

# Over 500 Ontario Parents Unite to Discuss the Challenges of CWELCC at Parent Awareness Night

*Parent education event first of several planned to raise awareness about flawed \$10/day childcare program and its impact to sector and families.*

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*Zoe Prassoulis, event co-organizer*

Parent Awareness Night, hosted on October 9 at The Venetian Banquet Hall in Vaughan, Ontario, brought together over 530 concerned parents in person, as well as a national audience that joined via livestream.

The event focused on the challenges associated with the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC) \$10 a day system in light of a newly-proposed funding framework that is being imposed on Ontario childcare operators, who have until the end of October to decide whether or not to opt into this new phase of their contract agreement. With the possibility of wide-scale opt outs eliminating affordability funding and doubling childcare fees across Ontario, hundreds of parents attended to learn

about the challenges facing childcare providers and to get information about what all this could mean for their families.

The event, organized by childcare providers, and facilitated by the AACE National Committee on Childcare Reform, was the first of several events that will take place in October in Ontario, and across Canada, to raise awareness about the industry-crippling, ideologically-driven and tactically-flawed rollout of the so-called affordable childcare program across the country.

The sentiment of the event—and that of childcare providers across Canada—was summed up by AACE National Co-Chair, Krystal Churcher.

“The CWELCC system was created to make childcare more affordable, but for many families and operators, it has resulted in intolerable strain on the system,” said Churcher. “While the goal of

affordability is important, we cannot ignore the negative consequences impacting accessibility, quality, and parental choice. The voices of parents and operators of all business models must be heard, and together, we can ensure that the childcare system works for everyone—not just in Ontario but nationwide.”

At the event, several childcare operators outlined challenges with the \$10 a day program, whose initial promises assured affordable, accessible, high-quality, inclusive childcare across the country. With the program prioritizing nonprofit providers, parental choice in childcare

is becoming limited. Many for-profit childcare centres, which have historically created a large number of spaces through private capital, are excluded from accessing affordability grants for parents. This has placed immense pressure on the nonprofit sector, which alone is not meeting the increased demand, leading to an access crisis, with families in some areas having to wait between two and eight years for childcare.

Parents and operators alike expressed frustration over government overreach and the underfunding of the federal program. Parents were also warned that many centres are struggling to find and retain qualified staff as the CWELCC program doesn't provide a comprehensive strategy for building the workforce needed to support the expanded spaces. Parents were also told to expect changes to food provisions, and to see field trips and extras eliminated, with an overall troubling outlook for the future of the high-quality childcare they have come to expect.

This awareness event marks initial strides toward continuing this dialogue on a national scale, with a national online parent awareness meeting scheduled for October 17 at 7:00 pm MST, and a Canada-wide awareness week running from October 21 to 25.

The National Campaign for Childcare Reform is advocating for a balanced and comprehensive approach to affordability, quality, parental choice and accessibility for all families. The week of awareness will see Canadian childcare operators join forces to drive through necessary change. Individual operators will decide if they want to participate in any of the six suggested strategies for advocacy, which include:

- Signing a petition requesting for the federal government to provide envelope funding to



Ontario Childcare Parent Awareness Night participants with signage

provinces

- A letter-writing campaign to provincial and federal governments
- The "At What Cost?" shirt campaign
- Social media blasts
- Optional rolling closures
- A rally at Queen's Park in Toronto on October 22

"We were thrilled with the turnout and the thoughtful parent questions," said event co-organizer Zoe Prassoulis. "Once we had highlighted our concerns around the new cost control framework, and parents also understood that we are very much in favour of them still receiving affordable funding, they were overwhelmingly supportive. This event showed there's widespread backing from parents to join us in advocating for a pause on the implementation of this new funding formula to allow for more comprehensive consultation with operators and parents. Our goal was to engage parents and it was empowering to see them leave the meeting with more compassion for operators and with an intention to advocate on these issues."

#### About AACE National

The AACE National Committee on Childcare Reform is leading the effort to shift from federally-controlled funding to no-strings attached envelope provincial funding, empowering provinces to create childcare solutions that ensure affordability, accessibility, and quality.

AACE National includes thousands of childcare operators from across Canada who have come together to raise awareness about the devastating impact that the Canada Wide Early Learning and Childcare Agreement (CWELCC) is having on the childcare industry, on childcare quality and parental choice.

For more information about national awareness week and the national parent meeting, visit [aacenational.ca](http://aacenational.ca).

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