

YWCA Ontario Coalition statement on the Ontario Fall Economic Statement delivered by Minister of Finance, Peter Bethlenfalvy

November 5, 2021 – Just this week, the YWCA Ontario Coalition officially wrapped its #SheCoversON campaign to draw attention to the urgent need for a plan to end the she-cession that has disproportionately impacted the lives of women province-wide.

And yesterday, our coalition of 11 Member Associations from across this province watched the Fall Economic Statement for signs of progress in this direction.

While we welcome its mission to ‘Build Ontario’ and ‘Work for Workers,’ we did not see any indication of the bold, transformative action that is required to see women enter or re-enter the workforce in ways that will address this province’s dire labour shortages and stimulate our economy.

Although it was encouraging to see a \$500,000 commitment of funding for the Investment in Women’s Future Program to offer free training for women facing multiple barriers to employment, it is far from enough to support the employment needs of women across this province. Women’s organizations are uniquely positioned to prepare women for long-term career success as they understand the multiple barriers faced by parents, newcomers, Black, Indigenous, racialized women, LGBTQ2S+ individuals and people living with disabilities. Five million dollars earmarked for second career expansion programs to help newcomers, gig workers and those with disabilities is just not enough.

But most importantly, there will be no economic recovery in this province without child care. It is striking that the economic statement made only a passing mention of this important piece of public infrastructure which requires investment and system-building in order to harness the economic potential of women. Creating 30,000 more spaces does nothing to address the chronic burnout among child care workers who have worked the entire pandemic and continue to work for wages far below the value of the work they’re doing. Further, it does not come close to addressing the crisis faced by the sector, which is on the brink of collapse. Deep investment, in the form of the \$10.2 billion sitting on the table from the federal government, is how we can fix it.

Decent work is such a crucial component of economic wellbeing, and while the minimum wage increase to \$15 an hour as of January 2022 is an improvement, it is well short of what a living wage looks like even in rural areas of this province. There was also no move to make permanent the temporary wage enhancement for personal support workers and no plan to support the long-term retention of the 13,000 new healthcare workers (many of whom will be women) that the Province plans to add in the coming years by way of investments in upskilling within this sector. We need to see the enactment of decent work conditions to protect and invest in sectors that employ women across Ontario.

We can end the she-cession by being serious about investment in women’s contributions to our economy. The YWCA Ontario Coalition pledges to be a committed partner in helping the Ontario government act on this timely and urgent need.

About YWCA Ontario

YWCA Ontario is a provincial coalition of YWCA Member Associations. We offer a range of housing programs and services including Violence Against Women (VAW) shelters, employment and training programs, community supports, child care services, and girls’ programs – all designed to address the

needs of women, girls, and gender diverse people and their families. We also engage in systemic advocacy to advance substantive gender and racial equality in our province. Combined, we serve more than 50,000 people every year across Ontario.

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