

Executive Coordinator's Update

Rachel Lafferty

The AECEO has had a busy winter. In February we submitted our **Pre-Budget Submission** with recommendations that the Ontario government commit to continuing the \$2/hour Wage Enhancement Grant while developing, implementing, and funding a Professional Wage Scale with a \$25/hour starting wage for all RECEs in Ontario. To read the full submission, see page 16.

Our **Professional Pay and Decent Work Campaign** is continuing to mobilize ECEs across the province. Our five Decent Work Communities of Practice are advocating in their local areas. Their most recent activities included obtaining hard copy and online signatures for the **Wage Enhancement Grant petition** (in coordination with the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care), which was presented sixteen times in the Provincial Legislature with over 14,000 signatures. In collaboration with the OCBCC, we also hosted online MPP meeting and email/letter writing training webinars, kept teams up-to-date with government announcements in the ECE sector, and planned actions for the **2019 Ontario Budget on April 11th**, including a Budget Watch.

As a result of our advocacy, we were very pleased that the **\$2/hour Wage Enhancement Grant will continue** to supplement 39,000 RECEs across the province for another year. However, we are cognizant that this is a temporary measure that does not solve the persisting issue of low wages across the sector. We are continuing our efforts towards establishing a Professional Wage Scale that starts at \$25/hour, in keeping with other professions with similar credential and skill requirements.

We also participated in the Ontario government's **Education Consultations regarding the FDK two educator model and class sizes**. The AECEO is pleased that the government has confirmed there will be no class size changes in FDK at this time, although our concerns remain regarding the future of the FDK program beyond the 2019-2020 school year, class sizes in grades 4 and up, before-and-after school programs, and other changes to the education system announced in the government's Education that Works for You plan: www.ontario.ca/page/education-works. To read the AECEO's full consultation submission, see page 9.

In response to feedback regarding our **Provincial FDK Summit**, the Summit will be moved to the fall. This event will bring together RECEs, OCTs, staff, administrators, and stakeholders from across the province to share information, network, and innovate. We will post updates on our website and social media regarding this exciting event - so be sure to stay tuned!

We are deeply concerned by the child care regulation changes contained in the government's omnibus bill, **Bill 66, Restoring Ontario's Competiveness Act, 2019**, and submitted our response to the Standing Committee on General Government on March 18th. Thank you to our President, Brooke Richardson, who attended the hearings and presented our response to the Committee. To read the full submission, see page 13.

Over the winter we bid a fond farewell to Sonia Tavares, our Community Organizing and Communications Coordinator. Sonia has moved on to work for the Region of Peel as an Advisor for Early Learning and Child Care Services. We, and our Decent Work CoPs, miss her positive spirit and fantastic community organizing skills - and wish her all the best in her new position.

Save the date! We will be in **Sudbury on May 3 & 4** and in **London on June 1 & 2** facilitating **Building Skills for Change in Early Years and Child Care workshops** in partnership with the **Institute for Change Leaders** in cooperation with Olivia Chow. Registration information is on our website - don't miss it!

We are stronger together - don't forget to pledge your support for Professional Pay and Decent Work by signing our online Pledge and asking your employer to sign our Decent Work Charter: www.aeceo.ca/ontario_early_childhood_sector_decent_work_charter. **Remember to renew your AECEO membership, and stay connected with us on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.**

In solidarity,
Rachel Lafferty, RECE, OCT, BSc, BEd, MEd