

Meeting with Ministry of Education

March 23, 2022

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

In attendance:

- [Dasha Androusenkov](#) | Director, Stakeholder Relations
- [Holly Moran](#) | Assistant Deputy Minister
- [Morgan Mattern](#) | Advisor, Stakeholder Relations

Discussed 3 related issues:

1. [Immigration Supports for ECEs](#)
2. [Workforce Crisis – Dual Credit Program for ECEs](#)
3. [CWELCC Implementation & Funding Formula](#)

ISSUE 1: Immigration Supports for ECEs

- How can we support ECEs to transition more quickly from a post-graduate work permit to permanent residency or another type of temporary visa?
 - 10% of the workforce at RisingOaks Early Learning are on a Post Graduate Work Permit (PGWP), could grow to be as high as 25% once the workforce crisis starts to stabilize.

We are aware that the immigration file has moved to Ministry of Labour

- We'll make this same ask of the Ministry of Labour, but wanted to go to Education first.

The ASK: Will the Ministry of Education, specifically Minister Lecce, make this a priority and actively bring this to the Ministry of Labour?

Why is this important:

We need the support of the Ministry of Education because the labour market situation for ECEs is dire.

- This has been acknowledged by the Ministry. Today's budget includes \$25M to enhance the OINP over 3 years to attract more skilled workers to the province.

If early learning and child care is not just about child development, but also an economic tool to get more women into the workforce, we need the Ministry to make this a priority to protect investments made in early learning and child care.

There is no system in place between graduation, PGWP and permanent residency. Employees tell us that they don't have enough points to get invited to apply for permanent residency, so they want their employer to do a Labour Market Impact Assessment (LMIA) to help them get more points.

As we start to think about the issue with the points, we realize that

- The federal government's points system penalizes ECEs with a 2-year diploma because they get 2 years + 3 years work permit, so are short for the 6th year and therefore don't have enough points.
- We need a temporary work permit solution to address this gap, to remove the onus on non-profit child care operators.
- **LMIA is a red tape issue for us.**

The problem with LMIA

It requires the employer to pay \$1,000 per application that cannot be reimbursed by the foreign worker. For non-profit operators this is not a cost we can assume.

We must go through an extensive recruitment campaign for a minimum of 4 weeks.

- If it is found that there is a viable Canadian applicant, we have to hire them.
- However, in most cases, we need the LMIA (or another solution) to support an existing employee to remain in the country and employed by us.

This issue is having a further impact on the child care workforce crisis. We have had several employees who were unable to obtain their permanent residency in time and had to leave the country despite being excellent ECEs.

The ASK to the Ministry of Labour & Federal Government

1. Have ECE added to the list of Jobs Exempt from LMIA under the "Canadian Interests Category"
 - This might be a fit under sub-section "significant benefit" – if your employer can prove you will bring an important social, cultural, and/or economic benefit to Canada, or under those "designated by the Minister"
2. Have ECE added to the Federal Skilled Trades Program (express entry)

Will Minister Lecce raise this with these partners and identify it as a priority for the roll-out of the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care system?

ISSUE 2: Workforce Crisis – Dual Credit Program for ECEs

- The Dual Credit program for high school students interested in ECE is welcome, though the sector doesn't have the support necessary to support it.
 - The Dual Credit program was touted by Minister Lecce as being “literally designed to fix the problem [of] staffing shortages that could be projected as demand rises for child care”.
 - This still focuses on recruitment, when the first issue is a retention issue.
 - ECEs are leaving the field by year 3.
 - a third of ECEs make less than \$20 an hour
 - 2 out of 3 ECE work more than one job to make ends meet.
 - The dual credit program requires existing ECEs to coach and mentor these new and even younger graduating students.
 - The challenge is that 46% of our workforce is new to us since 2020, so we are asking people who don't have the breadth of experience needed to fully understand the unique challenges of early childhood education in a post-pandemic world to mentor new and even younger workers – with no release time for planning, professional development, and mentoring discussions. This affects the integrity of the early learning experiences.
 - Our primary concern is to offer families the highest quality of early learning and care that their children deserve, but we can't deliver on this without addressing these real workforce issues.

The ASK: focus the workforce strategy on retention of ECEs first. This includes:

- salary grid starting at \$25/hour for child care workers, \$30/hour for RECEs
- benefits, paid sick days,
- paid professional development time, and
- paid programming time

Why this is important:

- With these supports in place, current ECEs will remain in licensed child care, rather than leaving the sector or moving to the school board.
- They will also be better supported to coach, and mentor new graduates including those from the dual credit program.

ISSUE 3: CWELCC Implementation & Funding Formula

- Current capped fees set out in the regulation are a barrier for high quality non-profit operators to expand into other regions. In some cases, there is a \$30/day variance between the existing region of the operator (Region of Waterloo) and the area of possible expansion (Count of Norfolk).
- In addition, the true cost of infant care is being subsidized by the economies of scale in school-age. With notional space targets being higher in many regions for community-based centre, rather than co-located spaces, this needs to be addressed.
- **The ASK:**
 1. Review Capped Fees to provide greater flexibility and equity and index to inflation
 2. Address the true cost of infant care in the new funding formula.
 3. To seek input from operators on the draft funding formula prior to it being finalized.
- **Why is this important:**
 - If these fees were capped based on the average – or the medium, it creates a disadvantage for a high-quality operator to support expansion under CWELCC.
 - While operating costs may vary by region in terms of rent or building costs, 80% + of an operator’s budget is staffing. Such variance in the capped fees by region may force an operator to pay staff less in one region than another.
 - One might argue that this is fine as the overall cost of living is lower in rural versus urban, but it creates an ethical issue.
 - In a sector that is already under valued and under paid, how can we justify having 95% of an organization’s workforce paid \$25/hour (as an example) and 5% paid \$20/hour for doing the same job.

Request for follow up: RisingOaks Early Learning requested a list of Advisory Table members.