

No more baby steps: Political insights from the 2018 election for moving childcare policy forward in Ontario ^[1]

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AVAILABILITY

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Excerpted from the introduction

The 2018 Ontario election was a pivotal moment for childcare policy. In the pre-election budget, the sitting Liberal government unveiled an ambitious universal childcare strategy (Ontario Government, 2018). In the spring electoral campaign, two political parties (the Liberals and NDP) committed to building an accessible and affordable childcare system. The Liberal Party's detailed, costed, and multi-year childcare strategy represented the closest Ontario would have come to building and delivering a publicly managed and supported childcare system. Yet childcare was, in this case, and in every single election since 1993, an electoral loser.

Our research team is moving into the final year of a Social Science, Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) funded project aimed at researching the ways in which care, and care work are understood and operationalized in social policy and practice, particularly in relation to early childhood education and care (ECEC). We realized that we had an opportunity to capture and preserve the confluence of advocacy, consultation, and adjacent policy work that had led up to childcare platforms in the 2018 election. We interviewed politicians, policy advisors, advocates, and academics across all parties and the ECEC sector about the election childcare platforms. We were interested in taking stock of the proposed childcare strategies. What were the strengths, problems, limitations, or fears associated with them? Importantly, we wanted to capture how politicians, policy makers, and advocates might hit the ground running to both talk about and build a high-quality childcare system when political conditions change. Our intention with this research study—, which is ongoing—is to create an institutional memoir for policy makers, advocates, and researchers that can assist Ontario specifically as well as other jurisdictions.

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