

**Child Care Champions:
Toolkit for constituency meetings with Ontario MPPs**

**COALITION ONTARIENNE POUR
de meilleurs services
éducatifs à l'enfance**



**ONTARIO COALITION FOR
Better Child Care**

Child Care Champions: Ontario MPP Meeting Toolkit

Advocates' resources:

- Our objectives, what we're asking for and why
- Checklist for an effective politician meeting
- Meeting speaking points
- Report back form

Documents to be left with the MPP:

- Needed: Child Champions at Queen's Park
- Photo sign – Child Care Champion!

Child Care Champions: Meeting with Ontario MPPs

Our objectives

- We need all MPPs to hear that the Ontario government must maintain support for Ontario's licensed child care system and wage enhancement for educators.
- We want them to understand that tax rebates and deregulation aren't effective ways to address child care needs.
- ***We want to leave MPPs thinking hard about the situation for families and educators in their local riding and communities – we're counting on them.***

What we are asking of MPPs

- Get a personal commitment from the MPP to be Child Care Champion: to learn more about the issue, discuss it with colleagues, and find opportunities to support stable investment in child care for Ontario.
- Ask them to commit to protecting key investments in child care including: \$2/hr wage enhancement grant for ECEs and child care staff; funding for licensed child care operation and subsidies.
- Ask them to learn more about our long-term vision for a system based on 3 Big Ideas:
 - 1) low fees or no fees for families;
 - 2) decent work and pay for educators;
 - 3) more public and non-profit child care spaces.
- Ask all MPPs for a photo with our Child Care Champions sign. At the end of each meeting ask if you can have a group photo of the MPP holding up the sign.

Why now?

- There is widespread concern that the Ontario government may make major funding cuts in their spring budget. We must protect licensed child care funding that families and educators rely on.
- In the Ontario election, the PCs promised an ill-thought-out tax rebate as a way to address child care. This costly scheme won't create child care spaces, support educators or provide much financial support to families, and would most likely be paid for by cutting funding to child care.
- Ford government's Bill 66 begins to deregulate home child care.
- Other provinces are moving forward on child care – for example BC is now piloting \$200 a month child care – but Ontario could move backward under the Ford government.

Overcoming our fears

- Sometimes we fear that a politician will know more than we do. But when it comes to child care, your personal or professional experience means that you likely have thought far more about child care issues than most elected decision-makers have. We need you to share your experience and knowledge so that our elected leaders know how important this issue is.
- Sometimes we fear that we are not articulate enough or that we'll freeze. But most people, when they feel passionate about an issue, find that it's surprisingly easy to talk about it once they get started.
- We fear we won't be able to answer their questions. That's okay. You're allowed to be unsure about some things. Just be honest and tell them that you'll get back to them, and then be sure to follow up. They'll appreciate your honesty, and sometimes information that comes after a meeting is easier to digest.
- If you believe in an issue strongly enough, believe in yourself to speak about it! 😊

Child Care Champions: Ontario MPP Meeting Checklist

Before the meeting:

- Review the materials in this kit to get a clear understanding of the issue and what we are asking for.
- If you are able, you can add notes about the specific situation in the MPP's community. What fees to parents typically pay? Are there waitlists? What do early childhood educators make in your area?
- Know how long your meeting is.
- Decide who will say what in your team and how you'll stay within the allotted time.
- Decide who will take notes.
- Plan to be at the meeting location 10 or 15 minutes early.

During the meeting:

- Right at the start, introduce yourself and confirm how long you have.
- Take charge. You asked for the meeting, so you can lead the meeting. Present your position clearly and don't be sidetracked.
- Listen well but don't let the MPP talk so much that you don't get a chance.
- Treat all questions calmly and seriously. You can learn a lot from the questions they ask.
- If you are asked a question you do not know the answer to, do not make up a response on the spot. Tell the politician you will get back to them with an answer.
- For the note taker: notes do not have to be exhaustive, but note if the MPP commits to something or refuses to commit to something.
- Have ready copies of the material to be left with the MPP: Wanted: Child Care Champions at Queen's Park, Child Care Champion photo sign.
- Ask if the MPP will take a photo with the #ChildCareChampion sign
- Do not prolong the meeting beyond the allotted time unless the politician indicates that they want the discussion to continue.

