

POLITICS OF ECE – Government 101
Guests: Shevaun & Tegan Conversation
Transcript

Tegan

Shevaun

Hi Shevaun.

Hi Tegan.

How are you doing?

I'm doing pretty well. How are you?

I'm good. So what are you doing now?

I am currently an RECE in an outdoor learning program.

Amazing! So I know we've gotten a chance to watch a video on the politics of ECE. What are your thoughts on that?

I thought it was a really great video, you know, sharing all the different aspects of government and how specifically they can affect your life and your job as an ECE? Yeah, I thought it went into good detail about specific things that, you know, can impact your job on a daily basis, both large scale and on a small scale as well.

Right, were there any kind of information or piece of knowledge that you think is very impactful to know?

I think it's really important to understand funding, and kind of the avenues of funding, where you get your funding from. Because funding is so integral to ECE, and it literally supports you in your job and the children and the families. It has direct impact. So understanding the different channels of funding and who kind of has the say about where the money goes and how much money, I think is really important. Funding can really explain and demonstrate government's priorities. For example, I have a personal story from my experience over the last year. We welcomed a child with exceptionalities into our program, and they've been in our program for a while. The parent told us that they were going to be moving to Quebec, because the funding for programs that would support this child are much more accessible, were funded completely through health care, and other programs from the government. And that's why they were uprooting their entire lives to move to Quebec, to give their child more opportunities and get the support that they need. And in our conversation, they said that around about four years ago, when the government was last elected, there were a lot of funding programs that were cut, that directly impacted this family, this child's life. This is the kind of thing that directly

impacts our work as ECEs. We're all a part of the support network that should help children flourish. You know, I'm very sad to see this family go. Because they think that the outdoor program is really beneficial for them. And they really love it. But they just can't do it anymore. And this parent is taking this huge step to uproot their life. We are so closely connected, of course to children and families and how we do our job that this kind of thing is directly impacting how we operate, and how we're trying to support the children and families in our programs. So I wanted to share that because I found it really it really touched my my heart and it really found it powerful to hear this, this parents perspectives.

Thank you Shevaun from sharing. I'm sure that it is really heartbreaking for you to see them go. And I totally agree with what you said about how funding really shows the priorities of each government. And I was not even surprised that they chose to move to Quebec, because we all know that Quebec really values their children and their families. And those can be seen in their in their policy, right? They are the first that has universal childcare. And I can imagine how the family of that child that you mentioned will get even more support.

They were already getting support before they even arrived in the province. At the same time, I was sad to see them go I was also really happy for them that they were going to get the support that they deserve.

Yeah, it's such a conflictual feeling for you as their educator to witness that. And I'm just curious how supporting that child within your program looked like, before they before they leave?

Well, I feel grateful, I have a lot of professional development offered through my job that's offered through my organization I work for. So we've actually gotten a lot of support that way. At the same time, you know, I'm only one person and the other educator is only one person, and it can be hard to balance all of our responsibilities at once, because everyone, every child is different, every family is different. So I really feel like there could be more, in my experience in my first year, more support for us in that area, among other areas, but I've noticed for sure, in that area of supporting children with exceptionalities.

Yeah, thank you for that Shevaun. From listening to your story, I was thinking of how of what kind of support ECEs like you get in order to then provide support for the child, for the families? How did that look like for you?

Well, at the municipal level, there's things like resource consultants which offer support. There are professional development opportunities through that as well. And I found that for my role as an educator was really helpful. And I know children can get funding, or families can get funding. But beyond that, I would say there's not much specific support beyond those avenues. And that might be because I am in my first year as an educator, but in my experience, those were the support options that we were able to work with.

It's good to hear that. Those are the support that were available to you and your team. And just overall in your day to day, life as a full time RECE, how do you feel supported in your work?

Well, there's definitely, I'm impacted by the different levels of government and your everyday work as an ECE. If you're licensed, then you're dealing with the ministry. And during COVID, you're definitely dealing with Toronto Public Health all the time. Whether or not just getting the information from them or you know, they're supporting you navigating the different responsibilities to deal with COVID and the pandemic and that kind of thing. And if you are in a city-licensed center, then you're dealing with AQI and all the requirements and responsibilities for that as well. As I'd say, there are a lot of kind of requirements of responsibilities from the various levels of government.

