

Guelph and Ontario chambers encourage collaborative approach to implement canada-wide child care system ^[1]

Child care critical to Canada's economic and social prosperity

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AVAILABILITY

[Access online](#) ^[2]

EXCERPTS

Following a roundtable hosted by the Guelph Chamber of Commerce with support from the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, the two organizations urged all provinces and territories to work with the federal government to implement a Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care System as a critical component of economic recovery.

"In Budget 2021, the federal government committed to investing up to \$30 billion over the next five years to make child care more affordable and accessible for Canadians by signing bilateral agreements with provinces, territories, and Indigenous partners. Access to child care will ensure parents can participate fully in the workforce," said Rocco Rossi, President and CEO, Ontario Chamber of Commerce. "We urge all provinces and territories to work collaboratively with the federal government to support this program, as it will be critical to our economic recovery and long-term prosperity."

As noted in the Ontario Chamber of Commerce report, *The She-Cover Project: Confronting the Gendered Economic Impacts of COVID-19 in Ontario*, child care is simply unaffordable and/or inaccessible for too many working families in Ontario. Even with existing subsidies, Canada (outside Quebec) has one of the least affordable child care systems among industrialized countries and access is especially challenging for parents who work irregular hours and those living in rural regions.

"The COVID-19 crisis has disproportionately impacted women in Ontario, with more than twice as many job losses reported for women than men, in part because women took on most of the unpaid child care that became necessary as schools and daycares closed," said Claudia Dessanti, Senior Manager of Policy at the Ontario Chamber of Commerce. "However, child care has been a challenge for families long before the pandemic."

"For rural families, flexibility and unencumbered access to affordable child care is crucial to allow parents to participate fully in the rural workforce, particularly for farmers who traditionally work and live on the farm and want to ensure safe care for their children while working" said Jen Christie, Chairperson, Ag Women's Network.

In order to fill the shortage of early childhood educators and child care spaces in our province, we need to invest in expanding availability alongside the necessary investments to stabilize the system. This means investing in better pay, improved working conditions, recruitment and retention are critical to ensure the success of the sector and a Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care System.

"Early Childhood Educators are the heart of Ontario's child care system. Their pedagogical work makes quality programs possible, and their working conditions are children's learning conditions" said Alana Powell, Executive Coordinator, Association of Early Childhood Educators Ontario.

"We must address the staff retention crisis in child care if we want to build a stable child care system. Early Childhood Educators are the key to quality programs for our children" said Carolyn Ferns, Public Policy Coordinator, Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care. "We need to ensure that Early Childhood Educators have good working conditions and compensation."

"The message we heard during our roundtable with business owners was loud and clear: Child care is a business issue as much as a social one," said Shakiba Shayani, President and CEO, Guelph Chamber of Commerce. "Families across the province need flexible, affordable, and high-quality child care that meets their individual needs."

The Ontario Chamber Network looks forward to working with the Governments of Ontario and Canada, community partners, and businesses to help improve the accessibility and affordability of child care.

Region: [Ontario](#) ^[3]

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