After the meeting:

- Debrief with your team right after the meeting. From your notes, do a quick one-page summary of the meeting (using the form in this kit) as soon as possible and send it to carolyn@childcareontario.org
- Flag any questions raised by the politician that you could not answer and any extra information that was requested.
- Flag any commitments that were made to you by the politician.
- Don't let the contact die after one meeting. Send the MPP a thank you letter or email, offer to introduce them to others in the local child care community, or arrange a tour of a local child care centre.

Speaking points: What to say in your meeting

1. Introduction

- Introduce yourselves: say what you do and where you are from. Be sure to point out if you are the MPP's local constituents.
- Thank the politician for meeting with you today.
- Confirm how long you have for the meeting.
- Say that you are here as part of a broad coalition of parents, educators and organizations concerned about child care in Ontario.
- Indicate what you want to get out of the meeting: To share your perspective on child care in Ontario and to ask for their personal commitment to be a child care champion by learning more about the issue, and supporting continued, stable funding to licensed child care.
- One person in your group should share a short, personal story about their experience, either as a parent or educator, which explains the child care challenge in Ontario. Keep in brief but powerful, under 3 minutes.

2. The child care system in Ontario needs protection, stability and further investment

- There are over 400,000 Ontario children and their families that depend on licensed child care every day – they are counting on you to protect current child care funding.
- Educators need continued investment in the \$2/hr wage enhancement grant, which supports ECEs working in licensed child care. Cutting this fund would create a staffing crisis, force increases in parent fees, or force hardworking educators do more with less.
- Going forward, the best way to support Ontario's families and hard-working educators, is through action on **3 Big Ideas**:
 - 1) Low fees or no fees for families:** We need to fund licensed child care directly to help lower fees.
 - 2) Decent work and pay for educators:** We need continued support for the *Early Learning and Child Care Workforce Strategy*, including establishing a wage grid by April 2020.
 - 3) Expansion of non-profit spaces:** There are still only spaces for fewer than 1:3 kids, and many areas of the province are "child care deserts". We must continue the expansion plan.

3. What the Ontario government/ their party can do

If the MPP is Conservative:

- Child care is a major issue for the people in your riding, a local issue that you must address.
- We both know that child care is a good investment. Even the governor of the Bank of Canada says that a subsidized child-care program will significantly boost the Canadian economy by increasing women's participation in the paid labour force.
- Child care isn't a partisan issue. Ontario needs to continue stable, predictable funding to licensed child care to support families, grow spaces and support the workforce.
- A tax credit or rebate plan isn't the answer. While it would provide modest support to parents, it wouldn't help create spaces where they are needed, support the workforce, nor provide adequate financial support for most families.
- The best "bang for your buck" is to fund licensed and non-profit child care. It's high quality and all funding goes to service provision. The non-profit sector provides most of Ontario's child care and is well positioned to expand where it's most needed.

If the MPP is NDP:

- Thank you for the NDP's continued support of child care, especially understanding the need to support public and non-profit child care. Thank you for a strong platform on child care in the election. We need the NDP to continue to make child care a defining issue.
- You know we can't allow cuts to child care; it would be devastating to families. As the Official Opposition, please use every tool available to protect child care services that families rely on.
- There are several key commitments to child care that are at stake, including the Wage Enhancement Grant (\$2/hr), Workforce Strategy, and 100,000 space expansion plan. These are commitments that the community worked very, very hard for years to secure. We must not lose them.

