood educators committed to promoting and supporting the quality of early learning and child care programs. It is affiliated with the Canadian Child Care Federation. The co-operative staff is not involved with this association.

As with New Brunswick, there is no provincial co-operative for English-speaking co-ops. Le Conseil de développement coopératif de l'Île-du-Prince-Édouard represents francophone co-ops.

**NEWFOUNDLAND and LABRADOR**

**Profile**
In Newfoundland and Labrador there are five registered child care co-operatives — three co-operative nursery schools and two daycare centres. The nursery school in Labrador City is temporarily closed while the Board searches for a new location.

The Confederation Building Daycare Centre Co-operative Society, is located at the provincial legislature providing child care for government staff and legislators. Confederation Co-op provides part time or full time care for children of provincial government employees.

**Enabling Environment in Newfoundland and Labrador**
The *Child Care Services Act* sets out the regulations required for opening and operating a child care facility. The Act does not distinguish between a child care co-op and a non-profit child care centre.

The *Co-operatives Act* sets out the regulations to operate a co-operative society in Newfoundland and Labrador and requires that all co-operatives in the province file with the Registry of Co-operatives, Department of Government Services, Commercial Registrations Division. Nothing prohibits the operation of a child care centre. The legislation also provides for “community service co-ops” that do not pay dividends to members but retain profits within the business for its future development.

In the province of Newfoundland and Labrador, child care is supervised by Regional Public Health Authorities. Each region has staff responsible for ensuring that all licensed centres are in compliance with the *Child Care Services Act* and the accompanying regulations. According to Jackie Whelan, Director of Child Care for Labrador/Grenville Region Public Health, parent involvement is especially encouraged when start-ups are being considered. The current emphasis of the public health authorities is on non-profit centres.

In May 2006, the provincial government announced its Early Learning and Child Care Plan. Through this initiative, the government will make child care services more affordable for families, improve recruitment and retention of individuals working in the child care
sector, create additional capacity in the system with a focus on rural areas, and enhance developmental opportunities and inclusion of children with special needs. The goal is to create 16 new child care centres and 200 new child care spaces in rural communities based on need, interest and capacity. There is start-up funding for new centres.

Gail Pike, President of the Newfoundland-Labrador Federation of Co-operatives (NLFC) and a retired early childhood educator, reports that the administrative burden to start a new centre is considerable and discouraging for busy parents. A new co-op takes approximately a year to start and the provincial staff person responsible for co-operatives does not have the time to work with the families. NLFC hopes to have more co-op development officers in the field who are trained in starting up various types of co-ops, including child care.

**Provincial Organizations**

The Association of Early Childhood Educators of Newfoundland and Labrador and the Child and Youth Care Association of Newfoundland & Labrador are the two provincial associations concerned about child care in the province. The co-op child care staff is affiliated with the professional association in order to have professional development training available to them.

The Newfoundland-Labrador Federation of Co-operatives is the central agency representing the collective interests of the co-operative business sector in the province. NLFC promotes the co-operative business model and supports the growth and development of co-op enterprise. There is a network of developers across the province and the Federation works closely with government departments and community economic development agencies. This is the only province where all the child care co-ops are members of the regional co-operative organization.
CHAPTER FOUR – International Perspectives

The United States, New Zealand and the United Kingdom were initially chosen to be studied because of the development of co-operative child care in these countries as well as the ease of obtaining data. Unfortunately, there was a similar lack of information on child care co-ops in the United States and the United Kingdom as in Canada. As well, co-op child care is also a small percentage of the overall child care delivery system in these two countries.

Only in New Zealand, where 12% of licensed centres in the country are co-operatives, does co-op child care play a significant role. This makes New Zealand, a small country of only 4.1 million, one of the most important countries in terms of child care co-operatives.

UNITED STATES

Facts
According to the Dunlap Survey, conducted by US’s National Business Co-operative Association (NCBA) and released in 2000, there are approximately 1,000 child care co-operatives in the United States. This is a reduction in overall numbers from 5,000 in the 1960s. The study did not include licensing spaces or staff numbers, nor did it break out whether they were preschools or daycare.

Of the 1,000 child care co-operatives, 200 co-ops are members of Parent Co-operative Preschools International (PCPI), the same organization with which many Canadian co-ops are affiliated.

The Centre for Co-operatives at the University of Wisconsin, in conjunction with the NCBA, is presently conducting a survey of co-operatives in the United States. It will include economic impact data, member surveys, and sector data that will yield more information on child care co-operatives across the US. It will be completed later in 2007.

There has always been a strong link between co-ops in the United States and Canada. Since the inception of the co-operative concept, parents on the both sides of the border have communicated and shared experiences. Over the years particular links have been created between child care co-op councils that share geography or language. British Columbia, Oregon and California used to meet to share experiences. Similar meetings occurred in the east with Indianapolis and Indiana usually joining the Michigan/Ontario groups. When Quebec had a co-op council, it often joined its counterparts in Maryland and Virginia. Although this link is now weakened, a few representatives meet annually to discuss issues and concerns.

Enabling Environment
The American child care co-ops operate in a very unregulated environment. The National Association for Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (NACCRA) rated the child care licensing standards and enforcement efforts of all 50 states, the District of Columbia

66 Katharine Whiteside Taylor, Parents and Children Learn Together.
67 PCPI Directory, 2006
68 Jean Stevenson, Past President of Parent Co-operatives Preschools International, interview
and centers operated by the Department of Defense. The greatest criticism by the Association was that state standards are far below what they need to be to truly provide appropriate environments for children. Nearly all states fail to adequately monitor programs with regular in-person inspections and the majority of states do not license or monitor part-time programs.

Some states, however, have excellent licensing standards, some invest in subsidized child care, some have requirements for staff training, and some have good staff-child ratios. In California, there are licensing statutes specific to preschool co-ops, requiring ratios of one-to-five in the classroom. NACCRRA rated New York, Illinois, Washington, Maryland, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Michigan, North Dakota, Vermont and Minnesota as the top 10 states for child care.

The federal government does not play a role in child care in the US. The only help from the federal government is getting not-for-profit and charitable status. The United States Internal Revenue Service Codes 501(c)3 and 501(c)4 are specific to not-for-profit status. Co-op child care experts report that obtaining not-for-profit status is a very involved process and they recommend starting with obtaining this status at the state level first, since grants are available to assist the parents with filing the application.

In the absence of strong state standards, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), a professional association, has developed a Code of Standards. Individual child care centres including co-ops strive to meet these standards for ratios, programming goals, staff qualifications, and physical environment. Knowledgeable parents seek centres which have met these standards. There is a voluntary commitment in writing from each centre to establish and maintain the standards. With encouragement from PCPI, all their 200 co-op members have received certification from NAEYC.

Many other child care co-ops have NAEYC certification. A co-op can then advertise that it has achieved this status and this helps in recruiting members.

Co-operative nursery school programs have been operating since 1927 in the state of California. Many co-op schools have long established agreements with local school boards and social planning councils to provide resource and referral networks, and connections to kindergarten and pre-kindergarten teachers. However, constant work is needed by the California Council of Parent Participation Nursery Schools and their members to show how valuable this connection is to the families who are members of the co-ops. New municipal councillors have to be educated after each election and value proven for the services provided.

California, Indiana, Illinois, Oregon (included state of Washington), Maryland and Virginia have umbrella “councils” for co-op child care which provide support to member centres with board training, staff training, insurance, local networking, and annual conferences. Michigan has regional councils that provide similar support. All are funded by member dues and fundraising. Some councils help with the start-up new child care co-ops.

69 National Association for Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies We Can Do Better: NACCRRA’s Rank of State Child Care Centre Standards and Oversight (March 2007) www.naccrra.org
70 Ibid
71 Kathy Ems, Past Chair and now Chair of School Relations, Parent Co-operative Preschools of Oregon (PCPO) and Susie Stone Past Chair, California Council of Parent Participation Nursery Schools in California, Interviews
Co-operative Models
Parents in the United States are concerned about the quality of care their children receive. By getting involved with a co-op they are able to have a say in that issue. The accreditation that most co-ops have received from NAEYC assures parents of a better quality of program and staffing. In those communities where a co-op is located, parents seem to prefer the program offered and will even arrange with their employer to have time away from their work to participate in the co-op.72

As noted in the history of child care co-ops, the co-operative child care model originated in the United States. Parent participation and the co-operative model have deep roots in many communities and waiting lists are not uncommon. Parents understand the advantages of a parent participation program and are willing to adjust their personal work schedules to belong to a co-op. Child care co-ops promote developmentally appropriate programming which is popular among parents.

Burgundy Farm Country Day School, in Alexandria, Virginia, is a parent-run co-operative that provides education for children from nursery school through to the end of high school. Founded in 1946, the parents own and operate the school. The objective of the school is to provide an education for the “whole child for the whole world” and the teachers have created a “hands on” program for the children.

In Philadelphia, Childspace Management Group (Childspace)73 has become a well-known worker co-operative, unusual for this field. It operates three child care centers in inner city Philadelphia. The owners are the early childhood educators and other staff, as well as a not-for-profit corporation that is responsible for training programs. Eight parents serve on the board as advisors.

Childspace set out to provide affordable and high quality daycare in low-income neighbourhoods, while improving the pay and working conditions of child care workers. The Training Branch of Childspace instructs educators, parents and other employees in early childhood education and governance. It has also created a separate non-profit, Childspace Cooperative Development, to replicate its worker-owned model in other locations and has already been successful in three states. This worker co-op model has potential to be replicated in other countries.

Historically, various unions, such as garment workers and auto workers, established child cares in co-op housing projects or in off-site locations as a service to their members. Based on the Dunlap Survey, most of these are still operating.

Washington State has more child care co-ops because many of the co-operatives are under the umbrella of a state college that provides supervision and regulation. This is encouraged by state legislation and the college takes on responsibility for ensuring a quality program.

Challenges & Opportunities
The American experts contacted during this research agreed that the two-income family is the biggest challenge to child care co-ops. The volunteer component of being involved in a

72 Leta Mack, President PCPI, interview
73 Cindy Coker, Childspace Management Group, interview
co-operative can be demanding for young families to fulfil. Many parents negotiate time off work to be able to offer in-kind services at the co-op or participate in monthly duty days. However, the traditional “duty day,” where the parent works beside the teacher as part of the teaching staff, is starting to be eroded. If a parent cannot negotiate with an employer to take time from work to do a “duty day,” then there is an additional fee to compensate.

Lack of knowledge about the co-operative model is another issue that challenges US child care co-ops. There is a need to produce research studies that demonstrate the value of co-operative programs for child care. The information could be used to educate politicians, national and state child care and co-operative associations, and parents.

Similar to British Columbia, Oregon co-operative legislation does not allow for non-profit co-operatives although many centres still call themselves parent co-operative preschools. Oregon’s child care legislation does not require licensing if the program operates for less than four hours a day and as a result, full daycare programming is not generally pursued because co-ops do not want to go through the licensing process. There is an opportunity to extend programs to accommodate working parents and some co-ops are pursuing it.

**NEW ZEALAND**

**Facts**
The New Zealand Playcentre Federation has 508 co-operative centres under its umbrella. Child care co-operatives are very important as 12% of licensed centres in the country are co-operatives.

All centres are staffed by trained parent volunteers according to ratios established with the Ministry of Education: one-to-one for children less than two years of age and five-to-one for children over two years of age. Children of school age are not enrolled in the programs. Average enrolment in each centre is approximately 20 families. Parents must take training courses (up to six courses) to become a “staff person” in the centre. Each centre has at least three parents on duty at all times — one parent with minimum Course 3, another with minimum Course 2, and one with Course 1. The Playcentre Federation has a separate agreement with the Qualifications Authority for licensing and volunteer qualifications that recognizes the uniqueness of co-operatives.

