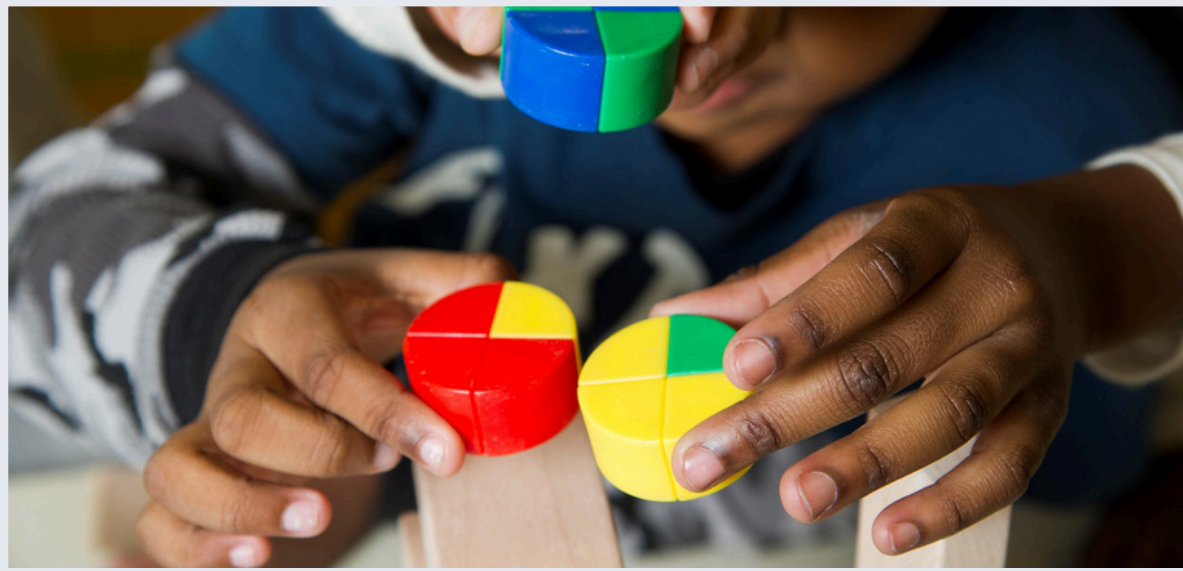


MONEY ISN'T EVERYTHING



KERRY MCCUAIG

ATKINSON CENTRE FELLOW IN EARLY CHILDHOOD POLICY

But it's a lot. Money is obviously needed to run your life and take care of the people you love. It provides the necessities of food, shelter, education. It can also buy time, such as ordering take-out instead of making a meal. Stress is reduced when you're not worried about bill payments. Your social connections are sustained when you can meet friends for dinner or buy that present your daughter needs to attend her friend's birthday party.

In short, money buys the things that make life easier and more satisfying but that relationship isn't entirely linear. [Research suggests](#) that individual satisfaction with personal earnings depends on how it compares with others. This may be why, despite government efforts to peg the earning of early childhood educators (ECEs) working in licensed child care to [a living wage](#) (the wage needed to cover basic expenses and participate in community life), staff are still exiting the workplace, and new grads avoid it as a career path.

A new study by [Beth Dhuey and colleagues](#) finds that Canada is producing ECEs; 6,500 graduate every year, the vast majority from colleges in Ontario and

Quebec. By linking diploma and degreed graduates of early education programs to income tax data, the authors have been able to create a demographic profile. The new ECE is atypical. She (95 percent are women), is older (32 years); half are married or living common-law, and almost two-thirds have at least one child.

Despite expectations that federal funding to reduce parent fees and accelerate child care expansion would create corresponding job opportunities in the sector, this hasn't materialized.

A year after graduation 50 percent of grads are piecing together several part-time jobs. This compares to the 6.8 percent of multiple jobholders among other working women – a 'staggering' difference as the authors say.

When it comes to pay, the Government of Canada Job Bank reports job postings for Early Childhood Educators and Assistants with a median hourly wage of \$20.20. This is 89 per cent less than dental hygienists, 50 per cent less than paralegals and executive assistants, 37 percent less than instructors of persons with disabilities, 36 percent less than teaching assistants in schools, 35 percent less than nurses, and 21 percent less than social workers – all professions requiring the same levels of post-secondary training.

Not surprisingly these professions become the landing pads for most new grads. Diploma holders may begin their post-graduate working lives in child care but move on to social services or education. Half the ECE degree-holders go straight into education according to Dhuey's study.

Considering a target of 250,000 new spaces by 2026, even if every new grad took employment and remained in licensed child, the supply of ECEs falls drastically short. For five provinces, it would take over two decades to staff new spaces at current graduation rates.

These numbers are behind the workforce crisis in child care. More money for ECEs isn't everything but it might buy enough job satisfaction to make them come and stay.