That's a lot of layers, on top of layers of responsibilities,

But then they connect, but it's definitely very layered.

Yeah, so working during a pandemic as an ECE. I can't even imagine how challenging that was. And that on top of that, a regular bunch of responsibilities and roles that you have. So tell me tell me more about that.

Yeah, it was a lot. And I didn't even come in at the beginning, when things were, like, even more strict with restrictions and, and cleaning and whatnot. So it was a lot to learn. Coming into it, it felt like a lot of pressure. However, you know, within my organization, I do have the safety net of sick days that is offered, and I have quite a few. So I knew that you know, if I got sick, I had that safety net, that I was going to be covered, I have pretty decent benefits. I'm aware that I'm pretty lucky in that regard. Because that's not across the board. It really varies from place to place with in terms of sick days, and some people have none. And during a pandemic, I think that's a really important thing to consider. Because you, you might not have that safety net depending on who you work for. And, you know, that's something that I feel ECEs should get more support for, it should be across the board. All ECS should deserve, they deserve to feel protected, and that way they deserve to receive benefits. And, you know, they deserve a decent wage, a decent pay, which is a part of the different electoral platforms. That's something that's directly addressed by, I believe, all four. Yeah. So that's another way that, you know, that levels of government directly can directly impact your work as a RECE and your your well-being, your livelihood. And another way I think it can be demonstrated what the priorities are of different parties.

Yeah, absolutely. Um, so as we're talking about wage and pandemic, I'm curious if you've received any pandemic pays? You know, ECEs are essential workers.

No, no.

Oh my God.

Yeah.

That is so unfair. Like, yeah, child care has been open throughout the pandemic.

Yeah. Earlier than I got a job. I guess, before I graduated, people were working throughout trying to figure it out. And to the best of my knowledge, no pandemic pay for ECEs.

That were offered by any governments. That's really unfair. And when you were talking about how you have access to all of these benefits and sick days, and I'm sure it's paid from how you were talking about it? That's amazing. I know you're not feeling well today from our off record conversation and see you have paid sick day.

Yeah. So I feel covered, because I know it's not going to be a struggle that I can take that time off. I mean, you're required for many symptoms, you're required to take time off due to TPH and your organization's policies. Yeah, so I think it's important that I feel taken care of, supported in that way. Everyone should feel that.

Absolutely. Yeah. I think you brought up like a really good point of how these benefits and paid sick days that you've got are not universally accessible to all ECEs out there, doing the same kind of work every day as you. And I think that really speaks to the importance of having a workforce strategy that regulates these.

Absolutely.

Benefits to ECEs and decent wage and paid sick days and all that, because you're right, ECEs care for children and families and someone's got to care for them.

Yeah. And you know, we deserve to be taken care of, in the same way that we put so much into taking care of children and families, and our well-being. It's not only important for our well-being, it's also important for everyone, the community's well-being, because if ECEs are better supported then you're able to do a better a better job or you're not as stressed or you don't have to worry about these other things. So these directly impacts your career, your job and your life.

And I think how you relate that value to policies really proves to me that like governments and policymakers - they can say all they want, they can call ECEs essential workers, they can call ECEs superheroes but as long as the policies to protect ECS are not there. Words mean almost nothing.

Talk is cheap.

Yeah, absolutely. Absolutely.

It's important to be informed about the different platforms. And what they're offering to us as ECEs who perform essential, really, really important work.

I know that we can talk for hours and hours and hours about this, because this is so important to us. I wonder, like with the new knowledge and information that that we've taken away from the video, from the politics of ECE video, how are you planning to use that in the future?

It definitely informs my vote. And not only that, it's important to share what you learn, what you know about how this all affects us as ECEs. It's important to share that with others. And I think it's important to have these kinds of conversations with your fellow educators, with your community.

Just having this conversation about how political ECEC is, is already so powerful. For me I get to know that out there, there are ECEs like you who have access to all the good stuff and are able to feel protected. I also feel so helpful because this is not only imagination, it can happen and there can be more ECEs like you who feel supported and valued and protected and cared for. And why it's so important to talk more, to talk louder.

Agree!