

June 17, 2021

The Honourable Stephen Lecce  
Ontario Minister of Education

Via Email: minister.edu@ontario.ca

**Re: National Early Learning and Child Care Plan will support the addition of 100,000 new jobs for women in the manufacturing sector**

Dear Minister Lecce:

On behalf of the Ontario members of Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters (CME), thank you for your ongoing engagement to improve education and training. I am writing as a follow-up to our recent conversation on child care and early childhood education (ECE) and seek your support for coordinating the implementation of the \$30 billion National Early Learning and Child Care Plan as announced in the 2021 Federal Budget. Our association firmly believes that this historic investment can play a major role in supporting families today and boosting long-term economic growth by kickstarting ECE.

For 150 years, CME has been focused on helping manufacturers in Canada grow. Over the past decade, the largest obstacle to growth has been the availability of qualified labour. In fact, in [CME's 2020 Management Issues Survey](#), 60 per cent of respondents reported having immediate labour and skills shortages. Without adequate labour supply companies cannot invest in their capacity, they cannot adopt new technologies, and they cannot launch new innovative products.

Among our many efforts to address these critical labour issues, CME launched a campaign dedicated to supporting, promoting and inspiring women to pursue careers in manufacturing. In 2018, we launched the *We Can Do It* campaign aimed at increasing the number of women in manufacturing by 100,000 in five years. A national child care program that is attuned to the specific needs of our sector could attract up to 50,000 working moms to manufacturing, thus going a long way in helping us achieve this ambitious goal.

As highlighted in the Federal Budget, and acknowledged and repeated by the Ontario government, women have borne a disproportionate share of pandemic-related job losses because they hold so many of the jobs in the hardest hit sectors. As well, women have shouldered the burden of child care responsibilities when schools and daycare centres have been closed to slow the spread of COVID-19, further limiting their ability to work. In short, the pandemic has made it abundantly clear that access to child care is essential to a functioning economy.

A lesser-known fact is that this same story is also playing out in traditionally male-dominated sectors, like manufacturing. In April 2021, female employment in manufacturing was 2.4 per cent below the pre-pandemic level, while male employment was 1.7 per cent above this threshold. Despite the lower level of female employment, the increase in male employment has been enough to return overall

manufacturing employment back to the pre-pandemic level. This is another sign that labour and skills shortages will remain a key challenge for the sector.

Boosting the labour force participation of women would help address current and anticipated labour shortages in manufacturing. In fact, women only make up about 28 per cent of the total manufacturing workforce, and of these workers, only about 10 per cent or 50,000 of workers are women with children under six years old. Enabling more women, especially working mothers, to pursue a career in manufacturing would be a win-win situation. It would help women transition from precarious part-time work to high-paying full-time manufacturing jobs, while at the same time helping the sector and Canada's economy grow.

That said, it is important to point out that some jobs in manufacturing involve working non-standard hours and are often located in more rural settings. While finding affordable child care spaces in Canada is hard enough during the daytime, it is even harder during nights and weekends. Thus, it is imperative that a national child care plan consider the situation of families in which parents work non-standard hours. Not only is it a matter of equity and fairness, but it is also one sure way of giving more women the opportunity to pursue a career in manufacturing. As such, we recommend that support be provided both to all types of licensed childcare, both institutionalized and home-based.

Along with providing affordable and accessible child care, the plan must also make ECE a top priority. Research shows that access to high-quality ECE helps children learn the social skills needed to interact successfully with other people and to form good relationships. It also gives them the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in later school years and in the workforce, especially vital in our increasingly technology-driven society and economy. While it will take years to realize the full benefits, these actions will eventually help address Canada's long-term labour and skills shortages.

Thank you for your government's commitment to foster a strong and competitive manufacturing sector in Ontario. CME and our members would be pleased to meet again with you to provide our support, ideas and insights as a National Early Learning and Child Care Plan is developed. CME will be reaching out to your provincial counterparts across the country to encourage their constructive action on this critical file as well.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if we can be of further assistance on this or any other issue.

Sincerely,



Mathew Wilson

Senior Vice President, Policy & Government Relations, Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters

CC: Hon. Todd Smith, Minister of Children, Community and Social Services  
Hon. Vic Fedeli, Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade  
Hon. Jill Dunlop, Minister Without Portfolio & Associate Minister of Children and Women's Issues