

August 28, 2025

Minister Champagne  
Department of Finance Canada  
90 Elgin Street  
Ottawa ON K1A 0G5

Submitted by e-mail: [yourbudget-votrebudget@fin.gc.ca](mailto:yourbudget-votrebudget@fin.gc.ca)

Re: 2025 Pre-budget Submission

Dear Minister Champagne,

I am pleased to submit this letter on behalf of RisingOaks Early Learning Ontario as part of your 2025 Budget Consultations. At RisingOaks Early Learning, we have a 40-year history of providing high quality early learning and care. We currently operate 9 – soon to be 10 – licensed, non-profit child care centres in the Waterloo Region. We have a licensed capacity of over 1,400 spaces. At RisingOaks we build the foundation for learning, at the most pivotal time of a child's growth and development.

Preparing them at this stage for a lifetime of learning is the key to their future, and ours. RisingOaks Early Learning Ontario urges the federal government to strengthen its commitment to inclusive, high-quality child care through targeted investments in Special Needs Resourcing and make enhancements to the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care to support the goal of meeting the diverse needs of children and families across Ontario and Canada.

## **1. Special Needs Resourcing**

While Special Needs Resourcing was intended to be supported under the Canada-Wide Bilateral Funding Agreement (CBFA), significant gaps in funding have left operators unable to meet the growing and complex needs of children requiring additional support.

The current funding structure does not adequately support enhanced staffing models necessary for inclusive care.

### **Policy Recommendations:**

We are requesting that the government of Canada conduct a national survey of child care operators to assess the needs of families and of early years centres' ability to meet these needs. This survey should seek to determine the following:

- The number and types of special needs currently being supported at Early Years Centres
- The capacity of operators to meet these needs

We urge the Government of Canada to use evidence to lead policy in this area, and it starts with understanding the need and use data to inform targeted funding and policy development.

## 2. Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC)

We are looking forward to the agreement extension between the province of Ontario and the Government of Canada. The CWELCC system has made significant strides in affordability and access, but structural challenges remain that threaten its long-term sustainability and equity.

- **Supervisor Benchmark Inequities:** The current benchmark does not reflect the responsibilities and qualifications of supervisors across diverse settings, leading to wage disparities and recruitment challenges.
- **Growth Top-Up Limitations:** The growth top-up provided to operators is insufficient to meet the real costs of expansion, especially in high-demand regions and for inclusive programming.
- **Wage Grid Implementation:** A standardized wage grid is essential to ensure fair compensation, reduce turnover, and attract qualified professionals to the sector.

### Policy Recommendations:

In order for CWELCC to continue to meet the needs of both operators and families, the Government of Canada should:

- Review and revise the supervisor wage benchmark to reflect actual market conditions and responsibilities.
- Increase the growth top-up in order to support sustainable expansion and inclusive programming.
- Consider adopting a wage grid for early childhood educators and staff as essential to promote equity, professionalize early learning educators, and create workforce recruitment and retention stability.

### Conclusion

RisingOaks Early Learning Ontario calls on the federal government to prioritize these issues in the upcoming budget to ensure that the CWELCC system continues to evolve into a truly inclusive, equitable, and sustainable model of early learning and child care.

We welcome the opportunity to collaborate further and provide insights from our centres based in Waterloo Region, educators, and families. Please feel free to contact me if you would like to discuss these ideas further.

Sincerely,



Lori Prospero, CAE  
Chief Executive Officer