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Student Outreach Kit

Dear Students:

Thank you for your interest in the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care and in working towards a better Ontario. The Coalition advocates to secure high-quality, accessible and affordable early childhood education and care for all families in Ontario, and your support is much appreciated. Working together is the most effective form of creating change.

Our Student Outreach Kit includes **Read This!**, a primer on the OCBCC and present issues in child care in Ontario; **Advocacy Action Tips**, suggestions on some simple steps you can get people engaged in advocating for child care; and a **Resources** section, containing online resources and links to materials.

How to use this kit:

Read This! consists of key information presented in question and answer format that can easily be adapted into a presentation.

Advocacy Action Plan stresses the power of building awareness through personal conversation. Use some of the tools and suggestions provided to create conversations that help more people understand how important child care is and how critical our issues are. Being informed is the first step to being an advocate for your community!

You can download advocacy and informative materials like sticker templates and fact sheets from the **Resources** section, where you'll also find more information, links and publications.

These are some useful and effective ways to get involved in advocating for child care yourself and getting other people engaged as well.

By working together, we can change Ontario!

Many thanks – the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care

Read This! - A Guide to Child Care Advocacy

When speaking to a group about the role of advocacy in child care, one approach is to frame the issues and information in the form of questions. By asking questions to the group you're addressing, you can engage them more readily and get them thinking about how what you're talking about applies to them.

Each of these questions is presented as its own module. You can mix and match them depending on who you are presenting them to.

What is the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care?

The Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care (OCBCC) is an advocacy group working to secure funding for universal high-quality, affordable and accessible child care in Ontario. Founded in 1981, the Coalition's membership includes community-based child care programs, labour groups, student and women's organizations, the francophone community and the education sector.

Who makes decisions about child care?

Decisions about child care are made at the provincial and municipal levels of government. While the province funds child care, municipalities deliver the services.

Everyone in Ontario is represented by a Member of Provincial Parliament (MPP). The province has a yearly budget, in which funding for child care can and should be secured. Child care has been historically underfunded – resulting in ever-increasing parent fees and low wages for child care workers. It's important that your MPP know that child care is an important issue for you, because they represent you. The best way to make your MPP aware of your views on childcare is to call or e-mail them and tell them yourself. If you aren't sure who your MPP is, for more information - www.ontla.on.ca/web/home.do

While advocating to provincial politicians for funding is critical, municipal politics have a huge impact on child care service delivery in your community. Make sure your councillor, school board trustee, and mayor know that child care services are an integral part of your community and you support initiatives to improve their accessibility, affordability, and quality.

What are the problems in child care in Ontario?

1. Licensed child care in Ontario is not universal. In fact **4 out of 5** children in Ontario do not have access to a licensed child care space.
2. Due to inadequate government funding, child care relies on parent fees, which are becoming increasingly expensive. In Ontario, full-fee paying families can pay upwards of **\$40-\$60 a day** per child, up to **\$10 000-\$15 000 a year**. For many families this is at the upper limit of what they can afford.
3. As a result of high fees, many families cannot afford child care. The province offers subsidy funding to families who aren't able to afford full fees, but there simply aren't enough – at present, there are over 22,000 eligible children on the waiting list for subsidy in Toronto alone.
4. There is a shortage of qualified early childhood educators. Providing high quality care requires maintaining good ratios of staff to children. Despite high parent fees, many child care staff are underpaid. As a result of low wages, 40% of trained early childhood educators are working in other fields. Funding to support wages and benefits is essential to maintaining a high quality early learning and child care program. Fair pay and benefits (like pensions) will ensure that RECE's are able to make enough money to support their own families and encourage RECE's who have left the field to come back to the job that they love and were trained to do.

Ontario is falling behind

Other provinces have made the choice to do things better than Ontario.

Quebec – In 1997, Quebec chose to implement a high-quality, universal child care system. Parent fees are set at \$7 a day, regardless of family income. Over the past 14 years, the effects of this have had tremendous positive impacts on Quebec's economy and society -

- Quebec child poverty rates have declined 50% in the last 10 years.
- School test scores have gone from among the lowest to the highest in Canada.
- Outside Alberta, Quebec is the only province to see an increase in its birth rate
- More than half of Quebec fathers take paid leave after the birth of their babies, compared to only 11% of fathers in the rest of the country.
- Maternal labour force participation went from the lowest to the highest in Canada
- Post secondary enrolment of women is now the highest in the country.
- Tax revenues from mothers now cover 40% of the cost of the program, not to mention the gains in tax revenue from child care staff, and the long term benefits in increased student achievement.

