



# IMPACTS 2018

How a **CUP partnership** with **EndPovertyEdmonton** is helping **UNDERSTAND AND IMPROVE EARLY LEARNING AND CARE** in Edmonton for **all** families.

## What is early learning and care?

“Early learning and care” (ELC) refers to environments for young children outside their homes where children spend a significant portion of their day without their parents. Generally known as “day care” or “child care” programs, ELC includes centre-based programs, full-day early education programs, and regulated family day homes for children who are not yet in K-12 education.

## Why is ELC important?

Research has shown that the early years of life are extremely important for learning, social development, and health. A strong start through high-quality ELC sets the stage for a successful life. High-quality ELC is also increasingly viewed as a fundamental human right for children.

Investment in high quality ELC:

- **allows parents to pursue or continue work and education.**
- **narrows the gender pay gap (as mothers are often the ones that leave their careers to take care of their children).**
- **produces a return of \$6 for every \$1 invested (Conference Board, 2017).**
- **reinforces commitments to reconciliation when offering culturally appropriate programs to Indigenous children and families.**

There was a space available in a licensed day care for only

# 3 of 10

children aged 0-4 in Edmonton in 2018.



# \$835

was the median monthly cost of full-time licensed care for a preschooler in Edmonton in 2018.



In Alberta,

# 72%

of mothers with children aged 3-5 participate in the workforce.



In Edmonton, many child care centres have waitlists and parents can be charged up to **\$200** to be placed on a waitlist.

## What do you need to know?

High-quality early learning and care (ELC) has great benefits for children, families, and society in general. ELC, however, is generally in short supply in Edmonton, and there is no regular coordination and planning of services in the city. This lack of coordination and planning is likely impacting the city's most vulnerable families. The role of the newly formed **Edmonton Council for Early Learning and Care** is to lead the development of high-quality, affordable, and inclusive ELC services in the City, with an emphasis on meeting the needs of low-income and underserved families.



## Origins of the Conversation

The Community-University Partnership for the Study of Children, Youth, and Families (CUP) led the Families First Edmonton project (2005-2012), which was instrumental in beginning to understand low income families' experiences and their needs for early learning and care. Lessons from Families First inspired the inclusion of ELC as one of the six game changers within EndPovertyEdmonton (EPE).

Throughout the development of EPE, discussions around early learning and care were led by a Working Group that hosted community conversations with Edmontonians with direct knowledge about early child development and poverty.

Through the efforts of the Working Group, in 2015 Edmonton City Council approved a set of "road map actions" for EPE, one of which was to create and fund a committee to work on designing and implementing an integrated system of early learning and care: the Early Learning and Care Steering Committee (ELCSC).



Billie MacFarlane with her four children (l-r): Naomi, Ericka, Logan, and Sophie. [Read more](#) about Billie and her situation.

“*[My children] are getting educated and cared for by people who are highly educated in the field . . . They are also exposed to more crafts and experiences than I would ever be able to provide no matter how much money I had.*

Billie MacFarlane

## Building Sustainable Leadership

The ELCSC was created in January of 2017 and included members from:

- City of Edmonton
- Edmonton Public Schools
- Edmonton Catholic Schools
- Alberta Children's Services
- Alberta Education
- Alberta Status of Women
- Alberta Health
- Muttart Foundation
- Edmonton Early Years Coalitions
- EndPovertyEdmonton
- CUP
- Association of Early Childhood Educators of Alberta
- YMCA of Northern Alberta
- Edmonton Community Foundation

Since January 2017, the ELCSC has outlined the vision, mission, and principles that could be used to design and implement an integrated system of early learning and care. In addition, the ELCSC, through research, internal conversations, and external consultations, agreed that the most critical short term issue was to create a single body through which early learning and care efforts could be planned and coordinated in Edmonton. And so, on October 31st, 2018, the ELCSC presented a plan to the Edmonton City Council's Community and Public Services Committee for the creation of the Edmonton Council for Early Learning and Care. This plan was lauded by the members of the Committee and was unanimously accepted.

### CUP's Role in the ELCSC

CUP has partnered with the ELCSC to bring relevant evidence and models to inform their conversations and outputs over the past two years. Some examples include:

- Providing capacity for the ELCSC through

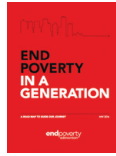
a postdoctoral fellow.

- Supporting a January 2018 workshop that engaged experts from other Canadian municipalities in conversations about the future vision for ELC in Edmonton.
- Aligning the independent study projects of four UofA students to address four potential issues in early learning and care:
  - Indigenous views into ELC,
  - "Hub" models for child care,
  - Inclusivity of children with disabilities, and
  - Communication of the benefits of high-quality ELC to policymakers and the public.
- Fostering a partnership with the College of Licensed Practical Nurses of Alberta which has developed a project to examine the ELC needs of shift workers.
- Providing research and analysis for the report to the Community and Public Services Committee.

