

# Investing in our child care workforce is essential <sup>[1]</sup>

AECEO's response to wage increase announcement

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**Source:** AECEO

**Format:** Article

**Publication Date:** 20 Jan 2015

## AVAILABILITY

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## EXCERPTS

Investing in our child care workforce is essential. Research shows that the quality of early childhood education and care programs is associated with the wages of the workforce and wages are a key factor in the recruitment and retention of trained early childhood educators. We were therefore encouraged by the provincial government's announcement to move forward to implement the wage enhancement of \$1 per hour for eligible child care staff in the licensed child care sector. The goal of reducing the wage gap between staff in the licensed child care sector and those working in the public education system is laudable. Also to be applauded is recognition of the need to improve wages for the child care workforce while at the same time protecting parent fees.

As the wage enhancement is rolled out some questions will need to be addressed. How does this \$1 dollar an hour increase fit with the current changes to previous wage enhancement grants as a result of the new funding formula for local service managers? How much discretion will local service managers have in distributing these additional funds? How will this wage increase be incorporated when new programs are opened or expanded? Additionally, how will the government ensure that money going to for-profit centres and agencies will be properly used to increase the compensation of program staff?

Today's announcement is a positive step in the right direction for addressing the long standing workforce issues in regulated child care and we will continue to work closely with provincial and municipal governments to address the need for a comprehensive workforce strategy for the regulated child care sector. ECEs and the child care workforce are still facing a market based system that results in persistently low wages and inconsistent working conditions including limited access to benefits, pensions and ongoing professional development.

The AECEO will continue to advocate for a provincially established salary grid along with base funding for child care programs in order to equitably raise the salaries, working conditions and morale of all early childhood educators and child care workers. A standardized wage rate in the child care sector will ensure staff with equivalent education and work responsibilities are paid a similar rate of pay no matter where they work. These initiatives would further contribute to higher and more consistent quality across child care programs.

Professional pay for professional work continues to be a goal for registered early childhood educators who have a specialized body of knowledge in early childhood and are held accountable to the public through a regulatory body.

The Association of Early Childhood Educators Ontario (AECEO) is the professional association for Ontario's early childhood educators and has actively advocated for a human resources strategy for the Ontario child care sector, which includes better wages and working conditions.

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

**Tags:** funding <sup>[4]</sup>

staff <sup>[5]</sup>

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