

Ontario Budget 2022: Child care plan can't work without a workforce strategy. ECEs and child care workers are worth more than Ford's budget ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

Child care advocates are warning the Ford government that without a better plan to solve the child care workforce shortage, their budget's promise to build 86,000 new child care spaces will fail.

"We have a child care workforce crisis right now, driven by low wages. As a result, child care centres are closing rooms and limiting enrolment. But the Ontario budget offers no solutions. We need a real workforce strategy if we want to staff the child care spaces we have now, let alone build more," said Carolyn Ferns, Policy Coordinator of the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care (OCBCC).

The new child care deal introduces a wage floor for all child-care workers of \$18 an hour, but it won't be enough to attract and retain staff, reports the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE).

"Early childhood educators and child care workers are worth more than an \$18 per hour wage floor," said Rachel Vickerson, Executive Director of the Association of Early Childhood Educators Ontario (AECEO). "We need a salary scale starting at \$25 per hour for all staff and \$30 per hour for registered early childhood educators."

While the agreement will provide more than a billion in federal funding this year, it is estimated that less than 4% of the agreement's funds will go to improving compensation for frontline educators, that puts the plan to expand spaces at risk. Since the Ford government delayed signing the deal, many parents won't see child care fees reduced until the fall.

"Without ECEs and child care workers there is no child care," says Vickerson.

When the Ford government was elected, they cancelled a planned Early Years and Child Care Workforce Strategy and salary grid and never redeveloped it. The current agreement only provides an \$18 per hour wage floor and a \$1 per hour enhancement only to registered early childhood educators (RECEs)—estimated to benefit only a quarter of RECEs in the sector, leaving out assistants and other program staff vital to the sector.

"Finance Minister Peter Bethlenfalvy claimed that Ontario has signed the "best child care deal", but it can't be the best deal with the worst plan for the workforce," says Ferns.

Child care advocates will be launching a Worth More campaign to call for a real workforce strategy at the May Day rallies happening across Ontario, being organized by the Ontario Federation of Labour (OFL).

Region: Ontario ^[3]

Tags: child care workforce ^[4]

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