

AECEO response to Ontario's Renewed Early Years and Child Care Policy Framework & Five Year Action Plan ^[1]

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Full statement

The AECEO is encouraged by the Ontario government's ambitious plan to transform the early years and child care system so that more children and families can access the services they need. Transformative change is no easy feat for any sector and the strategic plans laid out in the Renewed Framework set Ontario on a path towards universally accessible early years and child care.

For many years the AECEO has called for the government to develop a workforce strategy and we are gratified to see this as a centerpiece of the Renewed Framework. Our submission to the Ministry of Education's consultation process on the Early Years and Child Care was very clear on the pressing need for a workforce strategy, not only to support the planned expansion of 100,000 new spaces, but also to mitigate the serious recruitment and retention difficulties now being experienced in the licensed child care sector. In January 2017 the AECEO established a Task Force of RECE members, experts and researchers to advise government on the development of workforce policies and we are very enthusiastic to work cooperatively with the government of Ontario to advance the early childhood profession. We are pleased by the commitment, as called for in our submission, to continue to fund the wage enhancement grant while workforce policies and funding methods are being developed. We also call for RECEs and other staff who work outside of licensed child care to receive this grant while the government works on a more comprehensive strategy.

The AECEO is also very pleased that the government will support ongoing professional learning for educators by funding two provincial events each year and that educators will be able to apply for release time to be able to attend. This is an excellent opportunity for RECEs and staff in the sector to come together to share pedagogies, strategies and ideas.

The plan to direct fund licensed home child care agencies rather than require child care providers to pay fees will not only enhance quality by bringing more into the licensed system, it will also have a positive effect on compensation for all licensed providers, many of whom are RECEs. Additionally, the opportunity to receive support and professional learning opportunities from an agency is a very valuable component of improved working conditions and decent work.

It is our hope that through this process we can develop a comprehensive workforce strategy to better support RECEs and early years staff no matter where they work in the sector. In addition to developing policy direction on compensation, recruitment and retention, professional learning and education and training it is imperative to explore policy directives that would ensure decent working conditions that support staff to provide high quality programs.

RECEs in Ontario play a valuable and important role in keeping the province moving. We shape future generations and are excited to help shape this groundbreaking transformation of Ontario's early years and child care sector.

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