

Open letter to federal/provincial/territorial ministers with primary responsibility for early learning and child care (ELCC) ^[1]

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Excerpted from open letter

Dear Ministers:

Just over one-year ago, Canada's federal government announced the historic and transformative Canada-wide child care plan and one-year later, all provinces and territories have signed their respective agreements (noting Quebec's asymmetrical funding agreement). We also recognize the historic Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care Framework and the distinctions-based nation to nations plan for First Nations, Métis and Inuit ELCC and their right to self-determination.

As you collectively meet on July 12, 2022, we take this opportunity, on behalf of the Canadian Child Care Federation (CCCCF), its pan-Canadian affiliates and our members from across the country, to thank you for your support of this essential plan for Canada's children, families, communities, ELCC sector and the economy. There has been a lot accomplished in just one year, yet there is still a lot left to do. We encourage and support evidence-based policy changes that will support your continued development of the Canada-wide child care plan

Of paramount importance, and central to the success of the Canada-wide plan is Canada's ELCC workforce. You are all very aware of this as the ELCC workforce's central role is recognized within each of the agreements. Prior to our current, unprecedented inflationary time—and prior to the pandemic—the ELCC workforce has long suffered under significant recruitment and retention issues, most notably due to the lack of fair wages and benefits for the early childhood education professionals and providers. It is critical that these primary workforce issues are properly addressed in order to advance the Canada-wide plan. It is essential that fair and competitive wage grids with benefits are a part of a larger, more comprehensive workforce strategy. As this is an issue that impacts all jurisdictions, we urgently recommend and encourage you to take a collaborative and systemic approach together along with the new federal early learning and child care secretariat on this issue.

A workforce strategy is essential to realize the ambitious space expansion targets announced. The expansion of spaces, while a key element of the Canada-wide plan, requires that program spaces and environments be evidence-based and of high quality. Each child care program must be properly and publicly planned to ensure equitable access for all Canadian families, supported by fulsome public management and not left up to market chance. The CCCC supports your collective policy of ensuring that the new spaces are created primarily in the not-for-profit and public sectors.

The affordability of child care for families has been a primary focus of the agreements and public announcements. The commitment to the average of \$10/day child care across Canada will bring down costs for families making child care affordable for most. Typically, child care affordability has been supported by the use of subsidy systems, based on a family's income. We fully appreciate that provincial and territorial governments across Canada are continuing to move forward on the Canada-wide plan, supporting and enhancing their own ministries and related departments that are responsible to roll out the plan, but as they do so, a focus must be to move away from subsidy systems to realistically address affordability. Operational funding that supports all child care operations, including the ELCC workforce, coupled with a set/low maximum fee for all families, and with a further reduction or elimination of fees for low-income families is necessary. This will further support equitable and inclusive programs for all.

We thank you for your continued leadership and commitment to creating high quality, affordable and accessible child care for families and children. As a federation, our organization offers our collective expertise and willingness to contribute to your work and our collective success.

Yours truly,

Don Giesbrecht CEO

Region: Canada ^[3]

Tags: child care ^[4]

government ^[5]

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