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Advocacy Makes a Difference: Our work together has won big results

The Ontario government cites a number of funding announcements to the child care sector over the past several years. The reality is that these announcements have been short term fixes to prevent a collapse of our child care sector.

Every year parent fees rise, wages for hard working staff are stagnant and high quality child care centres close. In the absence of a plan to create a universal, affordable system of early learning and care in Ontario or *even* the indexation of our funding to account for inflation, we have had to struggle just to stay afloat.

And so, each year, we have worked together to do just that. And we have won significant gains:

Recent highlights:

2007 - Ontario Budget \$25 million

2008 - Ontario Budget \$25 million

2009 - Special Announcement: "Bridge funding" of \$18 million

2010 - Ontario Budget: \$63.5 million added to replace expiring federal funding (without this, the sector would have experienced a devastating cut of \$63.5 million)

2010 - Special Announcement: Funding to mitigate impacts from full-day kindergarten, growing to \$63 million over five years (growing to \$51 million in new fee subsidies and \$12 million in capital)

2012 - Liberal/NDP budget deal adds \$242 million over the next three years in one-time funding

A complete collapse of the child care system was averted by the 2012 budget deal between the Liberal and NDP parties that will see \$242 million in one-time stabilization funding split over the next three years.

However, that funding was only a third of what was needed to stabilize the child care sector. It is not enough money to provide base funding with affordable parent fees and reasonable wages that would allow us to stabilize and grow child care services for families.

From wage subsidies to capital funding in schools, there are many inequities in today's child care system. The new funding formula can't fix those inequities. To fix inequities, we need more funding. For more affordable child care, we need more funding. For fair wages, we need more funding. There will continue to be inequities in child care because otherwise, to take from one centre to give to another, further destabilizes our system.

Where we're headed:

First, the province *must* index funding for child care for inflation just like is done in the health and education sectors so that funding keeps up with increased costs. (For perspective, since 1995 inflation has gone up more than 38%).

Once the sector is stabilized, the Ontario government must work to ensure that child care fees are affordable like in Quebec where child care fees are \$7 a day and Manitoba, where fees are about \$20.00 a day.

Affordable child care will undoubtedly increase demand. Ontario must establish capital funding programs to build new not-for-profit child care centres to expand the system to meet the needs of parents and communities.

Our Plan – Working together

So, as a sector we must acknowledge our recent successes and the power we have when we come together and share the voices of parents who need these services.

But instead of asking for short-term solutions that will merely stabilize our programs, let's start looking at the bigger picture and working together to build a truly high quality, universal, affordable system that meets the needs of our communities and ensures staff are paid a decent wage.

Resources

Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care
www.childcareontario.org (child care news and campaign information)

contact us:

info@childcareontario.org or 1-800-594-7514

New outreach tool – Parent survey on child care options in Ontario

www.childcareontario.org/survey