

ICEC Conference

Reducing access barriers in Early Childhood Education and Care: International perspectives on local governance

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Abstract & CV

Overcoming financial access barriers through subsidies? Approaches of the Canadian ECEC System

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This presentation examines financial access barriers in Canadian childcare. It discusses relevant features of Canada's status as a federation, the role of municipalities in childcare and its child care market model. It explains how parent fee subsidies systems, the main policy intended to address affordability for low-income parents, act as a barrier to access. It then describes two local level initiatives designed to mitigate these barriers in Ontario and in the City of Vancouver. However, despite significant local activities, Canadian municipalities' lack of autonomy and limited revenue generation capabilities undermine local attempts to make access to childcare more affordable and equitable for families. It concludes that while municipalities have important roles to play in a viable Canadian childcare system, neither the necessary authority nor financing capacity are available them under current arrangements. Finally, it briefly reflects on the elements of participation by all levels of government needed to overcome financial barriers to access to ECEC in Canada.

Martha Friendly is the founder and executive director of the Childcare Resource and Research Unit (CRRU), Canada's primary policy research institute on early childhood and childcare, based in Toronto. Martha writes extensively on ECEC policy in academic, technical and popular venues and collaborates extensively with policy makers, researchers and advocacy organizations in Canada and internationally. Martha immigrated to Canada from New York in 1971.