



Feb.15th, 2022

Dear. Hon. Stephen Lecce,

Thank you for taking the time to meet with the Licenced Child Care Network (LCCN) Advocacy Sub-Committee this past week. At the meeting, you highlighted the importance of growing and providing childcare spaces for families in Ontario. To create these spaces for families, the key is a competent, robust Early Childhood Educator workforce. Childcare spaces cannot exist without quality Early Childhood Educators (ECEs). Quality of care is directly linked to qualified educators.

When starting their Public Childcare program, Quebec made the mistake of growing spaces too fast. This resulted in families remaining on wait lists for months or not finding a quality spot at all. Currently, there are 50,000 families on child care wait lists in Quebec. Children from low-income families are also underrepresented in childcare centres. To prevent what happened in Quebec from occurring in Ontario, spaces need to grow in tandem with the Early Childhood Educator workforce.

ECEs are professionals who belong to the College of Early Childhood Educators. To retain and recruit quality Early Childhood Educators, we recommend implementing a wage grid, not a wage enhancement, for our Educators. There is an inequity between ECEs in childcare who make \$16-18/hr, and ECEs in Full Day Kindergarten who make on average \$25/hr. ECE's are leaving the childcare field after an average of 5 years.

A wage reflective of the required qualifications and professional accountabilities for ECEs in childcare is critical to ensure we retain quality Educators throughout their working career. This will also help to stabilise the number of spaces available to parents. We strongly recommend starting the wage grid at \$25/hr and adding levels based on years of experience, education and role.

Additionally, we need to support the professional learning of Early Childhood Educators in Childcare settings. ECEs create, plan and implement early years appropriate curriculum each day, while also supporting the care and emotional needs of the children. Childcare is a part of Ontario's Education system and needs to be afforded the same paid professional work time to ensure a quality learning and caring environment for all children.

Ontario families deserve a stable, quality, long lasting childcare system that they can depend on for their children. The key to quality and stability is growing the Early Childhood Educator workforce and supporting the sector with a professional wage grid. LCCN invites another meeting to discuss recruitment and retention strategies for ECEs, and why they are critical to Ontario's sustainable, quality Child Care system.

Best Regards,

Licensed Child Care Network's Advocacy Sub-Committee