



working documents

Quality by Design is a project of the Childcare Resource and Research Unit

Child care centre physical environments

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Context and overview

This overview of physical requirements in child care centres in Canada is one of the working documents prepared for *Quality by Design*,¹ an exploratory project intended to contribute to strategies for improving quality in early learning and child care (ELCC) at the policy level. Part of the project involves identifying, consolidating and transforming information derived from research and other sources into tools that can help improve the quality of early learning and child care. This document summarizes comparable regulatory information from provinces/territories to help inform discussion and strategies for improving the quality of physical environments of ELCC programs.

The physical environment is one element of a high quality ELCC system². The physical characteristics of an ELCC program have an impact on the children, staff, parents and the broader community. There are many aspects of the physical environment that are important, for example, the location of the building, the type and amount of space, how the space is organized, the type and arrangement of furnishings and equipment, availability of natural light and views

to the outdoors, health and safety considerations, the amount and layout of outdoor play space, its proximity and connections to the indoor space, colours, surfaces and textures.

In addition to how well the physical environment supports children's physical, social, emotional and cognitive needs, it has an impact on how staff feel about their work, how easy or difficult it is to implement the program, their interactions with the children and with other adults. Does the program present a public image that suggests that ELCC is a valued profession, or does the program use shared space so everything has to be put away every day or every week? Is there attached outdoor space or do staff and children have to travel to be outdoors? Is there a kitchen for meal preparation and space for children to be involved in cooking and food preparation? Is there a staff room? Is there office space that is conducive to effective administration? Is there adequate storage for program supplies and staff's personal belongings?

It is also important from a parent and community perspective. What is the public face the centre presents to parents and the community; is it run down or institutional, relegated to leftover space or is it a valued community resource? Is the program's environment welcoming? Is there space for parents and children or parents and staff to gather for quiet conversations or meetings?

¹ *Quality by Design* is a project of the Childcare Resource and Research Unit, University of Toronto. It is funded by the Social Development Partnerships Program, Social Development Canada.

² For a fuller description of these elements, see *Elements of a high quality ELCC system* in print or on the *Quality by Design* website at www.childcarequality.ca.

In Canada the physical environment and design of ELCC spaces for children have not been a high priority compared to staffing, financing and other aspects of quality. Across the country there have been few opportunities to create purpose built facilities or to transform existing space into creative environments. Over the years, there have been major ELCC capital funding programs only in Quebec, Ontario and British Columbia. There have been initiatives in these provinces to create ELCC in public facilities, in new or renovated schools or where lack of services has been demonstrated. Even so, the available knowledge on the impact of the built environment has generally not played a large role in facility design or placement.

There are no data available that identify the physical settings in which child care programs are located but most would agree that Canadian ELCC is too often housed in less than adequate spaces. While there are some excellent purpose-built or purpose-renovated spaces, they are the exception rather than the rule. More often than not ELCC is in shared space, sometimes where equipment and furnishings have to be moved regularly to accommodate another use; in temporary space that offers the program no security of tenure or sense of permanence; in low-cost accommodation such as church basements, in strip malls, in surplus school classrooms intended for use by older children, or on a main thoroughfare that offers convenience to parents on their way to work but which is not rooted in a community or has little access to appropriate outdoor play space.

All provinces/territories regulate physical space for child care; some have fairly detailed requirements while others have fewer specifications. As well as meeting the child care regulations, centres are usually required to conform to building and fire codes, municipal bylaws and to satisfy certain requirements of various health authorities (such as, for example, food handling requirements if they serve food). Some provinces/territories allow certain physical requirements to be waived if approved by a Director (as defined in the legislation) if, in his/her opinion the health and well-being of the children is not compromised.

Some provinces/territories or local governments provide checklists of requirements and procedures for groups to use when developing ELCC facilities but there is little or no information regarding

good design or resources about design considerations. One exception to this is in the City of Vancouver, which plans for and coordinates development of child care facilities. Through the land use process, the city negotiates space, manages development projects and works with a design team to ensure that facilities conform to its Childcare Design Guidelines (1993³). These guidelines not only have space requirements that are approximately twice the provincial regulations but they also address the organization and arrangement of the space, the types of activity areas that should be provided and the relationship among them, the details of the outdoor space and its relationship to the indoors. In recent years, the city has been encouraging the creation of child development “hubs” with a mixture of child care, family resource programs and other family supports.

The Canada Country Note of the Thematic Review of Early Childhood Education and Care carried out by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (2004) reaffirmed that the ELCC physical environment is an important element of quality. The review team noted that facilities in Canada were generally poor even when they had been newly built, that resources and materials did not provide children with high quality experiences and that programs overemphasized safety at the expense of opportunities for children to develop independence and autonomy. They also expressed concern about the lack of adequate and available outdoor space, so that children spent little time outdoors and had few opportunities to move freely between the indoors and outdoors. They pointed out that this is in contrast to other northern countries such as Finland and Sweden where children spend much of their day outside, including during the winter months, in regular ELCC programs and in special programs such as “forest kindergartens.” The OECD report made a number of suggestions to improve indoor and outdoor environments; these ranged from considering the arrangement of space, introducing more interesting materials, to allowing for more opportunities for physical activity, especially outdoors.

In 2005, significant new federal dollars began to flow to provincial/territorial ELCC programs. Capital funding has been identified as a possible

³ Now being revised.

expenditure in each agreement; some provinces have identified specific growth targets that will result in the creation of additional ELCC facilities. For example, Ontario has indicated that it plans to create 25,000 new licensed spaces by the end of 2007-08 (Ontario Best Start plan July 2005) with \$328 million in capital funding for expansion in the non-profit sector. In its action plan, Manitoba has indicated that it will provide funding for renovations and will help create new and expanded non-profit centres through a new capital funding program.

With significant growth likely in ELCC over the next few years, there is an opportunity for physical environments to be improved – to bring ELCC out of basements and (as the OECD review noted) “makeshift low-rent buildings” (p82) and to consider how best to meet the needs of children, staff and parents.

A new scale, *The Early Childhood Physical Environment Rating Scale* (ECPERS) has been developed and tested to assess the quality of the environment relative to child development and learning. (see Sugiyama and Moore 2005 for a description of the development and testing). The 143-item tool is divided into four parts, each with one or more subscales: 1) overall planning of a centre; 2) architectural quality of the building as a whole; 3) indoor activity spaces and 4) outdoor spaces.

There is a growing body of literature on ELCC physical environments that suggests a number of considerations should be taken into account in financing ELCC and in the planning and design process. These may prove useful as provinces/territories consider the physical environment in the expansion process. For example, Olds (2001) notes that the design of a centre can have an impact on child/staff interaction, and staff satisfaction and turnover. She identifies four basic needs of children that should be considered in every aspect of a centre’s design; environments should 1) encourage movement, 2) support comfort, 3) foster competence, and 4) encourage a sense of control. Bennett points out that different pedagogical practices and approaches to curriculum help determine how the environment is used (2004). Other research shows that the physical environment has an effect on children’s behaviour, personal development and cognitive and social activities (van Liempd, 2005, Proshansky and Fabian 1987, Moore 1986).

The European Commission Childcare Network (1995) carried out a quality project over a period of some years during its 10 year tenure. The Network proposed 40 quality targets, intended to be achieved over a 10-year period beginning in 1996. Among the targets related to the environment are recommendations that

- the spatial organization, including the layout of the buildings, the furnishings and equipment should reflect the educational philosophy of the service and take account of the views of parents, staff and other interested parties;
- that there should be net internal space of at least 6 sq. metres per child under three years and at least 4 sq. metres per child 3-6 years; direct access to external space of at least 6 sq metres per child; and an additional 5% of internal space for adult use;
- food preparation facilities should be available on the premises and nutritional and culturally appropriate food should be provided.

The rest of this working document compares the requirements related to the physical environment contained in regulation in each province and territory across 18 categories. It also contains, in the same categories, an overview of the design guidelines required by the City of Vancouver when facilities are created through the land use development process.

