



Minister Stephen Lecce
Ministry of Education
5th Floor
438 University Ave.
Toronto, ON
M5G 2K8

January 24, 2020

Dear Minister Lecce,

[The Association of Early Childhood Educators Ontario](#) (AECEO) is writing to you on behalf of our members and the early childhood sector to express our deep concern with public comments you made in the media on January 20, 2020. As the professional association for early childhood educators in Ontario, we support ECEs in their professional practice and advocate for decent work (including professional recognition) for early childhood professionals. Well-educated, well-paid early childhood educators are fundamental to high quality early years programs that support children and families. Our members work throughout Ontario in programs for young children and their families, including as Designated Early Childhood Educators (DECEs) in the Full-Day Kindergarten Program.

During an interview with [Melanie Ng for BT on January 20, 2020](#), you referred to the Kindergarten Program teaching partnership as having “[one EA and one Teacher](#)”. It is our assumption that in using the acronym EA you were referring to Educational Assistants. While EAs are incredibly valuable to our education system, it is early childhood educators (ECEs, RECEs) who work as DECEs alongside OCTs in full-day kindergarten programs.

To practice as an early childhood educator in Ontario, one must be registered with the regulatory body, the College of Early Childhood Educators. The title "Early Childhood Educator" and/or "Registered Early Childhood Educator" alongside the professional designations ECE and RECE and their French equivalents are protected, and may only be used by registered members of the College of Early Childhood Educators. As regulated professionals, early childhood educators bring distinct education, pedagogical knowledge and competencies, as well as their commitment to upholding the [Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice for Early Childhood Educators in Ontario](#) (2017), to the Kindergarten teaching partnership. An extensive body of empirical evidence documents the benefits of the [two-educator \(ECE and OCT\)](#), play-based, full-day Kindergarten curriculum model for children's learning. The unique and complementary training of RECEs and OCTs working in partnership lends itself to rich caring and learning opportunities for children at a critical point in their lives.

ECEs in Ontario are essential to the well-being of Ontario's children. They are a key source of trust and confidence for families, as they are assured their children are in caring learning environments with regulated professionals. Your statement, in which you failed to appropriately identify ECEs in their important and legislated role in the Kindergarten teaching partnership, is detrimental to the profession and has been hurtful to practicing DECEs. In your neglect, you make the ethically and socially important work of ECEs and their contributions to children, families, and their teaching



partners invisible. This dedicated, predominantly female workforce expresses that their work is often undervalued and unappreciated, which is then confirmed by the deep disparity in remuneration and working conditions they experience in the school system.

Early childhood educators deserve better. They deserve respect and recognition. Specifically, they deserve this from the Minister of Education. Your words matter. ECEs who work tirelessly alongside OCTs to create meaningful, engaging early learning environments which inspire confidence and trust from children and families feel let down by your actions. Early childhood educators deserve an apology, one which explicitly affirms your (and your government's) recognition for the work that they do.

On behalf of our members, staff and Board of Directors,

Dr. Brooke Richardson, President, Association of Early Childhood Educators Ontario