

The Agreement on Internal Trade (AIT) & the Child Care Sector

by *Mary Goss-Prowse*, registrar, Association of ECE of Newfoundland & Labrador; member, CCHRSC

I imagine that one of the first questions that come to mind when you look at the title of this article is “What does “internal trade” have to do with child care?”. The short answer is that the link is through the people working in the Child Care Sector and how they can move more easily from one province or territory to another.

The *Agreement on Internal Trade (AIT)* was first signed in 1994 by federal, provincial and territorial governments in an effort to eliminate unnecessary barriers to the movement of workers, goods, services and investments within Canada. Chapter 7 of the agreement deals with “Labour Mobility” directly. Labour mobility is the ability of people in a workforce to move to and work in a different province or territory. In 2009 some amendments were made to Chapter 7 of the agreement and a timeframe was given to the provinces and territories to ensure labour mobility for workers in *regulated* or *certified* occupations. A *regulated* occupation is one in which you must hold a specific certification to work in that sector.

The 3 Core Principles of Chapter 7 of the AIT are:

- Protection of the public interest remains key;
- Governments and their regulatory authorities maintain the ability to set standards;
- Recognition that there are different pathways to certification.

Child Care Credentialing: Before looking at the AIT however, you first need to have a basic understanding of “credentialing”, “certification” or “registration” to work in the Child Care Sector (for the purposes of this article I will use these terms interchangeably as they are all used within the Early Learning and Child Care Sector in Canada to describe systems that assess your qualifications to work in the sector).

In many workforce sectors, certification or credentialing is required to practice or work in their field – this holds true for everything from plumbers, to doctors, to school teachers. Some sectors have a national certification system or national exam that allows them to practice in their field anywhere in Canada – the Child Care Sector (like some other sectors) does not have a national system or exam.

For the Child Care Sector, where credentialing systems exist, they are a provincial or territorial jurisdiction – in other words, the province or territory oversees the requirements for people to work in the sector. To complicate matters a little further, some credentialing systems are voluntary and some are mandatory. Some are directly administered by the provincial or territorial government and some are administered through a provincial or territorial non-government organization.

Where credentialing is mandatory or regulated in a province or territory it is generally based on qualifications to work in the child care sector – some recognize levels of qualification based on attaining different amounts of Early Childhood Education; others are not broken down into levels at all. For example, in Newfoundland and Labrador there are 5 levels of certification ranging from orientation (Entry Level) through to an approved University Degree (Level Four) in Early Childhood Care and Education. In Ontario, in order to become an R.E.C.E. (registered Early Childhood Educator with the College of Early Childhood Educators) you must hold at least an approved Diploma in Early Childhood Education. Nova Scotia has had a *voluntary* certification process for many years which is based on reflective practice and peer support / review.

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If you are interested in looking at or comparing the various child care credentialing systems in Canada you can find an interactive “Online Guide to ECEC Credentialing” on the *Child Care Human Resources Sector Council* website (<http://www.ccsc-cssge.ca>).

AIT Chapter 7 and Child Care: So, back to the AIT and the child care sector. At the time of writing this article, eight provinces and territories¹ have mandatory credentialing to work in the child care sector and therefore fall under Chapter 7 of the AIT – they are:

- Newfoundland & Labrador
- Prince Edward Island
- Ontario
- Manitoba
- Alberta
- Saskatchewan
- British Columbia
- Yukon territory.

Under Chapter 7 each of these provinces and territories are mandated to accept a certification / registration from another province or territory where the child care sector is regulated. This acceptance is based on something called “Scope of Practice”.

“Scope of Practice” basically refers to the range of activities that a qualified practitioner may practice. For example, let’s say you work in Manitoba and your certification there allows you to operate or manage a child care centre. You decide to move to Newfoundland & Labrador. The certification system in Newfoundland & Labrador would be required to issue you certification in that province that would also allow you to operate or manage a child care centre.

The part in this that often confuses people is that each credentialing system has its own “name” for the certification issued for a particular “scope of practice” – sometimes the equivalent certification sounds like a lower or higher credential than you had in the province or territory you are moving from, but this is likely not the case. The credential is correct if it allows you to do the same / similar work (scope of practice) that you were allowed to do in the province or territory from which you moved.

The major benefit of Chapter 7 to the workforce is the easing of mobility issues and time required for the credentialing process. Before AIT, if you moved to another province or territory, you would need to supply documentation of any Early Childhood Care and Education credential you may hold from a college or university; transcripts, and likely course descriptions. These would then need to be assessed by the credentialing body for equivalency to a credential gained in that province or territory. This may take some time to complete, thus delaying your ability to work in your new home. For provinces or territories that fall under Chapter 7 of the AIT you would simply apply for certification documenting your valid certification from the original province or territory. Equivalent certification would then be issued in a timely manner.

