



REOPENING TO RECOVERY:
A CHILD CARE PLAN FOR
ONTARIO

CAMPAIGN TOOLKIT

JUNE 2020

From Reopening to Recovery Campaign Toolkit

Advocates' resources

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Documents to share with MPPs

1. Photo sign: Child Care Champion
2. Who is your MPP - <https://www.ola.org/en/members/current>
3. One-page summary document geared towards MPPs [One-page summary - From reopening to recovery](#)
4. Report- [From reopening to recovery - a plan](#)

Introduction

Due to the COVID - 19 pandemic this toolkit has been adjusted to support lobbying local MPPs regarding urgent concerns related to child care during this time.

Since the election of the Ford government in June 2018, child care advocates have campaigned hard to protect the funding and policy gains that we worked for years to secure for children, families and educators. Over the past year we have faced setbacks, but we have also had hard-won victories.

- In 2019 our MPP meetings and petition campaign with over 15,000 signatures helped secure the continuation of the \$2 per hour wage enhancement for over 30,000 ECEs and child care workers.
- Following the provincial budget, child care was facing over \$80 million in funding cuts. Our members and allies sent thousands of messages to their MPPs, collected petitions, took part in a day of action and banded together with municipal leaders to push back against the cuts. After a two-month campaign, the 2019 cuts were cancelled and cuts were put on hold for a year.



These victories show just how effective our coalition can be when we work together on a common goal. We have momentum, but our work is far from over! *It's time to double down on campaigning!*

In response to the COVID - 19 pandemic child care centres across Ontario have been closed. However, recent developments have indicated that the Ford government intends to reopen child care programs in phase 2 of the reopening plan. The Ford Government has not provided the necessary support in order to ensure that the safety and well-being of children, families, RECEs, and early years staff is upheld. The early years and child care sector is unheard, unrecognized, underfunded and, therefore, unprepared. This tool kit will provide you with the resources that you need to take the lead in your community regarding these urgent issues.

Our campaign is not about having a one-off meeting with an MPP, but rather becoming the MPP's link to the child care community, a resource person that they can come to when they have questions, and a trusted local constituent who can bring important issues facing our sector as a result of the COVID - 19 pandemic to the MPP's attention. We also suggest community engagement strategies to begin to change the conversation about early learning and child care and to make it an important local issue.

Why Meet with your MPP?

Meeting with MPPs is one of the most effective advocacy tactics available, particularly if your meeting is part of a wider grassroots campaign, like ours, taking place across the province.

Politicians and their staff assume that for every person they meet with on an issue, there are dozens of others in the community who share these concerns.

By meeting with your MPP, you put a human face onto the issue of early learning and child care. This can change the politician's perception of the issue from being about spaces, grants and regulations to being about the challenges that families, educators and programs in their local community are facing during this difficult time.

MPPs in different regions often compare notes about constituency meetings to help them identify when there is widespread support or opposition across the province on different issues.

If you ask an MPP a question that they don't have the answer to, they'll often ask the central party staff to research and prepare an answer. This makes them aware of the issue that you are raising.

Meeting with MPPs gives you a chance to listen to the MPP's position and concerns, which can help us adapt our strategy to take these into consideration.

No matter what party your MPP represents, it is worth having a meeting with them. We need to build all-party support for an early learning and child care system that meets the needs of all parties involved in the sector.



How to Secure a Meeting

- If you are unsure about who your MPP is visit <https://www.ola.org/en/members/current>
- Email the MPP's constituency office to set up a virtual or telephone meeting with your MPP. If you don't receive a response within a week, follow up with a phone call.
- In your email or phone message, be sure to mention that you are a local constituent. If you are part of a local child care program, mention this too, as well as if other parents and educators might be joining you.
- Try to be flexible in the times that you can meet, as MPP's often have only a few constituency days available. However, be sure to emphasise the urgency of the issues you would like to discuss given the current circumstances.
- If the MPP is unavailable for a meeting, request a meeting with a member of their staff. Staff often have more time to meet, can answer many questions and can raise your concerns with the MPP. If you still would like to meet with your MPP ask the staff if a follow-up meeting is possible.



Our objectives, what we're asking for and why

Our objectives

- We want them to know that *you* are a knowledgeable local contact on child care issues and a link to the local child care community.
- We need all MPPs to hear that the Ontario government must maintain support for Ontario's licensed child care system and decent wages for educators as essential workers during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- We want to leave MPPs thinking hard about the current situation for families and educators in their local riding and communities – we're counting on them to endorse the OCBCC and AECEO plan for a safe reopening of child care in Ontario which includes adequate funding and support for educators and programs, as well as a strengthened child care system at the core of economic and social recovery. Details of this plan are outlined in our *Report From Reopening to Recovery*.



