

# Enhancing Early Years and Child Care workforce strategy

## Partnering for affordable and accessible child care

The Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC) plan is a transformative initiative toward making child care more affordable and accessible for families in Peel, and communities across Ontario.

Peel Region appreciates the recently announced \$29.8 million in provincial funding, which will support:

- A new 3 year CWELCC target of 10,768 spaces to be realized between 2024 and 2026.
- At least 4,984 of these spaces will be non-profit and up to 5,784 for-profit spaces.
- Increased flexibility in the non-profit/for-profit ratio, enabling greater for-profit sector expansion where needed.
- The launch of the Early Learning and Child Care Infrastructure Fund to support non-profit expansion in Peel.

This provincial support is a positive step toward meeting local child care needs. By fostering accessible, affordable, and high-quality licensed child care, the CWELCC plan not only promotes early childhood development but also supports economic growth and helps reduce poverty among lower-income families.

## Need to address staff shortages

While the recent investment is appreciated, meeting the 3-year space target of 10,768 will require over 1,200 additional program staff. CWELCC offers significant benefits, but its rapid expansion is putting growing pressure on workforce recruitment and retention.

A key challenge is the current compensation model, which does not reflect the qualifications and responsibilities of Registered Early Childhood Educators (RECEs), leading to urgent staffing shortages.

To fully realize the goals of the CWELCC plan, a competitive and equitable compensation framework is required. This includes fair wages and access to benefits to attract and retain the qualified educators needed to deliver high-quality care.



## Workforce challenges

### Wage compression and retention pressures

- The wage gap between experienced RECEs and new hires is narrowing, creating cost pressures for providers and reducing incentives for career longevity.

### Inadequate wage floor

- The 2025 provincial wage floor of \$24.86 per hour falls below the GTA living wage of \$26.00 per hour and remains well below the compensation received by Designated Early Childhood Educators (DECEs) in school boards.

### Lack of benefits

- Providing funding for health or retirement benefits, as part of the Provincial Workforce Strategy, will increase job satisfaction and reduce turnover.



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## Compensation framework

Developing and implementing a compensation framework aligned with DECE wages in the school system that recognizes experience and qualifications are critical to attract and retain qualified RECEs across the sector.



## Sustained, flexible funding

Providing Peel Region with multi-year, flexible funding to support ongoing local recruitment and retention efforts, including job fairs, tuition supports, and outreach initiatives will enhance Peel Region's ability to expand licensed child care.



## Career pathways for non-program staff

Funding flexible training pathways for current non-program staff will reduce financial and scheduling barriers, enabling them to become RECEs while continuing to work.



## Newcomer talent and immigration barriers

By collaborating with federal partners, the province can address domestic ECE shortages by removing barriers for internationally trained RECEs and supporting their settlement and employment in Ontario.



## Key takeaway

Peel Region is ready to work with the province to implement these solutions and ensure the success and sustainability of the CWELCC program.