It should be noted that provincial/territorial regulations provide but a preliminary way of considering ELCC physical environments; many other questions and approaches remain. For example: Will the space be purpose built or renovated? Will the facility be stand-alone or part of a larger set of services? Will it be located in a school; in some other community facility or part of another type of building? Will it be in leased or owned space? Will the space have to be shared with other groups that have particular space needs? Will the organization of the space be conducive to the implementation of a particular philosophy or pedagogy? Is the indoor/outdoor relationship maximized to allow for free movement of children between the two?

Across Canadian jurisdictions, there are both commonalities and differences. A summary of child care regulations across jurisdictions shows that:

- All provinces and territories have minimum indoor space requirements but only Yukon has requirements that meet the EC Network target (4 square metres/child for children 3-6 years). The requirements range from less than 3 square metres/child in five provinces/territories: Nova Scotia, Northwest Territories and Nunavut, and for children 18 months and older in Quebec (2.75 square metres per child), and Ontario (2.8 meters per child) to 4 square metres in the Yukon.
- All provinces and territories have some specification for children's bathroom facilities. One toilet and sink per 10 preschool-age children is required in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Manitoba and British Columbia; one per 15 in Quebec and one per 16 in the Yukon. Ontario has specifications for infants and toddlers but none for older children. Other jurisdictions do not specify these.
- Most provinces/territories do not require the centre to have a kitchen. Quebec requires a kitchen, or at least a kitchenette, and a fridge and range or hot plate; Saskatchewan requires access to kitchen facilities; eight jurisdictions have no specifications; Prince Edward Island and Ontario have specifications if the centre prepares food for the children (no jurisdictions require that food be prepared on site).
- Only Ontario, Saskatchewan and Yukon require designated spaces for the child to eat. They require "suitable" "sufficient" or "designated" space for eating; others have no specifications.
- Eight provinces and territories have no requirements for office or staff space. Both are required in Quebec, Ontario, Alberta and Yukon; Nova Scotia requires that office and staff facilities not interfere with the routine activities of the children.
- Newfoundland and Labrador is the only jurisdiction that requires the outdoor play space to be on site. Ontario requires it to be adjacent to the premises unless "otherwise approved" by a Director and Saskatchewan requires 50% of the space to be adjacent, unless "otherwise approved" with the other 50% within walking distance. Other provinces/territories have a range of options, except for British Columbia, which has no specifications.
- All provinces/territories except Newfoundland and Labrador have specific outdoor space requirements in regulation (In Newfoundland and Labrador there are requirements contained in policy). Some require square footage for each licensed space and others require space to accommodate some of the children at any one time. The EC Network recommends 6 square metres/child of outdoor space, directly accessible from the indoor space. Prince Edward Island, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and British Columbia all meet or exceed this recommendation; Manitoba requires enough space to accommodate the greater of 50% of the children at any one time, or 55 square metres. Outdoor space requirements in other jurisdictions range from 2 square metres/child for infants and 4.5 square metres/child for children 19 months and older in Alberta to 5.46 in Nova Scotia and 5.6 square metres in Ontario.
- Many of New Brunswick's requirements are contained in standards rather than in regulation. Since they are enforceable by law, they have been included, where applicable, in the tables and noted as standards.

Provincial and territorial regulatory requirements for child care centre physical environments in Canada

Indoor requirements

Table 1: Requirements regarding the physical space at the time of initial licensing and other related regulatory compliance requirements

Newfoundland and Labrador	Written proof that all requirements under the Act and regulations comply with national building, fire and electrical codes, the <i>Buildings Accessibility Act</i> and the <i>Health and Community Services Act</i> . Building plans of the premises and area intended for use as a group child care centre must be satisfactory to the Director.
Prince Edward Island	On request, copies of certificates, permits or reports issued by appropriate provincial authorities, and compliance with prescribed standards for fire, safety and hygiene are required. The facility must comply with <i>Fire Prevention Act</i> and its regulations and standards and must conform with the requirements under the <i>Public Health Act</i> as well as all pertinent provincial and municipal laws.
Nova Scotia	Every facility shall comply with the regulation(s), order or direction of the appropriate authority, respecting fire, safety, health and sanitary requirements, and any relevant municipal by-law. Cribs must be manufactured after 1986 and comply with the <i>Hazardous Products Act</i> .
New Brunswick	Sanitation, lighting, ventilation and other general health standards must meet standards under the <i>Health Act</i> . Fire prevention and building standards must be approved by the Fire Marshal or prescribed by regulations under the <i>Fire Prevention Act</i> . Please note that the following requirements are from the <i>New Brunswick Child Day Care Facilities Operator Standards (2003)</i>: A letter from the municipal authorities stating that the location complies with local bylaws; the official plan as required by the <i>Details of the Official Plan</i> ; and the official plans of the indoor and outdoor play space (one copy to the Plans Survey Officer, Office of the Fire Marshal).
Quebec	A plan of the premises, signed and sealed by an architect; a plan, to scale of the outdoor play space, with a site plan for the play space showing its location in relation to the facility, as well as the location and layout of the outdoor play area, if there is one required. Proof of ownership of the centre or a lease of at least 5 years, or authorization to occupy the premises for free for at least 5 years is required. The holder of a centre permit cannot operate in a building already occupied by another holder of a centre permit. The facility must comply with municipal by-laws. Toys, folding gates, expandable enclosures for children, cribs, carriages and strollers must comply with safety standards in the <i>Hazardous Products Act</i> Outdoor play area and play equipment must meet Canadian Standards Association standards.
Ontario	Evidence of compliance with requirements of the local board of health and local Medical Officer of Health; any local by-laws, including those in Part V of the <i>Planning Act</i> and any by-law on-reserve to regulate the construction, repair or use of buildings; the Building Code under the <i>Building Code Act</i> ; the requirements of the Fire Code under the <i>Fire Marshals Act</i> are required. Before construction of a new building, or alterations or renovations to premises, plans must be approved by a Director and must include space for: washing, dressing, toileting and isolation; storage for toys, indoor play materials and equipment; storage for food; storage of required records; storage for medical supplies, cleaning materials and equipment and other hazardous substances; and heating and electrical equipment. Cribs and cradles must conform to the <i>Hazardous Products Act</i> .
Manitoba	Copy of the floor plan showing room dimensions and location of fixed equipment; compliance with the Manitoba Fire Code; compliance with standards for sanitation, natural and artificial lighting, heating, plumbing, ventilation, water supply, sewage disposal and food handling; evidence of compliance with local zoning by-laws are required. If the licensee wishes to establish a room for the purpose of isolation of children for behaviour management, written approval from the Director is required. Indoor play equipment, equipment for sleeping, eating and the storage of personal effects must comply with the <i>Hazardous Products Act</i> and other applicable safety legislation or standards as determined by the Director. Diapering facilities must meet requirements of the Health Authority.
Saskatchewan	A report from the designated public health officer respecting the sanitation, lighting, ventilation and general health and safety standards of the premises; a report from the Fire Commissioner's local assistant respecting the fire safety standards of the premises; a report respecting the heating system from a person acceptable to the Director are required.

Alberta	Must show how indoor space and outdoor play space will be used including furnishings and equipment. Evidence of municipal zoning approval; a satisfactory health inspection report from the regional health authority; evidence of compliance with all applicable regulations under the <i>Safety Codes Act</i> are required. Cribs must comply with the <i>Cribs and Cradles Regulations</i> of the <i>Hazardous Products Act</i> .
British Columbia	Floor plan to scale showing inside dimensions of each room, corridor and stairs; size and location of fixed equipment; location and size of windows and height of windowsills; the location of accommodation for family or staff; site plan to scale showing the boundaries of the property, location of the facility and location and dimensions of the play area. If the play area is not on the property on which the facility is located, a sketch map showing location of the play area in relation to the facility and its distance from the facility are required.
Yukon	Must demonstrate compliance with: zoning regulations, building standards regulation, National Fire Code and fire safety regulations, electrical and gas safety regulations, <i>Public Health Act</i> and established environmental health guidelines. A drawing of the floor plan showing inside dimensions of each room, size and location of fixed equipment and intended location of beds, furniture and other moveable items is required.
Northwest Territories and Nunavut	A copy of the floor plan showing room dimensions and the location of fixed equipment, a report from the office of the Fire Marshal showing compliance with the National Building Code of Canada, a report from the Health Officer showing compliance with the <i>Public Health Act</i> and evidence of compliance with appropriate zoning by-laws. The operator must comply with the <i>Hazardous Products Act</i> .

