

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



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

#### BY THE NUMBERS

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

CUPE represents 2,500 members in dedicated child care centres. CUPE also represents many early childhood educators (ECEs) delivering child care programs in other sectors such as education and municipal services. We represent 2,020 school-aged child care members in Quebec who are employed by school boards. In Ontario, we represent almost 4,400 full-time equivalent ECE members who deliver the full-day kindergarten program. In British Columbia, we represent 350 members who deliver the Strong-Start early learning drop-in program helping prepare children for kindergarten. Many Ontario municipalities deliver child care programs directly; CUPE represents about 2,000 members employed in their child care centres. We also represent child care workers at universities and colleges that directly provide child care services. Finally, many multi-service agencies deliver child care programs where CUPE represents the members.

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

#### FUNDING AND GOVERNANCE

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

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

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

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

The NDP government in BC has taken welcome steps towards building a universal child care system. Wage enhancements, education and funding for training were all announced as part of an ECE recruitment and retention strategy.

Five provinces or territories offer some publicly delivered (municipal or school board) child care: Alberta, Saskatchewan, Ontario, Newfoundland and Labrador, and the Northwest Territories. However,



Ontario's municipally-operated child care sector has dropped from 11 per cent of total spaces in 1998 to 2.6 per cent of total spaces in 2012.

The majority of child care centres are run by not-for-profit boards. Many CUPE members in the child care sector work with voluntary boards and there is large turnover leading to instability. The introduction of full-day kindergarten has also put these centres under tremendous stress to meet changing demands.

For-profit care is also expanding across the country. In six provinces and territories, half or more of all child care spaces are provided by for-profit corporations. For-profit care is nearly 30 per cent of total centre spaces in Canada. In Ontario, CUPE represents the 270 members at Kids & Company, a large for-profit privately held corporation. In August 2018, the Conservative government in Ontario announced that it will remove the "For-Profit Maximum Percentage Threshold" from child care funding guidelines. This means that more public funds could go to big-box for-profit child care, creating downward pressure on wages and working conditions.

## Issues

### THE MARKET MODEL FOR SERVICES

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

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

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

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

### UNIONIZATION

A 2013 report, *You Bet We Still Care!*, conducted by the Child Care Human Resources Sector Council, showed 21.5 per cent of child care staff identified themselves as union members. Unionization is highest at 30 per cent in Quebec, where the Confédération des syndicats nationaux (CSN) is the dominant union. In BC, unionization is at 29.4 per cent; the government employees' union (BCGEU) represents the majority of the sector. CUPE represents the largest number of members delivering child care and early childhood education services in child care centres as well as other programs.

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

### WAGES

Without adequate public funding, child care workers' wages and working conditions are poor. However, child care workers who are unionized have better wages and are more likely to have pensions and benefits.

On average, in 2012, wages for staff in unionized centres were \$4.61 an hour higher than those in non-unionized centres (\$20.11/hour compared to



\$15.50 for non-unionized staff). The biggest difference was in Ontario, where unionized staff were paid an average of \$23.06/hour, while non-unionized staff were paid \$15.77/hour.

## Bargaining

CUPE has worked to create structures and strategies that provide more effective coordination, bargaining, and campaigns for the child care sector. In Nova Scotia, CUPE is working with allies to campaign for provincially-funded ECE wages and working standards. Ontario child care sector members are represented on the social services workers' committee and also support the provincial child care coalition. One large local in Toronto has 30 sites and represents 350 members. In Ottawa, one local represents approximately 300 child care workers at 13 centres, and has set up a common bargaining table. One local is representing all the workers for the private-for-profit centre Kids & Company across Ontario. Manitoba has a local representing around 90 members at five child care centres. Although CUPE represents few child care locals in BC, they are covered under province-wide community services bargaining. Outside of the Ottawa local and BC, coordinated bargaining is rare.

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

## Pensions

Pension coverage for the unionized child care sector is low outside of Quebec and BC. CUPE locals have made some headway with the Multi-Sector Pension Plan (MSPP) in Ontario and Manitoba. Just over

53 per cent of CUPE members in the child care sector have access to a registered pension plan, although only 22 per cent have a defined benefit plan.

## Campaigns

CUPE has been a leader in campaigns for child care, working in coalition with many groups, including Child Care Now. We are gearing up for the 2019 federal election to campaign with our allies for adequate federal funding and evidence-based child care policy.

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

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

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

### VISIT CUPE.CA: RESOURCES FOR MEMBERS

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