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INDEPENDENT LICENSED CHILD CARE CENTRES PREPARING TO MEET COMMUNITY NEEDS

For Immediate Release

ONTARIO—January 15, 2020— As labour disruptions in Ontario’s public school system leave parents scrambling to make alternate arrangements for their children, the owner/operators of Ontario’s independent licensed child care centres are preparing for the influx of families. In some cases, these preparations began long before Minister of Education Stephen Lecce’s announcement of the new Parent Support program, which will see families reimbursed for some of the child care costs they incur on days when teachers are on strike.

“It can take a bit of time to arrange for the staff, facilities and equipment needed to serve more children, or even to increase the number of hours children are at your centre on any given day,” says Andrea Hannen, Executive Director of the Association of Day Care Operators of Ontario (ADCO). “Some of our members started working toward this goal last fall and are already in a position to accommodate increased demand for their services. It also helps that shortly after the Minister’s announcement this morning, the Ministry of Education issued a memo to child care licensees letting them know it stands ready to help fast-track their efforts to ramp up the licensed services available to families who will need a back-up plan for days when schools are closed.”

Despite these combined efforts, it is by no means a certainty that every family that needs to find alternate care for their children will be able to do so. “Ontario’s independent licensed child care sector was radically downsized when the McGuinty government introduced government-run full-day kindergarten,” says Hannen. “This downsizing has continued since the Wynne government introduced the Child Care and Early Years Act (CCEYA), which has artificially limited the expansion of Ontario’s independent licensed child care sector, as well as the development of new kinds of licensed services such as those offering flexible hours and 24/7 availability.”

[A recent report by the Ministry of Education reveals that some 2000 of Ontario’s licensed child care centres closed between 2008 and 2018.](#) “It’s really a shame that so many of Ontario’s elected leaders and public officials saw these centres as disposable. Parents could really use them right about now,” says Hannen.

“Our hope is that Minister Lecce will continue to support parents and lead a comprehensive review of the *Child Care and Early Years Act*. Child care policy reform is urgently needed if parents are to have more child care choice and viable back-up plans during public school closures. It’s critical that these reform efforts eliminate the municipal conflicts of interest, Ministry red tape, staff shortages and other barriers that make it harder for existing independent licensed centres to grow and new independent licensed centres to open.”

ADCO is the industry association for Ontario’s independent licensed child care centres. Independent licensed child care centres are those that are not run by public sector entities such as municipalities or school boards, or by large multi-service agencies such as YMCAs. While independent licensed child care centres may be run as businesses, not-for-profits or co-ops, their core business is licensed child care. Independent licensed child care centres account for more than a third of Ontario’s licensed child care spaces. Many are run as small businesses, owned and operated by women.

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For further information, please contact:
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