**Enabling Environment**
The Strategic Plan for Early Childhood Education, prepared by the Ministry of Education in 2002, is the regulation under which child care programs are operating at this time. This framework is being used while a 10-year regulatory review is being undertaken. New Zealand is now at the half-way point of the plan.

The Strategic Plan includes support for parent participation. It also recognizes that the skills the parents are learning in governing the centre are transferable to other situations. Every member has a job in the co-operative and there are information evenings for the membership to network and share experiences.

74 www.ecd.govt.nz
The Ministry of Education has also published a paper entitled *Parent as First Teachers* (PAFT), which is part of the Strategic Plan. It documents a strong sense of obligation to the parents in New Zealand.\(^7\) The long-term planning on the part of the New Zealand Government, which is currently underway for early childhood education, covers many aspects of care and education for preschool aged children in the country.

The New Zealand Qualification Authority supervises the guidelines for parent/teachers in licensed child care centres, including standards of training for all staff and volunteers. Funding from the Authority has been made available to the Federation and its membership to support parent education courses. The Authority feels that society benefits from the knowledge parents gain from the courses.

The New Zealand Playcentre Federation was formed in 1947 when the government of the day made a commitment to the Maori, New Zealand’s indigenous people, for early childhood education.\(^7\) The Playcentres were able to come to an agreement with the government to provide parenting training along with early childhood programs.

At this time, there is no formal training for co-operative management available but the Federation is looking into possible training opportunities for its membership. One venue could be through the New Zealand Co-operative Association. At this time the Federation is not a member of the Association.

**Co-operative Models**

The child care co-ops in New Zealand are parent-owned and operated. There is no paid staff. Member families are responsible for governance as well as operations. Each member is assigned a “job” when she/he joins the centre. Most centres are small and face the challenges of a lower birth rate and mothers going out to work, which reduces the number of available families to enrol. However, mothers on maternity leave are encouraged by the government to enrol in the courses for parent education while their children are enrolled in the infant/toddler program.\(^7\)

The co-operative model works well for the indigenous people of New Zealand for whom the programs were originally created. The democratic process of co-operatives fits the culture of the Maori, who view the family as the fundamental unit in society and the most important setting for the nurture and education of children.\(^7\) Co-ops become an extension of the family as they are controlled by parents. The long-time government commitment for early childhood education has helped in the success of the Playcentres, which are near Maori communities.

Since 1947, other communities have observed the advantages that early childhood education provides children and have established co-ops for themselves.

**Challenges & Opportunities**

New Zealand’s model for child care co-ops is challenging. The time commitment and the compulsory parent education training can make involvement difficult. Birth rates in New Zealand have fallen...
Zealand are declining with fertility rates of 1.9 children per woman in 2002, compared with the high of 4.3 births recorded in 1961. More mothers are heading off to work and can no longer volunteer for extended periods in the centres.

The Strategic Plan for Early Childhood Education has created opportunities for the Playcentre Federation to improve the programs of its member centres. Centres meeting the new standards will be recognized as “Centres for Innovation.” These Centres must show that they meet stringent requirements such as partnership with parents, quality infant and toddler care and education, quality interactions, and innovative implementation of programs. 

**UNITED KINGDOM**

**Facts**
There is a lack of concrete data on child care co-ops in the UK. According to the Institute for Public Policy Research, there were 80 child care co-operatives in the United Kingdom in 2005. Since 2005, Imagine Co-operative has opened or converted 11 centres under its umbrella and Co-operatives UK identified nearly 90 previously unknown child care co-operatives during a special child care project. In addition to this information, a survey of child care organizations in Scotland revealed that 32% or 96 organizations were organized as parent co-ops. This means that there are 277 child care co-ops in the UK.

Child care co-ops in the UK are successful because they contrast with the commercial daycare centres that are of poor quality and expensive. Additionally, they provide a way for parents to influence the nature and type of care for their children.

**Enabling Environment**
In 1998, the Labour Government introduced the National Child Care Strategy, a 10-year plan to create accessible, affordable and quality child care for children up to age 14 (and to 16, for those with special educational needs or disabilities) in every neighbourhood. The goal was up to one million new child care places by March 2004.

The components of the strategy were:
- Education places available to all four year olds, extended to all three year olds by 2004
- Up to 100 Early Excellence Centres, bringing together daycare, early education and family support by 2004
- The Neighbourhood Nurseries Initiative to bring 45,000 new affordable child care places to deprived areas by 2004
- The national Sure Start program, bringing a range of services to families with children under four years of age in deprived neighbourhoods
- New Opportunities Fund for out-of-school schemes

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80 Ministry of Education, New Zealand
81 “Co-operative Social Enterprise and its Potential in Public Service Delivery” Howard Reed & Kate Stanley, Institute for Public Policy Research, London England 2005
82 Hare, Jones, and Blackledge, Understanding social enterprise: A Case study of the child care sector in Scotland, Social Enterprise Journal, March 2007.
83 [www.number-10.gov.uk/output/page1430.asp](http://www.number-10.gov.uk/output/page1430.asp)
At the time, there was a shortage of child care spaces, information was scarce, and places were often expensive. The responsibility for all daycare provision for children under eight years was brought together with early years education under the local education authorities and the Department for Education and Skills. In 2004, HM Treasury published a multi-year child care strategy as part of the Pre-Budget report and allocated £769 (CDN$1,650) for each new child care space created up to 2007/08.84

In the same year, the national co-operative society, Co-operatives UK, in partnership with Co-operative Solutions Ltd and Social Enterprise London, started Co-operative Child care85 with two-year funding from the national government. The objectives of the project were to promote and support co-operative child care options and grow the co-operative child care sector.

The project developed a knowledge centre, identifying nearly 90 previously unknown child care co-operatives and producing numerous case studies; provided hands-on advice and consultancy resulting in new child care co-operatives; and piloted a London-based consortium. Training seminars and networking sessions were delivered for child care specialists within development bodies and links were made with a range of national child care bodies. New model rules (bylaws) for child care co-operatives have been developed by Co-ops UK’s legal team.

The project ended in February 2007 when the funding ran out. Over the 24 months of the project, it responded to over 300 queries, allocated approximately 75 days of business consultancy, and directly supported 120 child care services, co-operative support bodies and local authority early years teams. A comprehensive website still exists with promotional material, case studies and learning tools available for use. 86

Co-operative Models
Co-operatives UK has promoted a range of options for breaking down child care barriers. In their model rules (co-op bylaws), they articulate five different models of child care co-ops:

1. Workers co-operatives owned and controlled by the employees
2. User co-operatives87 owned and controlled by parents or carers (a term used in the UK, to identify anyone caring for children not their own, outside the home, but not usually in a regulated space or centre. They are usually unqualified care-givers)
3. Co-operative consortia of self-employed child minders or other child care workers
4. Multi-stakeholder co-operatives with mixed membership including employees, parents, community representatives and representatives from local authorities and children’s trusts.
5. For-profit consumer co-operative

The Sheffield Children’s Centre co-operative has been operating for over 25 years. It started initially as a worker co-operative and is now operating as a multi-stakeholder co-operative, owned and controlled by the users, the community, and the staff.88 The centre is

84 Carol Jenkins, Places for Children, Banbury England, interview
85 www.cooperatives-uk.coop/child care
86 Ibid
87 A user co-operative is similar to a consumer co-operative in Canada.
88 Case Study about Sheffield Children’s Centre on Co-operatives UK website at www.cooperatives-uk.coop
open seven days a week from 8 am to 10 pm and provides a very wide range of services, including 102 full-time equivalent nursery places for children aged six months to five years. Along with the child care services, it delivers therapeutic services, health services, training and education for adults, consultancy, advocacy and community development support. Half the child care staff at the centre is men and 80% come from ethnic minorities.

Sheffield is one of Britain’s Early Excellence Centres and a “trailblazer” with an explicit focus on improving child outcomes. The centre is self-financing and has a range of satellite provisions that extend nationally and internationally. Sheffield Children’s Centre regularly represents Britain globally in regard to inter-culturalism and equal opportunities.

The Imagine Child Care Co-operative is a unique model, owned by the Midcounties Co-operative, which is a consumer co-op operating in the Oxford, Swindon and Gloucester area. Currently there are six individual nurseries, with advisory groups comprised of staff, parents and members of the local community, and even employers. The Imagine centres stay open from 8 am to 6 pm and are geared to parents’ needs. One of the sites, Cainscross Nursery in Stroud, was purpose-built beside one of Midcounties’ retail stores and another is located in a hospital where the majority of parents work. Midcounties Co-op was the sole developer of each site, providing all the resources required. The UK Government provided some grant funding to establish new nurseries in deprived areas.

Early Birds Carter Lane Neighbourhood Nursery is a neighbourhood nursery based in Shirebrook, Derbyshire, with places for 70 children. Originally the nursery was set up by Derbyshire County Council, in 1985, and bought by the staff with help from local organizations and the Neighbourhood Nursery Initiative funding. It was set up, in 2004, as a workers’ co-operative, with the child care workers responsible for the management of the nursery as well as for providing the child care.

In mid-2005, Early Birds was also selected to run a second 42-place nursery service in partnership with the local school and with the intention of becoming part of a new children’s centre. The co-operative is also thinking about whether to put in a tender to provide the child care for more of the children’s centres opening in the area. Early Birds now has plans to become a training nursery as the workforce already includes six assessors and four adult education tutors. They hope to be able to take on trainees and provide the whole training package themselves.

**Challenges & Opportunities**

Data released by the Office for Standard in Education (Ofsted), in 2006, indicates that there were 1,537,800 regulated child care spaces in the country. The majority of child care in the UK seems to be unregulated and informal. One of the opportunities is that co-operative child care could be a cost effective solution to the high cost of child care. The private sector has raised its fees for child care and there are not enough low-cost government supported spaces. In the next few years, the number of spaces will need to double to meet the demand for regulated low-cost child care.
According to the Institute for Public Policy Research, co-operatives are well-placed to work with under-served groups such as minority ethnic parents, low income families, and parents who work atypical hours. Co-operatives can bring to child care the benefits of improved staff retention and more empowered staff. They can also integrate parental and wider community involvement in the design and delivery of child care and ensure that it is responsive to local needs.  

One of the identified barriers is the lack of understanding by some local authorities (municipalities) and the Early Years Development and Child Care partnerships of the co-operative structure. This is gradually being dealt with. Angela Gibbons, in her workshop at the PCPI annual meeting in March 2006 said that finding a way to support the sustainability of existing services is critical. This could be accomplished through the development of centralized support services.

Co-operatives UK has been proactive in creating as great a variety of co-operative solutions as possible for the parents and professionals to consider.

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89 Howard Reed and Kate Stanley, "Co-operative Social Enterprise and its Potential in Public Service Delivery" Institute for Public Policy Research London 2005
Parents and communities in Canada have formed, and are continuing to form, child care co-operatives when they want to have control over and involvement in, their children's care and education.

In 1991-92, a task force was established to determine the needs of child care co-operatives in Canada. With the assistance of the Co-operative Secretariat, Ken McCready published a report, The Role of Co-operatives in Child Care. At that time, over 900 co-op child cares were identified serving approximately 40,000 families. And while the number of co-ops has declined, the total number of families served remains only slightly lower at over 34,000 families in 2004.

If we use this figure as a basis for numbers of children involved (at one child per family), and with some 357,000 spaces in child care centres and 745,000 spaces overall, we can estimate that co-op child care forms about 9.5% of all centre spaces and 4.5% of all spaces in Canada. (See Table 8 in Chapter 2 for overall figures) This analysis confirms that co-op child care remains an important part of child care delivery in Canada.

The same issues, needs and recommendations have arisen in this research as in the 1992 research. Most striking is the lack of awareness and promotion of co-operative child care and its benefits among provincial governments. Across the country, provincial legislation that regulates child care does not make any distinctions between non-profit and co-operative organizations. As one ministry person in Saskatchewan said, “We recently updated the Act and we collapsed the co-operative guidelines with the non-profit as there were no distinctions between the two.” The only provinces that do have a direct reference in the licensing act to co-operative child care are Ontario and Quebec.