What we are asking of MPPs

- Ask them to meet or exceed current best practices in Emergency Child Care for reopening:
 - Greatly reduce groups sizes
 - Enhance staff to child ratios
 - Provide full base funding for child care programs
- Ask them to address staff and educator concerns:
 - Paid time for staff to return to work and prepare programs
 - Sector-specific training on public health guidelines
 - Increased paid sick/emergency leave days for all RECEs and early years staff for a minimum of 21 days
 - Immediate extension of pandemic pay to all program staff
 - Funding to ensure \$25 minimum wage for all RECEs
- Get a personal commitment from the MPP to be a Child Care Champion:
 - to learn more about local child care needs and programs,
 - discuss the issue with caucus colleagues, and
 - find opportunities to support stable investment in child care for Ontario.

- Ask all MPPs to take a selfie with our Child Care Champion sign. Also ask all MPPs if they would be willing to post the picture on their social media account and tag the AECEO and the OCBCC.

Why now?

- The COVID-19 pandemic has had serious traumatic effects on children and in order to support their recovery child care must be treated as a priority and an effective well-informed reopening plan must be put in place.
- RECEs and child care staff are not being recognized as essential workers as the government has not extended the \$4/hour pandemic pay to emergency childcare staff. Also, the Province's "Child Care Sustainability Funding Approach" does not allow for provincial funds to be used to pay RECEs and child care staff who have continued to work from home supporting families throughout the COVID-19 pandemic or top up laid off child care staff.
- The Ford government has set weak policy and guidelines regarding the health and safety recommendations for all child care workers. Many staff fear returning to work as they have concerns about the health and safety of everyone involved.



Overcoming our fears

Sometimes we worry that a politician will know more than we do. But when it comes to child care, your personal or professional experience means that you have likely thought far more about child care issues than most elected decision-makers have. We need you to share your stories, experiences and knowledge about how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected you as a child care worker, parent or community member so that our elected leaders know how important this issue is to people in their communities.

Sometimes we fear that we are not articulate enough or that we'll freeze. But most people find that when they feel passionate about an issue it's surprisingly easy to talk about it once they get started.

We fear we won't be able to answer politicians' questions. That's okay. You're allowed to be unsure about some things. Just be honest and tell them that you'll get back to them, and then be sure to follow up.

They'll appreciate your honesty, and sometimes information that comes after a meeting is easier to digest. This also gives you another opportunity for contact with the MPP's office.



MPP Meeting Checklist

Before the meeting:

- ☐ Review the materials in this kit along with OCBCC and AECEO report *From Recovery to Reopening* to get a clear understanding of the issues and what we are asking for. If you are able, you can add notes about the specific situation in your community related to the COVID-19 pandemic. What is your stance on child care reopening in Phase 2 of the Ford government reopening plan? Do you believe that the Ford government is equipped to support the reopening of child care programs? What do you need to support child care workers during the COVID-19 pandemic?
- ☐ Know how long your meeting is.
- ☐ Decide who will say what in your team and how you'll stay within the allotted time. Decide who will take some short notes.
- ☐ Have the necessary documents ready to email to the MPP: *Child Care Champion photo sign*, and the one-page summary document geared towards MPPs *From Reopening to Recovery: A Child Care Plan for Ontario*.
- ☐ Ask the MPP which program they prefer for virtual meetings and if they will set up the meeting or if they would like you to set it up.
- ☐ Ensure that all of your technological devices are functioning properly and fully charged. Plan to be ready for the virtual or phone meeting 10 or 15 minutes early.

During the meeting:

- ☐ Right at the start, introduce yourself and confirm how long you have.
- ☐ Take the lead. You asked for the meeting, so you can lead the conversation.
- ☐ Listen well but don't let the MPP talk so much that you don't get a chance.
- ☐ Treat all questions calmly and seriously. You can learn a lot from the questions they ask.
- ☐ If you are asked a question you do not know the answer to, do not make up a response on the spot. Tell the politician you will get back to them via email or phone call with an answer.
- ☐ For the note taker: notes do not have to be exhaustive, but note if the MPP commits to something or refuses to commit to something.
- ☐ Ask if the MPP will take a photo. They can hold up the Child Care Champion sign if they agree.
- ☐ Do not prolong the meeting beyond the allotted time unless the politician indicates that they want the discussion to continue.

