



## AECEO 2022 Ontario Pre-Budget Submission

To the Standing Committee on Finance and  
Economic Affairs

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*The Association of Early Childhood Educators Ontario is the professional association for registered early childhood educators (RECEs) in Ontario. We advocate for respect, recognition and appropriate wages and working conditions for all RECEs and a high quality, publicly funded early childhood education and child care system.*

Our early learning and child care system was not working before the pandemic, and it is not working now. The current market approach relies on full enrolment, underpaid educators, and high family fees. RECEs and child care workers continue to leave the sector due to increased risk and responsibility without appropriate pay and working conditions, and an ongoing lack of recognition and respect despite the undeniably valuable pedagogical and caring work they do with children and families in our communities. Many programs struggle to remain operational amidst a worsening workforce crisis, and many are closing rooms, or their doors. The COVID-19 pandemic has also thrown families and their finances into disarray. Many families, predominantly women, are being forced to make impossible decisions about balancing work and their children's care needs.

RECEs in the Kindergarten Program are facing increasingly burdensome working conditions both in-person and in virtual teaching. RECEs are managing health and safety protocols with rising class sizes and not enough resources, pivoting to virtual learning, and supporting children's mental health and well-being as many children enter group settings for the first time, all while continuing to provide meaningful pedagogical experiences.

The current context will not improve without intervention. Early childhood education must be an economic and social priority as the province continues to fight the pandemic and work towards

long-term recovery and must be a top priority for the 2022 Budget.

We recommend the Province:

- Immediately sign on to the federal child care plan. If Ontario fails to sign before March 31st we risk losing the first year of funding - over \$1 Billion in federal funds.
- Adopt and implement the child care community's Roadmap to Universal Child Care in Ontario, which sets out our vision and a shared path forward for Ontario child care.

As well, Ontario must commit Provincial funding to the ELCC and education systems and:

- Invest an initial \$375 million to develop and implement a province-wide Wage Grid for RECEs and child care staff/providers. A \$25 minimum wage is required to immediately protect and respect the early childhood workforce and address recruitment and retention issues.
- Immediately reverse the 5% administrative funding cut to child care.
- Increase general operating funding by \$500 million to stabilize the child care sector.
- Reverse cuts to the education budget and allocate funding to lower class sizes, increase wages, ensure paid preparation time and collaborative planning time for the Kindergarten Team, and ensure a healthy and safe work environment.
- Fund 7 permanent paid sick days and additional 14 paid sick days during public health emergencies.

*Ontario must sign to the Federal government's plan to create a national ELCC system.*

*It is past time for Ontario to value and fund care and education.*