

# **BUDGET WATCH**

## *Time to get Serious about a Canada-wide Care Economy Workforce Strategy*

We all need care at times throughout our lives and without care, there is no workforce anywhere. Jobs in the Care Economy make other work possible and drive the larger economy. Given the right conditions, they ensure there's quality care for everyone, including seniors, children, students, parents and those with disabilities. What's more, these jobs are a big part of our overall workforce. More than one in five workers draw a paycheque in health care, childcare, eldercare, social assistance and education.<sup>1</sup> Most are women, many are racialized.

The pandemic exposed terrible shortcomings in the sector. Labour shortages now loom, as burned-out and undervalued workers take sick leave or abandon jobs. This has implications for all of us. The conditions of work determine the conditions of care... even its availability.

Yet – despite decades of warnings – **there is still no labour force strategy** to ensure every Canadian has quality care when and where they need it, throughout their lives. **This will require planning and coordination of**

- recruitment and retention strategies
- skills development
- immigration reforms
- labour standards, paid sick days, manageable schedules and decent pay and benefits
- equity measures that ensure conditions improve for everyone, including women and all racialized workers.



***Time to take our heads out of the sand.***

***The 2022 federal Budget is just around the corner.*** We need a Canada-wide Care Economy Workforce Strategy to ensure we have enough workers in this critical sector and that those jobs are also good jobs.

Labour issues are viewed as provincial/territorial turf. So why do we talk about a ***federal role?***

- Our history with Medicare rightfully leads us to expect quality care, no matter where we live in Canada. This should extend to all healthcare, eldercare, and childcare.
- The sector's use of the federal government's temporary foreign worker program is growing. Making more workers permanently temporary is no solution to our problems.
- The recent success in negotiating early learning and childcare deals with each province and territory (except Ontario) shows that the combination of federal leadership and mutually-agreed goals can improve access to and quality of care along multiple tracks.
- Provinces and territories have varying ability to pay incentives and lure workers from poorer regions that may have invested scarce funding to train the people they need in the sector.
- As convenor, the federal government can bring stakeholders from across the country to share information and policy approaches. Learning from one another could yield changes in curriculum, upgrading supports, public health measures, labour standards and more.

<sup>1</sup> [21.2% of all jobs in 2021, Statistics Canada, Table 14-10-0023-01](#)