The recommendation and outcome of the task force, in 1992, led to the formation of the Association of Canadian Child Care Co-operatives (ACCC). This organization worked with existing groups to co-ordinate services, promote awareness, and provide a national voice for the child care co-operatives. “Strong leadership and a sound funding base will determine the success and viability of this new organization.” However, this dedicated volunteer group could not sustain the financial or leadership requirements necessary to support such a vital organization and was disbanded by 1999.

In a recent Civica report, prepared for CCA, Christopher Wilson summarizes the child care co-operative sector as being well established but uneven across the country. One of the fundamental strengths is “the commitment to parent participation in the early education of their children and the depth of experience with a model that supports that important goal. Co-operative preschools also offer a high quality care and educational environment for the children.”

This report has tried to show that child care co-ops are valuable alternatives in the child care field. Co-ops offer a clear distinction with private child care centres, municipal child

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91 Ibid., p.109
92 Christopher Wilson, Second Report, Prospects for Federation Formation in Emerging Sectors of Co-operative Activity, CIVICA, June 2005
care, or many non-profit centres (except where the non-profit is clearly set up as a
democratic structure, as in Quebec). They are democratic organizations, owned and
controlled by their members, and are primarily established to meet their parent members’
needs for high quality child care for their children. What is special about co-operative child
care is that it provides parents with a determining and controlling role in their child’s
development.

Our report underlines that co-op child care has continued to thrive in some provinces, and
maintain itself in most provinces, in spite of a political culture and enabling environment
that does not generally single out and promote the co-op child care model.

Perhaps the most important overall conclusion from this report is that if there was an
improved enabling environment, co-operatives could play an even greater role in the
delivery of child care in Canada.

Currently there are approximately 410 child care co-ops in Canada reporting to the Co-
operatives Secretariat. While this number is down from the 1991 report, if we add parent
participation centres in BC the number is over 500. The number of centres is particularly
strong in four provinces — Ontario, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and BC. Numbers could
probably increase in other provinces but supportive programs are required to assist
parents and communities in developing new co-ops and in expanding existing ones.

In this concluding chapter we will examine:
• The Advantages Of Co-Operative Child Care
• What Kinds Of Types and Models Work Best
• The Best Enabling Environments
• Challenges For The Future

The Advantages of Co-operative Child Care
The research we have done in this paper has enabled us to synthesize some of the
advantages of co-operative child care. If co-op child care is to develop to a larger extent,
those who promote it must be clear on some of the major advantages that co-op child care
has over some other forms of child care. Taken as a whole these advantages provide an
impressive package.

1. Child care co-operatives provide benefits to both governments and users in third
   sector delivery of social services.
Child care delivery by co-operatives of any type fits into the growing trend across many
countries and jurisdictions to deliver social and health services by social economy
organizations or social enterprises. Social enterprises are not-for-profit organizations that
are run as either traditional non-profit organizations or as co-operatives, but which function
with a business model.

Many governments, such as the UK government and the Quebec provincial government,
have encouraged the delivery of existing and new social services such as child care, home
care or other health services through social enterprise and the social economy. Patricia
Hewitt, UK Secretary of Health, in a study entitled Social enterprise in primary and
community care, outlined the important role that is played already but could be expanded
in terms of third sector (community and non-profit) service delivery. As Ms. Hewitt noted: “The particular strengths of the third sector include its independence (both from government and private shareholders), its commitment to a wider social good, the passion and commitment it generates in staff, and its capacity for innovation and rapid change. Perhaps the most important benefit the third sector and social enterprise organisations, in particular, can bring is a stronger voice both for the users of services and the staff that deliver them.”

In Canada, co-operatives are already playing this role in the child care sector. In Quebec, third sector delivery has also been expanded to the home care sector where there are now 44 co-operatives. While the Quebec child care sector is not organized primarily through co-operatives, it has borrowed the feature of parent control and integrated it into the primarily non-profit social economy model that predominates.

2. Co-operative child care has certain financial advantages in that any surpluses are reinvested in the enterprise.

In a recent UK study by Howard Reed and Kate Stanley, *Co-operative social enterprise and its potential in public service delivery*, the authors describe the benefits of co-operative delivery. “Data is not available on the average costs of social enterprise child care compared to other forms of provision. Whilst there is no evidence that good quality child care delivered by co-operatives is cheaper because there is no extraction of profit to external shareholders — as there is in for-profit organizations — surpluses can be retained in the businesses to improve provision and terms and conditions for staff.” As there are only non-profit co-operative centres in Canada (unlike the for-profit model in the UK with Midcounties) any surplus in Canada would be used by the centre. In this sense, child care co-ops distinguish themselves from both private sector care where surpluses accrue to shareholders or owners and from state-run child care where surpluses will not necessarily be reinvested in the centre.

3. Co-operative child care has advantages for staff in terms of its integration.

Co-operative child centres, perhaps because they are, for the most part, parent-run and the parents develop a close relationship with staff, have generally had an integrative approach to staff. A UK study shows that social enterprises including co-operatives “may be more successful in retaining staff than other forms of organisation”. The authors of the study interviewed child care providers from co-operatives who were quick to point out the benefits to staff of working within a co-operative organisation. The study concludes that: “Employee owned cooperatives which by their nature empower and engage staff would seem very well placed to secure low staff turnover and high levels of commitment and anecdotal evidence suggests this is borne out in reality.” While child care co-op workers do not have the same access in Canada to co-op discounts as some of the UK co-ops studied, many child care co-ops that have developed direct participation by staff in the management of the centre, as is the case in the multi-stakeholder models in Quebec and Ontario, do offer an important and unique venue for employee participation.

94 Howard Reed and Kate Stanley, *Co-operative Social Enterprise and Its Potential in Public Service Delivery*. IPPR, London, 2005
95 Ibid
96 Ibid
97 See Case Studies in Appendices
4. Co-operative child care fosters parental participation which can also deliver better outcomes for children.

Parental participation is at the heart of the Canadian co-op model. Recent research has now backed up the positive results of parental involvement and support, and how it impacts the educational achievements of their children. Researchers have found that where parents are involved in their children's school and work activities, children benefit academically.\(^9^8\) Findings from research on effective pedagogy showed that centres which involved parents in discussing and agreeing educational aims, supported parents in developing these at home and provided weekly or monthly feedback on their child’s progress resulted in better outcomes for children.\(^9^9\) Finally, research shows that “Parental involvement multi-stakeholder child care social enterprises and user/parent owned enterprises that enshrine the democratic participation of children’s parents can also be seen to be fulfilling a social function in terms of their so-called ‘activity value’.\(^1^0^0\) These findings have been confirmed by the continued popularity of 500 child care co-ops as well as the 1000 Quebec CPEs which are all based on parent participation.

5. Co-operative child care centres are better linked to the community

Another benefit of co-operative child care is that, by their organizational form, co-ops are directly linked to the community in which the parent-members live. Parents, as members and as board members, and because they live in the community, are always looking at the child care centre in terms of its role in the community. In multi-stakeholder or solidarity co-operatives other people, such as workers and community members, are also drawn into the mix. In this way, co-op child care can provide a better link to the community than municipal controlled, private sector ownership and even many non-profits where there is generally no formal mechanism linking boards or management to the community.

What Kind Of Types And Models Work Best?

In this section we will examine, in more detail, a number of the different types of service and models of governance in terms of their positive and negative aspects, and also look at the potential for growth and expansion of these different variations.

Types of Service

The vast majority of co-op child care centres in Canada provide half day pre-school programs, which in many provinces do not receive any direct funding. This connection of co-op child care with one predominant kind of child care means that most co-ops are often not open to parents seeking full day programs or, in some provinces, to parents seeking help with subsidies. Our research showed that if funding was available many of the co-ops would be prepared to expand. In Quebec, in the post 1997-98 period, child care funding from the province expanded dramatically and led to the transformation of many existing child care centres into larger and better funded centres de la petite enfance, which offered more comprehensive programs and even managed regulated home child care.

\(^9^8\) Desforges, C. The impact of parental involvement, parental support and family education on pupil achievement and adjustment: a literature review Report no.433 DfES, London 2003 as cited in Reed and Stanley


\(^1^0^0\) Bolton, M., Voluntary Sector added value. A discussion paper, NCVO, London, 2003 as cited in Reed and Stanley
Could such a transformation be possible for some of the existing pre-school child care co-ops? A first step would be the recognition of the importance of child care co-ops and what they have to offer by provincial governments. A second step would be a survey of existing co-ops to see if they would be willing to expand and under what circumstances.

Another opportunity that exists is the possible development of purchasing and service co-ops. There are presently two purchasing and service co-operatives and one mutual for the child care and co-op child care sector in Quebec. Co-op child care centres in other provinces could possibly take advantage of similar opportunities, which could help to develop a more secure and financially viable co-op child care sector. This kind of development probably would require a provincial or national child care organization, a federal or provincial government, a provincial or national co-op, or social economy catalyst in order to be established elsewhere.

Models of Governance
Our report also confirms the existence of many types of ownership and governance models for co-ops in the child care sector. While there are five models of governance, we have only examined the first four as the fifth model, the service and purchasing co-op, has been covered in the above section.

Parent-Run. The vast majority of child care co-ops are parent run and parent participation is at the heart of the co-op model of child care. Parent participation is important for several reasons:

1. Parent participation bridges the gap between parent-delivered education and quality early learning and education. A recent report from Mustard and McCann, *Early Learning 2*, argues that only about 1/3 of parents have the prerequisite skill sets for providing high quality education at the under age six range. Co-op child care allows parents to participate along with qualified and trained child care educators in their child’s education.

2. Parent-run child care is a direct democratic system. Parent-run child care allows parents to be in charge of the personnel as well as the quality of the programs. A study on European child care showed that “the participation of parents is a key characteristic of the parent associations, initiatives and co-operatives found in France, Germany and Sweden.” The study compared this with other more state centred forms of child care delivery where parent participation was not at the same level.

3. Parent-run child care allows for parents to adapt and change to the needs of their children in a more flexible and rapid fashion than is the case in more bureaucratic forms of child care delivery or in privately controlled centres.

4. Parent-run child care offers a decentralized community-entrenched method of delivering services to the population.

On the other hand, parent-run child care has several disadvantages, which are more acute in provincial systems where centres are generally under-funded and cannot be assured of retaining staff due to low wages.

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101 Fraser Mustard and Margaret McCain, *Early Learning 2*, March 2007 [www.councilcde.ca/cecd/home.nsf/pages/EYS2](http://www.councilcde.ca/cecd/home.nsf/pages/EYS2). “Only about one-third of the population are actually highly competent parents, the rest are okay, but about 17 per cent are godawful,” said Mustard. “You do have to improve parenting – parents have a huge impact on brain development.” Fraser Mustard as quoted in KRISTIN RUSHOWY, “Canada last in ECE spending”, Toronto Star, Mar 26, 2007

102 Victor Pestoff, “Participation in Child Care Services in Eight European Countries” CIES, 2004 [http://www.mes-d.net/grupcies/Html/boletin/docs/articulo2.pdf](http://www.mes-d.net/grupcies/Html/boletin/docs/articulo2.pdf)
1. Parent-run child care demands time and effort on the part of parents. In one of the Quebec-based child care co-ops, parents were asked to work 30 hours of donated labour per year or pay a fine based on hours not worked. In Europe, the practice is similar: “In parent cooperatives and parent initiative facilities there is often a work obligation which includes many parents who do not have flexible working conditions that permit them to make such contributions in time. In particular, single parent families find it difficult to meet the extra time demands of such services in most countries studied here.” The effects of this kind of obligation can keep many parents from using a co-op or, as is the case of one co-op studied in Quebec, push the co-op to drop the requirement.

