

TCBCC  
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December 14, 2021

Dear Mayor Tory and Toronto City Councillors,

I am writing on behalf of the Toronto Community for Better Child Care (TCBCC) to comment on the December 15, 2021 City Council meeting on item 2021.DM38.1, Affordable and Accessible Childcare for All - Update on Federal-Provincial Negotiations - by Councillor Joe Cressy, seconded by Councillor Michael Thompson.

The TCBCC is a broadly-based non-profit community organization that comprises early childhood educators, child care workers, union locals, families and non-profit child care centres from across Toronto.

We are gravely concerned that Ontario has yet to sign the federal child care agreement and it is Toronto families that are paying the price for the provincial government's inaction. Toronto families pay the highest child care fees in Canada and for many families it's equivalent to carrying a second rent or mortgage each month. Many Toronto child care centres will be increasing their fees 3-5% next year, while cities in other provinces are seeing a 50% decrease in fees, and even rebates for child care fees paid in previous months of 2021.

Toronto's child care community has yet to sustain their recovery from the pandemic. 27 of Toronto's child care centres permanently closed last year and several child care centres have recently had to reduce their hours, close rooms or entire programs due to low staffing; despite ever increasing waitlists. Toronto's families need accessible, affordable, publicly funded child care and signing the federal agreement gets us closer to achieving our shared vision of quality care in Toronto.

Funding from signing the federal agreement could provide opportunities to achieve Toronto's own [Licensed Child Care Growth Strategy](#) target of having affordable child care spaces for 40% of young children by 2026. It would also enable Toronto to increase its initial target of having enough licensed, centre-based child care spaces for 50% of children under the age of 4, and the capacity required to operate those spaces. As well as meeting and exceeding its goal of supporting a thriving child care workforce with well-paying child care jobs that attract and retain child care professionals.

Toronto's early years and child care workforce is essential in delivering high quality programs that lead to positive outcomes for children, especially in vulnerable communities. A decently compensated and highly trained workforce is the key to expanding services and making it possible for Toronto to accommodate more young children and their families. The child care sector, and more specifically the child care community in Toronto, has been faced with a decades long recruitment and retention crisis. This is driven by the inadequate recognition and devaluation of predominantly feminized care work, and insufficient wages and compensation. The median pay for a child care worker in Toronto is \$20 an hour, despite the 2021 report from the [Living Wage Network](#) outlining a living wage in Toronto as \$22.08 an hour. We know that the city of Toronto values the work of early learning professionals, as [Toronto's municipality operated child care centres](#) pay their ECEs an hourly wage of \$31.26. The federal child care agreement will provide an opportunity to support and sustain increased wages and compensation, as well as improved workforce recognition, training and development. Every neighbourhood in Toronto is supported by the critical community care work of the frontline child care workers at their local child care centres; it's time for Toronto to live it's values and prioritize decently compensating the entire child care workforce.

In a recent [Progress Toronto Petition](#), nearly 2000 Toronto families have reached out to their MPPs, city councillors and the mayor requesting that our decision-makers take action to get the child care agreement signed. We know that thousands more families agree. Our provincial government has dragged their feet for far too long; it is inequitable that families are paying the high price for the government's lack of leadership. If the agreement is not signed by March 31, 2022, we stand to lose \$1 Billion in proposed funding. Toronto families deserve better.

As the province's largest Service System Manager, Toronto Children's Services has expertise in operating a quality child care system. Toronto is the second largest child care system in Canada, and signing the agreement directly with the federal government would provide Toronto with significant opportunities to address the inequities faced by Toronto's children, families and the child care workforce. We ask that you push the province to get the agreement signed, or negotiate with the federal government directly. Toronto needs an agreement that ensures:

- affordable child care fees for families at \$10-a-day or less;
- decent work and compensation for Early Childhood Educators and child care workers; and
- the expansion of quality public and non-profit child care spaces to assure access to all families who need it.

The Association of Early Childhood Educators Ontario (AECEO) and Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care (OCBCC) have developed a [Roadmap to Universal Child Care in Ontario](#) in consultation with Ontario's child care sector, including Toronto's 1051 child care centres, 13,000+ Registered Early Childhood Educators and frontline care workers. Much like Toronto's Licensed Child Care Growth Strategy, the Roadmap emphasises the need for an

affordability strategy, workforce strategy and expansion strategy to come together as a means to address our current context and post-pandemic future. This is what Toronto's frontline child care workforce, supervisors, administrators and non-profit child care operators are seeking to achieve as a part of the federal child care agreement.

Accessible, affordable child care with decent work and compensation for the child care workforce plays a critical role in our collective ability to build back a better Toronto and recover from the pandemic that has exacerbated the preexisting child care crisis. We ask you to fiercely advocate to the Ontario government to sign the federal child care agreement, or that the city of Toronto negotiate directly with the federal government. Children, families and the child care workforce simply can't wait any longer.

Abigail Doris, RECE  
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Toronto Community for Better Child Care