Table 2. Minimum indoor space required per child

Newfoundland and Labrador	3.3 square metres excluding fixed equipment
Prince Edward Island	3.5 square metres excluding kitchens, hallways, bathrooms, closets and other similar areas
Nova Scotia	2.75 square metres of unobstructed playroom space
New Brunswick	3.25 square metres exclusive of offices, hallways, washrooms, lockers, kitchen facilities, shower rooms and isolation rooms
Quebec	4 square metres for children under 18 months; 2.75 square metres for older children
Ontario	2.8 square metres; for handicapped children 5 square metres
Manitoba	3.3 square metres excluding hallways, washrooms, food preparation areas, storage space or other space not used by the children for play; for infant space licensed after June 2002, equipment or furniture used for napping, feeding, toileting is also excluded.
Saskatchewan	3.7 square metres excluding offices, hallways, washrooms, kitchens, closets, lockers, furnace or boiler rooms and large or fixed equipment. An additional 2.3 square metres separate sleeping area for each infant.
Alberta	3 square metres of net floor space, appropriate for children when playing, resting, sleeping and eating. Includes unencumbered hallway space, but not stairwells, kitchens, offices, staff rooms, storage rooms or half the washroom space; 2.5 square metres for a nursery school, drop-in centre or out-of-school centre.
British Columbia	3.7 square metres in a centre for children under 36 months, from 30 months to school age and in preschool (nursery school), excluding hallways, built-in storage areas and bathrooms; 4 square metres in special needs daycare ⁴ ; 3 square metres in out of school care; 5 square metres per person in the sleeping area in overnight care
Yukon	4 square metres for activity, eating and sleeping, excluding hallways, cloakrooms, washrooms, sick room, furnace room, staff room, office, cooking area and private areas, and fixed furniture
Northwest Territories and Nunavut	2.75 square metres excluding storage space or fixed equipment. Space must be available for activities at all times of the operating hours if it is to be used in the calculation of available space

Table 3. Conditions and organizational requirements of play space

Newfoundland and Labrador	A home room for each group of children
Prince Edward Island	All space must be clean, safe and readily accessible to the children.
Nova Scotia	No more than one group of 10 infants, 18 toddlers or 30 school age children in a room. No more than 25 children in a specified play area at any one time for rest or play. The play area for infants must be separate from other children.
New Brunswick	Maximum number of children grouped for a common activity including free play: nine under 2 years, 10 2-year-olds, 14 3-year-olds, 20 4-year-olds, 24 5-year-olds and 30 children 6 years and older. Please note that the following requirements are from the <i>New Brunswick Child Day Care Facilities Operator Standards</i> (2003):

⁴ A group child care facility in which at least 25% of the children have special needs.

	Operators must not place more children in a room than the measured child spaces allow; if a collateral authority of the day care approval process recommends fewer children than the measured child spaces would allow, operators must comply with the lower number.
Quebec	For children under 18 months, the space must be divided into two separate rooms, with a maximum of 15 in one room at the same time. For children 18 months or older, the space may be divided into several rooms with no more than 30 in any room at the same time except for special activities.
Ontario	A separate play activity room required for each group of children: up to 10 under 18 months; up to 15 18-30 months; up to 24 31months-5years; up to 30 over 6 years. In child care centres for handicapped children, for 12 to 24 children space divided into two separate rooms, with one additional room provided for additional each group of up to 12. A resource area is also required. Infants not able to walk must be separated from other children during active indoor and outdoor play periods.
Manitoba	Maximum of two groups in a room: in mixed-age groupings a group is maximum eight children 12 weeks-2 years, 16 2-6 years, and 30 6-12 years. In separate age grouping, a group is a maximum of six children under 12 months, eight 1-2 years, 12 2-3 years, 16 3-4 years, 18 4-5 years, 20 5-6 years and 30 6-12 years. For infants, a written plan must be submitted to the Director regarding how the space will meet each infant's daily developmental needs. Infants may be integrated with older children for activities for a maximum of 50% of infants' waking hours. For mixed age groups a written plan must be submitted to the Director regarding how separate space and programs meet the developmental needs of all the children.
Saskatchewan	Maximum group indoors: six infants, 10 toddlers, 20 preschoolers and 30 school-agers. Group size does not apply at mealtimes, when children are resting, or during special activities. The facility must have exclusive use of usable floor and sleeping areas during operating hours.
Alberta	Maximum group size: six children under 13 months or eight over 13 months and under 19 months, or 12 between 19 months-3 years, or 16 between 3-4 ½ years, or 20 age 4 ½ and over, attending an early childhood services (kindergarten) program, or 30 children in grades 1 to 6. Each room must have a layout conducive to effective supervision.
British Columbia	A separate area required for each group: 12 children under 36 months or 25 30months to school-age or 20 in kindergarten or grade 1 or 25 in higher grades or 16 children not yet in grade 1 attending a centre where at least 25% of the children have a special need or 20 in preschool (nursery school).
Yukon	Separate area for each group: up to eight infants, up to 12 under 3 years, where none are infants, up to 16 3-years and older, up to 24 school-age. In mixed groups, children not able to walk must be separated during at least half of the play period from other children, and children under 3 must be separated during at least half of the play period from older children. Activity space must be divided into separate areas to permit participation in variety of activities at one time. Number of children in activity space must be limited so there is at least 1 square metre of net floor area per child in the room. Suitable activity area must be suitable for number of children and separate from sleeping area. In centres with children with special needs, all areas must be accessible and safe to the children.
Northwest Territories and Nunavut	Maximum number of children in a room: nine up to 12 months or 12 13-24 months or 18 25-35 months or 25 3-year-olds or 27 4-year-olds or 30 5-11 years. Group sizes do not apply during naps, meals or special activities.

Table 4. Playroom furniture and equipment requirements and specifications

Newfoundland and Labrador	Spaces must be equipped in a manner that the provincial Director may require. Play materials, furniture and equipment must be developmentally appropriate and conform to <i>Hazardous Products Act</i> .
Prince Edward Island	Equipment must be maintained in safe condition, relevant to developmental capabilities of children, comply with <i>Hazardous Products Act</i> and be located accessibly so children can select independently.
Nova Scotia	Furnishings must be of suitable size; must have play materials and equipment, dishes, cutlery and personal hygiene items. Facilities are not permitted to use playpens, jolly jumpers or walkers for children of any age.
New Brunswick	Please note that the following requirements are from the <i>New Brunswick Child Day Care Facilities Operator Standards (2003)</i>: Indoor play equipment, furnishings and program materials must be available in sufficient quantity and variety to occupy all children; age appropriate and consistent with the developmental capabilities of all children; stored to permit independent selection by the children; in compliance with the <i>Hazardous Products Act</i> and regulations; surfaced with a lead-free, non-toxic paint, if painted maintained clean and in good repair.
Quebec	Games and educational materials related to the educational program, suitable for age and number of children; seats and tables suitable for children's height and in sufficient number; storage of games and materials reachable by children. Toys must be safe, non-toxic, washable, sturdy and in good repair. Climbing apparatus, swing, slide or similar device installed indoors and designed for indoor use must have smooth surfaces with no sharp edges and placed on a surface that can absorb the impact of a fall. Bunk beds and cradles not permitted.
Ontario	Play equipment and furnishing adequate to serve licensed capacity and of a type and design to meet