In Quebec, child care workers are employed in good jobs with decent wages, benefits, and a pension.

Manitoba – Following Quebec's lead, Manitoba provides provincial funding for universal child care was secured and parent fees are now capped at a maximum of \$18.80 a day. In 2002, the province began to focus on child care, and in 2008 began a five-year program to increase the number of child care spaces, and raise child care worker's wages by 20%.

On December 1, 2010, Manitoba also put into place a pension available to all child care workers in the province. Stable funding and benefits ensures a stable workforce of people who stay in their jobs.

How does this affect us as students, and what can we do?

- To ensure the existence of accessible, affordable high-quality childcare environments where we would like to work with children once we enter the workforce, we need to secure funding from the provincial government.
- Students studying early childhood education, family support, and child and family studies have *invested* in their education to help improve the lives of children and families. Entering the workforce these highly skilled individuals deserve to be compensated fairly – together we must advocate for fair wages.
- Students are the most effected by the high costs of child care – from high costs (mounted on top of exorbitant tuition fees) to the lack of evening and weekend care and unfair subsidy rules, students get the short end of the stick.

Advocacy Action Tips – Things to do to work for child care in Ontario.

One of the most important things in advocacy work is personal conversations. It can be a simple and effective way of making connections with people, and making people aware of important issues.

1. Have conversations with people about how important child care is.

Conversation starters can be as simple as: “Why is child care important?”; “Why does affordable child care matter to families?”; “Why do child care staff deserve decent wages?”

In your discussions, encourage others to get involved and write letters and emails to their representatives. Lots of people do not know who represents them. Use www.waitingforchildcare.ca and put in your postal code and email your representative right away.

2. We have .pdfs of our stickers and posters on our website. You can download them and print them out yourself. Available in French and English.



Print square stickers on Labels Avery Standard # 3113 and rectangular stickers onto labels Avery Standard # 3612

3. Get the word out.

- Do a class talk in your classes. Talk to your professor about taking 5 minutes of class time to raise these issues. Use the Read This! questions and answers to inform other students, and increase the awareness.
- Set up an information table at ECE events or at other school events. You'll attract ECE students and other students as well – especially students who are parents.
- Encourage students to send a message to their MPP about their thoughts and opinions on child care.
- Encourage students to sign up for the OCBC free quarterly advocacy update via our website - www.childcareontario.org so that they can remain informed about child care policy in Ontario.



I'm Advocating for Child Care

What can I do if I only have...?

5 Minutes or less

- Have Facebook? Write a status about why child care matters to you and your community along with a link to campaign information
- Have Twitter? Tweet about the child care, your local child care and why your community needs it!
 - Can't think of anything specific? Simply say:
I care about early learning and child care in Ontario. Do you? #onchild #onpoli
- Read up on child care funding. Being informed yourself is the first step to being an advocate for your community!

10 Minutes

- Download the OCBCC pamphlets and fact sheets & make them available to parents and neighbours
- Talk about child care issues with peers, friends & family. This doesn't need to be formal; lack of funding is an issue that affects us all and we should all be talking about it.
- Call or e-mail your local MPP and tell them why Ontario Can't Work Without Child Care *

30 Minutes or more

- Write an e-mail to colleagues, friends, family and neighbours about the campaign and how they can get involved. Explain why child care is important to you, your family, and your community and the risks facing the child care sector if funding isn't guaranteed. *
- Write a letter to the editor or a small piece for your local newspaper *
- Hand out materials to parents as they drop-off or pick-up their kids at a local centre (is there one on campus?)
- Write an update about child care funding in your school/community/program newsletter.

* **Advocacy tip!** You only really need to write one letter. Once you have that it can easily be changed to be used for a letter to the editor, to your MPP, and a more informal e-mail to colleagues, friends, and your community as well as into a piece for your newsletter.

Resources

Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care - www.childcareontario.org

News about child care in Ontario

Send a message to your MPP and the Minister of Education

Locate your MPP – <http://www.ontla.on.ca/web/home.do>

“Like” the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care on **Facebook** to receive up-to-date information on child care in Ontario. Follow us on Twitter **@ChildCareOn**

Check out Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care’s Newest Quarterly Newsletter with up to date news, links, and upcoming events.

<http://www.childcareontario.org/newsletters>

Tip :

Get your Faculty involved – they can support you! Meet with your school Faculty and find out if they can help you organize and advocate for high-quality accessible and affordable child care.

- Can they book you spaces in which to hold meetings?
- Can they help by making photocopies or printing stickers and posters?
- Can they help you with outreach, making presentations to classes, organize information events or support with info tables?

Thank you for working to secure the future of child care!