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REOPENING DELAYED OR UNCERTAIN FOR MANY OF ONTARIO'S LICENSED CHILD CARE CENTRES

For Immediate Release

ONTARIO—June 29, 2020—Across Ontario, parents are growing increasingly anxious about the fact that so many of Ontario's licensed child care centres still haven't reopened. Many independent licensed child care operators are growing increasingly anxious as well, wondering if they'll ever get a fair shot at reviving their centres after the Provincial COVID-19 emergency orders shut them down. Smaller centres owned and/or operated by women have been among the hardest hit.

"What we have are hundreds of women-owned small businesses and stand-alone not-for-profits that have had no source of revenue for over three months," says Andrea Hannen, executive director of the Association of Day Care Operators of Ontario (ADCO). "The provincial Government promised them "sustainability funding" to get them through the closure period and then made promises about additional funding to help them cope with the costs of reopening. So far, most licensees haven't received a dime of this money, and they haven't even been told when it might arrive or how much they might receive."

Many of Ontario's licensed child care centres are already at their debt limit because of the extended closure period and the lack of a timely Provincial rescue package. Reopening now will be at lower capacity and will only generate about a third of the usual revenue. Operating costs will be nearly double due to the need for additional staffing, disinfection and PPE. There also isn't a clear Provincial plan for reopening the sector. The Ministry of Education has required most of the funding for reopening to be delivered through 47 different municipalities, each of which has to develop its own related policies and procedures. Each of Ontario's 35 public health units has been tasked with coming up with its own process for ensuring licensed centres will be safe for staff and families.

The current Minister of Education, MPP Stephen Lecce, has been in the role for just over a year. According to the Province's Info-Go Employee Directory, the position of Assistant Deputy Minister for Early Years and Child Care has remained vacant for most of that time, as has the position of Director for Child Care Quality Assurance and Licensing. Currently, there are numerous other senior staff vacancies in roles related to child care oversight, policy and funding.

"Independent licensed child care centres play a vital role in Ontario's economic recovery," says Hannen. "It's disappointing that the Province doesn't seem to have the administrative capacity to support its licensees through the reopening process. Ontario parents want to get back to work and they're relying on this Government to take the lead on getting licensed child care centres the funding, supplies and timely approvals they need to reopen. ADCO stands ready, willing and able to advise the Government in this regard, but the political will has to be there and so far, we haven't seen it."

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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.

For further information, please contact:
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