	developmental needs of the children enrolled, in sufficient quantity to allow rotation. Equipment and furnishings maintained in good condition and repair.
Manitoba	Indoor play equipment and equipment for sleeping and eating consistent with developmental capabilities of children in attendance; play equipment arranged to facilitate small group interaction in areas free from interference and interruption. Play equipment located in areas accessible for independent selection by children. Equipment for activities including dramatic, fine motor, block, creative, reading, large muscle, water, sand, music, science and construction activity according to guidelines provided by the Director.
Saskatchewan	Developmentally appropriate equipment and furnishings for resting, eating, diapering, toileting and storage of personal effects. Materials and equipment in sufficient quantities for number of licensed spaces and to developmental capabilities of children. Adequate in quality, non-toxic, washable, sturdy and safe play materials.
Alberta	Indoor and outdoor furnishings and equipment, including play materials should be safe, maintained in good repair, developmentally appropriate and in sufficient quantity and variety for the number and ages of children served.
British Columbia	Appropriate equipment, furniture and supplies of sturdy, safe construction, easy to clean, free from hazards, and not interfering with exits. Play materials and indoor/outdoor play equipment suitable for age and development of the children, materials must be safe and play equipment safely constructed, free from hazards and in good repair.
Yukon	Furnishings and equipment must be of size/number suitable for children enrolled; play materials easily accessible to the children; adequate supply of indoor/outdoor play materials and equipment suitable for ages and needs of children enrolled. Furnishings, equipment and toys maintained in clean and sanitary condition, good repair and free from conditions hazardous to child safety according to established guidelines.
Northwest Territories and Nunavut	Furniture and equipment in good repair and free from loose, sharp or pointed parts, consistent with developmental capabilities of children and of sufficient quantity and variety to occupy all children. Sufficient tables and chairs of suitable size, and a high chair/infant seat with safety harness for each child who cannot sit independently in a chair.

Table 5. Sleep and rest area requirements for infants

Newfoundland and Labrador	Separate sleep room accessible to the home room of children 0-24 months. Separate cot or crib with suitable bedding for each child.
Prince Edward Island	No specifications
Nova Scotia	The infant sleeping area must be a room separate from the infant play space and large enough to accommodate one crib for each infant with 46 cm or a divider between each crib.
New Brunswick	Please note that the following requirements are from the <i>New Brunswick Child Day Care Facilities Operator Standards (2003)</i>: Usable indoor play space for infants less than 15 months must be doubled to provide a rest area separate from the floor area used for play activity. A separate crib or portable playpen, for each infant less than 15 months, which must comply with the Cribs and Cradles Regulations under the <i>Hazardous Products Act</i> .
Quebec	For children less than 18 months there must be adjacent play and rest areas; staff must be able to watch the children through a glass opening between rooms. A bed protected with a washable cover for each child, with one blanket per child and sheets in sufficient quantity.
Ontario	A sleeping area separated from play activity space for each group of 10 or fewer children. Cradle or crib that complies with the <i>Hazardous Products Act</i> for each child less than 18 months.
Manitoba	Separate rest space for infants; children under 2 years must be separated from children over 2 years during sleep periods, with the exception of children 18-24 months who sleep on a cot, who may be included in the preschool nap room provided a staff:child ratio of 1:4 is maintained.
Saskatchewan	A minimum 2.3 square metres for each infant, separate and apart from other usable child care space.
Alberta	A crib that complies with the <i>Cribs and Cradles Regulations</i> of the <i>Hazardous Products Act</i> for each child under 13 months.
British Columbia	A sleeping arrangement not located in an activity area for each child under 36 months, which consists of a crib, where the child is shorter than 90 cm and is unable to climb out of the crib unaided, or a mattress not less than 7.5 cm thickness, or a cot or equivalent sleeping arrangement, with a clean washable mattress and clean washable covers.
Yukon	Sleeping space separate from activity space. Separate cots, cribs, beds or mats that comply with the <i>Hazardous Products Act</i> for each preschool child; washable or moisture resistant covers on each mattress and blankets that are clean and provide sufficient warmth.
Northwest Territories and Nunavut	Where a sleeping area is provided, the area for children under 18 months must be sufficiently separate from older children to ensure quiet sleeping accommodation.

Table 6. Sleep and rest area requirements for preschool age children

Newfoundland and Labrador	Sleeping arrangements as the minister may require
Prince Edward Island	No specifications
Nova Scotia	Separate cots or mats with washable and moisture resistant covers; bedding that is clean and sufficient for warmth, for each child attending for more than half a day.
New Brunswick	An area for each child to sleep or rest during sleep or rest period. Please note that the following requirements are from the <i>New Brunswick Child Day Care Facilities Operator Standards (2003)</i>: A cot or mat for each child 15 months and over, up to five years of age, in attendance more than four consecutive hours daily, that is appropriate to the child's size and level of development.
Quebec	A cot or mattress protected with a washable cover per child; with one blanket and sheets in sufficient quantity.
Ontario	A designated space for resting in programs operating six or more hours/day. For each child 18-30, months a cot; for each child 31 months-5 years a cot unless otherwise approved by a Director.
Manitoba	A sleeping space not used for play activities while any child is sleeping and allows 2.3 metres per sleeping child, in centres and nursery schools operating for more than four continuous hours/day, in accordance with the developmental capabilities of each child. In programs providing overnight care all children must have separate bedding and sleeping accommodations to meet their individual needs; school-age children must have separate sleeping rooms for males and females.
Saskatchewan	Appropriate equipment and furnishings for resting
Alberta	No specifications
British Columbia	A sleeping arrangement for each child consisting of a mattress at least 7.5 cm thick, or a cot or equivalent, with clean washable mattress cover and covers.
Yukon	Sleeping space separate from the activity space. Separate cots, cribs, beds or mats that comply with the <i>Hazardous Products Act</i> for each child; with washable or moisture resistant covers on each mattress, and blankets that are clean and provide sufficient warmth for sleeping child.
Northwest Territories and Nunavut	If sleeping and activity take place in the same room, a partition must separate the two areas to ensure quiet for sleeping children and to allow for normal activities for those not required to sleep; a shelving unit or curtain is acceptable. When a child is sleeping, the sleeping area must not be used for meals or activities. A cot, bed or sleeping mat for each child who sleeps, with a recommended minimum thickness of 5 cm; high density foam. Bunk beds should not be used.

Table 7. Diapering, toileting and washing requirements

Newfoundland and Labrador	Bathing facilities and diapering stations as the minister may require. Washroom facilities for the exclusive use of the child care centre that meet the National Building Code, the <i>Health and Community Services Act</i> and requirements which the minister may establish.
Prince Edward Island	Toilet and washing areas satisfactory to the Public Health Officer, for the maximum number of children permitted in the license.
Nova Scotia	A diapering area for infants and toddlers, equipped with a counter with a non-porous surface located next to a hand-washing sink. The location of the counter must enable staff to see the playroom from the diapering area. One toilet and washbasin per 10 children, located in the immediate vicinity of activity rooms.
New Brunswick	Please note that the following requirements are from the <i>New Brunswick Child Day Care Facilities Operator Standards (2003)</i>: Toilets and washbasins that children can use safely and independently, and that are for the use of staff and the children enrolled during the facility's operating hours. In multi-use buildings children must be supervised at all times when using washrooms that are also used by the public. For children over the age of two: one toilet and washbasin for groups of 1-9 children; 2 toilets and washbasins for groups of 10-24 children; 3 toilets and washbasins for groups of 25-49 children; and 4 toilets and washbasins for groups of 50-75 children. Steps or platforms that allow children access to adult sized sinks and toilets; toilet training seats and/or potty chairs in the ratio of one for every three children who are being toilet trained. Diapering surfaces must be: sturdy, of adult height and equipped with rails or safety straps; of an impervious and non-absorbent material; located separate from the food preparation areas; and adjacent to a handwashing sink.
Quebec	A washable diaper-change table, located near a washbasin, at a suitable height, and a closed container for soiled diapers One toilet and washbasin is required per 15 children for exclusive use of the facility during opening hours with at least one toilet and washbasin on each floor where children have access.
Ontario	A table or counter space for every 10 children under 18 months, and for every 15 children 18-30 months adjacent to a sink, suitable for dressing and changing a diaper of one child at a time.