After the meeting:

- ☐ Debrief with your team right after the meeting.
- ☐ Send any notes and photos as soon as possible to carolyn@childcareontario.org . Let us know if we can share the photos on social media.
- ☐ Flag any questions from the politician that you could not answer and information that was requested.
- ☐ Flag any commitments that were made to you by the politician.
- ☐ *Don't let the contact end after one meeting.* Send the MPP a thank you letter or email, offer to introduce them to others in the local child care community.

Speaking notes to guide your MPP meeting

1. Introduction

- Introduce yourselves: say what you do and where you are from. Be sure to point out if you are the MPP's local constituents.
- Thank the politician for meeting with you today. Confirm how long you have for the meeting.
- Say that you are here as part of a *broad coalition* of parents, educators and organizations concerned about child care in Ontario regarding the policy and practices during the reopening process.
- Indicate what you want to get out of the meeting: To share your perspective on child care in Ontario during the COVID - 19 pandemic and to ask for their *personal* commitment to be a child care champion by learning more about the issue, and supporting continued, stable funding to licensed child care.
- If possible, one person in your group should share a short, personal story about their experience, which explains the child care challenges in Ontario as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Keep it brief but powerful, under 3 minutes.

2. Funding and support - The government must provide adequate funding and support for child care workers and programs in order to ensure the safe and effective reopening of Ontario childcare.

- We estimate that this approach will mean tripling the child care budget. We need the federal and provincial government to work together to ensure that the necessary funding and policy is in place.
- Explain that full base funding is needed for all existing child care programs to cover the costs needed to maintain emergency child care as well as effectively reopen child care Ontario.
- Explain the need for more legislation surrounding the allocation and spending of federal funds in order to ensure that funding is spent effectively.

3. Health and safety regulations- The government must create concrete regulations that are clear in regard to the health and safety guidelines that child care workers should follow upon reopening of child care in Ontario

- The current health and safety guidelines are a huge concern for child care workers returning to work. Explain the need for clear regulations as well as the importance of creating these regulations in consultation with experts in the field.
- There has been no discussion in regard to specific health and safety training by local public health authorities. Explain the importance of child care workers feeling confident in their ability to use Personal Protective Equipment, conduct screenings, and maintain health and safety procedures for staff, families, boards, and operators.

4. What the Ontario government/ their party can do

If the MPP is Conservative:

- Child care is a major issue for the people in your riding, a local issue that you must address.
- We both know that child care is a good investment. A strong reopening plan will revive the Canadian economy and support social recovery during, and after, the of COVID - 19 pandemic.
- Child care isn't a partisan issue. Ontario cannot work without it, and providing safe, high quality child care in a decent work environment is essential.
- A full base-funded model has been put in place to operate emergency child care programs in Ontario. This funding model must be expanded to child care programs across the province during the reopening phase in order to support families facing economic constraints.
- The COVID-19 pandemic has had serious impacts on the economy and is disproportionately impacting women and feminized community members. In order to achieve economic recovery support for women's employment must be a focus.

If the MPP is NDP:

- Thank you for the NDP's continued support of child care, especially understanding the need to support public and non-profit child care. Thank you for your strong support in the legislature. We need the NDP to continue to make child care a defining issue.
- As the Official Opposition, please continue to use every tool available to protect child care services that families rely on, wage support for educators and continue to put forward a vision of universal child care.
- The government's "Child Care Sustainability Funding Approach" prohibits provincial funds from being used to pay RECEs and childcare staff while programs are closed even though many are working virtually, and also restricts the use of this funding to top up the laid off child care staff.
- The government is planning on reopening child care in Ontario in phase 2. We are concerned that there are no clear COVID-19 specific guidelines or regulations in place to govern the safe reopening of child care.
- We want to create a unified front with local advocates, municipal leaders and the Opposition to explain the importance of investing in child care centres during the reopening and recovering period. Can we work together on this?

If the MPP is Liberal:

- The previous Liberal government's investments in child care were game changing. You were making Ontario a leader on child care. Please continue to make child care a defining issue.
- Childcare in Canada is an impactful sector that acts as a base support to many. Child care worker's engagement and relationships with children, families, and communities is essential during the transition through reopening and recovery. Therefore, it is necessary that ECEs and child care workers are provided with decent work, safe environments, and professional pay.
- RECEs and child care workers were underpaid prior to the COVID-19 pandemic and it is imperative that the government addresses unfair wages in order to ensure a successful reopening of child care.
- It is essential that an immediate extension of pandemic pay to all program staff is put in place as well as funding to ensure a \$25 minimum wage for all RECEs.

