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Advocates Launch Child Care Election Campaign: *Universal Child Care IS Possible*

Toronto, ON Parents, children, educators and advocates have gathered to launch our province-wide campaign to show that *Universal Child Care IS Possible*. Our campaign aims to urge people to get ready to vote by informing themselves about the key child care issues, checking the voters' list and making a choice on June 7th.

In Ontario we have never been closer to an affordable system of publicly funded child care – a system in which every family would have access to high quality child care regardless of the age of the child, their location or their income.

We are parents and grandparents, early childhood educators, child care staff and social justice advocates across the province. From experience and from research, we know that affordable, accessible, high quality child care is good for children and for society. It also produces valuable benefits to the economy. With our local partners across the province, including Thunder Bay, Waterloo, Ottawa, Halton, Peterborough and the Greater Toronto Area, we want to make sure that child care stays on the agenda during the election and in any new government that assumes leadership.

Universal child care IS Possible; but to get there, we need to think big.

These are our 3 Big Ideas for building a universal child care system that works for everyone:

First, make child care affordable for every family. Provide public funding to child care programs similar to the way funds support recreation programs and libraries. Then set low fees or no fees for parents. Together these changes make universal child care possible.

Second, make sure that early childhood educators, who are the key to high quality programs for our children, have decent work and professional pay. Retain qualified educators by developing a wage scale that ensures working conditions that respect their skills and education. Funding child care programs that offer fair wages will ensure that programs for our children are high quality and stable.

Third, make sure that the expansion of child care happens only in the public or not-for-profit sectors. Every dollar of public funds must directly support our children. Well-resourced public and not-for-profit child care programs will offer families high quality, stability and accountability.

“Ontario is poised to take a giant leap towards a universally accessible, publicly managed system of early learning and child care. We want all of the political parties to embrace our 3 big ideas that make universal child care possible so that Ontario families now and in the future can budget to pay low or no child care fees because there will be additional and more secure, predictable funding for child care programs,” said Laurel Rothman, Interim Coordinator at the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care (OCBCC).

“Early Childhood Educators are knowledgeable professionals who care for and educate our children. They need to make a fair wage and it shouldn't come on the backs of parents,” commented Lyndsay Macdonald, Coordinator at the Association of Early Childhood Educators Ontario (AECEO).

The Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care is Ontario's central advocacy group for a universal, affordable, high quality system of early childhood education and care. Formed in 1981, the OCBCC is a member organization comprised of non-profit child care programs, local and provincial groups and individuals from across Ontario. Our members are parents, early childhood educators, trade unionists, women's advocates and social activists. Most importantly-- we are people who care about child care.

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