Manitoba	Diapering facilities must meet the requirements of the Health Authority. One flush toilet and one washbasin with running water, within the child care centre or within reasonable access, for each group of 10 children in a full-day centre or nursery school, and for every 15 children in a school-age program. Where three or more toilets are required, one-third may be urinals which are accessible for independent use. Bathing facilities acceptable to the Director for children under 18 months. Facilities for bathing, showering or sponge-bathing for all children in programs providing overnight care.
Saskatchewan	Adequate washroom and diapering facilities in convenient locations.
Alberta	Washrooms and washroom fixtures conveniently located and easily accessible to children.
British Columbia	One toilet and washbasin for 12 children under 36 months; one for eight children in special needs day care. For both groups, a change table that is not in the food preparation area and an additional washbasin convenient to the change table. One toilet and washbasin for every 10 children 30 months to school age. Bathrooms must be on the same floor as the facility. If a child requires mechanical aid for mobility a conveniently located grab bar beside at least one toilet. One toilet and washbasin for 15 children in an out-of-school program.
Yukon	At least one toilet and sink per 16 children who are not infants in a convenient location accessible from individual playrooms and outdoor play space. Plumbing fixtures must be easily accessible to children with steps, nursery seats or platforms to allow such access.
Northwest Territories and Nunavut	Flushable toilets and washing areas satisfactory to the Health Officer, for the maximum number of children permitted in the facility. Bathing facilities for children under 18 months. A diapering area that meets the approval of a health care professional, for all children who require diapering.

Table 8. Children's eating areas

Newfoundland and Labrador	No specifications
Prince Edward Island	No specifications
Nova Scotia	No specifications
New Brunswick	No specifications
Quebec	No specifications
Ontario	A designated space for eating in programs operating six or more hours/day
Manitoba	No specifications
Saskatchewan	Sufficient dining facilities for children
Alberta	No specifications
British Columbia	No specifications
Yukon	A suitable eating area separate from the sleeping area
Northwest Territories and Nunavut	No specifications

Table 9. Entrances and exits

Newfoundland and Labrador	No specifications
Prince Edward Island	No specifications
Nova Scotia	No specifications
New Brunswick	Please note that the following requirements are from the <i>New Brunswick Child Day Care Facilities Operator Standards (2003)</i>: All child day care facilities must ensure that exit door(s) do not have keyed dead bolts.
Quebec	A mechanism for controlling access to the premises
Ontario	No specifications
Manitoba	No specifications
Saskatchewan	No specifications
Alberta	No specifications
British Columbia	If a child requires mechanical aid for mobility, a ramp for access to the facility required. If overnight sleeping accommodation is provided, a second exit to ground level from each floor on which a sleeping room is located.

Yukon	Two exits free of obstructions at all times; doors must swing in the direction of exit travel. No room that can only be accessed by a ladder, folding stairs or a trap door may be used. In the areas accessible to children no interior or exterior doors that can be locked by children without the use of a key, unless the door can be unlocked from either side.
Northwest Territories and Nunavut	No room may that can only be accessed by a ladder, folding stairs or a trap door. In the areas accessible to children no interior or exterior doors that can be locked by children without the use of a key, unless the door can be unlocked from either side.

Table 10. Light, ventilation and heating requirements

Newfoundland and Labrador	No specifications
Prince Edward Island	No specifications
Nova Scotia	The facility must be suitably ventilated and free from odours.
New Brunswick	Lighting and ventilation and other general health standards in accordance with standards prescribed under the <i>Health Act</i> .
Quebec	In the play area, windows opening to the outdoors must have a glass area a minimum of 10% of the floor area of the room. A windowless room is deemed to be part of a contiguous room with windows provided that 60% of the common wall is open. If any part of the room is more than six metres from a source of natural lighting, the minimum glass area must be at least 15% of the total floor area. Minimum lighting level of any artificially lit play area at least 320 lux measured one metre above the floor. Constant temperature of at least 20C; with relative humidity of not less than 30% in the winter; in a basement not more than 50% at all times.
Ontario	Programs operating six or more hours/day and licensed after December 31, 1983 must have window glass equivalent to at least 10% of the floor area of the play activity room. Artificial illumination in each play activity area at least 55 dekalux The temperature must be maintained at least 20 degrees Celsius.
Manitoba	A minimum of one room with natural light that all children have access to for activities each day.
Saskatchewan	Window area equivalent to 10% of the usable floor area Natural lighting in at least 50% of areas used for children's play, available to children for at least 50% of the day
Alberta	No specifications
British Columbia	No specifications
Yukon	Rooms must be well-lighted, dry and ventilated. Space heaters not permitted during hours of operation unless at least three metres from any door which is an exit or which provides access to an exit.
Northwest Territories and Nunavut	Every room must be dry, ventilated, lighted, sanitary, heated and in good repair. Rooms must have adequate natural or artificial lighting. The room where children spend the majority of their time should be naturally lighted. Where artificial light is used, the level should be appropriate for the type of activity conducted in the particular room. Temperature maintained at approximately 20 degrees Celsius

Table 11. Height and level specifications

Newfoundland and Labrador	The centre must be on or below the second floor; the home-room for children 0-24 months must be at grade level.
Prince Edward Island	No specifications
Nova Scotia	All rooms for children under 2 years must be located on the ground floor. All rooms for the use of children 2-6 must not be above the second floor.
New Brunswick	Please note that the following requirements are from the <i>New Brunswick Child Day Care Facilities Operator Standards (2003)</i>: Indoor play space must be on the first floor, second floor or basement level; basement levels must be no more than 1.52 metres below ground level.
Quebec	Floor to ceiling clearance must be at least 2.3 metres for at least 75% of its net area and a floor to ceiling clearance of at least 2.1 metres at any given area. At an average at least half the floor/ceiling height must be clear height above ground level.
Ontario	Each room used by children 6 years and under, or by handicapped children, must be on or below the second floor, unless otherwise approved by a Director.
Manitoba	No specifications
Saskatchewan	No specifications
Alberta	No specifications

British Columbia	No specifications
Yukon	No specifications
Northwest Territories and Nunavut	No room or space may be more than one story below ground. Infant areas are recommended to be on main floor.

Table 12. Office and staff room

Newfoundland and Labrador	No specifications
Prince Edward Island	No specifications
Nova Scotia	Office and staff facilities must not infringe upon the space or interfere with the routine activities of the children.
New Brunswick	No specifications
Quebec	An office required in facilities of more than 20 children
Ontario	Programs operating six or more hours/day must have a space designated for an office area and a staff rest area.
Manitoba	No specifications
Saskatchewan	No specifications
Alberta	Adequate space must be provided for administration and for staff needs.
British Columbia	No specifications
Yukon	There must be an administration and staff area separate from the space for the care and use of the children.
Northwest Territories and Nunavut	No specifications

Table 13. Kitchen/food preparation area

Newfoundland and Labrador	No specifications
Prince Edward Island	If the centre prepares food for the children, a sanitary food preparation area must follow practices to the satisfaction of the Public Health Officer.
Nova Scotia	No specifications
New Brunswick	Please note that the following requirements are from the <i>New Brunswick Child Day Care Facilities Operator Standards (2003)</i>: The kitchen space in all child day care facilities must be inaccessible to children, except under supervised conditions; never be used as play space.
Quebec	A kitchen where the meals are prepared by the staff, or failing so, a kitchenette which must be closed or enclosed to prevent unattended children from reaching them. The facility must have a refrigerator, and a range or hot plate.
Ontario	Programs operating six or more hours/day must have space designated for food preparation if meals are prepared on the premises.
Manitoba	No specifications
Saskatchewan	The facility must have access to sufficient kitchen and dining facilities to provide food for the children attending the centre.
Alberta	No specifications
British Columbia	No specifications
Yukon	No specifications
Northwest Territories and Nunavut	No specifications