Credentialing Process Under AIT Chapter 7:

Typically, in order to become certified or registered to work in a new province / territory under AIT you will still need to apply to the regulatory body in that province / territory². You will need to document with your application evidence of your *valid* certification or registration from the previous province / territory.

You should be able to apply for your certification / registration before your move, if you wish, as a residency requirement is not allowed under the agreement.

With the exception of a very few requirements, an applicant under the AIT cannot be asked to complete additional processes over and above what is required for residents of that province or territory. Examples of allowable additional requirements that might apply in the child care sector would be:

- Application or processing fees
- Undergo a criminal record background check
- Provide evidence of good character
- Demonstrate knowledge of measures maintained by a province or territory applicable to the practice of the occupation in that province or territory
- Produce a certificate, letter or other evidence of good standing.

¹ At least two other provinces are working on a credentialing system – if they make the process mandatory / regulated they will also be included under Chapter 7. As of May 1, 2012, Nova Scotia will be included under Chapter 7 of AIT.

² Chapter 7 does not prevent provinces or territories to decide to waive the application process for any sector and accept the certification for work, however in the 8 provincial and territorial jurisdictions for the child care sector currently under Chapter 7 of the AIT an application is required.

Post-Certification Requirements: Once you hold your new certification under AIT you then must meet ongoing requirements of that certification. For example, if your new province or territory has mandatory continuing education / professional development requirements for the certification you received from them you would need to meet that expectation to maintain your certification.

AIT and Non-Canadian (Foreign) Credentials: The assessment of non-Canadian credentials can be a lengthy process in any sector. The major benefit of the AIT and a non-Canadian credential assessment is that, at least between the provinces and territories that fall under the AIT, once the non-Canadian credential is assessed, it can be transferred easily if the person who holds the credential wants to move to a different province or territory and work.

Summary: Chapter 7 of the Agreement on Internal Trade (AIT) allows for inter-provincial / territorial recognition of credentialing to work in the Child Care Sector in those provinces and territories where credentialing is regulated in order to work. This eases the movement of the child care workforce between those provinces and territories that fall under the AIT.

Reference:

Agreement on Internal Trade – Chapter 7 – Labour Mobility; August 2009; Forum of Labour Market Ministers, Labour Mobility Coordinating Group.

(http://www.ait-aci.ca/index_en.htm)

Child Care Credentialing in N.S.

In Nova Scotia child care, the Early Childhood Education that one receives is credentialed by post secondary institutions offering ECE programs; and the ECE practice of an individual is credentialed by the Certification Council of Early Childhood Educators of NS (CCECENS). These two credentials provide the basis for the two classification processes operating in Nova Scotia.

Postsecondary ECE programs offer a two year diploma in ECE at the College level. At the University level a Child and Youth Studies bachelor's and master's is offered. (<http://www.cccns.org/training.html>).

The Certification Council of Early Childhood Educators of NS (<http://www.cccns.org/cert/home.html>) offer voluntary certification of practice credentials for Early Childhood Educators (ECE's) and for Early Childhood Centre Administrators (ECCA).

Regulatory Classification:

As of May 1, 2012, trained staff in licensed child care programs in Nova Scotia must be classified as a level 1, 2 or 3 or school aged training approval. Untrained

staff working in a licensed centre must have entry level classification. These classifications have been implemented as a result of the new Day Care Act and Regulations. "Classification is the process for reviewing training and determining eligibility towards one of four designations for employment in a licensed child care facility. School age approval is the process for reviewing training and determining eligibility for work in a licensed school age program."

(<http://www.gov.ns.ca/coms/families/provider/ClassificationforStaff.html>).

These classifications are based on post secondary ECE training that the former group have completed and an "Orientation to Staff Working in Child Care Facilities" course for the latter group.

(<http://www.gov.ns.ca/coms/families/provider/OrientationforStaff.html>).

ECE Classification:

The Nova Scotia Child Care Association classifies its members based on the post secondary training of an individual. They have incorporated the classifications into their suggested minimum salary guidelines and recommend that those who are certified as an ECE or ECCA receive \$1,500 above scale depending on their classification.

(<http://nschildcareassociation.org/NSCCA%20Suggested%20Minimum%20Salary%20Guidelines%20revised%202008.pdf>)

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Editor: E. Elaine Ferguson
Child Care Connections
100-1200 Tower Road,
Halifax, NS B3H 4K6
(902) 423-8199
1-800-565-8199 (Atlantic)
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