

The Honourable Minister of Education Stephen Lecce
Ontario Ministry of Education
Toronto, Ontario
By email: minister.edu@ontario.ca

June 25, 2020

Dear Minister Lecce,

On behalf of the Ontario Nonprofit Network (ONN), we are writing to you to provide insights from the nonprofit and charitable sector on the importance of accessible, affordable, safe, and high quality nonprofit licensed child care for not only our sector's women-majority labour force but also all Ontario parents as the economy re-opens.

ONN is the independent network for the 58,000 nonprofits and charities in Ontario, focused on policy, advocacy and services to strengthen the sector as a key pillar of our society and economy.

The current proposed funding guidelines to reopen child care space across Ontario are encouraging next steps. However, nonprofit licensed child care requires clearer communications and commitments to adequate funding for reopening.

Impact

Child care is of particular importance to the nonprofit and charitable sector in Ontario as 80 per cent of its one million employees are women workers. Many provincial associations and organizations across the sector have expressed that they worry about the impact of lack of adequate and affordable licensed child care on their women workers, and thus on their ability to continue providing modified services, reopening closed enterprises, and eventually moving to 100 per cent service capacity. For the majority of the sector's workforce to show up for work and continue serving communities during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond, these nonprofit workers need accessible, affordable, safe, and high quality child care

Nonprofits and charities are also at the forefront of fighting the COVID-19 pandemic as many of our frontline workers are considered essential workers in essential services. This includes long-term care homes, community health, mental health, homeless and women's shelters, food security programs, developmental disability services, and organizations working with those who have come into conflict with the law. They have been using emergency child care during the pandemic, which in the early days of the crisis ONN advocated for essential nonprofit workers to have access to¹. However, emergency child care will shut down on June 26, 2020 and essential

¹ See ONN letter to Education Minister Stephen Lecce. April 2020.
<https://theonn.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Letter-on-emergency-childcare-APR-2020.pdf>

workers will have to arrange new care which might not be available given the uncertainty around child care reopening and spaces.

Overall, the COVID-19 crisis has already had a greater impact on women's employment, with Ontario's official unemployment rate in May 2020 at 13.1 per cent for men and 14.7 per cent for women. Once the involuntary part-time rate is included, the rate for women was also much higher, at 16.4 per cent, compared to 14.0 per cent for men.² Moreover, women are known to be disproportionately the primary caregivers of children and so with school closures and unreliable re-opening of licensed child care, they are more likely to stay home.

Recommendations

While the province's new funding guidelines are encouraging, lack of communication on its implementation and commitment to it are not helpful for the child care sector. They need clear and direct communication and commitments from the provincial government in order to reopen with support and confidence. We encourage a roundtable between the province and child care sector and endorse the plan released by the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care (OCBCC) and the Association of Early Childhood Educators of Ontario (AECEO) for a plan for child care.³

Indigenous led, francophone, and anglophone child care spaces require increased resources to adapt to new pandemic requirements, while creating adequate spaces to support (especially) women's return to work -- without increasing fees which are already some of the highest in Canada. It is unreasonable to expect child care providers to reduce their child-to-ECE ratios, clean more frequently, equip and train workers with PPE, and refrain from increasing parent fees without an increase in public funding.

Ontario's recovery will be seriously hindered unless it includes a plan for women workers -- and that means supporting accessible, affordable, safe, and high quality nonprofit licensed child care.

In conclusion

It is in times of crisis and rebuilding that the nonprofit sector is often needed the most, and the sector in turn requires the partnership of government to continue to serve communities. Nonprofits act as a bridge between government and communities, enabling policy decisions to be better informed by what is happening on the ground across Ontario's vast and diverse landscape of urban, rural, remote and northern communities.

² Statistics Canada. "Supplementary unemployment rates, monthly, unadjusted for seasonality." Table: 14-10-0077-01. June 2020.

<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1410007701&pickMembers%5B0%5D=1.7&pickMembers%5B1%5D=3.3&pickMembers%5B2%5D=4.1>

³ OCBCC and AECEO. "From reopening to recovery: A plan for child care reopening in Ontario and moving to a publicly funded system." May 27, 2020.

https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/childcareon/pages/2628/attachments/original/1590577582/FROM_REOPENING_TO_RECOVERY.pdf?1590577582

We would welcome the opportunity to speak with you at your earliest convenience to discuss the child care needs of Ontario's nonprofits during the pandemic and as we transition into the reopening and recovery phase.

Sincerely,



Cathy Taylor
Executive Director
Ontario Nonprofit Network

Supporting Organizations:





A TURNING POINT
FOR WOMEN



[L'Association francophone à l'éducation des services à l'enfance de l'Ontario](#)
[Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario \(AFO\)](#)
[Association of Early Childhood Educators Ontario \(AECEO\)](#)
[Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses](#)
[Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care \(OCBCC\)](#)
[Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres](#)
[The Neighbourhood Group](#)
[Toronto Neighbourhood Centres](#)
[YWCA Cambridge](#)
[YWCA Toronto](#)

Copy to: The Honourable Premier of Ontario Doug Ford
By email: doug.fordco@pc.ola.org

The Honourable Minister of Children, Community and Social Services Todd Smith
By email: ministerMCCSS@ontario.ca

The Honourable Associate Minister of Children and Women's Issues Jill Dunlop
By email: jill.dunlop@pc.ola.org