Table 14. Storage for children’s belongings and play equipment

Newfoundland and Labrador	No specifications
Prince Edward Island	No specifications
Nova Scotia	Individual cubicles or hooks to keep children’s clothing separate and easily accessible to the children. Adequate storage for beds, play equipment, program supplies.
New Brunswick	Please note that the following requirements are from the <i>New Brunswick Child Day Care Facilities Operator Standards (2003)</i>: Shelves and cupboards for the storage of toys, program materials and supplies must be easily accessible to children and permit independent selection. Easily accessible storage space for the personal belongings of each child in attendance: either in cubicles or lockers shared by no more than two children at one time, or on hangers or hooks with additional provisions for personal storage space. For children in diapers individual storage space for the diapers, creams and diaper wipes of each child.
Quebec	A cloakroom for children; storage for games and materials at the reach of children.
Ontario	Storage for beds and linen, toys, indoor play materials and equipment. Storage for outdoor play equipment.
Manitoba	Storage for each child’s personal effects, consistent with child’s developmental capabilities and in compliance with requirements of the <i>Hazardous Products Act</i> and other applicable safety legislation or standards as determined by the Director. Clothing, bedding and grooming materials stored in a manner acceptable to the Health Authority.
Saskatchewan	Must provide for the storage of children’s personal effects.
Alberta	No specifications
British Columbia	No specifications
Yukon	Individual cubicles or hooks arranged such that the clothing of the children is separated and easily accessible to children. Cupboard space that makes play materials easily accessible to the children.
Northwest Territories and Nunavut	Individual lockers, cubbies or hooks easily accessible to children and arranged so that each child’s personal belongings are separated from other children’s. Storage must be easily accessible to children – indoor/outdoor materials, clothing, equipment/supplies.

Table 15. Other indoor requirements/additional information

Newfoundland and Labrador	Easily accessible space for temporary care and isolation of a sick child, with a cot with suitable bedding.
New Brunswick	Please note that the following requirements are from the <i>New Brunswick Child Day Care Facilities Operator Standards (2003)</i>: Centres must provide a designated area for temporary isolation of children in case of illness.
Nova Scotia	A supervised quiet space for an ill child. The Minister may waive or alter any regulations regarding physical space (Sections 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, or 16), and apply other provisions where there are special circumstances and the Minister is satisfied that such waiver or alteration will not adversely affect the services provided to children and the Fire Marshal is satisfied that the facility does not constitute a hazard to children.
Quebec	Walls and floors must be covered with washable materials. No carpets permitted except moveable rugs; no concrete or other hard materials that may pose a risk to children.
Manitoba	Exempt from the regulations are public or private schools for children who will be 4 years old by December 31, or provides care/supervision to school-agers in addition to regular instruction at least 5 ½ hours/day.

Outdoor requirements

Table 16. Minimum outdoor space requirements per child

Newfoundland and Labrador	No specifications
Prince Edward Island	7 square metres
Nova Scotia	5.46 square metres A part-day program is not required to have an outdoor play area but if it does, it must comply with the requirements of the regulations.
New Brunswick	4.5 square metres per child to safely accommodate 50% of the children at any one time.
Quebec	4 square metres for at least one-third of children on the permit.
Ontario	At least 5.6 square metres for each child based on the licensed capacity for programs operating six or more hours/day, unless otherwise approved by a Director
Manitoba	7 square metres in full-time child care centres and nursery schools providing child care more than four hours/day or a school-age centre, to accommodate the greater of 50% of the number of licensed spaces or 55 square metres.
Saskatchewan	7 square metres per licensed space
Alberta	2 square metres for each child under 19 months and 4.5 square metres for each child 19 months and older, for least 50% of the licensed capacity
British Columbia	7 square metres. The amount of outdoor space is not specified for preschool (nursery school) or school-age care.
Yukon	5 square metres for each child using the outdoor space. Outdoor playground space does not need to be provided for every child in the program; however, the number of children using the outdoor space must not exceed the limit provided for at any time.
Northwest Territories and Nunavut	5 square metres for each child where outdoor space is adjacent to the facility.

Table 17. Outdoor play space: Proximity to indoor space

Newfoundland and Labrador	Centres operating more than three hours/day must have access to outdoor play space on-site. Centres operating three or fewer hours a day must have access to an outdoor play space surfaced and equipped in a manner which the minister may require.
Prince Edward Island	Where there is no outdoor space immediately adjacent to the facility, nearby parks or other open space, which in the Board's judgement is appropriate may be used.
Nova Scotia	Every full-day program must have an outdoor play area, or access to an equivalent and suitable play area within a reasonable distance from the facility.
New Brunswick	Outdoor play space must be immediately adjacent to the day care centre, or within a reasonable walking distance depending on the age of the children participating in an activity.
Quebec	Outdoor play space must be contiguous to the rooms where child care is provided or located less than 500 metres from the facility and to which the operator must be guaranteed access during the operating hours of the facility for at least 5 years; or an outdoor children's play space in a public park, enclosed by a fence.
Ontario	Outdoor play space must be adjacent to the premises unless otherwise approved by a Director.
Manitoba	Full-time child care centres and nursery schools providing child care for more than four hours/day must provide or have access to outdoor play space that is within 350 metres of the centre; in school-age centres the space must be within 700 metres. Where the outdoor play space is not adjacent to the day care centre, the licensee must provide safe access.
Saskatchewan	Unless otherwise provided for in the licence, at least half the outdoor space must be adjacent to the centre and the remainder must be within walking distance, determined by the youngest age category for which the centre is licensed.
Alberta	Adjacent to or within easy and safe walking distance of the centre. In out-of-school care, developmental and age appropriate outdoor play space must be within easy and safe walking distance of the centre.
British Columbia	No specifications
Yukon	There must be access to outdoor playground space, either on the premises or off within easy and safe walking distance for the age groups involved.
Northwest Territories and Nunavut	Where space is not adjacent to the facility, outdoor space must be within walking distance with safe access to the space.

Table 18. Fencing and enclosures

Newfoundland and Labrador	As the minister may require
Prince Edward Island	No specifications
Nova Scotia	A fence at least 1.5 metres high
New Brunswick	Please note that the following requirements are from the <i>New Brunswick Child Day Care Facilities Operator Standards (2003)</i>: For children under the age of five a fence of a least 1.22 metre in height; and gates equipped with bolts and latches locked at all times when children are using the play space. Children under the age of two must either use the outdoor play space at a time separate from all other age groups or in an area within the outdoor play space to meet the needs of this age group. A fenced outdoor play space is not required for school age children.
Quebec	A fence at least 1.2 metres high unless the outdoor space is in a public park, in which case the space must be fenced, but height is not specified.
Ontario	For children under 6 years, a fence at least 1.2 metres high, with one or more gates that are securely closed at all times.
Manitoba	Where the outdoor play space is adjacent to the child care centre and is owned or rented by the child care centre or licensee it must be fenced.
Saskatchewan	No specifications
Alberta	The outdoor play space must be securely enclosed on all sides. All entrances exits that do not lead into the interior of the child care facility must be kept closed at all times when the children are using the play space. Centres on public property may be exempt if the Director is satisfied that such space is not reasonably available and that the children will be adequately supervised and protected in the play space.
British Columbia	The outdoor play area must be enclosed by a fence.
Yukon	Unless in a public playground, the space must be surrounded on all sides by a fence of at least 1.2 metres.
Northwest Territories and Nunavut	Where outdoor space is adjacent to the facility, it must be fenced if the surrounding environment is potentially hazardous to children.

