



## OCBCC SPRING UPDATE:

- Supporting Ontario's Childcare Sector
- 2021 Federal and Provincial Budget
- Health Benefits Plan Updates
- Three Big Ideas for Childcare

## Supporting Ontario's Child Care Sector

Over the past year, Ontario's childcare community has faced an extraordinary challenge brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic.

While the last 12 months have been hard, childcare operators, early childhood educators, and childcare staff have risen to the challenge: supporting children and families, communities, and each other through a global pandemic.

Through all this, the OCBCC has helped Ontario's early learning and child care sector withstand the impacts that COVID-19 has had on our community and to amplify your voices to the decision-makers.

Here are some ways we have helped the childcare community this year:

- In the early days of the pandemic, we called for the swift closure of licensed childcare programs along with schools and funding to support programs during closure;

- We pushed for funding to open free emergency child care programs for essential service workers.
- We called for significantly reduced cohort sizes upon reopening along with funding to make up lost revenue and increased staffing.
- Along with child care advocates across Canada, we advocated for earmarked funds for child care in the federal Safe Restart Agreement, securing \$625 million in funding to help sustain the sector.
- We understood that our member's financial priorities may have shifted during the pandemic, and we needed to be responsive to our members' needs, so we offered fee deferrals for 2020 for our members who wanted to continue to be part of the vital advocacy we were engaged in but could not pay their membership dues due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- We successfully advocated for ECEs and child care workers to be prioritized for vaccination in Phase 2 of Ontario's vaccine roll-out.
- We called for ECEs and child care workers who are working as cleaners, screeners, or runners to continue to receive the \$2 per hour Wage Enhancement, although they are not technically "in ratio."



Of course, there is still much to do.

- We continue to push for more sector-specific funding and pandemic pay to support programs and staff.
- We continue to campaign for regulations that respect the work of ECEs and staff in creating quality programs.
- We have joined decent work and health advocates to push for paid sick days for all.
- We are calling for vaccination to be made as convenient as possible for ECEs and child care workers, including mobile vaccination clinics at schools and child care centres and/or paid time to attend vaccination appointments.

And as always, we continue to call for real action from the federal and provincial governments to create a universal child care system with adequate public funding to ensure affordable fees for parents, decent work and pay for educators, and enough spaces for all.

The pandemic has shown everyone how essential child care is. Child care has never been more vitally important, and together we can begin to build a brighter future – that’s what our coalition is all about.

## Looking ahead to the 2021 Federal and Provincial Budgets

In February, our Policy Coordinator presented to the Ministry of Finance how Ontario should invest in child care in the 2021 provincial budget. Our pre-budget submission called on the Ontario government to:

- Immediately reverse \$49 million in planned cuts to child care.
- Increase general operating funding by \$500 million to stabilize the sector.
- Partner with the federal government to transition to a publicly funded child care system.

The federal government’s Fall Economic Statement is committed to a national child care system, and we are anticipating a serious financial commitment from in the upcoming Federal Budget. Ontario should seize this opportunity and pursue a long-term strategy to collaborate with the federal government on a publicly funded child care system.

Ontario cannot rely upon federal funding alone. We must increase provincial child care funding to ensure affordable fees, decent work, and enough spaces for all.

The Ontario Budget is set for March 31st, 2021, and the federal budget is likely to happen in April.



## Health Benefits Plan Update

### Renewals

Offering an industry-leading benefits package to members is very important to the OCBCC. It protects your employees, makes it easier for you to attract and retain qualified staff, and helps grow the coalition’s membership base.

As the membership base grows, our ability to advocate strongly and effectively on behalf of our sector grows as well. We are truly stronger together.

We are pleased to report that the April 2021 renewal packages have been distributed. There is a predictability and stability that comes from being a part of a larger group, as well as a broad range of coverages, flexibility, and buying power.

The average increase to the benefits plan was 6.1% - in contrast with an average increase across most carriers of 12% amidst inflationary pressures.

We are pleased to continue to provide substantial value to OCBCC members, and we thank you for your support.

## Virtual Healthcare by Akira

The OCBCB knows you care for your employees. That's why we are proud to offer members GroupHEALTH's Virtual Healthcare (VHC) service, powered by Akira.

Virtual Healthcare, powered by Akira, allows plan members to consult confidentially with an accredited doctor or nurse practitioner by video conference using their phone, tablet, or computer.

The Akira medical team can diagnose medical concerns, write prescriptions, order diagnostic tests, and refer patients to doctors and other specialists.

Akira connects you with primary care providers without the need to use valuable sick days or personal time for doctors' visits.

### Benefits of Akira



#### Secure & confidential

Online consultations use secure technology, with patient confidentiality assured



#### On-demand

Use the Akira app or website to access a medical professional as often as necessary



#### Continuity-of-care

Use the same practitioner for follow-up and subsequent sessions



#### Professional

Akira's medical teams are accredited by professional colleges

## Benefits Plan Sign Up

If your child care centre is interested in being part of our benefits plan, please call one of our New Business team members at 1-855-895-7155 and mention that you are an OCBCB member.

We look forward to welcoming you on board!

## Three Big Ideas to Transform Child Care

All of the OCBCB's campaigns and submissions to the government are driven by our vision of early learning and child care system for all, based on three Big Ideas:

1. Affordable fees for families supported by operational funding for programs,
2. Decent work and professional pay for educators and,
3. Expansion of public and non-profit child care.

Read more about our Three Big Ideas:

[childcareontario.org/build\\_a\\_better\\_future](http://childcareontario.org/build_a_better_future)



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ONTARIO COALITION FOR  
**Better Child Care**