



1-188 Bunting Road  
St. Catharines, ON L2M 3Y1  
1.800.567.7075  
[admin@adco-o.on.ca](mailto:admin@adco-o.on.ca)

## **DAY CARE OPERATORS SAY POLICY CHANGES ARE NEEDED TO INCREASE ACCESS TO LICENSED CARE**

*For Immediate Release*

ONTARIO—July 11, 2019—Ontario’s independent licensed child care centres are concerned that misinformation about child care funding is causing parents unnecessary stress. They say Provincial policy changes, not more investment in the public sector, are what’s needed to make high quality licensed child care more affordable and easier to find.

Most Provincial investments in licensed child care services in Ontario are delivered through the province’s 47 upper-tier municipalities or local school boards. The Ford government’s recent efforts to bring greater efficiency to how municipalities spend this money included proposed changes to cost-sharing arrangements. There is also speculation that plans to build new child care spaces in public schools may also be on hold.

“Taxpayer-funded expansion in the public sector isn’t the only option for bringing relief to families,” says Andrea Hannen, Executive Director of the Association of Day Care Operators of Ontario. “And, there’s no evidence that carrying on with the previous government’s approach to Ontario’s child care challenges will even work. When Dalton McGuinty first took office, there were only licensed spaces for about 20% of Ontario’s children under the age of five. When Kathleen Wynne left office, there were still only licensed spaces for about 20% of Ontario’s children under the age of five, despite spending billions in federal and provincial tax dollars. The difference is that prior to the roll-out of full-day kindergarten and the “schools-first” approach to child care expansion, there were many more independent licensed child care centres offering parents a much wider range of innovative programming options. Now, public sector and quasi-public sector providers predominate, leaving parents with fewer choices and paying more for them.”

“There are other, more sustainable ways the Ministry of Education can make great licensed care more affordable and easier to find, but it will take a clear change in policy direction,” says Hannen. “The CARE tax credit was a positive step, but there’s much more work to be done. There are hundreds of independent licensed child care centres across Ontario that are ready, willing and able to expand or open new locations. Many have proven track records of serving families on fee subsidy and children with special needs. What they’re telling us is that Provincial policies like “schools-first” need to end and the Province needs to start holding municipal governments accountable when they mismanage Provincial child care dollars. Until the Province does this, it will be hard for independent licensed centres, either commercial or not-for-profit, to feel confident about expansion.”

ADCO looks forward to working with the new Minister of Education to realize all of the potential that’s out there to make great licensed child care more affordable and easier for parents to find.

***ADCO is the industry association for Ontario’s independent licensed child care programs, both commercial and not-for-profit. Independent licensed child care programs are those that are not run by public sector entities such as municipalities or school boards, or affiliated with national multi-service agencies such as YMCAs.***

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For further information, please contact:  
Association of Day Care Operators of Ontario (ADCO)  
[admin@adco-o.on.ca](mailto:admin@adco-o.on.ca) or 1-800-567-7075