Table 19. Playground specifics

Newfoundland and Labrador	Surfaced and equipped in a manner which the minister may require. Otherwise, as the minister may require.
Prince Edward Island	No specifications
Nova Scotia	The play area must be supervised, safe and sanitary.
New Brunswick	Please note that the following requirements are from the <i>New Brunswick Child Day Care Facilities Operator Standards (2003)</i>: A surface which is well drained and free from depressions in which water may stand. Outdoor play equipment must: be well anchored; have adequate guardrails and/or handrails to prevent falls; have openings less than 76mm or greater than 254 mm in diameter to guard against entrapment; be free from protrusions that may act as hook, catch or entanglement points; be free from loose splinters, cracks, decay, splitting or cracking parts, rust or corrosion; have no sharp points, nuts, bolts or other parts that could cut or pierce; have no exposed moving parts that could pinch or crush; be spaced to allow sufficient spacing between stationary and/or moving equipment; be surrounded by protective surfacing Protective surfacing where required must: be fine loose sand and pea gravel (5 – 7 mm in diameter), wood chips, wood mulch, or approved synthetic materials; be maintained at a depth of between 150 – 300mm; extend at least 1800mm around all sides of the equipment and into the no encroachment zone, as determined by the type of equipment; be maintained in a non-compacted condition, evenly distributed and free of glass and debris.
Quebec	The play space must have a suitable and safe layout. Outdoor play equipment must meet <i>Canadian Standards Association Standard for Children's Playspaces and Equipment</i> (except when the play space is in a public park).
Ontario	If the licensed capacity is for more than 64 children the play space may be divided into two or more areas by a fence to allow all the children to use the play space at one time, providing each fenced-in area is not used for more than 64 children at a time. The playground must be at ground level, unless otherwise approved by a Director, and designed so that staff can maintain constant supervision. The play equipment must be sufficient in quantity to allow for rotation and includes equipment for gross motor activity.

Manitoba	Where the outdoor play space is adjacent to the child care centre and is owned or rented by the child care centre or licensee, a minimum of 50% of the area must be grass, sand or a similar surface.
Saskatchewan	No specifications
Alberta	No specifications
British Columbia	Outdoor play equipment must be suitable for the age and development of persons enrolled.
Yukon	Unless in a public playground, the playground must be suitably surfaced, drained for safe and comfortable play, and maintained in a safe and sanitary condition according to established guidelines. It must contain equipment for large muscle activity, an area for sand play and other activities, and an area for quiet activities. If outdoor space is not available on the premises, liability of all concerned must be posted. When required, written permission to use the playground area must be obtained from the owner of the area, and the use of public parks is subject to territorial and municipal regulations and procedures. The playground must be designed to allow for required supervision.
Northwest Territories and Nunavut	No specifications

City of Vancouver design guidelines

Table 20. Indoor requirements

	Age group and group size	Total minimum net activity area (square metres)	Total gross indoor area⁵ (square metres)	Minimum net area per child (square metres)
Minimum indoor space required per child: individual age groups	Infant (12 spaces)	82	182	6.83
	Toddler (12 spaces)	82	182	6.83
	Preschooler (25 spaces)	128	247	5.12
	Preschool (part-day) (20 spaces)	78	153	3.9
Minimum indoor space required per child shared facilities	Age group and group size	Total minimum net activity area (square metres)	Total gross indoor area⁶ (square metres)	Minimum net area per child (square metres)
	Infant and toddler (24 spaces)	164	336-364	6.8
	Toddler and preschooler (37 spaces)	210	401-429	5.7
	Infant, toddler and preschooler (49 spaces)	292	555-611	6
	Infant, toddler, preschooler and preschool (69 spaces)	370	764	5.3
Conditions and organizational requirements of play space	<p>Activity settings, defined by physical location, visible boundaries, work and sitting surfaces, materials storage and display, a mood or personality, should be designed to accommodate a variety of discrete activities. They should be delineated by a combination of fixed and moveable elements. Where changes in level are employed ramps should be used. The gross motor/nap room and the quiet room should be designed to open up to the activity room to enable shared use and enhance flexibility. The minimum recommended activity settings by age group are listed below</p> <p><i>Infants</i> 7 settings: art/sensory; dramatic play; manipulative toy; 2 for quiet reading; 2 settings climbing and crawling.</p> <p><i>Toddler</i> 8 settings: art; water sand and sensory; dramatic play; blocks; puzzles and manipulative toys; blocks; gross motor/movement, quiet retreat for 1-2 children</p> <p><i>Preschoolers and preschool (part-day)</i> 12 settings: art; water; sand/texture; dramatic play; science; puzzles and games; manipulative toys; blocks; gross motor/circle; reading; wheeled and construction toys; quiet retreat for 1-2 children</p> <p>The activity rooms should have waterproof flooring throughout except in infant group child care where much of the space should be carpeted. Activity settings should be delineated by a combination of fixed and movable elements (hung partitions, bookcases, storage units, etc).</p>			
Playroom furniture and equipment requirements	No specifications			
Sleep and rest area requirements for infants	Facilities for infants and toddlers should provide two smaller rooms for napping so that fussy infants do not disturb sleeping infants. These rooms may accommodate more than one activity and should both open up to the primary activity space			
Sleep and rest area requirements for preschool age children	An enclosed gross motor/nap room should be able to be opened up to the activity room to promote shared use. Nap space should be sized to accommodate 12 children sleeping on mats, located away from the outdoor play areas, and located to allow children to sleep without being disturbed by the activities around them.			
Diapering, toileting and washing requirements	<p>For programs with children under 36 months and/or children with special needs a dedicated diaper changing area, located with visual access to the main activity area and close to the laundry, separated from the main activity area by a Dutch door or other partition 750-900 mm high. The diaper changing area should include a changing surface approx. 800mm high and 600 mm deep; an adjacent sink large and deep enough to bathe children, outfitted with elbow faucets and a hand held shower attachment; space for several large, lined containers with lids for soiled diapers within arms reach of staff; shelves and drawers for supplies, and enough shelf space for children’s individual supplies; hooks or shelves for mobiles or small toys and a mirror along or behind changing surface; adequate ventilation to remove odours without drafts and sufficient heat; a nearby toilet; room for 3 or 4 potties.</p> <p>Toddler and preschool facilities should provide a children’s washroom for each group immediately accessible from the cubby and activity areas. Staff should be able to visually supervise the entrance to the washroom from the main activity area. The infant and toddler toilets should be unscreened. For preschool groups there should be one partially screened toilet. The number of fixtures must conform to the</p>			

⁵ The gross floor area does not include stairwells, elevator shafts and lobbies.

⁶ If facility design permits support spaces, laundry rooms, parents’ rooms and staff washrooms may be shared by two or three groups with a commensurate reduction in area.

