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## **DAY CARE OPERATORS WARN PARENTS: THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS "FREE" PRESCHOOL**

*For Immediate Release*

ONTARIO—March 28, 2018—The owners and operators of Ontario's independent licensed child care centres are questioning whether the Government's proposed plan for "free" preschool will result in the closure of hundreds of licensed child care centres across the province.

"So few details have been made available to the centres that currently provide these services, one can only imagine how this program will actually be rolled out," says Andrea Hannen, Operations Manager of the Association of Day Care Operators of Ontario (ADCO). ADCO represents independent licensed centres, both commercial and not-for-profit. Independent licensed centres account for roughly a third of Ontario's licensed child care spaces.

"If the centres that are currently offering these services are to be included in this new program, the plan might be to help families with children in this age group with their licensed child care fees, which could prompt many centres to expand at their own expense" says Hannen. "However, if the Government's plan is to replace some or all of the existing licensed preschool spaces with new preschool spaces based in schools, like it did with the roll-out of Full-Day Kindergarten, many families will be left scrambling. It will also mean the cost of new space creation will fall entirely on Ontario's taxpayers."

Critics of the Government's Full-Day Kindergarten program contend that its rapid roll-out forced hundreds of small, independent licensed child care programs to close their doors, resulting in fewer child care choices for families. And, parents aren't necessarily paying less for child care. Some school boards charge families as much for wrap-around care (the portion of the day before and after the regular school day) as independent licensed centres charge for a full-day of care, which includes a hot meal and two snacks.

Critics also contend that since school boards are exempt from the Child Care and Early Years Act, the children enrolled in these programs are subject to a much wider range of risks. Despite the integration of these younger children into the public school system, the Government has continued to close neighbourhood schools across the province, resulting in more children being bussed to school and fewer opportunities for parents to be involved in their children's education.

"We've seen promises like this before—for instance, in the early 1990s under Bob Rae's NDP government," says Hannen. "Parents need to understand that there is no such thing as "free," particularly where licensed child care is involved. Whether it comes in the form of parent fees or is hidden behind higher taxes, it still comes out of parents' pockets. If the new program results in more government debt, it means the cost is passed along to their children."

*For further information on the work done by the Association of Day Care Operators of Ontario, please visit <http://www.adco-o.on.ca/>.*

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