2. Parent-run child care centres often have no organized mechanism for encouraging the participation of staff and of the community. Jean Robitaille, the Executive Director of the AQCPE, noted that this is one of the factors that tipped the balance of some CPEs in Quebec to incorporate as non-profits; they wished to have the flexibility of having staff and community representatives on their boards. Multi-stakeholder co-ops could be formed to try to deal with this issue.

3. Parent-run co-operatives can have problems of isolation if there are no federative structures formed to allow exchange of experiences. In a recent study of child care co-ops in Sweden, Victor Pestoff noted this problem as being prevalent and cited it as one of the causes for the lack of influence of child care co-ops in the political system. "One final reason for the lack of representation and influence by third sector child care service providers at either meso- or macro-levels in Sweden is the lack of an infrastructure to promote coordination among third sector service providers themselves or between them and public providers of such services." Child care delivery is provided by small, independent third sector organizations, parent and worker co-ops or voluntary organizations, which do not belong to an intermediary organization designed to promote their common interests within the public system for service provision, nor in any given service sector. Not only is the public system of child care delivery closed to them, but also their own intermediary organizations are very specific, to the extent that they belong to any.

**Worker Co-operatives.** Presently, stand alone worker co-op child care centres do not exist in Canada. However, in the United States, there continues to be a successful worker co-operative child care centre. In Quebec, the roots of one of the existing multi-stakeholder co-operatives (See Case Studies) is a worker co-operative. It is exactly because parents have a great desire to participate in their children’s education that it is unlikely that pure worker co-operatives will become a prevalent model in the child care field.

**Multi-stakeholder or co-ops de solidarité.** One of the most interesting developments over the past years has been the development of multi-stakeholder or solidarity co-ops in the child care sector. While they are still rare (there are nine in Ontario and three in Quebec) this is a model that has the possibility of expansion. The Ontario co-operatives are not legally multi-stakeholder but they practice a philosophy of having a board composed of parents (51% of the votes) and employees (49%).

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103 ibid
In Quebec, one of the co-operatives (as explained in the Quebec case studies) has parents, workers and community members. The other two stakeholders have been workers and community. Our research does not show much experience with businesses participating in a sustained manner in child care co-ops. Employers could play a role in future multi-stakeholder projects but there are no strong signals of interest from the employer community to do so. The regulatory environment needs to be amended and knowledge about this model needs to be more widely advertised. Only Quebec, Alberta, PEI, and Newfoundland have specific legislation for the multi-stakeholder model.

This is a tribute to the flexibility of the co-op model that, with no support or direction, multi-stakeholder co-ops have been able to develop and maintain themselves. This type of co-op could also be expanded to include community organizations, employers, and municipal governments. This would require a change in the legislation in Ontario, which currently does not allow multi-stakeholder co-ops. In the UK, the practice is more advanced and we have “multi-stakeholder co-operatives with mixed membership including employees, parents, community representatives and representatives from local authorities and children’s trusts.” ¹⁰⁵

Multi-stakeholder co-operatives are important because they allow parents and staff to share the management of the co-op. This can have positive implications for the retention and integration of staff. Multi-stakeholder co-ops also allow the possibility of sectors such as the community to become members and thus help shape the development of the child care centre.

On the negative side, multi-stakeholder co-operatives are not legal in Ontario, the province with the largest number of child care co-ops. This means that they are limited to situations where the parents share control with other stakeholders in an informal way. Multi-stakeholder co-ops can put stakeholders with sometimes divergent views together at the board table. This may force them to recognize their issues but has potential for conflict.

**Child Care Co-Operatives as Part of Consumer Co-operatives.** The model of child care co-operatives that are part of a large consumer co-operative¹⁰⁶ does not exist in Canada but has some interesting advantages, such as access to support from a large and well organized co-operative. On the other hand, the UK’s Midcounties is a for-profit co-op where profits earned go back to co-op members in the form of dividends. The child care movement in Canada has been concerned to limit the growth of profit-oriented child care. And major child care advocacy networks such as the Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada and the Canadian Child Care Federation have long stood up for non-profit or public care. Many provinces have favoured the non-profit sector over the for-profit sector and Saskatchewan, Nunavut and Northwest Territories have no commercial centres.

¹⁰⁶ For more information on the six nursery co-operatives operated by Midcounties Co-operative in England please see the International chapter
What is the Best Enabling Environment for Child Care Co-ops?

After completing the research, the conditions for the success or failure of child care co-ops are not as simple to discern as initially envisaged. We did not find a positive enabling environment internationally nor nationally that brought together all the factors necessary to produce a strong and vibrant co-op system or an environment that could be replicated in other jurisdictions. While many advocates of child care would argue that the Quebec child care system provides a strong environment, it has not produced many co-ops.

Child care co-operatives in Canada are deeply rooted in some provinces (Ontario, BC, Saskatchewan and Manitoba) where a majority of the Canadian population lives. In those provinces there is no immediate threat to their continued existence. But, if child care co-operatives are to grow in number and membership rather than simply maintain their existence, they must find answers to a number of important challenges that influence the future. One way to begin to examine these challenges is to look more deeply at some of the conclusions that can be drawn from our analysis of the enabling environment at the federal and provincial level, as well as some of the lessons from our international case studies.

International Lessons

Our study showed us that Canada has a very large child care co-operative sector compared with the US and UK but not with New Zealand. While the strength of the co-op child care sector in Canada varies from province to province, in ranking the size of the sector on a per capita basis, Canada’s 500 centres ranks as number two, with the US, third, and the UK, fourth. Both the US, with 1,000 centres in a country 10 times as large as Canada, and the UK, twice as large as Canada with only 80 or so centres, have very small numbers of centres per capita. When we break down the provinces by density, Saskatchewan has the greatest number of co-ops on a per capita basis and has a co-op child care density very similar to that of New Zealand...

What, then, are some of the specific lessons we can learn from our international research? While there is no one model that we can propose to adopt or general lessons from the practice of all of the countries, there are elements of each of the countries worth further examination.

From New Zealand, the success of the co-op model among Aboriginal communities seems worthy of further study. In Canada, we know that child care access for Aboriginal communities is very limited. However, the entirely volunteer parent-run model has little chance of being replicated in Canada, where child care workers are viewed as professionals (albeit, generally poorly paid ones) and where parents need child care to help them with early childhood education and full daycare.

107 While the First Nations and Inuit Child Care Initiative provides 7500 children with child care in some 407 First Nation and Inuit communities, and while both Ontario and Alberta have other programs, it is estimated some 200 First Nation communities are without access to child care and the total number of spaces means few children 0-6 of the 58,000 children from 0-4 on reserve in 2003 (according to INAC 2004 Basic Departmental Data) can attend. Aboriginal Head Start a more limited program serves only some 20% of eligible children.

From the United Kingdom experience, the success of the Co-operatives UK\textsuperscript{108} campaign to publicize the co-op child care model is the kind of initiative that could be replicated in Canada and could lead to greater knowledge of the co-op model and result in the start-up of new co-ops. The series of tools, such as the development of new model rules (bylaws) and research on different types and models of child care, were particularly important.

From the United States, we can take the concept idea of a close working relationship between the California Council of Parent Participation Nursery Schools (CCPPNS) and its members, and with school boards and social development councils. This relationship is an important opportunity to be recognized by the public sector for the important role it plays. Also, the existence of a large worker child care co-operative in Philadelphia, Childspace Management Group (Childspace), is a model that needs further study to see if and how, such a governance operation could be replicated in Canada.\textsuperscript{109}

**Enabling Factors at the Federal Level**

Canada, unlike the American federal system, has had an important role for the federal government in child care beginning in the 1940s and, later, structured through the Canada Assistance Plan. Because of this history it was important to examine the current role of the federal government in supporting development of child care through funding and other legislation because it impacts directly on the provincial level.

As a result of the change of emphasis of recent government policy, all political parties are now putting an emphasis on federal transfers through the Canada Social Transfer (CST) to the provinces for the provision of child care spaces.\textsuperscript{110} The 2007 Budget also makes the point that, over the next year, negotiations with the provinces will be set up to determine standards of accountability for how the funds in the CST will be spent. The challenge will be to see that co-operative child care, along with other non-for-profit organizational forms, become one of the designated child care models that is explicitly recognized, as is now the case in Quebec and Ontario.

As we saw in the development of public health care in Canada, intervention by the federal government through funding and through the Canada Health Act was able to overcome certain intransigencies that existed at the provincial level, and helped create an environment where previous differences in health care programs could be overcome. Today, similarities between provinces around health care are more important than differences. Thus, a commitment from the federal government, in terms of increased funding and accountability for a national child care system, could move the situation forward as could the identification of the co-op model as one of the approved models for child care service development.

The role of national co-operative organizations in taking up the cause of child care co-operatives has also had its ups and downs over the years and both the Canadian Co-operative Association and the Conseil Canadien de la Coopération have a role to play in terms of helping to develop and enable the child care co-op sector. In the UK, the major co-operative organization, as we have noted above, has also played an important role in stimulating co-operative growth in the sector.

\textsuperscript{108} [www.cooperatives-uk.coop/child care](http://www.cooperatives-uk.coop/child care)

\textsuperscript{109} Cindy Coker, Childspace Management Group, interview

\textsuperscript{110} The Bloc Quebecois does not recognize a role for the federal government beyond fund transfers.
Enabling Factors at the Provincial Level

In Chapter Three we tried to capture the complex enabling environment affecting child care co-ops in each province. In this study we have identified eight factors that are key to co-op child care development. The role of the federal government in its relationship with the provinces also remains crucial in terms of the development of many of these factors:

1. **Support for child care:** Provincial government support for child care, as evidenced by its funding and by how many children have access to regulated child care space, is an important overall factor that establishes the climate for all forms of child care. The attitude of the province towards the subsidization of regulated child care spaces is crucial. In most provinces (except Quebec and to a lesser extent Manitoba), there is a severe lack of resources to support child care. As a result of this climate, the majority of co-operatives do not receive funds to support their programs.

2. **Child care development strategies:** The presence of a provincial plan to expand child care and create new spaces is very important. For this factor, only Quebec, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Ontario and Newfoundland have highly developed plans for the creation of new spaces. Most of these plans were developed around 2005 when the federal government was offering to provide funding for child care improvements.

3. **Provincial government support for non-profit service delivery:** The preference to non-profit delivery is especially important for child care co-ops as, in Canada, they are all non-profit. In Quebec, this commitment has assured that co-operatives have been included as CPEs (Centres de la petite enfance) when that form of delivery was created in the post 1997 period. Manitoba and Saskatchewan also have expressed a clear indication in their 2005 agreements with the federal government that all future child care funded by government has to be non-profit. Saskatchewan, along with Nunavut and the Northwest Territories, already has a ban on for-profit centres.

4. **The regulatory and legal framework** and the legal ability to form a child care co-operative, including a multi-stakeholder co-operative, is an important factor. In some cases, child care co-operatives do not have enabling legislation (as in BC), have restrictions that make their operation difficult (liability insurance requirements in Nova Scotia), or disallow certain types of co-ops (such as multi-stakeholder co-operatives in Ontario).

5. **Funding to start up a child care co-op:** Particular programs to support the planning and start-up of co-op child care centres are as necessary as ongoing funding. In most provinces, there is no funding to help get a child care centre off the ground. The capital cost of establishing a child care centre is too great for a small community of families to fundraise. Newfoundland is an exception in having start-up grants available.

6. **Organized support for child care co-ops** including the following factors: 1) the attitude of the co-operative movement and its provincial organizations, 2) the existence of provincial or regional co-op child care organizations, 3) the support of child care organizations, 4) the existence of a government co-op office, and 5) the availability of co-op developers in the province.
7. **The size of the child care co-operative sector:** The size of the sector, relative to the population, and the overall number of child care co-ops can help create the support and the momentum for development. It can be difficult to build the sector if there are insufficient numbers of existing child care co-operatives, as is the case in the Atlantic provinces. In order to establish a provincial or regional association, a significant number of centres in the province is needed.

