



Open letter to Premier Kathleen Wynne about proposed changes to staff: child ratios and group sizes in Ontario child care centres

Posted by Carolyn Ferns on March 16, 2016 · [Flag](#)

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Dear Premier Wynne:

We are Ontario parents, educators, service providers, academics and community members. We are very concerned about some of the regulatory changes your government has proposed for child care centres. We are especially troubled by the changes to age group composition that will have the effect of reducing staff: child ratios and increasing group sizes.

We believe that these will have two negative outcomes: first, they will erode the quality of care that is so important for young children. Second, the changes will have a negative impact on accessibility, making much-needed spaces, particularly for infants, even less financially and practically viable than now.

Expert opinion shows the proposed ratios/group size regulations that would affect children aged 12-18 months and 24-30 months to be below even minimum recommended quality standards and lower than almost all other Canadian jurisdictions. This would mean that young children in child care would be cared for by too few adults in too-large groups.

It is hard to argue that a two year old with the proposed 1:8 adult: child ratio in a group of 24 is in a "quality" or even a safe environment. While we are pleased with the proposal to increase the number of Registered Early Childhood Educators, research suggests that an increase in trained staff is not a trade-off for decent ratios and group sizes. Additionally, the already-stretched, underpaid, 97% female child care workforce cannot continue to pick up the slack for massive gaps in public financing.

Your government contends that these changes are necessary because they will "increase access". To the contrary, analyses by public entities and community service providers show that "new" infant rooms with a younger, narrower age range at a very high fee will close and that there will be severe financial and practical effects that affect service viability across age groups. We recognize that there are good reasons to make changes in early childhood education and care (ECEC) in Ontario. But we believe that these must be based on the best available evidence about what is of most benefit to children and families; we argue that these proposed changes are not. Additionally, we suggest that changes in ECEC in Ontario will continue to have negative effects if they continue to be "piecemeal".

Thus, we propose that your government needs to withdraw proposed changes to age ranges, ratios and group sizes. Instead we recommend that the government develop a well-considered road map that begins with a clear vision, goals/objectives, targets and timetables, with regulatory changes as one part of this plan. This would have a better chance for successful policy change. We also call on Ontario to play a positive leadership role with the new federal Liberal government and other provinces/territories in developing the high quality universal integrated ECEC system that so many have been seeking for so long.

Signed,

Organizations

Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care
Association of Early Childhood Educators Ontario
Campaign 2000 - Ontario
Canadian Union of Public Employees Ontario
Canadian Union of Public Employees, Local 2484 Child Care Workers
Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada
Childcare Resource and Research Unit
Children's Aid Society of Toronto
Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario
Family Service Toronto
Health Nexus
Ontario Council Canadian Federation of University Women
Ottawa Child Care Association
Public Service Alliance of Canada - Ontario
Toronto Coalition for Better Child Care
Thunder Bay Childcare Supervisors Network
Unifor
YWCA Toronto
Ontario Federation of Labour
Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation

Child care centres and service providers

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