

# Child care advocates call on Premier Doug Ford to cooperate with the federal government <sup>[1]</sup>

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## AVAILABILITY

Access online <sup>[2]</sup>

## EXCERPTS

TORONTO--(BUSINESS WIRE)--Child care advocates in Ontario are celebrating today's federal budget commitment to early learning and child care. Advocates also send a strong message to Premier Ford to accept federal leadership on child care and work cooperatively with Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland to build a real system of early learning and child care for families.

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"The child care commitment in the federal budget is a lifeline for Ontario's families, educators and the child care sector—and the Ford government must cooperate," said Carolyn Ferns, Policy Coordinator of the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care (OCBCC). "Now is time for all levels of government to work together, across party lines, to support the child care sector and build an affordable, accessible, not-for-profit system of early learning and care."

During the COVID-19 pandemic, approximately 58 child care centres have permanently closed; enrolment has dropped; and the workforce is exhausted, stressed and still not prioritized for vaccines amidst increased outbreaks, reports the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE).

"Child care workers, who are more than 95 per cent women, have long endured low wages, expanding cohort sizes, inadequate staffing, and little access to paid sick days," says Carrie Lynn Poole-Cotnam, CUPE Ontario Social Services Chair. "New funding for the child care sector must address current staffing needs, ensure a \$25 per hour minimum wage for workers, and enhance recruitment and retention issues that have impacted this sector for decades."

CUPE and OCBCC have long campaigned for a publicly funded child care system that provides affordable fees for families, decent work and pay for educators, and enough spaces for all families that need them. OCBCC has gathered more than 10,000 signatures on an petition calling on Premier Ford to respect and protect early childhood education and care.

"Today's federal budget commitment by Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland is a historic turning point that will build a system that child care activists have long advocated for," says Ferns. "It's taken a pandemic for everyone to finally grasp how important early learning and care is for our economy. We must all roll up our sleeves to rebuild the Ontario child care sector and make a real difference for families, for educators, and for a generation of young children who deserve to look to a brighter future."

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