8. **Co-operative culture:** How does the population in each province regard co-operatives? Are co-ops viewed positively? Do people see co-operatives as a possible tool to use in building child care? Here, again, we see this as a crucial factor and have devoted more attention to this below.

**An Enabling Environment Matrix**

Table 17 is an original table produced for this report, summarizing the enabling environment for child care co-ops in all provinces in Canada. It uses the key factors that influence the operation of child care co-ops in a particular province. The rating was based on the information collected through this research process and prior knowledge of available co-op resources.

The table shows that Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, and Quebec provide the best environments in Canada for new child care co-ops to start and thrive. Newfoundland & Labrador has strong potential if more co-op development resources were made available to parents and communities in the coming year.
### TABLE 17: The Enabling Environment for Child Care Co-operatives by Province

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Provincial Government Support for Child Care</th>
<th>Child Care strategy with plan for new spaces</th>
<th>Provincial Government support for non-profit delivery</th>
<th>Legal - Ability to form a Child Care co-op</th>
<th>Financial - funding to start-up child care co-ops</th>
<th>Org Support for child care co-ops</th>
<th>Size of Co-op Child Care Sector</th>
<th>Co-op Culture</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>BC</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Manitoba</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: CCA with information and analysis from this report
Note: Scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is Negligible Support and 5 is Very Supportive
* This rating is low because BC does not allow child care services to be incorporated as a co-operative.

**Key Enabling Factors**
To really succeed, child care co-ops need a positive score on all the above factors or, at least, a combination of most of them. However, we believe that two factors are particularly important and at least one must be in place for co-ops to succeed.

Four provinces have achieved high numbers of co-ops — Ontario, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and British Columbia (co-ops in all but name). As Table 17 shows, there are no common threads as to why these provinces have such large numbers while other provinces have far less.

After further analysis, two factors stand out — co-op culture and organizational support.
Co-op Culture. One of the common threads for the comparative strength of the sector in Saskatchewan and Manitoba seems to be the strong co-op culture where virtually every community still has a co-op store and/or a credit union. This seems to have helped these provinces develop high numbers of co-op centres. The presence and success of the co-op model in the province provides co-op recognition and a culture that helps co-op child care be seen as a viable alternative.

Organized Support. As mentioned above, four support actors are very important:
1. The co-operative movement and its provincial organizations
2. Provincial or regional co-op child care organizations
3. Government co-op office or department
4. Child care organizations

Too often child care co-operatives are left isolated and without the kind of help that exists in Ontario where the both the provincial and regional child care co-op organizations and the provincial co-op association help sustain the child care co-op movement. Only Ontario and BC have provincial and regional child care co-op organizations (or in the case of BC, “parent-run” child care organizations). These are the only organizations that provide volunteer parents with board development training and technical support for the operation of the centres. In Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Quebec, while there are sizable numbers of child care co-ops, there are no provincial or regional child care co-op organizations, although in Quebec the CDRs (Regional Development Co-operatives) do provide assistance.

The role of provincial co-operative associations is also important and, with the exception of Ontario and Newfoundland, child care co-operatives are not integrated into the provincial organizations as part of their network.

But the challenge is not just at the provincial level. While other co-operative sectors, such as the housing and workers’ co-op sectors, have benefited from national federations, the child care co-op sector has gone backward in that it once had a national organization and now has not even a strong provincial organization. Without the support from government and from the larger co-operative sector, the failure of the completely volunteer Association of Canadian Child Care Co-operatives has meant that there has not been that national voice to sustain interest in the sector.111

Provincial governments, which monitor and encourage co-op development, are a factor that is also present in the continued strength of co-op child care in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Quebec. In Nova Scotia and Newfoundland, government co-op support is quite strong but has not translated into the creation of a large number of child care co-ops. Five provinces, including Ontario, have neither a co-operatives services department nor a child care services department to help the development and growth of

111 Only Ontario tried to support the Association with a levy on its grass roots members. Without funds the volunteers, committed to the concept of a national association could not generate support from their home provinces to develop provincial networking needed to give depth to the national organization. The stress on the volunteers who committed to act as Board members soon took its toll and they began to resign after approximately three years. The whole association was represented by the President alone and she could not sustain a national organization on her shoulders alone.
child care co-ops. The UK initiative of the national co-operative society, Co-operatives UK, is a possible model to be emulated.

In Ontario and British Columbia, the founders of co-operative and parent participation programs were also some of the leading bureaucrats of the new provincial ministries dealing with child care.\textsuperscript{112} By the 1980s, huge ministries overseeing children and family services were in place but there was no place carved out in provincial administration for child care co-operatives.

Even governments with co-op departments (except Quebec through its CDR network) do not generally provide advisory services or co-operative developers trained to assist with starting up a child care centre. One example, which is a positive counterfactual, is Newfoundland’s use of funding from Innovation and Trade Technology to train staff about the co-op model, including child care. The Co-operative Development Initiative could provide funding for advisory services to help start child care co-ops or expand existing co-ops. These services could include assistance with planning, incorporation, governance, development of policies and procedures, board training, and legislative requirements.

The support of major national and regional child care organizations is a missing factor for most child care co-operatives. Larger child care associations often overlook the co-operative model. The mandate of most provincial and national child care organizations is focused on the professional early childhood educator, the early childhood education philosophy, and lobbying the governments for access to improved funding and program needs. With a greater integration of these organizations, the profile of child care co-ops could be greatly enhanced.

**Challenges for the Future**

There are other challenges beyond an enabling environment. This section will examine some of the broader challenges affecting child care co-ops.

**Profound changes in work, family life and demographics.** Two working parents mean that many do not have the time to volunteer in a co-operative as whole-heartedly as was the case even 10 years ago. Now 62.1% of women are in the labour force, up from 60.9% in 2002.\textsuperscript{113} Parents are also expected to have their children involved in as many extra-curricular activities outside the home as possible. The lower birth rate is also having an effect on enrolment. In 2006, the Canadian birth rate was 10.6 per 1,000 compared to 14.3 in the US in 2000.\textsuperscript{114} Anecdotal research from OPPCEO tells us that a one-child family does not stay involved with a play school centre for more than two years.\textsuperscript{115} At the same time, the changing demographics mean that more of our young children are and will be from Aboriginal communities and immigrant communities. If child care co-ops are to serve these communities, where they are presently quite weak,

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\textsuperscript{112} Carol Brown, OPPCEO
\textsuperscript{113} Statistics Canada http://www40.statcan.ca/l01/cst01/labor05.htm
\textsuperscript{114} http://www40.statcan.ca/l01/cst01/demo01a.htm
\textsuperscript{115} Carol Brown, OPPCEO
the co-op child care centres and the co-operative movement as a whole will need to make major changes.

**The role of the city.** Eighty per cent of Canada’s population now lives in cities, one of the highest percentages among the world’s developed countries. Only in Ontario do cities and municipal governments play a consistent role in child care.116 But it is in cities where we find the concentration of children in need of regulated centres. We need to find a way to have cities become more involved in promoting child care and in particular co-op child care.

**The role of volunteers.** Individual co-ops and the sector are weakened by the chronic turnover of volunteers. Parent turnover is a common theme in child care co-ops. The length of time a family is involved in a pre-school co-op is short because most families now have one or two children at most. However, turnover is also linked to inadequate funding for staff and other services, which means co-ops have had to rely on parents for many tasks. The decline in volunteer participation is a phenomenon striking many sectors in Canada and we need to examine how to deal with it in child care co-ops.117

**The role of education.** Colleges offering early childhood education training are not normally aware of co-operative and parent participation programs. Co-operative education is necessary in terms of both child care workers in ECE programs but also for management and board members. The uniqueness of the child care co-operative is also its biggest challenge — the almost certain yearly turnover of board members as their children leave the centre.

There is lack of early childhood curricula and training within the colleges specific to co-ops in child care. This could include understanding the role and balance of parent-run, parent-owned co-operatives and the early childhood educator and administrator of the early childhood curriculum.

**The role of research.** The lack of systematic research in Canada into child care co-operatives means we do not have all the tools to fully develop the targeted policies we need. Two weaknesses are particularly apparent: 1) Research into the benefits of parents being part of their child’s early education and particularly in co-op child care centres. There are no long term longitudinal studies to track whether children today are really better off in a co-operative or parent-participation program. 2) The lack of accurate statistics on child care co-operatives in terms of number of children, kind of programs offered and other data.

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116 Rianne Mahon, op. cit.
117 Imagine Canada, 2004 Canada Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating
CASE STUDIES

Lynn Valley Parent Participation Preschool, British Columbia
- A Parent Participation Preschool (PPP)

Lynn Valley Parent Participation Preschool is one of BC’s oldest schools, established in 1945, and based in a historic school house for the past 37 years. The centre leases the building from the municipality and is responsible for all maintenance and repairs.

The centre has enjoyed full enrollment for the past ten years and currently has 34 families, with 36 children enrolled in two classes. Twenty children attend the Four-Year-Old Class, while 16 attend the Three-Year-Old Class. Each class is supervised by one teacher and three duty parents, creating a much lower than average adult to child ratio.

Rhonda Café, a Teacher-Supervisor at Lynn Valley explains the advantages. “This contribution of time and talent by families enhances the depth of programming, and the lower ratio makes for a better first learning experience for both the young child, and the new parents. Parents involved in a PPP – with all of its required duties, education component and volunteer requirements – are deeply invested in quality of care for children. We focus on bringing families together by volunteering and working towards a common goal of excellence in childcare.”

In British Columbia, current regulations pertaining to ‘ongoing parent education’ allow parents to fully participate in the classroom as teaching assistants. At Lynn Valley, parents are prepared for this role through various training methods, including newsletters, monthly meetings, and special events.

Lynn Valley not only surpasses the adult to child ratio requirements. It also provides a much larger space than required, both indoors and out. Its large playground also allows all children access to a well-equipped play space and quality time out of doors in a safe environment.

While approximately 50% of families leave the centre annually, new families are recruited by word of mouth, and many return with younger siblings. The quality of the Lynn Valley experience is known not only to local parents – the centre received a national Donner Foundation Award in recent years for its quality programming.

The governance and management structure of the centre reflects the full ownership and engagement of parents. The 12-parent Executive Board is elected annually. The centre also has 11 committees, with parents active in all aspects of operations – including fundraising, financial management, social events, repairs and maintenance, safety, public relations, parent education and newsletters.

The centre benefits from a long-term alliance with the Royal Canadian Legion, which donates money. Other community relationships include the North Shore Disability Center, where a young woman with Down’s syndrome volunteers twice weekly at Lynn Valley.
As Rhonda Café sees it, the advantages of the co-operative structure extend far beyond the quality of care the children receive. "Young families meet and connect with others in their community, work towards a common goal, and develop long-term relationships that carry far beyond the early childhood years. It is the connections to the community, of being part of something bigger than yourself, of belonging. I have seen our school come together to make meals, clean house, and do yard work for a family facing cancer. I have seen our school come together to make meals and raise money to support a family whose child was involved in a very tragic car accident. I have seen families strive to meet the needs of others, even those long 'out' of our school. Many did not even know the families they were helping. They just knew that these families in need were ‘one of our own’ and we would work together to assist them in any way we could. It is a privilege for me to be involved in our community co-operative school."

**Vaughan Co-op Nursery School, Ontario**

- A Nursery School

Vaughan Co-op Nursery School was founded in 1943 and incorporated in 1951 as a non-profit co-operative nursery, jointly run by parents and teachers. The second oldest co-op nursery school in Toronto, Vaughn recently published ‘A Patchwork of Memories’ celebrating its history.

Parent education is a vital aspect of the Vaughan Co-op program, with workshops and seminars offered throughout the year on parenting practices. While parents learn and develop their skills, they also develop close bonds with each other and experience a strong sense of community through involvement in school activities.

