

September 16, 2024

Federal Secretariat on Early Learning and Child Care

Employment and Social Development Canada Government of Canada Sent

via email: ESDC.ELCCER-AGJERE.EDSC@hrsdc-rhdcc.gc.ca

Re: Engaging in Early Learning and Child Care Discussion Guide

Dear Federal Secretariat on Early Learning and Child Care,

The Ontario Municipal Social Services Association (OMSSA) is a non-profit association whose municipal Members are Ontario's Consolidated Municipal Service Managers (CMSMs) and District Social Services Administration Boards (DSSABs). Our Members appreciate the strong and collaborative relationship we have with the Province of Ontario and the Government of Canada. Ontario is the sole province or territory with a mandated role for municipal government as Service System Managers.

Ontario's Municipal Service System Managers bring a deep level of local expertise, experience, and knowledge to the table. As local governments and service leaders, they are tapped into the broader community planning process, bringing a long-term vision and a sophisticated level of local data, research, and local economic analysis to guide their work. They understand the unique social, economic, regional and demographic forces that shape their communities, and their strong relationships with local service providers help them deliver the right mix of services, with the right community partners, to address specific local needs.

In July 2024, the Federal Government released the *Engaging in Early Learning and Child Care Discussion Guide* and has asked for feedback on how the *Canada-Ontario Early Years and Child Care* (CWELCC) agreement is working so far.

At OMSSA, we asked our 47 Service System Managers to individually respond to the Federal Government with their local experiences. Ontario just released a new funding formula for CWELCC and Ontario service managers are in the process of implementing the change for January 1, 2025.

In November 2023, Ontario released the Child Care Workforce Strategy (CCWS) to support the retention and recruitment of Registered Early Childhood Educators (RECEs) working in licensed child care programs enrolled in the CWELCC system.

Ontario has also negotiated a mid-agreement review with the Federal Government that will be helpful in addressing any shortfalls or implementation challenges that may arise, but did not reach an agreement with the Federal Government until March 2022.

While it is still early to evaluate results, OMSSA appreciates the opportunity to provide consultation to the Federal Government and we are providing this high-level feedback on behalf of our 47 Members as a collective.

Universal access to early years and child care has long been a goal for Ontario Service Managers. The Childcare Resource and Research Unit has released a report on [Early Childhood Education and Child Care 2023](#) with recent data on child care across Canada, and in Ontario specifically.

In November 2022, the Financial Accountability Office of Ontario (FAO) reported to the Legislative Assembly that Ontario parents would need 300,000 additional child care spaces if child care fees were \$10-a-day on average.

The Ontario Government has committed to building an additional 71,000¹ new spaces which are projected to be added between 2022 and 2026. The FAO concluded that 227,146 families of children under six would be unable to access \$10-a-day child care as a result. This represents 25% of the projected under age six population in 2026.

OMSSA Members believe the long-term goal should be that every Ontario family has access to high quality, affordable, flexible and inclusive early years and child care and, to achieve this, additional capital investments are required from the Federal Government to create the estimated 300,000 new spaces required to meet projected demand in Ontario.

Recruitment and retention of RECEs and the child care workforce remains a challenge for Ontario Service System Managers. Ministry officials have projected a shortage of 8,500² RECEs by 2026.

OMSSA Members have partnered with [Knowing Our Numbers](#) to provide data related to workforce issues. This also includes feedback from almost 6,000 members of the early childhood education workforce in Ontario with regards to work conditions, paid pedagogical support, access to pre-service education, competency development and professional learning, and inclusivity and discrimination. The [College of Early Childhood Educators](#) also has data on recruitment and retention challenges.

To address these workforce issues, OMSSA Members believe a further significant federal investment is required which addresses compensation, benefits, and professional development to have any chance of recruiting and retaining RECEs to support CWELCC implementation in Ontario.

Addressing the above two identified issues of capacity and workforce are critical to the successful intended impact of CWELCC in Ontario. OMSSA and our Members believe federal investments in these areas will help ensure CWELCC is a success in Ontario.

¹ Cleveland, Gordon (2024), ["Who's To Blame For Child Care Shortages In Ontario?"](#), Childcarepolicy.net

² CTV News (2024), ["Ontario early childhood educators still waiting for promised 2024 wage increases"](#)
Toronto.ctvnews.ca

To help facilitate this further we are suggesting the following to occur in conjunction with these investments:

- Ontario is the only jurisdiction in Canada where municipal Service System Managers are responsible for the planning, administering, and operating of licensed child care and early years programs. Municipalities have worked closely with the Province of Ontario for years collaborating and providing consultation on initiatives related to early years and child care. With CWELCC, the Federal Government also has an important role to play in the delivery of early years and child care in Ontario. All levels of government share common issues and priorities with regards to early years and child care in Ontario. **OMSSA suggests a tri-lateral table be created for increased collaboration and ensure success and positive outcomes as intended through this increased investment in early years and child care.**
- OMSSA Members believe in accessible and inclusive childcare, and recently released a [report on Special Needs Resourcing \(SNR\)](#) with several recommendations. **OMSSA strongly encourages the Federal government to support accessible and inclusive childcare with additional CWELCC investments being directed to increasing access and inclusion of all children.**

OMSSA appreciates the opportunity to provide consultation to the federal government and looks forward to expanding our partnership in the future as our Members work with the Province of Ontario to implement CWELCC within Ontario communities.

Sincerely,



Henry Wall
President



Doug Ball
Executive Director

CC :

Kate Manson-Smith, Deputy Minister of Education

Holly Moran, Assistant Deputy Minister of Education

Hon. Jenna Sudds, Minister of Families, Children and Social Development