ACE Welcomes Ontario CWELCC Extension — But Thousands of Families Are Still Waiting for a Space

Stability for participating families is a good first step, but structural change and more spaces are needed for everyone else

TORONTO, ONT, CANADA, October 2, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The Association of Canadian Early Learning Programs (ACE) today welcomed the four-year extension of the Canada–Ontario Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC) Agreement, while urging both governments to turn their attention to the families the program does not yet reach.

Under the extension, Ontario will receive nearly $12 billion in federal funding from March 31, 2027, to March 31, 2031. Ontario has committed to keep fees at an average of $19 per day, with a cap of $22 per day, for families in CWELCC.

"This extension gives the families who rely on CWELCC something they badly need, which is certainty," said Krystal Churcher, Chair of ACE. "The federal and Ontario governments deserve credit for getting it done."

That certainty has limits. The fee commitment is guaranteed only until June 30, 2027. Ontario's share of the $5.4 billion in additional federal funding announced in June 2026 has yet to be negotiated. Parents in the program have a stronger footing today than they did yesterday, but they do not yet have a long-term guarantee.

Families outside CWELCC are not part of this story
The extension does nothing for families whose children are not in a CWELCC-participating program. Some pay full market fees. Others cannot find a participating provider at all. Additional funding for the existing program will not change their situation.

> These parents are working, budgeting and planning like everyone else, and they feel like the system was built without them,"
> *Krystal Churcher, Chair of ACE*

Helping these families requires fundamental structural changes to how the program is delivered in Ontario, not incremental funding on top of the current model. ACE believes that conversation should begin now, while the governments are working together on the path forward.

Parents outside the program feel invisible

Families outside CWELCC are largely absent from public debate and from the rooms where decisions are made. The governments have said they will work together over the next year to establish a sustainable path forward for child care in Ontario. Those negotiations will shape child care for a generation, and parents who are not in CWELCC need a seat at the table.

"These parents are working, budgeting and planning like everyone else, and they feel like the system was built without them," said Churcher. "Their voices need to be heard before decisions are made, not after."

Affordable fees mean little without a space

Affordable child care only works when families can access it. A $22-a-day fee means little to a parent who cannot find a space.. A parent cannot return to work, finish a degree or build a business while waiting for a call that does not come.

The federal and Ontario governments have both described child care as important to labour force participation and economic growth. That goal depends on space availability as much as on price.

What ACE is asking for

ACE calls on the federal and Ontario governments to do three things during the coming year. First, include families outside CWELCC, and the organizations that serve them, directly in the negotiation and policy process. Second, examine the structural barriers limiting participation, sustainability and growth, and ensure Ontario can draw on all models of licensed child care — non-profit, for-profit and home-based — to meet community need. Third, publish a clear plan, with targets and timelines, to expand the number of licensed child care spaces that will qualify for CWELCC so that waitlists shrink.

ACE stands ready to work with both governments and to bring the experience of its members to the table.

About ACE

The Association of Canadian Early Learning Programs (ACE) is the only national association that represents childcare operators of all models of childcare, including non-profit, home-based and

for-profit. ACE advocates for accessible, high-quality early learning and child care for every family in Canada.

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