The school has a Supervisor and three Early Childhood Education teachers on staff, and fifty-seven children from 50 families enrolled. However, only 42 children attend at any time due to a license capacity of ten toddlers and 32 preschoolers. With strong parent involvement, Vaughn is able to offer an excellent adult to child ratio, since each family is responsible for a half ‘duty day’ per week.

The nursery program itself is play-based and child-centered, with the child’s interests and ideas forming the basis for their experiences, and the environment providing the materials and feedback to support their development. The child’s feelings about self and others are nurtured, and the full range of emotional expression is encouraged – within the context of responsibility and self discipline. As the children discover the world around them, emphasis is placed on the advancement of critical thinking, language, social and motor skills.

Creativity is engendered through a wide range of art materials, music and movement, dramatic play and literature, and children are encouraged to create freely – the process of creation and exploration valued far more than the finished product.

The Co-op facilities are rented from St. Matthew’s United Church, and is comprised of four large rooms, a kitchen, children’s washroom, staffroom, and a gym available when weather closes the outdoor playground. The school is open five days a week from 8:15 to 5:30, offering families a minimum of three half-days weekly with chances to ‘extra
book’ for occasional use if space is available. They operate from September to June and also run an eight-week summer camp.

New families are recruited at Vaughn by word of mouth, and families are trained with the aid of parent and staff handbooks employed as teaching tools and references. Parents go on to participate in morning or afternoon duty days once a week. They provide snacks once a month and attend two to three fundraising events per year. In addition to three staffed school trips a year, parents volunteer for special excursions, such as a visit to the Humber River to watch the salmon jumping or to Harbourfront for the annual Milk Festival. They also participate in special school events such as the annual Dragon Parade to celebrate the Chinese New Year.

This high level of participation at Vaughan has allowed several parents to pursue work in the educational field. Their involvement at the school has helped them make decisions about educational careers, while providing valuable experience that colleges and universities often require of applicants.

Another benefit of parents’ participation at Vaughan is the continued relationship with their child’s education process at the elementary level and beyond. Many of these parents join the parent-teacher association at their child’s school, volunteer in classrooms, help run aftercare programs, and participate in fundraising. Participation at an early stage has clearly shown to lay the foundation for later contributions.

In recognition of its successful program and its strong co-operative community, Vaughan Co-op is used as a field placement site for Ryerson University and other colleges. Students from these programs who demonstrate a high level of understanding about child development and best practices in child care are often hired to help run the summer camp.

The Vaughn Nursery Co-op clearly offers a great deal to its families and teachers, with many developing a long-standing connection to the school. One teacher recently celebrated her 20th year at the school. Another parent has been connected to the school for more than 25 years – first with four children in attendance, then as a cook, and now as the financial manager.

And the co-operative structure is a big part of what makes the school special. The school provides an alternative to families who want quality care in their community, but who also want to be engaged in a culture of learning and growth, both for themselves and their children. A school such as this serves the needs of adults and children alike – offering parents the chance to participate and learn, while guiding their children’s cherished introduction to the world.

For more information about Vaughan Co-op Nursery school, see their book, ‘A Patchwork of Memories,’ and their website www.hipposchool.com, or email them at: vcns@rogers.com.

NB: The Vaughn Co-op Nursery is formally incorporated under the name, York Township Nursery School Association as a non-profit corporation. It is one of the early Ontario centres that was not able to incorporate as a co-op, but used co-operative in their name.
Centretown Parents Daycare, Ontario
– A Multi-Stakeholder Daycare Co-op

Ottawa’s Centretown Parents Daycare is one of the few federally incorporated – and the only multi-stakeholder – child care co-operative in Canada, where both parents and staff are members of the co-op. Centretown has assumed the responsibility of serving financially disadvantaged families, and it makes great efforts to educate families in the concept of mutual assistance and taking charge of issues that affect themselves and the Daycare. Unfortunately, Centretown itself is facing numerous funding issues.

After the closure of St. Andrews Co-operative Daycare Centre in 1974, parents, day care workers and community members bought the current building on 94 James Street in downtown Ottawa. With a provincial grant and a lot of hard work, Centretown Parents Daycare opened in February 1976. Since then, the co-op has renovated the building to include a kitchen, an office, and a parent-staff resource room. In August 1982, they expanded to include a kindergarten at Centennial Public School.

Centretown Parents Daycare serves 55 children, aged six weeks to six years – with 37 children attending the James St. location and 18 attending the kindergarten. Significantly, 53 of the child care spaces are subsidized by a Purchase of Service agreement with the municipality, with over 96% of Centretown’s income received from this agreement.

The Centretown program focuses not only child care, but on meeting the needs of its member families. Many of the families are new to Canada, many are run by single parents, and they all live on a low income. Families are encouraged to interact and work together to help each other. The centre’s staff also maintains a list of community partners, resources and services that can assist parents. Rachel Besharah, Early Childhood Educator, reports, “We are focused on the family as a whole. We facilitate parents working and supporting each other to make Centretown become a part of their family’s lives – as well as a force for change in the community and their own lives.”

While parents do not typically participate in the classroom, they assume other responsibilities within the co-op, such as the weekly rotational clean up. And they are actively involved in the centre’s governance, through committees and the Board of Directors. All executive positions on the Board of Directors are held by parents, providing them the opportunity to hold influence and responsibility. Empowerment of this nature has proved of great value to families so often disenfranchised by mainstream society.

The Centre has five standing committees – including Political Action, Finance, Policy, Fundraising, and Human Resources. However, because of the funding crisis the centre currently faces, the Board and membership have decided to focus primarily on fundraising.

The financial health of the centre is of great concern at present. With a recent reduction in provincial funding, the subsidy dollars for this year are reduced by up to 8%. There is
also no commitment from the province for the ongoing pay equity requirements to improve child care worker’s wages. Even maintaining federal co-operative status is seen as costly, and difficult to balance with other costs that must be met.

The Centre’s 100-year-old building is in constant need of expansion and repair, with extensive renovations now required in the kitchen and the basement. The Board has a commitment to Health and Safety and works constantly towards improving the work-play space.

Rachel points out that the Ontario Ministry of Community and Family Services does not recognize the co-operative structure. “It is a challenge to maintain our philosophy of parental engagement and development – so vital to the families we work with. We need money to maintain and improve infrastructure. But, unfortunately there is no differentiation in the amount of funding the centre receives because it is a co-op, despite the extra responsibilities it assumes in the community. It takes a lot of additional resources to focus on the well being of the family.”

**West Side Co-op Preschool, New Brunswick**

– A Preschool Co-operative

West Side Co-op Preschool is the oldest co-op preschool in New Brunswick, having served the Saint John community since 1974. The preschool accommodates children from fourteen months to five years of age. It has a Teacher-Director, two early childhood educators, and a program that encourages each child’s overall development through activities appropriate to their ability.

Parent participation is key to the philosophy of the centre. Parents at West Side serve as classroom assistants, and they are also actively involved in other affairs of the Co-op. They work in fundraising events, serve on committees, and clean the preschool to provide a pleasant and healthy environment for the children. Parents also provide a nutritious class snack on a rotational basis.

This high level of parent participation in their child’s first educational experience affords many benefits. Parents are able to see their children in social situations and gain insight into the variances of child development and behaviour. They learn better parenting skills by observing the trained early childhood educators. Families develop a sense of community and form enduring relationships through the co-operative, and they receive preschool services at a below-average cost, due to high parent involvement.

Unfortunately, the co-op is now facing a drop in enrolment, due to a number of factors, including declining numbers of preschool age children, new private preschools, and higher provincial academic standards for kindergarten. In fact, the new standards for
kindergarten have some families avoiding activity-based programs – such as those available at West Side – for more structured academic situations. Finally, it is becoming increasingly difficult for some parents to participate in the Preschool because of work schedules.

As a result, attendance at the monthly committee meetings has been dropping recently. The Teacher-Director, Lori Roberts, feels that the main reason is the increased demands on parents’ time outside regular school hours. There are 16 active committees at the Preschool and the Board suspects that this may be another reason for poor attendance at the monthly meetings. The school is currently examining the number of committees and looking at the possibility of reducing their number.

Nonetheless, Roberts says “the opportunity exists for tremendous expansion of co-operative childcare centers in the province of New Brunswick. Whereas most co-operatives serve only preschool children, the need for infant spaces is critical and demand is also high for after-school care. A national organization could help pave the way for this expansion by providing the expertise and experience of other centers across the country.”

**Centres de la petite enfance, Québec**

– Québec City, Gatineau, and Sherbrooke

The project staff interviewed three child care centres and one regional federation in Québec in an attempt to better understand why co-operative child care centres have not developed in greater numbers in a province with such a strong co-op movement. The conclusions around this issue can be found in the section on Quebec. There are only 16 child care co-op centres in Québec, and these are part of the 1,000 Centres de la petite enfance (CPEs), the non-profit government funded daycare centres. They are all members of the Association québécoise des Centres de la Petite Enfance.

The first co-operative interviewed, **Centre de la petite enfance, Coopérative St. Jean (Québec)**, has existed since 1971. It is located in the upper town of Québec City in a primarily middle class neighbourhood. The Co-operative has some 42 children and about 80 members, including some parents who once had children in the centre. The co-op is an official Centre for Early Childhood (Centre de la petite enfance), which means that the centre receives $19-20 a day per child from the government and collects $7 per day from the family of each child who attends the centre. The centre has 44 funded places but has chosen to operate only 42, with a mix of full and part-time participants. The co-op’s waiting list has some 300-400 names, but this is largely due to the fact that parents place their child’s name on the waiting lists of several centres. The CPE Coopérative St. Jean has set three criteria for deciding who is admitted to the centre. First priority is given to children who live in the neighbourhood. Second priority is given to members of the co-operative – that is, families that have had a child attend the

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122 Interview with Jean Robitaille, Executive Director, of the Association québécoise des Centres de la Petite Enfance

123 Interview with Sylvain Baril, Deputy Director.
centre in the past – while third priority is given to parents who already have a child at the centre.

This centre maintains the key features of the child care co-op model. For example, all members must purchase a share for $30, and they are expected to assist in the maintenance of the co-operative – which can range from helping with clean-up or major repairs to shoveling snow. Families with children in full-time attendance must contribute 30 hours of work per year, while parents who use the centre on a part-time basis contribute 15 hours. If a member does not carry out the work, he or she is billed at a rate of $8 per hour and must pay this penalty to the centre.

The Centre has 10 staff, and it is a member of the regional CPE organization, which provides access to a job bank for replacing staff for temporary time periods as well as access to professionals in education, health and psychology, whose services the centre can purchase. The Centre is also affiliated with le Conseil québécois de la coopération et de la mutualité (CQCM), and it receives various resource materials from this umbrella organization, which serves all Québec co-operatives.

The board of the Coopérative St. Jean is composed of 7 parents and 2 staff, for a total of 9 members, which is the minimum size mandated by law. This board is elected at the AGM for one year.

Unlike the Quebec Centre, the CPE Libelle, located in the Hull area of Gatineau, is a co-operative in name and legal status only. In fact, the administrator would like to change the co-op to a non-profit child care centre for ease of operation. However, since the legal change would cost in the range of $10,000, this option has not been pursued for financial reasons. Members still pay $10.00 for shares, but the co-op long ago abandoned the practice of members donating a certain number of hours to the co-op. The co-op is unionized with the CSN, and one staff member (not the director) serves on the Board, along with 7 parents. The centre has some 58 children and 14 staff.

