



aeceo

Association of Early Childhood Educators Ontario

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December 22, 2020

Minister Stephen Lecce
Ministry of Education
5th Flr. 438 University Ave.
Toronto, ON M7A 2A5

Honourable Minister Lecce,

We are writing today to share the voices of Early Childhood Educators and early years staff across Ontario who are frustrated, once again, by the lack of respect and recognition for their work, and care and consideration for their wellbeing, as demonstrated in yesterday's lockdown announcement. Early childhood education and care programs have been an integral part of Ontario's COVID response throughout the pandemic, and for their important efforts and contributions to be missing from another announcement is unacceptable.

ECEs and early years staff have been on the front-lines, implementing new health and safety protocols, that while necessary and important, have increased their workload and challenged them to be innovative in their pedagogical and caring practices. They have risen to every challenge and ensured that children in their programs are receiving the care and learning experiences they deserve. They have been professional in their response to changing protocols and conflicting communication, they have built confidence in families, and they have done this while being concerned about the health and wellbeing of children, their communities, themselves, and their own families.

ECEs and early years staff were clear about what they needed to feel safe, supported, and cared for in the workplace. They asked for increased paid sick and emergency leave days, respect and recognition, funding to support additional planning and pedagogical time, and pandemic pay to reflect both the increased workload and uncertainty they face. They deserve that, and more.

Many ECEs and early years staff are concerned with the decision to keep child care open during the lockdown period, especially in areas where community cases are higher. They face difficult challenges over the next few weeks; uncertainty about their income, negotiating the needs of their own children and elderly family members, fears about their own health and the health of their families, yet they will be there to ensure that children are cared for and families and communities are supported. To add to their concerns, there has been no clear rationale provided to them which supports the decisions made by the Province. ECEs and early years staff are on the front-lines, ensuring child care is as safe as possible during this time, implementing and working within the changes made at the Provincial level, and they are deserving of respectful acknowledgement the work they are doing, action to address their areas of concern, and transparent communication on decisions that impact them.

While the early childhood education and care sector has been referred to as essential throughout the pandemic – many across Ontario feel, instead, that they are being treated as if they are expendable. We know that ECEs and early years staff are essential – they were before COVID and will be after. They deserve decent work and professional pay that acknowledges the important work they do caring for and educating young children and supporting families and communities. We urge you to listen to their voices and take action to address their concerns. We know their work is integral to Ontario’s COVID response, and thus far they have responded to your every call. It is time to respond to theirs.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Alana Powell".

Alana Powell RECE
Executive Coordinator