	<i>Community Care Facilities Licensing Regulations</i> , and be immediately accessible from the cubby and activity areas. Urinals should not be provided.
Children's eating areas	Enough space is required to seat all children at once for snacks and meals.
Entrances and exits	There should be only one entry door with additional locked or alarmed doors as required by regulations for emergency egress only. It should not be necessary to enter one group's space to access another group. Ideally, for security and programming reasons, the entry should be directly from the covered outdoor play space. If it is through a hallway or stairway and not directly from the outdoors, the route should provide views to the outdoors, community spaces, or into the child care. Long dark or harshly lit institutional corridors should be avoided. The preferred entry way is via the cubby area and from there into the primary activity area.
Light, ventilation and heating requirements	All major indoor activity spaces used by children should have a direct source of natural light from a minimum of 10 percent of the wall area of the room. These major spaces should have a balanced distribution of windows. Natural light is preferred for staff rooms and offices. Support areas such as washrooms, kitchens and storage rooms do not require natural light. The facility should have its own heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems separate from the rest of the building.
Height specifications	Locations below grade are unacceptable due to requirements for natural light and outdoor areas.
Office and staff room	Staff offices should be provided for administrative activities, private interviews and meetings, and for staff breaks. The offices should be accessible to each group and be within hearing range of the primary activity area(s). There should be visual supervision of the primary activity areas from the office by means of a window or door. A single staff office may be shared by two or more groups if easily accessible to each group and within hearing range of primary activity area(s). If a single office is used for two or more groups, a staff lounge should also be provided. One individual staff/handicapped washroom with one toilet and sink should be provided for each facility, for up to 25 staff. Provision of an accessible shower within the staff washroom is desirable. This washroom should be large enough to permit assisted toileting. One staff washroom may be shared by 2 more groups.
Kitchen/food preparation area	A kitchen should be provided for the preparation and clean up of snacks and lunches. Two groups can share one kitchen if it is located to be readily accessible to both. Kitchens may be located within an alcove of the primary activity space, but must be separated by a child-height counter. An open kitchenette (along a wall) is not allowed. If there is a shared kitchen, infant programs should have separate ½ size fridges and small microwaves properly mounted at counter height.
Storage for children's belongings and play equipment	Three categories of storage should be provided for each group: active storage – accessible to children from activity setting; semi-active storage, shelves and cabinets accessible to staff above or near activity settings and storage room for longer term storage and larger equipment. There should be dedicated sleeping mat storage adjacent to sleeping area; personal storage for children and staff, a variety of wall cabinets and shelves, floor units and open visible storage. Infant and toddler programs should provide storage space for parent-owned strollers and car seats. Tall, heavy cupboards and other furniture items should be fixed to the wall, designed to address seismic safety concerns. A separate cubby area should be provided for each group, directly accessible to the washroom and outdoor covered play area, with one cubby for each child; child care centres with part-time children should include extra cubbies. There should be sufficient open floor space for a group of eight children with one staff to get dressed for winter conditions, separated from the activities of the other children. The cubby area is best located immediately inside the entry used by children when using the outside play yard.
Other indoor requirements/ additional information	A quiet room should be provided for toddler and preschool groups, in a separate room with a door, used for quiet activities involving one staff and up to three children. There should be enough space for a small table, chairs and some storage. A small separate room should be provided for parents as a resource room for reading, staff/parent conferences or breast-feeding. It should be private from the program areas and separate from the staff office. One parent room may be shared by two or more groups. A lockable laundry should be provided which is not accessible to children, with washer/dryer and folding counter. One laundry area may be shared by two or more groups. A lockable laundry area with a floor sink, storage shelves and impervious wall coverings should be provided within the childcare facility, where appropriate, or immediately adjacent to it.

Table 21. Outdoor play space requirements

	Age group and group size	Covered outdoor (square metres)	Outdoor (square metres)	Total outdoor ⁷ (square metres)	Total outdoor per child per child (square metres)
Minimum outdoor space requirements: individual age groups	Infant (12 spaces)	22	63	85	7.1
	Toddler (12 spaces)	33	137	130-170	10.8-14.2
	Preschooler (25 spaces)	45	320	265-350	10.6-14
	Preschool (part-day) (20 spaces)	33	107	140	7
	Age group and group size	Covered outdoor (square metres)	Total outdoor ⁸ (square metres)	Total outdoor per child per child (square metres)	
Minimum outdoor space requirements: shared facility	Infant and toddler (24 spaces)	55	215-255	9-10.6	
	Toddler and preschooler (37 spaces)	78	390-520	10.5-14	
	Infant, toddler and preschooler (49 spaces)	100	475-605	9.7-12.3	
	Infant, toddler, preschooler and preschool (69 spaces)	133	615-745	8.9-10.8	
Proximity to indoor space	Outdoor space should be at the same level as the indoor space (plus or minus .5 metres) and contiguous with it. The facility should be within .8 km of a park or playground to supplement the outdoor play area.				
Fencing and enclosures	All fences should be designed to be unclimbable and of sufficient height and material strength to prevent children from getting out of the yard and strangers from reaching or climbing into the yard. Roof-top or above-grade play areas should provide perimeter safety rails and fences with vision panels to discourage climbing, for viewing.				
Playground specifics	The outdoor space should offer a variety of surfaces and terrains, including resilient fall surface, as approved by the public health inspector at all places where children can climb, slide or fall. The outdoor play area should be divided into play zones: a covered play area adjacent to entry; a creative zone located near indoors or in the covered area; a fantasy zone near the covered area; a social zone in a central location, shady in summer, sunny in winter; a dramatic zone with space for a house setting, props and utensils, large blocks and interlocking construction toys. It is appropriate for the wheeled toy route to extend from this area; a physical zone located away from quieter zones, but adjacent to dramatic zone; a natural element zone including vegetable plots, fragrant flowers, soil for digging, animal hutches, sand, water, trees shrubs and wind toys, such as sails or banners; a hose bib for watering purposes.				
Other considerations	Outdoor play space should have a favourable microclimate (i.e. wind protection and direct sunlight), and between 1/3 and ½ should be clear space for group activities and physical movement. A paved path or route for wheeled toys should wind around the other activity areas. Outdoor space should be acoustically buffered from traffic and parking and other disruptive noises, fumes and odours. If the outdoor play space is on a roof, vegetation and play equipment should be wind resistant. The play space should be free of skylights, roof vents and/or mechanical equipment. The outdoor space should be oriented to receive a minimum of 3 hours of direct sunlight per day at the winter solstice. Two hours of sunlight should occur during typical playtimes of 9:30-11:30 am or 1:30-4:00 pm. The area should be protected against flooding.				

⁷ Outdoor areas may be reduced in shared situations by up to 25% for toddler and preschoolers if an appropriate park or playground is within .5 km walking distance and available for regular use.

⁸ Outdoor areas may be reduced in shared situations by up to 25% if: a covered area is provided adjacent to each group, the outdoor area is shared by three or more groups, each group retains control of an area for individual use and appropriate playground or park is within .5 km and is available for regular use

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Additional resources

The following list includes additional documents that inform thinking on the impact of the physical environment and design of spaces for young children. Please visit www.childcarequality.ca for links to online documents. Contact CRRU to access documents available only in print (abstracts are available online for most print materials). Materials are listed for most recent to oldest.

Documents available online

Sugiyama, T. & Moore, G. T. (2005). *Content and construct validity of the Early Childhood Physical Environment Rating Scale (ECPERS)*. Sydney: Faculty of Architecture, University of Sydney. <http://www.arch.usyd.edu.au/web/research/ebs/gary/publications/EDRA%202005%20Pub%20Paper%20.pdf>

City of Vancouver. (1993). *Child care design guidelines*. Vancouver: Author. <http://www.city.vancouver.bc.ca/commsvcs/guidelines/C017.pdf>

Documents available only in print

Children in Scotland. (2005). Making space: Architecture and design for young children. *Children in Europe*, April 2005 (Issue 8). Edinburgh: Author.

Moore, G.T. (2000). *Early childhood physical environment observation schedules and rating scales* (2nd ed.). Milwaukee: School of Architecture and Urban Planning, University of Wisconsin.

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ABOUT THE QUALITY BY DESIGN PROJECT

www.childcarequality.ca

The Quality by Design Project is intended to promote and inform discussion, debate and knowledge about quality in early learning and child care (ELCC). This project builds upon previous work to broaden and deepen Canadian approaches to quality in ELCC. It is intended to contribute to quality as Canada's new national ELCC program - framed by the "QUAD" principles of Quality, Universality, Accessibility and Developmental [ness] - develops.



www.childcarecanada.org

The Childcare Resource and Research Unit (CRRU) at the University of Toronto is a policy research facility that focuses on early learning and child care (ELCC). CRRU's mandate is to carry out and disseminate research and policy analysis, to support ELCC research in various disciplines, to provide education, resources and expertise on ELCC policy, research and programs and to play a role in shaping public policy. CRRU produces several kinds of publications and maintains a comprehensive ELCC resource collection and an extensive website that acts as a clearinghouse for the ELCC field.

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