

Growing together: Ontario's early years and child care workforce strategy 2018 ^[1]

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AVAILABILITY

PDF available online ^[2]

Attachment	Size
 Growing Together- Ontario's Early Years and Child Care Workforce Strategy.pdf ^[3]	2.22 MB

Introduction

To provide the best early childhood education for Ontario's children, we must support the educators who care for them.

When a toddler arrives at her child care centre, one of the first things she sees is an educator's welcoming smile. When a father goes to an EarlyON Child and Family Centre with his infant, he can get expert advice from an educator with specialized knowledge of child development. And when a school-age child leaves her before- and after-school program, she takes with her the new skills and confidence she learned from an educator.

But despite everything educators do to support our children, there continues to be a lack of understanding of the value of their work, and they are often not recognized for their contributions. They also face challenging working conditions, such as low compensation and split shifts, which make it difficult for many to enter into and stay in the sector. Because of these issues, many communities and providers report difficulties in finding enough high-quality educators and registered early childhood educators (RECEs) for their program needs.

That is why Ontario's Renewed Early Years and Child Care Policy Framework (2017) included a commitment to develop an early years and child care workforce strategy to help recruit and retain more educators and RECEs. As an important part of the strategy, the 2018 Budget announced that the government will implement a wage grid for program staff working with children in licensed child care and EarlyON Child and Family Centres beginning in April 2020.

The wage grid will align compensation rates with early childhood educators in full-day kindergarten. The grid will also help reduce the gender wage gap by supporting the predominantly female workforce. These commitments build on the Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014, which sets out the provincial interest in having knowledgeable, self-reflective and qualified professionals in Ontario's early years and child care programs.

Supporting the workforce is an important part of the government's overall vision for the early years and child care, because helping more children access early years and child care programs and services is only possible when there are enough educators to support them and their families. With the government's commitment to help 100,000 more children aged 0 to 4 years access licensed child care, including the commitment to expand access to child care for First Nation families on reserve, and the introduction of free preschool, beginning in September 2020, for children aged 2.5 to 4 years, the need for more educators is only going to increase: as the system expands, the early years and child care workforce must also expand.

Growing Together: Ontario's Early Years and Child Care Workforce Strategy is our plan to build a stronger, more robust workforce by recruiting and retaining more educators in the early years and child care sector. It is our plan to better care for the educators who care for our children.

The strategy includes the following five initiatives to support educators:

1. Establishing fair compensation
2. Improving working conditions
3. Enhancing skills and opportunities
4. Valuing contributions
5. Increasing recruitment

Taken together, these initiatives will help ensure that more people are drawn to careers in the early years and child care, and that those already working in the sector will want to stay in the sector – and that they will have the professional development opportunities they need to enhance

their skills throughout their careers. These initiatives will also increase public awareness of the impact of educators, so that more people understand and value the meaningful work they do.

We all know that the first years of a child's life are important: those early experiences can lay the foundation for so much that comes afterward. For children in an early years or child care program, many of those early positive interactions and caring relationships will be with educators: educators who are passionate and dedicated, who inspire curiosity and enrich potential, and who – like us – want the very best for our children.

Related link:

Region: Ontario ^[4]

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