The third Québec co-operative interviewed was CPE le Bilboquet, which was established in 1982 in Sherbrooke by four people who are still on staff at the Centre.\footnote{124} It is one of three multi stakeholder co-op CPEs that exist in the Eastern Townships region of Quebec.\footnote{125} Le Bilboquet was originally set up as a workers co-op and converted in 1997 to a solidarity co-op which has three components. The day care workers, the parents and community members. The community members are mainly former daycare home care workers who remained in the co-operative when the function of managing workers who ran homecare child care were moved to a regional centre. The Co-op looks after children 30 months and older and functions with half day programs or 2-3 day full day care. Since 2004 it has 2 sites and would be ready to expand if that possibility existed. It has 130 full day places from the government which translates into 226 children on a half day basis. It also offers places to children with

\footnote{124} Interview Bernard Beaupré, Director, Coopérative de solidarité du centre de la petite enfance Le Bilboquet

\footnote{125} Interview with Martine Staehler, Director, Regroupement des centres de la petite enfance des Cantons de l'Est
Members pay $125 to join the co-op. The Board is elected at the AGM has 2/3 parents as well as representatives from staff and the community. The co-op is active in the CDR Estrie (La Coopérative de développement régionale de l'Estrie (CDE)) where the Director sits n the Board and through that organization with the broader Quebec co-op movement. The Co-op has also been a leader in a recent attempt to hold a meeting of child care co-ops and investigate the possibilities of federation or more permanent forms of contact.

126 A full detailed outline of the pedagogical approach of the Centre can be found in the Memoire presented by Center to the Quebec government on the Law 124 in 2004.
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Jean Beale, Executive Director of the Council for Parent Participation Preschools in British Columbia:

“It is absolutely about helping families be better families. Training parents to improve their parenting skills at the same time attending school with their children is a huge advantage. We hear years and years after they’ve left the system the quality of training from seminars and working with highly trained Early Childhood professionals is a big, big thing. And also the co-op model is always about community building. So in this day and age there are not as many opportunities to reach out to your neighbours and people in your community. You get to know all the families so well and you never forget even decades afterwards. Affordability is a big factor. What I love about the co-op model is anybody can afford to be apart of it. So you get a real mix of types of people that join a coop preschool and they’re all mixed together, working together regardless of their economic status. There are no shortages of good reasons!”

Kerry Hall-Jardine, of Vancouver Island Co-operative Preschool Association, feels

“it meets the needs to a certain degree but more could be done. The preschool in my community gave me just that community and a safe environment for my son(s) to grow as people. Preschools provide a common place for parents to voice concerns and to listen to possible solutions. Some parents who do not have support systems in place find their preschool to be their resource for support. Parents participate in the community of the school to foster a love for learning not only in their children but in themselves as well. Children learn by example and parents who choose to participate in co-operative preschools know the obligations they must fulfill and I believe their children see them take an interest in what is going on in their little lives and feel empowered by that.

“It is interesting in that the parents who are involved in cooperative school in my community go on to be involved in their elementary and middle school communities as well. The involvement that they had at the preschool level seems to translate into a life of learning and being an advocate for children. Granted not all of the parents choose this path but the correlation does exist here. Strong attachments are formed as well by the children themselves and they remember their preschools fondly when spoken to about them. Even driving by we still check out what is happening. I myself like to support as many preschools as I can by asking to hear about fundraisers and community events. I know that financially they could use as much help as I can give them.”

The co-operative model, according to Executive Director of Parent Co-operative Preschool Corporation (PCPC), Nancy Bradley provides
“parent participation in the child’s life on a day-to-day basis. Participation in running a centre gives some people a chance for the first time in their lives to run a corporation and get some new skills.

Economically, if done properly [it] should be more inexpensive. [They have an] opportunity to have a vote and a say in day-to-day operations of a centre. If co-op, done properly, can be a feeling of being part of a community, not just a drop-in family. A family can learn new skills and/or upgrade their parenting skills, can be very community-oriented and socialization for children, especially with English as a Second Language, and preparing them for Jr/Sr Kindergarten programs in the public sector. As a member in a co-op you generally should not be standing at the sidelines but ‘participating’ in all facets of the centre. [However,] if co-op is out of control then it can be a really bad experience.”

Wendy Burton-Booth, Supervisor of Huron Co-operative Nursery School and Treasurer of PCPC, comments on the co-operative model

“We provide support to the families by providing a wonderful environment for the children and a learning environment for the families – working with each other and qualified staff. For me the co-operative model gives a great deal to the families – each family is involved and has the opportunity to take some ownership over their child’s environment outside of the home. For some families childcare is not affordable; [therefore it] allow[s] families to attend programs that are operated by great qualified staff for an affordable amount each month. Our co-op is a fabulous place for the families – they feel comfortable and enjoy working with other families. They provide a support system for each other and develop friendships that last a lifetime not only for the children but for the families. Co-op’s provide a level of ownership for the families.”

Jean Stevenson, one of the first women to start in the co-operative movement in the 1950’s, comments on what she feels is one of the greatest concerns to co-operative child care today.

“It keeps emerging that one of the greatest concerns that we have had, and in which it is going to continue, is leadership development. The average on going co-op may have learned how to cope with its own individual problems, and with help from places like co-op councils or other knowledgeable advisors they can deal with their local needs, but once the individual who has taken the initiative in that particular centre moves on, it’s totally dependent on what’s upcoming so leadership development, I think, is a major concern and one which should be looking for money. If they want to start to insert some valuable skills, as you know in the past, the councils have worked very hard at this and have done their best.

Any leadership development programme of that kind would have to be formulated with the co op people having input, not just say ‘oh well here’s a bunch of people [who] know about leadership development and they’ve done it on this and that and the other or company or something’. It wouldn’t run. It would have to be in the
meeting of the minds of what would go into that [leadership development programme].”

Jean further reflects on Early Childhood Education,

“When you talk about applying a course that has something to do with teacher training then the best people to do [it] would be the best people that we have in the field now; taking it on, giving a course, going in as an accepted lecturer to bring the whole idea to teacher in-training. That might have to start at a continuing education level.”

When asked how she would envision the Federal Government supporting co-operative child care she observes,

“If the money is going to go somewhere, maybe it should have a way to filter it down for the individual who’s coming in from the local co op council or the local co op school and says will take this training. ‘But its going to cost me child care its going, cost me transportation.’ It’s about time that it should be taken into consideration so that you should be looking for subsidy for people who have the enthusiasm and willingness to make it possible.”

The Supervisor of the Confederation Building Daycare Centre in Newfoundland Centre, Ruby Thorne, wrote that

“for some parents, once they start to recognize this [early childhood education] field as a true profession with an extensive knowledge base and skill set they commit even further. The parents know they have a voice in decisions that affect their child’s day to day care and that any part they play in the co-operative will benefit their child.”

127 Jean Stevenson, Interview, February 1, 2007
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*DIY day care*
Elizabeth Payne, The Ottawa Citizen, February 12, 2007

Connor, Hamish, Sebastien and Lily are four of the children cared for by Lana St. Jean at Le Jardin, the do-it-yourself day care set up by their parents in a former in-law suite attached to Hamish's family's home.

One by one they toddle up -- the big-eyed and the runny-nosed -- to peer at the large stranger in their midst. Some touch me, some hand me toys or address me in one-word sentences. Others just stare.

In the micro-universe of the day-care centre, a visiting adult is often reason for excitement. But despite their initial curiosity, my presence is not so out-of-the-ordinary for the toddlers of Le Jardin Co-operative Daycare in Vanier; soon they return to their toys. Adults are part of the routine at Le Jardin. Four days a week, a different parent is on duty to assist caregiver Lana St. Jean in helping the children through their daily routine. On Fridays, St. Jean's day off, two parents run the day care. And, even when not on duty, parents frequently drop by for quick and not-so-quick visits to lend a hand and get down on the floor with the kids.

Daily parental involvement is one of the things that makes Le Jardin different from many day-care centres. But that's just the beginning.

Le Jardin, opened by five Vanier and New Edinburgh families last fall, is one of the faces of the future of child care in this country.

Decades after the debate began -- and continues -- about what the government's role should be in providing day care in Canada, families such as the parents of Connor, Lily, Hamish, Sebastien and Elise -- aged 14 to 19 months -- have begun taking things into their own hands. It's called do-it-yourself day care, and, for the parents of Le Jardin, the made-to-measure child-care program is a perfect fit.

Amy Lightfoot and her husband bought their house in a newly developed corner of Vanier with just such a venture in mind. The home's sunny in-law suite, which leads to a fenced yard, is now Le Jardin. Inside are a kitchen where organic meals and snacks are prepared, a room where five tired toddlers nap in portable cribs every afternoon, and a large, bright playroom with a tent, table and chairs, couches, books and toys. Tacked onto a bulletin board are schedules, menus and some of the mountain of paperwork that was created in the process of building a co-operative day care.

Lightfoot and her husband "papered the neighbourhood" with posters seeking other like-minded parents to form the day care and invited anyone interested to a meeting. Some of the initially intrigued decided they would be unable to devote one day a week (or more, in
the beginning) to working there. But by September five families had signed on and Le Jardin was born.

For the first few months, parents were on full-time duty looking after the children. In November St. Jean, an experienced early childhood educator, was hired.

The parents, who are looking for two more families, say six children is the optimal number for Le Jardin; that way, every family can be responsible for one day at the day care. Currently, two families share one spot, which means four full-time spots are filled. The co-op will hold an open house next month to try to generate more interest.

The parents, several of whom met with me one chilly morning, say Le Jardin is ideal.

"It feels very homey to me," said Colette Gignac, mother of 14-month-old Elise. "I know my daughter’s safe. I know all of these kids. There is a real sense of community."

Lightfoot added: "It's nice to know like-minded parents."

And that is one of the keys to Le Jardin and other grassroots co-operative day cares that are springing up across Canada: They give parents the ability to create child care that suits their needs and reflects their values at an affordable cost. They also give parents a flexibility -- for part-time hours, specific food requirements and specific scheduling requirements -- that larger day cares can't offer.

With a full complement of children at Le Jardin, parents would pay about $28 a day, which covers St. Jean's salary, rent, cellphone, food, supplies and miscellaneous expenses, including the recent purchase of a quad stroller. That's significantly less than the cost of a nanny or fees at most day-care centres and many home day cares. In addition, parents pay a registration fee of $250.

At Le Jardin, children are fed organic meals and snacks; non-toxic, environmentally friendly cleaning products are used; and there is no television -- all principles agreed to by the day care’s parents during some of the initial meetings.

Although co-operative day cares and nursery schools have long existed -- Betty Hyde Co-operative Nursery School in Sandy Hill, which involves 50 families, is in its 64th year -- smaller grassroots day cares such as Le Jardin reflect a growing desire to create a tailor-made program. Although some are motivated by the difficulty in finding day-care spaces, Lightfoot said she found there were daycare spaces when she began looking.

"There is day care out there. But, maybe my standards are just too high," she added about her pursuit of DIY day care.

One of the other parents found a part-time spot in a home day care before Le Jardin was created, but was asked to leave two weeks later when a family looking for full-time day care showed up. Where does Le Jardin fit into the ongoing and seemingly endless debate about day care in Canada?
Day-care proponents have long pointed to European countries, where state-provided care is available to everyone, as an example Canada should follow. But the Conservative government, with its $1,200 annual Choice in Child Care Allowance for parents of children under six, has come in on the side of parents who make their own arrangements -- whether with relatives, at home day cares or in day-care centres.

The problem is that the allowance doesn't come close to covering the real cost of day care, nor does it address calls for a national child care system. Canada is as far from providing meaningful support to working parents as it has ever been.

Still, somewhere there may be a made-in-Canada solution -- one that provides more than token financial support for parents of day-care-aged children but that also helps parents who want to opt out of larger day-care centres or avoid smaller home day cares to do it themselves.

That would require a day-care strategy with real financial support as well as flexibility. Maybe DIY day-care parents have something to teach the rest of us.

Elizabeth Payne is the Citizen’s editor of senior writers. Her column appears every other week.

Toronto Star
Sharing, learning together
Kids get benefit of involved parents at country’s oldest co-op nursery, now in 70th year - Apr 26, 2007 04:30 AM (KRISTIN RUSHOWY, EDUCATION REPORTER)

Atop a hill, inside the walls of an old Toronto church, is a nursery school where children are playing and learning – alongside their parents – just as they have for the past 70 years.

