

# INVESTING IN CHILD CARE: ESSENTIAL TO OUR ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RECOVERY

## ONTARIO COALITION FOR BETTER CHILD CARE 2021 ONTARIO PRE-BUDGET BRIEF

The Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care is a member organization that brings together non-profit child care centres, local and provincial groups, and individuals from all across Ontario to campaign for a universal, affordable, high quality system of early childhood education and care.

### THE OPPORTUNITY

A strengthened child care system will support: parents in the workforce; children's well-being, learning and development; and decent work for educators. It will be a system that is prepared and nimble enough to: prevent outbreaks; respond to future waves of Covid-19; and grow to meet demand as we move forward to economic and social recovery.

### ONTARIO 2021 BUDGET PRIORITIES

- **Immediately reverse \$49 million in planned cuts to child care**
  - Child care currently is facing at least \$49 million in annual provincial funding cuts. Originally planned for January 2020, then delayed until January 2021, these cuts are now being off-set this year with a one time "transitional grant". It's time to admit these cuts were ill-conceived when they were announced last year, and in the face of a pandemic they must be permanently reversed.
- **Increase general operating funding by \$500 million to stabilize the sector**
  - 133 child care centres have closed since the onset of the pandemic. The province has largely relied on federal pandemic funding, including the Safe Restart Agreement, to temporarily stabilize the child care sector. But new health and safety standards, combined with low enrolment during the pandemic means that child care centres face increased costs and reduced revenues and remain in a very precarious financial position. General operating funding should be increased to ensure that child care programs remain operational for reopening and recovery.
- **Partner with the federal government to transition to a publicly funded child care system**
  - The federal government's Fall Economic Statement committed to a national child care system. Ontario cannot let this opportunity pass. We must pursue a long-term strategy to collaborate with the federal government on a publicly funded child care system.
  - Ontario cannot rely upon federal funding alone; we must increase provincial funding to child care to ensure:
    - 1. Affordable Fees:** Cap child care fees and allocate \$600 million to begin a transition to operational funding that supports low fees or no fees for parents.
    - 2. Decent Work:** Continue the \$2 per hour Wage Enhancement Grant for ECEs and child care staff, while working towards implementing *Growing Together, Ontario's Early Years and Child Care Workforce Strategy*. This should include committing \$375 million to establish a province-wide wage scale with a minimum of \$25 per hour for ECEs and child care staff.
    - 3. Enough public and non-profit child care spaces for all:** Ensure new capital funding goes only to non-profit and public child care sectors, to ensure efficient use of public funds and public accountability.

For further details, read our report: "**From Reopening to Recovery: A Child Care Plan for Ontario**" [childcareontario.org/from-reopening-to-recovery-a-plan](https://childcareontario.org/from-reopening-to-recovery-a-plan)

