



# THE EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE WORKFORCE

**More than 190,000 people are part of Canada's early childhood education and care (ECEC) workforce.** ECEC workers are employed in early childhood programs operated by non-profit agencies and for-profit companies. They work in the public sector in postsecondary institutions, for school boards, and for local and provincial governments. They also work in private homes as unregulated child care providers, as independent contractors for regulated child care agencies, and as live-in nannies.

## Why does the ECEC workforce matter to women?

**Women are the main consumers of child care and over 96% of ECEC workers are women.**

**Despite the fact that 95.5% of these workers have postsecondary training most earn less than the average provincial wage.** ECEC worker wages are low because child care programs rely on parent fees for the majority of their funding and few families can afford child care fees high enough to fairly pay ECEC workers.

**ECEC workers often experience poor working conditions.** They work for long hours caring for many children (including those with special needs) without adequate supports. They often go beyond their assigned duties to connect children and their families to community services and even to fundraise to support their programs.

**Rates of unionization are low for those outside the public sector.** And working conditions are worsened when governments fund for-profit ECEC providers where working conditions are particularly poor.



**Racialized and immigrant women tend to fill the most difficult and the lowest paid care jobs.** Many women migrate to Canada on temporary permits to work as live-in nannies. Often they will fail to report abuse from employers because they fear deportation. Even when abuses are reported, complaints are rarely properly investigated.

## Early Childhood Education and Care policy debates MUST consider:

- Who is primarily served (the child or the parent) and who participates in ECEC programs.
- Who is doing the caring labour (the gender, race, and immigration status of the workforce).
- Under what conditions child care workers are working (waged/unwaged, unionized/non-unionized).
- How the child care is being funded (a public, market, or private service).
- The type of organization overseeing the work (non-profit/for-profit agency, regulated/unregulated).



### What can governments do?

#### Who is responsible?

Provincial/Territorial governments regulate child care services and employment standards.

The Federal Government is responsible for ECEC programming for First Nations communities, military families, immigrants, and refugees. The Federal Government also sets the immigration rules for migrant child care workers, provides financial support for child care in the Provinces and Territories through the Canada Social Transfer, and offsets parent fees through the Child Care Expense Deduction.

#### What has been done?

Most provinces offer wage grants to support ECEC workforce recruitment, training, and retention. Provinces such as Quebec and PEI have created wage scales for ECEC workers that child care operators must pay staff to be eligible for government funding. Others, including Saskatchewan, Nunavut and the Northwest Territories, do not fund commercial operators.

Increased federal funding for child care may create modest improvements. However, non-profit agencies are often too small and under-resourced to successfully compete for government funding, which means government grants largely support the expansion of for-profit child care. In addition, new funding is often targeted to fee subsidies for working parents, which further supports the fee-for-service model of child care without improving the wages or working conditions of the child care workforce.

#### What can be done?

**For ECEC wages and conditions to improve, public and non-profit childcare programs must be prioritized by and receive greater support from Canadian governments.** Canada has well-developed public education system with the capacity to grow “down and out” to provide more quality care opportunities for children and good, supported jobs for ECEC workers. Schools already employ ECEC workers in kindergarten, preschool and before and after school programs. In these public programs workers enjoy the benefits of unionization, including higher wages, improved job security, and regulated working conditions.

**Publicly-managed, quality ECEC services may also operate outside of schools.** PEI manages and funds a provincial network of non-profit Early Years Centres. Early Years Centres must serve children 0-4 years old (including those with special needs), employ trained staff, and follow a provincial curriculum. The PEI government regulates parent fees to keep them affordable and staff salaries to support wage fairness.

**Protections for caregivers working on temporary work permits can be improved.** Live-in caregivers should be allowed to unionize, to change their employers and sponsor, and to live with their own families while working in Canada.

Association of Early Childhood Educators Ontario

[www.aeceo.ca](http://www.aeceo.ca)

Association of Early Childhood Educators of Newfoundland and Labrador

[www.aecenl.ca](http://www.aecenl.ca)

Atkinson Center for Society and Child Development

[www.oise.utoronto.ca/atkinson](http://www.oise.utoronto.ca/atkinson)

Canadian Child Care Federation

[www.cccf-fcsge.ca](http://www.cccf-fcsge.ca)

Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada

<http://www.ccaac.ca/>

Child Care Canada: Childcare Resource and Research Unit

<http://childcarecanada.org/>

Early Childhood Educators of British Columbia

[www.ecebc.ca](http://www.ecebc.ca)

### Resources

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