

# A response to the Ministry of Education modernizing child care in Ontario discussion paper <sup>[1]</sup>

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## AVAILABILITY

Full report in pdf <sup>[2]</sup>

Excerpts:

### Early Childhood Educator Wages and Working Conditions

The AECEO is highly concerned that the ministry's discussion paper does not ask substantial questions about chronic ECE workforce issues that significantly affect workforce capacity and program quality. It is particularly important for the ministry to take action on ECE workforce issues to ensure that ECEs in child care programs do not fall behind DECEs in full day kindergarten programs. The AECEO urges the ministry to immediately communicate to the early childhood education community their intention to address long-standing workforce issues. This communication will go a long way to reassuring Ontario's ECE workforce that the Ministry of Education is listening to their concerns about poor wages and working conditions.

The government provides funding to CMSMs/DSSABs and First Nations through wage subsidies to enhance salaries and benefits to staff. However, it is clear that this approach cannot be sustained in a modernized child care system. A provincially established salary grid along with base funding for child care programs must be established to raise the salaries of early childhood educators. Manitoba and Prince Edward Island have ECE salary grids that could guide the ministry in the development of an Ontario salary grid. Low ECE salaries have resulted in poor morale, job dissatisfaction and high staff turnover. Early childhood educators are leaving the child care field and replacements cannot be recruited which has had an on-going negative impact on staff consistency and stability and program quality.

Multiple studies (i.e. Whitebook, Sakai & Howes, 1997; Beach & Costigliola, 2005) over the last two decades have demonstrated that there is a strong link between early childhood educator wages, staff stability and the quality of services. While the Modernizing Child Care Discussion Paper proposes several valuable mechanisms to promote consistencies in quality, research shows that the surest way to improve program quality is to recognize early childhood educators as professionals and ensure that they are adequately compensated. The 2007 report of the Ontario Ministry of Children and Youth Services Expert Panel on Quality and Human Resources identified the following four critical "building blocks" for creating a province-wide system of quality child care service:

1. Effective policies, sustained funding and appropriate infrastructure
2. Properly paid, registered and committed educators
3. Evidence-informed age appropriate programs and practices
4. Parents who are partners in their children's early learning (p.8)

The AECEO maintains that without the "the block" of well-compensated early childhood educators, a quality early childhood system cannot be built up and stabilized in Ontario. Indeed, the AECEO cannot imagine a modernized child care system if the wages of early childhood educators continue to be tied to families' ability to pay child care fees. Nor can the AECEO imagine increasing ECEs' public accountability in a modernized system without adequate professional recognition through improved compensation and benefits. Now that child care is part of the Ministry of Education, the focus must be on the equal recognition of Ontario's ECEs and teachers who are central to positive child outcomes in a modernized early learning and child care system. A coordinated human resources plan with well-articulated short, mid and long term goals will ensure that Ontario has a knowledgeable and appropriately compensated ECE workforce necessary to support the development of quality programs. The implementation of a human resources plan as part of a modernized child care system will attract and retain trained and committed professionals and significantly improve program quality.

**Region:** Ontario <sup>[3]</sup>

**Source URL (modified on 27 Jan 2022):** <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/research-policy-practice/12/09/response-ministry-education-modernizing-child-care-ontario>

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