If the MPP is Liberal:

- The previous Liberal government's investments in child care were game changing. You were making Ontario a leader on child care. Please continue to make child care a defining issue.
- We are working to ensure that key commitments made under the Liberal government are protected. We want to ensure that the 100,000 space expansion plan and wage enhancement grant, workforce strategy and wage grid are not lost. Please help us with whatever tools you have.

4. Closing/commitment

- Ask the MPP if they will commit to protecting child care and advocating for stable funding and further investment.
- Remind them that you are part of a broad coalition looking for "child care champions." Ask if they will have their photo taken with you and the frame/sign indicating that they are a #childcarechampion.
- Thank them for meeting with you, leave behind the "Needed: Child Care Champions at Queen's Park" document and your card or contact information. You could offer to help put them in touch with other members of the child care community/ arrange a centre tour/ assist them with holding a town hall on the issue.

Politician Meeting Report Back Form

Politician's Name: _____

Politician's Constituency: _____

Politician's Party: _____

Names of child care advocates who attended the meeting:

Did the politician allow you to take a #childcarechampion photo?

YES NO (If yes, please send the photo electronically to carolyn@childcareontario.org and also post it on your social media accounts using the hashtag #childcarechampion and the mentioning the handle @ChildCareON. Be sure to also tag the politician.

Did the politician commit to protecting child care funding?

YES NO

Did the politician commit to protecting the Wage Enhancement Grant?

YES NO

Did the politician commit to advocating our 3 Big Ideas (no fees or low fees; decent work and pay; expanding public and non-profit spaces)?

YES NO

Did the politician make any other commitments? If Yes, what were they?

Did the politician ask any questions that you need to respond to? If Yes, what were they?

Other issues or notable discussions:

Who will be responsible for following up with the politician?

What needs to be included in your follow up email/phone call? (always include a thank you!)

A request for information the politician promised you

Answer(s) to questions the politician asked you

Request for another meeting or event

Other: _____

Needed: Child care champions at Queen's Park

Why we are here

- We are a broad coalition of parents, educators and others passionate about child care issues who are urging MPPs to make a personal commitment to be **Child Care Champions**.
- Child care is a vitally important local issue in Ontario families, communities and economies.

The economic value of child care

- Economists estimate the multiplier effect for licensed child care in Ontario is 2.27. This means that an investment of \$1 results in an economic output of \$2.27.
- Analysis shows that when child care investments support accessible, high quality early learning and child care programs there are moderate to significant impacts in each of the following areas:
 - Economic stimulus;
 - Increased labour market participation, particularly by women;
 - Reduced poverty;
 - Improved child development outcomes;
 - Increased social and support networks for families.
- Canadian and international research confirms that demand-side schemes (tax credits or rebates) do not have the same positive impacts as funding to child care services.

What we need: Responsible, stable investment

- Protect current child care funding investments to programs and subsidies – over 400,000 Ontario children and their families use licensed child care every day.
- Maintain the \$2/hr Provincial Wage Enhancement Grant to ECEs and child care staff.
- Continue steady progress on Ontario's child care expansion plan.
- Support Ontario's early childhood educators by carrying out the key recommendations of the *Early Years and Child Care Workforce Strategy*, including a wage grid by April 2020.

Moving forward:

- To best support Ontario's families and educators, we need further action on **3 Big Ideas**:
 - 1) *Low fees or no fees for families***: We need to increase direct funding to licensed child care programs to help lower parent fees.
 - 2) *Decent work and pay for educators***: Low wages are driving people out of the sector. Early childhood educators need and deserve decent work and fair pay.
 - 3) *Expansion of non-profit spaces***: There are still only spaces for fewer than 1:3 kids, and many areas of the province are "child care deserts". We need to grow the non-profit child care sector that provides the bulk of Ontario's child care spaces already and is well-positioned to expand.

To help solve the child care crisis **we need you to commit to be a Child Care Champion at Queen's Park** to take this issue forward. Thank you.