



Education Report

Saturday November 21st CFUW Ontario Council Speakers Series

Carolyn Ferns – Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care

Topic – Covid’s Impact on Women from a Child Care Lens

The Economic Impact on Women

Carolyn Ferns, Executive Director of the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care discussed the basics of child care in Ontario, not enough spaces, plus the unaffordability of regulated child care for most families.

The highlighted points from Carolyn’s presentation are:

- The Covid pandemic has impacted working mothers, who are overwhelmed with feeling they are facing this crisis alone. Since the start of the recovery mode, employment of women with pre-school children have recovered at less than half the pace of men with pre-school children.
- This period has been referred to as the “She Session” as more women than men have caregiving responsibilities. The economic recovery will not happen until safe, adequate, affordable child care is in place.
- Since the pandemic began, over 132 Child Care centres have closed. Early Child Care (ECE’s) have been laid off as a result.
- Nearly $\frac{3}{4}$ of parents are concerned with the safety and the health of their families.
- Many parents are dealing with mental health issues while juggling many responsibilities, including working for home and caring for their young children.
- Parents are continuing to pay high fees for child care. The present system is broken and not working for families. A public funded system would work better for everyone.
- ECE’s are paid low wages while their responsibilities have increased. They are expected to keep children safe, as well as cleaning several times per day. They are feeling burned out.

- A first for Ontario, was offering free child care to essential service workers, plus extended hours, and small group/care worker ratios. This is the perfect child care model that advocates are striving for.
- **From Reopening to Recovery: A Child Care Plan for Ontario**” Carolyn Ferns was part of this initiative to use the emergency model as the benchmark to overhaul the present child care system.
- The child care issues in Ontario have gone on for a long time. Accessibility and affordability continue to be at the forefront of the issues that parents face while dealing with child care for their children.
- Early Child Care workers continue to be impacted by increased work loads, low wages, uncertainty about employment and financial instability while keeping themselves and the children in their care, safe.

Moving forward with child care in a post pandemic society will have to include the Federal Government with a move towards a National Child Care strategy. This is where we need to focus our energies. Women right now are losing ground even though their role in the economic recovery is critical.

The Federal Throne Speech¹

The Government will build on previous investments, learn from the model that already exists in Quebec, and work with all provinces and territories to ensure that high-quality care is accessible to all. There is broad consensus from all parts of society, including business and labour leaders, that the time is now.”

The Plan moving forward needs to focus on these three key areas:

1. Affordability
2. Decent work and wages for workers
3. Child care spaces for all

Carolyn thanked CFUW Ontario Council for their past and continued support on child care. Carolyn stressed, “the only way the economy can recover is to provide child care and support for working mothers and families.”

Respectfully Submitted
 Wendy Taylor
 Education Chair – CFUW Ontario Council

¹ Carolyn Fern’s Presentation Slides #8 for Ontario Council Speaker Series