

Ontario's Fall Economic Statement ignores the child care crisis in Ontario ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

TORONTO--(BUSINESS WIRE)--The Ford Conservatives' Fall Economic Statement fails families by continuing to ignore the importance of child care to our social and economic recovery. There was little mention of child care and no new, critically needed funding announced.

Families and educators continue to wait for the Ford government to sign on to the federal child care agreement to unlock more than \$10 billion in federal child care funding earmarked to support a universal, accessible, non-profit, and affordable system of early learning and care. Meanwhile, Ontario parents continue to pay the highest child care fees in the country and there is a growing shortage of early childhood educators (ECEs) and child care workers that is leading to growing waitlists for child care.

The Fall Economic Statement purported to be focused on building back the Ontario economy, but the Ford Conservatives failed to recognize the importance of social infrastructure and solving the she-cession.

"This Fall Economic Statement was called "Build Ontario", but building Ontario isn't just about roads and highways and it isn't only done by men in hardhats. ECEs and child care workers build Ontario. Child care is infrastructure," says Carolyn Ferns of the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care (OCBCC).

Across Ontario, communities are reporting that the recruitment and retention crisis in child care is causing programs, including the closure of critical child care rooms and significantly limited capacity at child care centres.

"ECEs and child care workers have been stepping up to provide quality child care during the pandemic, despite ongoing and increasing challenges and burnout that have contributed to a provincial child care worker shortage. We are in the midst of a workforce crisis in child care and it's time for Ontario to step up and value ECEs and child care workers with decent work and pay," says Alana Powell from the Association of Early Childhood Educators of Ontario (AECEO).

With a provincial election coming in June, the Ford Conservatives should know that families, and educators are watching the issue of child care closely.

"With the Ontario election around the corner, Ford foreshadows no fundamental shifts toward what our province needs the most right now: robust investment in vital social infrastructure that addresses the disproportionate economic impact that COVID-19 has had on women," says Carrie Lynn Poole-Cotnam, CUPE Ontario social services chair. "Supporting families means making child care affordable and accessible and creating decent work and good jobs for ECEs and child care workers."

The Ontario government needs to sign and honour the federal child care agreement and follow the OCBCC and AECEO's Roadmap to Universal Child Care in Ontario that features 20 policy interventions to transform early learning and child care from a market-based patchwork to a comprehensive, publicly funded system.

Region: Ontario ^[3]

Tags: advocacy ^[4]

social infrastructure ^[5]

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