

ONTARIO COALITION FOR BETTER CHILD CARE

ONTARIO PRE-BUDGET BRIEF, OCTOBER 2020

WHO WE ARE

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 OCBC is a member organization comprising non-profit child care centres, local and provincial groups and individuals from all across Ontario. Our members are early childhood educators and parents, centre directors, trade unionists and social activists.

IMMEDIATELY

Reverse all planned cuts to child care and increase operating funding to address the additional costs facing the child care sector due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

- Child care is facing at least \$48 million in annual provincial funding cuts starting in 2020. These cuts were ill-conceived last year, but in the face of a pandemic they must be reversed immediately.
- Invest \$500 million in emergency funding to stabilize the child care sector. Increased costs to meet new health and safety standards, combined with temporarily low enrolment due to the pandemic means that many child care centres are in a very precarious financial position. Operating funding must be increased to ensure child care centres do not close.

TRANSITION TO A PUBLICLY FUNDED CHILD CARE SYSTEM TO ENSURE A SAFE REOPENING AND RECOVERY

Child care is essential to our economic and social recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic. The federal government's September *Throne Speech* acknowledged this and set out a vision for national child care system. Ontario cannot let this opportunity pass. We must set out a long-term strategy to collaborate with the federal government on a publicly funded child care system. But we cannot rely upon federal funding alone; we must increase provincial funding to child care to ensure affordable fees for parents, decent pay for educators and enough spaces for all who need them.

To fully address the needs of Ontario's children and families, to respect the work of educators and to reap significant social and economic benefits, Ontario should implement a truly universal system of affordable early learning and child care. This transition should take action on 3 ideas simultaneously:

1. **Affordable Fees:** Allocate \$635.5 million to begin transition to operational funding in child care centres to support low fees or no fees.
2. **Decent Work:** Continue the \$2 per hour Wage Enhancement Grant for ECEs and child care staff, while working towards implementing a provincial wage scale, as promised in *Growing Together, Ontario's Early Years and Child Care Workforce Strategy*. This should include committing \$375 million as a first step to establishing a province-wide wage scale for early childhood educators and child care staff.
3. **Expand public and non-profit spaces:** Ensure that capital funding goes only to non-profit and public child care sectors, to ensure efficient use of public funds and public accountability.

For further details on these proposals please read our full report "From Reopening to Recovery: A Child Care Plan for Ontario" at: https://www.childcareontario.org/from_reopening_to_recovery_a_plan