



Hon. Stephen Lecce
Minister of Education
438 University Ave, 5th Floor
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Dear Minister Lecce,

We have a New Year's resolution for Ontario: sign a child care and early learning agreement with the Government of Canada.

Because it is good for children, families, and the economy.

It has long been acknowledged that child care is necessary to support parents as they return to work or school. It has been over 50 years since the Royal Commission on the Status of Women reported to Parliament on the need for a publicly funded child care system. For children, the value of a safe, nurturing place to play and learn is clear - and research has demonstrated [time](#) and [again](#) that high-quality, not-for-profit child care is [good for all children](#), but especially our children who are vulnerable.

Ontario families today pay some of the highest fees for child care - in Toronto the median fee is [1,900\\$ per month for an infant](#). Parents struggle to find child care solutions that they can afford, and hope for quality in what they can find.

Looking next door to Quebec, the increase in tax revenue created by increased workforce participation has paid back - and more - the government's investment in Quebec's affordable system. Creating affordable child care also [led to an increase](#) in maternal participation in the paid workforce, and boosted Quebec's economy.

Agreements signed in almost all provinces ... but not Ontario.

Across the country, provinces have signed early learning and child care agreements with the federal government in 2021. Premiers and Ministers of Education of all stripes have signed these agreements: Ontario's Conservative government has no excuse to dither. Each agreement - other than Quebec (which already massively funded the creation of a child care system) - has the same conditions, and Ontario is not a special case, different or exceptional from the other provinces in its underfunding of child care.

The federal dollars must be used to lower parent fees in regulated child care, to expand public and not-for-profit child care spaces, and to establish provincial wage grids for the people working in child care, and improve those wages. Parents, educators and child care advocates all agree - these requirements are important, and necessary to ensure the federal investment isn't wasted or turned into provincial de-funding.

A strong agreement for Ontario

While an agreement is urgently necessary, it must be a strong agreement - good for families, ECEs and child care workers, and children. Provincial child care advocates are [calling for](#) an agreement that prioritizes:



- Affordable fees for families
- Decent work and pay for educators
- Enough quality public and non-profit spaces for all.

A strong agreement will see parent fees reduced, and enough spaces created for all families to be able to access affordable child care. A strong agreement will establish a wage grid for ECEs and child care workers, and will require providers to follow that wage grid, and limit fees to be eligible for funding. A strong agreement will ensure high quality experiences for children - most often found in public and not-for-profit child care.

Child care is essential infrastructure, as the pandemic has clearly shown. For parents affordable, quality child care is as necessary as the bridge, road, subway or bike path to get to work.

Just as we have built a health care system with hospitals and built an education system with schools, we also need to expand and build a childcare system with sufficient infrastructure to meet the needs of all the families.

Ottawa is ready

Municipal governments are anxious to stabilize the child care sector, and the City of Ottawa has called on you to sign on to an early learning and child care agreement with the federal government. The municipal government is moving towards developing a growth strategy - a plan to expand not-for-profit and public child care in a thoughtful way, to end child care deserts, and include child care in new developments. Without an agreement and access to the substantial funding available, growth plans however will come to naught.

I am declaring my support for a system founded on the principles above, and demand the province sign a bilateral agreement based on those principles immediately with the federal government. We must begin building a universal, affordable, and not-for-profit child care system in Ottawa, and across Ontario.

We cannot afford to miss this major opportunity - women, families, and children have waited far too long to see this necessary piece of social infrastructure built.

Yours,

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and



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