

## **Bill C-35: An Act Respecting Early Learning and Child Care in Canada**

Bill C-35: An Act Respecting Early Learning and Child Care in Canada sets out the Government of Canada's vision for a Canada-wide early learning and child care system. It also sets out the Government of Canada's commitment to maintaining long-term funding relating to early learning and child care to be provided to the provinces and Indigenous peoples. Finally, it creates the National Advisory Council on Early Learning and Child Care.

(<https://www.parl.ca/DocumentViewer/en/44-1/bill/C-35/first-reading>)

ECEBC was pleased to inform the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities (HUMA) Committee's study on Bill C-35. The witness statement below was presented on March 30, 2023, by Emily (Mliczko) Gawlick, ECEBC Executive Director.

On December 28, 2022, the first reading was completed in the House of Commons. The second reading was February 1, 2023. HUMA is now reviewing submissions and witness statements.

### **How Government Bills Become Law**

A government bill is a written legislative initiative submitted to Parliament by the government for approval, and possibly for amendment, before becoming law. Such bills relate to matters of public interest and may include financial provisions. Government bills are normally introduced in the House of Commons, although bills that do not provide for the expenditure of public funds or the levying of new taxes may be introduced in either House.

([https://www.ourcommons.ca/procedure/procedure-and-practice-3/ch\\_16\\_2-e.html](https://www.ourcommons.ca/procedure/procedure-and-practice-3/ch_16_2-e.html))

To view other witness statements and submissions about Bill-C-35:

<https://www.ourcommons.ca/Committees/en/HUMA/StudyActivity?studyActivityId=12022948>

Good morning Honourable Chair and Committee Members,

My name is Emily Gawlick, Executive Director of the Early Childhood Educators of BC. I am honoured to be calling in from the land that I live, work, and grow on, as the unsundered traditional territories of the Coast Salish Peoples, specifically x<sup>w</sup>məθk<sup>w</sup>əyəm (Musqueam), Sk<sup>w</sup>xwú7mesh (Squamish), and səliwətał (Tseil-Waututh) Nations.

Through our obligations, ECEBC is compelled to think deeply, listen with intention, and act ethically with commitments through the following lens: the BC Early Learning Framework, Declaration on the



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Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act, the ECEBC Code of Ethics, Indigenous Early Learning and Childcare Framework, Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action, and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Since 2011 ECEBC and our partner, the Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC, have been championing our own provincial \$10aDay Child Care Plan. This plan advocates for a public childcare system that addresses affordability, accessibility, and quality. We are heartened to see the success of the \$10aDay Child Care Plan growing throughout Canada.

The essential factor to a quality system that supports children, families, and communities is the early childhood educator profession. ECE in Canada is commonly perceived as a service for working parents, rather than a public good, of great social, cultural, and political importance. When early childhood education is understood and operated as a commodity to be purchased by consumers in a competitive market, early childhood education is reduced to an economic transaction without consideration of educational values and purpose. From this perspective, early childhood educators are viewed as technicians only within a model of cost efficiency and minimum universal standards. ECEBC supports the development of the National Advisory Council for Early Learning and Child Care and the importance of the council to be accountable, working with academics and educators, to ensure we are co-creating a system that is not limited to a service but provides an educational space that all Canadian children deserve.

Current research asserts social policies and narratives that maintain our profession as gendered, racialized, marginalized and positioned as a secondary market force. However, we know that early childhood educators are much more than these narratives. Educators practice with ethical commitments as they co-construct lively curriculum with children.

For generations the education of early childhood educators has evolved to reflect the diversity of children and families. Educators, who are predominantly female, have for too long shouldered inadequate working conditions, low wages, lack of benefits, and minimal professional recognition. During the global pandemic it was highlighted how fragile the current funding and processes are and how imperative it is to move forward to create a new Canada wide social system that embeds a wage grid, higher post-secondary standards, and healthy working conditions.

With federal leadership a system can be developed that includes a fair wage grid that's reflective of education and experience, and benefits for the workforce. Bill C-35 needs to ensure the complexities and the pedagogy of this work are recognized and hold provinces accountable to creating a system based on child rights.

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ECEBC is encouraged that this enactment honours Indigenous rights and jurisdictions. We must demand this acknowledgment and identify and overcome barriers created by colonial systems and structures and align our practices accordingly. We support and acknowledge that First Nations, Métis, and Inuit have autonomy. We commit to listen, learn, and act in our ongoing work to decolonize our own practices, perspectives, and professional education. ECEBC encourages everyone to make this commitment alongside us.

After 30-plus years as an early childhood educator, I am elated to see the investments and commitments from the federal government in the early years. Research has shown the importance of strong ongoing investment in a public not-for-profit, licensed-based model. Bill C-35, an Act respecting early learning and child care, takes a progressive leap forward in recognizing this through the lens of child's rights. ECEBC is committed to working in partnership to ensure this bill fosters a system that attracts and retains highly qualified early childhood educators and represents the diversity of Canada.

Emily Gawlick Executive Director  
Early Childhood Educators of BC