



P.O. Box 46
Palgrave, ON
L7E 3S9
1.800.567.7075
admin@adco-o.on.ca

MEDIA RELEASE

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DAY CARE FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN PUT AT RISK BY PROVINCE'S JK/SK PLAN

Toronto: On the heels of Premier Dalton McGuinty's announcement naming the 600 schools that will offer full-day learning for four- and five-year-olds this fall, members of Ontario's largest child care association, the Association of Day Care Operators of Ontario (ADCO) are urging the government to move forward with measures to stabilize Ontario's existing licensed child care system.

"What's at stake is the cost and availability of care for children under the age of four," explains Karen Eilersen, Chair of ADCO's Provincial Advocacy Campaign. "Almost all licensed child care programs, whether they're operated on a commercial or a not-for-profit basis, rely on the revenues generated from kindergarten programs to help cover the cost of caring for children who are under the age of four. With the Province committing to creating 35,000 new childcare spaces in schools this September and also planning to offer fee-based before- and after-school care, many licensed child care programs simply won't be able to survive."

Care for younger children is more expensive to provide because younger children are less able to do things for themselves, more staff is required to supervise the same number of children, and different equipment is required in the rooms. "Presuming there are enough families in a given area to enrol younger children in existing licensed child care centres rather than four- and five-year-olds, that still leaves the question of costs for adding more staff and converting existing facilities to serve younger children," says Eilersen. "In this economy, many licensed programs are already struggling to keep their doors open. Unless the Province takes action immediately, parents can expect to see centre closures and fees increase by as much as 25%."

"It's important for people to understand that as educators, we support whatever is best for children and we welcome this new initiative," adds Eilersen. "We just recognize the government must act quickly and in a substantive fashion to ensure that child care remains available in all Ontario communities for children of all ages, not just four- and five-year-olds."

The Association of Daycare Operators of Ontario (ADCO) is a not-for-profit organization that brings the owners and managers of Ontario's licensed child care programs together to enhance child care quality and achieve common goals. Its members include licensed centre-based programs, home child care agencies, nursery schools, preschools and before- and after-school programs. With nearly 400 members, including both commercial and not-for-profit childcare programs, some of which operate in multiple locations, ADCO is the single largest child care association in Ontario.

For more information, please contact the Association of Daycare Operators of Ontario (ADCO) President Bonnie Walraven at 519-377-0341 or bwalraven@adco-o.on.ca.