They’re building with blocks, learning letters and even jumping on a makeshift trampoline – a mattress – in the same rooms children did when Manor Road Co-operative Nursery School opened in 1937.

And while times have changed for the oldest co-op school in Canada, the philosophy has not.

"There is the same commitment to the co-op movement, to parent participation," said veteran teacher Martha Smith, who’s been involved with the school since 1976. It’s celebrating its anniversary tomorrow with a party and fundraiser for parents and alumni.

Smith’s first contact was as a Ryerson early childhood education student on a work placement; she was later hired on as a teacher. Her daughters, now 20 and 22, also attended and at that time, she served as a parent volunteer.

Co-operative nursery schools, dubbed by some as childcare’s "best-kept secret," began in 1916 in Chicago, when a group of professors' wives sought a program that would
combine education for their children, parenting help and social networking as well as some free time for themselves.

The schools are non-profit and less expensive than other pre-school programs. Parent volunteers run all aspects from setting the budget to helping out in the classroom alongside early childhood educators. Parents sign up for committees to plan fundraisers, produce newsletters and run social events. They're also required to do "duty days" where they work alongside the teachers.

Over the years, as mothers entered the workforce, fathers have taken on a greater role. Some co-ops also now allow other caregivers as substitutes for duty days; others allow parents to pay a little more or serve on extra committees and forego the duty days.

While most tend to offer half-day programming, some run full-time. Canada has about 526 co-operative nurseries, 270 of them in Ontario.

Mary Stuart, who has just completed a study on co-ops for the federal government, said their benefits are enormous. They also provide the kind of child learning and parenting support that child development expert Dr. Fraser Mustard has advocated for years to get pre-schoolers off to a strong start in life.

"It's really a wonderful environment for parents to share and learn together, working together as a community in bringing up their child," Stuart said.

For Brett and Rachael McCaig, Manor Road was a way to meet new parents after moving to Toronto from St. Thomas. Daughter Molly is in her second year at the co-op, and son Fergus, 18 months, will attend in 2008.

"Especially for her first formal school experience, it's been great for us to be able to know what's going on, to know her friends," said Rachael McCaig, who sometimes brings in her guitar and plays Lyle Lovett and Beatles songs for the children, or simply lets them touch or strum the instrument.

She said being in the classroom and watching the two teachers gives her a chance to pick up all kinds of parenting tips. Teachers too appreciate parents' input and expertise – one parent who is a dentist came in and gave the children check-ups.

"Parents bring skills that you don't necessarily have as a teacher," said Chris Denovan, an ECE who has been at Manor Road for five years. "It enhances the program, brings a specialness to it."
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Appendix Six

Co-operative Childcare

Co-operative Childcare

This website tells you all about the way in which the co-operative childcare service can help you.

What is a childcare co-operative and why choose a childcare co-operative?
How can we help you? The service we offer.
Setting up? All you need to know from finance to legal.
Barriers & solutions - How to overcome problems for providers & parents.
Why so special? What makes co-operatives so different & successful?
Types of service - We can help all types of services.
Case studies
Frequently asked questions
Contact us
Links

You can download a copy of our introductory leaflet by clicking here or visiting our downloads page.
A specialist advice and support service designed to meet your needs

If you are • Running a childcare business
  • Thinking of starting one
  • Providing advice and support to childcare businesses

Co-operative Childcare can help you...
Barriers to excellent childcare – and how a co-operative approach can help you to overcome them:

**PROBLEM**

**Availability:** Traditional working patterns and family structures have changed dramatically in recent years, but many childcare services have yet to evolve to meet the needs of today’s parents and children.

**CO-OPERATIVE SOLUTION** Co-operative childcare delivers flexibility and responsiveness. The close relationship between childcare worker and parent that is inbuilt in the co-operative approach ensures that the business is shaped to respond to the changing needs of the children and parents using the service.

**PROBLEM**

**Quality:** Recent media coverage, Ofsted reports and user experiences highlight huge variations in the quality of care.

**CO-OPERATIVE SOLUTION** A stable, well-trained and committed staff team combines with the financial sustainability of the co-operative model to create a sound platform for the delivery of consistent high quality care. Involvement of parents in shaping their children’s learning experiences and care also contributes to childcare that really does meet the needs of the family and community.

**PROBLEM**

**Staff turnover:** Many childcare services suffer from high staff turnover due to low pay, lack of training and low morale. This has a direct impact on children and their parents, as well as causing problems for staff and employers.

**CO-OPERATIVE SOLUTION** Co-operatives know that well trained employees not only provide excellent care but they can also contribute to the effective running of the business. Giving employees the opportunity to share this responsibility gives staff a more positive outlook and job satisfaction, creating a strongly motivated staff team and low staff turnover. It also strengthens the recruitment process and training costs fall. Co-operatives have the edge in recruiting and retaining the best employees due to their attractive employment benefits and excellent working conditions.

**PROBLEM**

**Costs:** Childcare costs in the UK are the highest in Europe.

**CO-OPERATIVE SOLUTION** The private sector has raised the cost of childcare due to the enormous demand. Government support is only adequate for some. Co-operative childcare delivers value for money because profits are not taken out of the service by absent owners and shareholders, but reinvested in the business and the local community. Co-operative childcare offers a cost effective solution.
You can learn more about the benefits of the co-operative approach to childcare by taking advantage of our business advice service. The support available includes information and advice on:

- Business planning
- Legal structures
- Marketing (including pricing & promotion)
- Financial management (including budgeting, payroll & income/funding generation)
- Democratic working (co-operative working methods)
- How to run and manage the business

This service is provided both via telephone and face-to-face.*

As part of our service we are also developing a resource centre providing:

- Information about the co-operative childcare sector.
- Case studies of childcare co-operatives — learn from the successes (and mistakes!) of others.
- A support network for individuals and organisations with an interest in co-operative childcare issues — share information, knowledge, and expertise, and spread good practice.
- Ongoing legal and business services to childcare co-operatives taking up membership of Co-operatives UK.

A pilot consortium of childcare businesses is being developed and will act as a central services organisation, providing tools and resources to support and grow co-operative childcare businesses. The first pilot will be set up in London and is to be replicated in other areas of the UK.

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* Free face-to-face consultations are usually limited to one day per client, with any additional time chargeable by agreement. Telephone support is unlimited for the duration of the project and free of charge, other than your normal telecoms charges.

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**Co-operative developing excellence**

**Case study**

**Playtots Childcare Ltd**

**PLYMOUTH**

Playtots Childcare Ltd began in January 1999. The service was set up as a worker co-operative and Company Limited by Guarantee, by two childcare workers who realised that the local provision was far from satisfactory and had long waiting lists.

Playtots is a nursery and pre school that also provides breakfast, after school and holiday club services. There are currently 17 members of staff and 58 children’s places, which will soon extend to 70. Cost for the services are varied starting from £2 per hour.
Case study

The Owl Club MANCHESTER

Oswald Road Childcare Club Ltd (also known as The Owl Club) was set up in December 1993 by the parents of children attending the Oswald Road School. Set up as a user co-operative and company limited by guarantee, the parents elected a committee, from themselves, to manage the club.

The club provides before and after school services and during the school holidays a play scheme on an alternate basis with two other local co-operative childcare clubs. It is £5.25 per session and has filled its 72 places. Its premises are on the school grounds and are rented from the School.

One issue for the club has been high demand, it is very popular and has a waiting list. However as a co-operative the money made from the service goes back into the club so they can now consider renting more space from the school so the service is more available without increasing the cost of the service.

Razia Dastageer from the club said that the workers are happy with their pay, as it is higher than other childcare workers they know she explained “we provide a fun & exciting environment for the children with secure premises and caring staff. Parent run co-operatives can be successful”.

Childcare excellence in childcare services

Initially the service was given guidance and financial support from the Pre School Learning Alliance, the Local Council and the Local Prison Charity Fund. After contacting Co-Active the regional co-operative development body in their area, a successful bid was made for neighbourhood nursery funding. Support continued and more recently the service has received financial support for further staff training from Business Link. Problems were encountered along the way, but the founders overcame these by inviting organisations and individuals to become personally involved. They did this through encouragement to visit the service at various stages, explaining how far they had come and what help they now needed to meet their goals. “We believed in our project so we had to make them believe that we could achieve all we said we could.” Tracey Lynn, Director.

The success of Playtots Childcare Ltd is inspirational. It has extended from its original 26 places for care in term time only to its current size in only 5 years. In addition its family support services include antenatal classes, childminder training, courses run by health visitors, Jobcentre Plus hold a session every two weeks, drop-in sessions with a school nurse and an inclusion drop-in is about to start to support children and families with special needs.

The centre has formed great partnerships with organisations such as Social Services and the Childminders Association and this supports them in their bid for Children’s Centre status. Tracey Lynn who has been involved from the beginning says, “Our whole ethos is about children, community and non profit. Becoming a co-operative fitted into our ethos perfectly”.
What makes a co-operative approach so special?

- Co-operatives are businesses that are democratically owned and controlled by their members, and serve their best interests. Many co-operatives are rooted in the local community from which their members are drawn, enabling them to better understand and respond to local needs.

- The members can be parents or carers, employees, community representatives, or a mixture of these and other stakeholders. With key stakeholders on board, the business can be easily shaped to the needs of its market.

- Co-operatives are based on the values of self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity and solidarity. Co-operative members believe in the ethical values of honesty, openness, social-responsibility and caring for others. These values drive the business, ensuring that it is sustainably managed in the interests of its stakeholders, and is fair and honest in its approach to clients.

Co-operative principles
These are internationally agreed guidelines by which co-operatives put their values into practice.

Voluntary and open membership
Membership of co-operatives is open, without discrimination to anyone willing to take on the responsibilities of the role. Dependent on the type of co-operative you choose this may mean it is open to all parents, or employees.

Democratic member control
It is the parent/worker members who set up policies and make decisions, one member-one vote.

Member economic participation
Profits are democratically controlled. They can be re-invested back into the business, invested in the community as a donation, or paid to the members as a bonus.

Autonomy and independence
When a co-operative enters into an agreement with another organisation it does so on terms of democratic control and maintains its co-operative autonomy.

Education, training and information
Co-operatives provide these for their members, to promote the development of the co-operative and raise awareness of the co-operative model and mutual benefits.

Co-operation among co-operatives
Co-operatives are dedicated to strengthening the co-operative movement by working together and supporting other co-operatives. Co-operatives® holds a database of all co-operatives at www.uk.coop so you can learn from and work with similar co-operatives.

Concern for community
Co-operatives work for sustainable development of their community through policies approved by their members.
The Co-operative Childcare project supports all types of childcare provision including:

- Full/session day care
- Breakfast clubs
- After school clubs
- Holiday clubs
- Crèches & mobile crèches
- Childminders
- Childminding Networks
- Community Play Schemes
- Saturday services
- Community Nannying schemes
- Parent/Carer toddler groups
- Employer childcare networks

The Co-operative Childcare project is a partnership between Co-operativesUK, Social Enterprise London, and Co-operative Solutions. It is funded by Co-operative Action and will run through to December 2006.

The project aims to:

- Grow the co-operative childcare sector through hands-on support to new businesses.
- Share good practice and provide information.
- Pilot a consortium approach and a central services organisation to add value to work of smaller childcare settings.

The partners aim to promote awareness of the co-operative option and to support those who wish to develop sustainable childcare businesses. We provide a range of resources and access to specialists, which will enable your venture to become a success.

If you are interested in advice, support, information and contacts please get in touch today

Telephone: 0845 458 1879 or 0161 246 2941
Email: angela.gibbons@cooperatives-uk.coop
Online: www.cooperatives-uk.coop/childcare
Write to: Angela Gibbons,
Project Co-ordinator, Co-operativesUK,
Holyoake House, Hanover Street,
Manchester M60 0AS