- We want to create a unified front with local advocates, municipal leaders and the Opposition to explain the importance of investing in child care during the reopening and recovery period. Can we work together on this?

5. Closing/commitment

- Ask the MPP if they will commit to the asks and recommendations in the OCBCC and AECEO report protecting child care and advocating for stable funding and further investment during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Remind them that you are part of a broad coalition looking for “child care champions.” Ask if they will have their photo taken with the frame/sign indicating that they are a #ChildCareChampion.
- Thank them for meeting with you, email the “Needed: Child Care Champions at Queen’s Park”, *Report From Reopening to Recovery: A plan for child care reopening in Ontario and moving to a publicly funded system* document and your contact information
- Offer to help put the MPP in touch with other members of the child care community, or assist them with holding a virtual local town hall meeting or roundtable on the current issues related to the COVID-19 pandemic and child care in Ontario.



MPP Meeting Report Back Form

MPP's Name: _____

MPP's Constituency: _____

MPP's Party: _____

Names of child care advocates who attended the meeting:

Did the politician allow you to take a #ChildCareChampion photo?

YES NO

(If yes, please send the photo electronically to carolyn@childcareontario.org and also post it on your social media accounts using the hashtag # ChildCareChampion and the mentioning the handle @ChildCareON. Be sure to also tag the politician).

Did the politician commit to the asks and recommendations in the OCBCC and AECEO report?

YES NO

Did the politician commit to protecting child care and advocating for stable funding and further investment during the COVID - 19 pandemic?

YES NO

Did the politician make any other commitments? If Yes, what were they?

Did the politician ask any questions that you need to respond to? If Yes, what were they?

Other issues or notable discussions:

Who will be responsible for following up with the politician?

What needs to be included in your follow up email/phone call? (always include a thank you!)

☐ A request for information the politician promised you

☐ Answer(s) to questions the politician asked you

☐ Request for another meeting or event

☐ Other: _____

FROM REOPENING TO RECOVERY: A CHILD CARE PLAN FOR ONTARIO

Child care programs across Ontario have been temporarily closed in response to Covid-19. To achieve a safe reopening, we need a new plan for child care, with adequate funding and support. With this plan, a strengthened child care system could form the core of economic and social recovery.

THE CHALLENGE

- **Health and safety:** We need robust health and safety protections to keep children, families and educators safe, and reassure them about reopening. Evidence suggests that to reopen safely we must greatly reduce the number of children per group and have fewer children per staff.
- **Financial viability:** Before the pandemic, the child care market relied on high parent fees and full enrolment to ensure that centres could stay afloat. Since we will need to reduce group sizes and many families are struggling financially, we cannot rely upon this model any longer.

THE SOLUTION

- **Expand Ontario's current Emergency Child Care (ECC) programs.** ECC programs have been operating successfully in communities across Ontario, serving a higher risk population of health and essential service worker families. Reopening by expanding this model will inspire the confidence of parents and educators, and keep children as safe as possible. Best practices from these programs include:
 - **Enhanced staff to child ratios and smaller group sizes.** For example, two staff to a group of six children. Keep groups of staff and children separate from other groups.
 - **Base funding and no parent fees.** ECC programs are fully base funded by the provincial government, including increased funding for enhanced staffing levels, PPE, etc.
 - **Licensing and public health** approve the reopening plan of each program prior to reopening, including the use of physical space, staffing, and decent work conditions.
 - **Slow and staged reopening** including provincial guidelines on eligibility of families.

Funding the system

- Based on the current cost of Emergency Child Care, we estimate that this approach will mean tripling the current child care budget – an increase of \$2 Billion. The Federal and provincial governments must work together to ensure that the necessary funding and policy is in place.
- With this plan, Ontario will gain a real child care system that will support: parents in the workforce; children's learning and development; and decent work for educators.
- It will be a system that is prepared and nimble to control outbreaks, respond to a second wave of Covid-19, and grow to meet demand as we move forward to economic and social recovery.

Our full report *From Reopening to Recovery* lays out 27 detailed recommendations for moving forward. The full report is available at: childcareontario.org/from_reopening_to_recovery_a_plan

ChildCare Champion Before, During & After COVID - 19 Pandemic

#ChildCareChampion

Child Care Workers Are Essential Workers

#Essentialworkers

