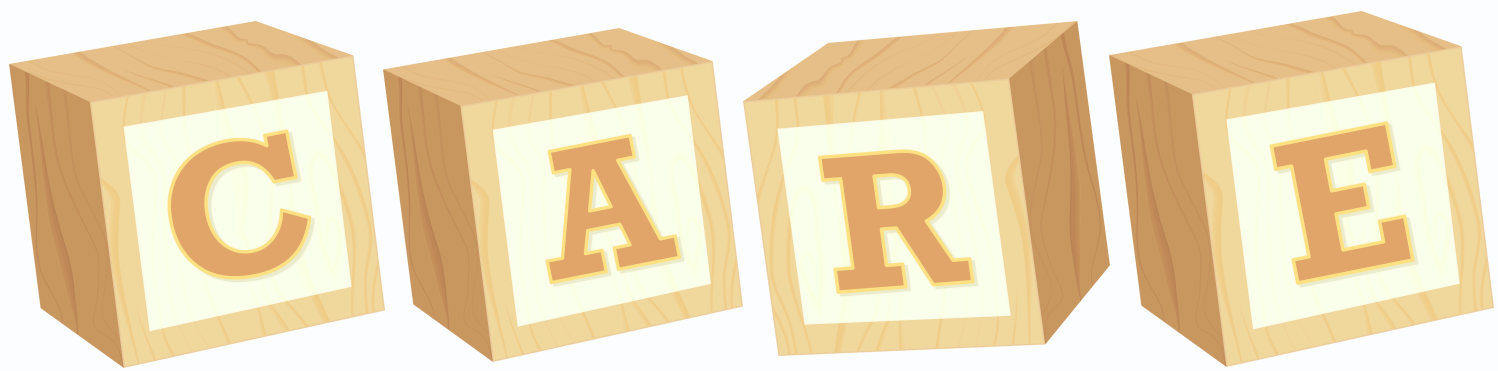


SHAPING CARE:

Ontario Policies & ECE Advocacy



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Learn more about two key policies impacting the work of Ontario ECEs and how the work of the AECEO supports educators no matter where they work.



SHAPING CARE:

Ontario Policies & ECE Advocacy

Early Childhood Educators (ECEs) in Ontario are deeply affected by policy: not only do policies shape the way ECEs practice, policies also have a significant impact on ECEs' well-being.

Understanding these policies and the role of your professional association is essential for everyone in the sector. Whether you are an experienced educator or a student new to the field, policies affect everyone, and it is important to recognize how they impact YOU.

Here, you will read a brief summary of two key policies that shape early learning and child care in Ontario, how they affect the ECE workforce, and the role played by the Association of Early Childhood Educators Ontario in the development of these policies.

SHAPING CARE:

Ontario Policies

CHILD CARE AND EARLY YEARS ACT

The **Child Care and Early Years Act (CCEYA)** is legislation created in 2015 by the Ministry of Education in Ontario. Originally the Day Nursery Act, the CCEYA sets the standards for ensuring the safety and well-being of children, provides oversight for child care providers, and can be used to help parents make informed decisions about child care options.

HOW DOES IT AFFECT YOU?

The CCEYA sets provincial standards for child care in Ontario. It outlines the regulations and compliance requirements that all educators must follow, as well as penalties for any violations to the act.

Students are impacted by these regulations because they are being sent to placement experiences in child care where the educators are obligated to follow the procedures from the CCEYA, like staff to child ratios. Students new to the field must follow the same policies, whether they align with their values or not.

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Ontario Policies

CANADA-WIDE EARLY LEARNING & CHILD CARE (CWELCC).

Through the CWELCC plan, the federal government reached funding agreements with provinces and territories to make child care more affordable for families. Each jurisdiction had their own action plan, but the overall goal was to increase the number of licensed spaces and expand access to inclusive, high-quality, and affordable early learning and child care (ELCC) services across the country. Ontario's action plan focused on lowering fees, increasing access, enhancing the quality of care, supporting inclusion, and enhancing data and reporting.

HOW DOES CWELCC AFFECT YOU?

Ontario's original CWELCC agreement, signed in March 2022, set **a wage floor of only \$18/hour for RCEs** and did not include commitments to improving working conditions, even though it acknowledged the vital role played by ECEs in delivering quality care.

For student educators, this means **entering a field that is undergoing change**, where the value of ECEs is verbally recognized, but the conditions to sustain that recognition are still being built.

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Advocating for ECEs

ASSOCIATION OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS ONTARIO (AECEO)

The AECEO is the professional association for ECEs in Ontario. Their mission is to **build and support a strong collective voice for educators** so they can engage in positive changes in the sector for ECEs, children, and their families.

Founded in 1950, the AECEO supports ECEs through community building, government relations, policy work, campaigns, and professional learning. **The AECEO strives to make work better for every educator.**

The AECEO works in partnership with organizations like the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care (OCBCC) to inform the public about what ECEs do and how the early learning & child care sector are important and valuable to everyone in the community.

With the goal of supporting ECE leadership and advocacy, the AECEO creates spaces for educators to come together and care out loud. They do this through supporting CARE collectives, which are local or identity based groups that provide a space for Community, Advocacy, Recognition, and Empowerment (CARE).

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How the policy work of the AECEO supports ECEs

The AECEO collects and shares information on relevant policies, advocating to the provincial government to promote program quality through **improved compensation and working conditions** for the early learning and child care workforce.

THE AECEO WAS KEY IN STOPPING DANGEROUS CHANGES TO THE CCEYA

In 2020, the government of Ontario proposed changes to the CCEYA that would force younger children to be placed in larger groups with fewer qualified staff, skewing ratio requirements. There were many concerns related to the proposed changes, especially with the possible merging of the infant and toddler age groups, which would pose risks to quality and safety. Through a survey on their website, the AECEO gathered the perspectives of the child care workforce and presented them to the provincial government.

Early childhood educators, child care workers, operators and members of **the ECE community spoke up and won!** The advocacy work done by the AECEO and the OCBCC were fundamental to stopping these changes.

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THE AECEO & THE CANADA-WIDE EARLY LEARNING AND CHILD CARE PLAN

The AECEO is known to advocate for decent work, fair wages, and the recognition of ECEs, which closely aligns with the goals of CWELCC. In 2021, in response to the federal program, the AECEO and the OCBCC published **The Roadmap to Universal Child Care in Ontario**. This document was written following extensive consultation with early childhood educators, child care workers, operators, home child care providers and other ELCC stakeholders, and highlighted the need for equitable system-building in Ontario. Policy recommendations outlined in **The Roadmap** recognized the well-being of the workforce as key to providing quality care to children and families.

The provincial government did not follow the recommendations from **The Roadmap** in the original CWELCC agreement signed in March 2022. But in November 2023, the Ontario government announced an increase to the hourly wage floor for RECEs: from \$18 to \$23.86. **This win for RECEs was only possible thanks to the consistent advocacy** from the AECEO, the OCBCC and the ECE community.

Learn more about how policy and advocacy shape care in Ontario by getting involved with the AECEO!

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Ontario Policies & ECE Advocacy



Visit the AECEO Student Blog to find the PDF version (with links to resources) of this post, as well as an interactive infographic version, created by TMU ECS student Hannah Sanderson during her placement with the AECEO.