## The Evolution of ELC in EndPovertyEdmonton

### Foundations & the ELC Working Group

- Families First Edmonton contributions
- Mayor's Task Force for the Elimination of Poverty in Edmonton
- Multiple community conversations
- Formation of ELC Working Group



ELC is a game changer in EPE Roadmap (Action 29)

### ELC Steering Committee

- ELCSC established in January 2017
- Two-day planning workshop
- Four student independent study projects
- CLPNA shiftwork & ELC project
- Research and analysis for Council presentation



Presented to Community and Public Services Committee

### Edmonton Council for Early Learning and Care (ECELCC)

- Council created in March 2019
- Profile of ELC in Edmonton project
- Newcomer perspectives on ELC project
- Indigenous Talking Circles on ELC

## What We Still Don't Know About ELC in Edmonton

One of the major issues uncovered by the ELCSC was the lack of systematic information on early learning and care in Edmonton. There are numerous gaps in what we know about core areas of early learning and care across the city, such as cost and affordability, supply and demand of spaces, quality, and how inclusive and flexible the early learning and care system is. The newly formed Edmonton Council for Early Learning and Care is supporting three projects to fill these knowledge gaps, which are described on the next page. Two of these projects are specifically focused on traditionally underserved populations in early learning and care: newcomers and Indigenous families and children.



Photo courtesy of the YMCA of Northern Alberta.

*“We are in dire need of an Early Learning and Care system in Edmonton, like they have in many other large cities. High quality, affordable, and accessible early learning programs are essential to ensure families and communities thrive.”*

Annalise Yuzda  
Vice President of Child Care for the YMCA of Northern Alberta and Member of the Edmonton Council for Early Learning and Care

*“Many families struggle to find affordable, quality child care near their home in Edmonton. My hope is that by working together with many partners through the Edmonton Council for Early Learning and Care that we can ensure that parents have access to appropriate child care.”*

Bev Esslinger  
City of Edmonton Ward 2 Councillor and Member of the Edmonton Council for Early Learning and Care





## Learning Forward

Research shows that purely market-based approaches to child care often fail to provide affordable, high-quality and inclusive early learning and care on a broad scale, especially for vulnerable families. Moreover, local authorities are usually best placed to undertake service management and planning, given their proximity to the communities they serve. Local planning and management can also result in closer integration of early education and child care services, which has been shown to benefit children and their families. The Edmonton Council for Early Learning and Care will serve as the local entity focused on the management and planning of early learning and care in Edmonton. The Council will focus on:

1. Research and analysis of community needs for early learning and care in Edmonton,
2. New, affordable, high-quality early learning and care services to meet community needs,
3. Partnerships between local governments and community-based services to integrate early learning and care services, such as the creation of local 'hub models' for services,
4. Strategies that build the capacity of community-based service providers and school boards,
5. Increasing quality by setting service goals and supporting service delivery standards that exceed those established in current public regulations,
6. Culturally responsive early learning and care services, curricula, and training programs for service providers, and
7. Community support for early learning and care.


*The costs of providing high-quality, safe environments for young children, and especially for disadvantaged young children, are often outweighed in the long run by the benefits of better employment and reduced demands on educational, legal, social, and health systems. Affordable, high-quality child care can help children thrive.*




Dr. Jeff Bisanz  
Steering Committee  
Co-Chair

## The Council's First Three Projects

The Council's has already taken its first steps for research and analysis by supporting three projects:

- 1 Creating a Profile** of ELC that will outline the current state of early learning and care in Edmonton, and map the gaps in our understanding. (Led by CUP)
- 2 Facilitating talking circles** to learn about the perspectives and ELC needs of Indigenous families and children in Edmonton.  
  
(Led by Tibetha Kemble, Director of Indigenous Health Initiatives at the University of Alberta).  
  
*"Ensuring that the voices and experiences of parents and caregivers of Indigenous children are heard will enable the Council to build a system of early learning and care that is not only responsive to their distinct and unique needs, but that their voices are at the centre of our approach going forward."*

Tibetha Kemble

- 3 Gaining insight** into perspectives and ELC needs of newcomer families in Edmonton.  
  
(Led by Multicultural Family Resource Society)  
  
*"Our work will help build a more equitable system of early learning and care for newcomer families, especially for those families who face marginalization due to race, poverty and other intersecting factors."*

Ashima Sumaru-Jurf

For more information  
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