

Child Care MPP-Parent-Operator-Student Meeting

May 21, 2024

Requested by: [Lori Prospero](#), CEO, RisingOaks Early Learning Ontario

In attendance:

- Catherine Fife, MPP | Waterloo
- Aislinn Clancy, MPP | Kitchener Centre
- Lori Prospero, CEO, RisingOaks Early Learning Ontario
- Christa O'Connor, RECE, Executive Director, Creative Beginnings Child Care
- Devi Persaud, parent
- Ethan Russell, Bachelor of Early Learning Program Development student, Conestoga College
- Julia Bloom, parent | Board Chair, RisingOaks Early Learning
- Julia Meglei, parent
- Kamryn Lamond, Bachelor of Early Childhood Leadership student, Fanshaw College
- Karla Marin, parent
- Kristine Parsons, RECE, Director of Operations, RisingOaks Early Learning Ontario
- Lindsey Hartung, RECE, Emmanuel at Brighton Child Care
- Mariam Al-Lami, parent
- Sandra Woodward, parent

Discussed 4 related issues:

1. [Recommendations](#) for Building an Anti-racist Child Care System in Ontario
2. Challenges for Parents on the Wait List
3. Workforce challenges
4. Funding Quality within the CWELCC System

ISSUE 1: Recommendations to build an anti-racist child care system in Ontario

- The Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care, along with the Association of Early Childhood Educators of Ontario, recently completed a project via the Women and Gender Equality grant to raise the voices of racialized women and mothers within the child care system. A key outcome was a set of recommendations to build an anti-racist child care system in Ontario.
 - [Recommendations to the Ontario Government](#)
 - [Recommendations for the Post-Secondary Institutions](#)
 - [Recommendations to Child Care Operators](#)

The ASK:

- Amend the CCEYA to be more inclusive and promote culturally safe early learning and child care.
- Ensure the Access & Inclusion framework, and that of service system managers, includes goals around culturally safe programs, ready to serve families regardless of race, language, immigration status or ability where all families can see themselves represented in the

program. Ensure the framework demonstrates a clear commitment to truth and reconciliation.

- Revise How Does Learning Happen to include concepts of anti-oppressive practices, anti-racist pedagogy and indigenous world views.
- Invest in the child care workforce with a provincial wage grid commiserate with education and experience.
- A stronger role for the oversight advisory/steering committee.

Why is this important:

- As we work to expand access and raise the quality of child care, we need to ensure we are actively working to create an anti-racist child care system.

Response:

MPP Fife:

- CWELCC's \$10 a day program has destabilized child care and there is a lack of transparency in the program
- Supports access and inclusion 100% and wants to ensure that organizations and parents voices will be heard to make child care more inclusive
- Will incorporate the recommendations voiced today in our private member's bill

MPP Clancy:

- So many great policies are discussed and mandated but the government funding just doesn't happen
- We need to focus on how all of us can push to get the funding to support the work that needs to be done to build an anti-racist child care system

ISSUE 2: Challenges for Parents on the Wait List

- Devi Persaud, parent with child on waiting list:
 - Difficult to find information on registration procedure and waiting lists
 - Tried using social media to find child care, it was mostly unlicensed child care workers; hired a Conestoga College student for \$20 an hour
 - Recently sent a letter to MPP Mike Harris for assistance but didn't receive a response from his office
 - Moved back to Waterloo region from California and had no idea that it would be this difficult to place her child in a child care facility
 - As a single mother the child care situation in the region adds more stress to her life
- Sandra Woodward, parent with child on waiting list:
 - Knows parents that have 2-year olds still on waiting lists
 - Would like a system where parents could visit multiple centres and pick the one they like best
 - Planning for an 18-month mat leave; would have liked a 12-month mat leave if the situation for child care was better
 - It has been stressful worrying and trying to plan with the uncertainty



- Some ideas as parents they have considered to deal with this difficult situation:
 - not to plan any vacation in the near future
 - husband could take time off work to look after children
 - having grandparents help some of the time
 - could work part time but not feasible in her position
- Considering unlicensed home day care or hiring a nanny
- More important than anything is finding a person or centre that you trust to take care of your child

The ASK:

- Improvements to the OneList system.
- Expansion of the system and improved communication for parents and those on wait lists.

Why is this important:

- Parents need a program that provides easily accessible information on how to register and on wait lists. The reduction of wait lists will reduce the stress and uncertainty for parents, while providing the quality child care that is needed.

Response:

MPP Fife:

- Will be attending a meeting with the region to discuss OneList and the issues with it
- There is a lack of transparency in the entire system

ISSUE 3: Workforce Challenges

- Lindsey Hartung, Fanshawe College:
 - Wage gap – RECE's earn much less than other professions i.e. construction workers and security guards usually earn more than RECE's
 - There have been multiple cuts on various supports in the classroom – this is difficult for staff as well as children
 - Centres used to have support from Kids Ability but that stopped due to cuts
 - It is hard for RECE's to experience all these cuts to supports/services and see how it affects the children and the programs
- Ethan Russell, Conestoga College:
 - Students are feeling so much uncertainty regarding wages
 - It is difficult for students to want to work in the child care field with everything they are hearing about all the challenges and wages
- Kristine Parsons, RisingOaks Early Learning:
 - Shared data – organizational, provincial and national, on workload, burnout and employee wellness in the child care sector. Based on YMCA WorkWell's national research in the child care sector, the reported rates of burnout (those selecting "Often" or "Extremely Often") were as follows:
 - 38% for child care leaders
 - 32% for child care front line

- RisingOaks has had a 2-year focus on these areas and through many projects has successfully reduced the level of burnout to 20%.

The ASK:

- Advocating for minimum of \$30/hr for RECE'S and minimum of \$25/hr for ECE's, and more supports for inclusion.
- A commitment to wellness and mental health supports for the sector, including fundings for organizational initiatives such as this one.

Why is this important:

- Improved wages are needed to recognize the importance of child care workers, as well as to improve recruitment and retention for students and those already working in the profession. Increasing the number of graduates will assist with recruitment and decrease the shortage of child care workers across Ontario.
- The employee's working conditions are the children's learning conditions. Supporting employee wellness, leads to high quality programs for children.

Response:

MPP Fife:

- The new funding formula is now pushed to 2025 - child care centres need to know this, not only for recruitment but also retention
- Childcare organizations in Waterloo Region should design their own funding formula
- Requested that organizations share any financial analysis they may have done to show the potential impact of the new funding formula (e.g., YMCA Ontario) with her office and the office of MPP Clancy
- Would like to see a child care town hall before the next election to put pressure on the Liberal and Conservative governments

MPP Clancy:

- We need to ensure equality for all sectors of the population
- Important that we look at the impact economically
- Her office will contact RisingOaks with suggestions on how they can advocate for child care in the region

ISSUE 4: Funding Quality within the CWELCC System

- Discussed the importance of funding the system that children deserve, not just the lowest cost model.

The ASK:

- Programs needs funding for release time for:
 - Planning time,
 - Professional learning
 - Pedagogical documentation and collaboration
 - Enhanced staffing for children with special needs/rights



-
- Educators need professional compensation that makes ECE a viable career for both men and women.

Why is this important:

- The staff's working conditions are the children's learning conditions.
- We can't meet our expansion targets without a high quality, well funded workforce. It's not a first then approach, it's both occurring together.

Response:

Keep the conversation going. Continue to reach out to all MPPs to discuss this important issue. Help us to see the potential impact of the new funding formula so that we can use it in our advocacy at Queen's Park.