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FEDERAL CHILD CARE PROPOSAL MAY NOT INCREASE ACCESS TO CARE

For Immediate Release

ONTARIO—April 20, 2021— The 2021 federal budget promises to establish a Canada-wide early learning and child care system, comparing this undertaking to the creation of a public school system and public health care. “While there’s no question that many families could use help with their child care costs, there are many ways to accomplish this goal,” says Andrea Hannen, executive director of the Association of Day Care Operators of Ontario (ADCO).

“If the federal government is envisioning a public sector-only system of institutional child care, it is unlikely to be able to meet the needs of most families. In fact, many families may wind up with fewer child care choices. However, if the federal government works with the provinces to build upon what is already working in their jurisdictions—including direct supports for parents, such as the CARE tax credit—it could make a real difference to families. The devil is in the details.”

“Even prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, most jurisdictions in Ontario were experiencing significant changes in how families access licensed child care,” says Hannen. “There was a growing demand for part-time care, care during non-traditional hours, overnight care and generally greater flexibility for families. In a typical work week, a lot of parents were using a combination of at least two to three different providers, including licensed, unlicensed and familial arrangements. Direct supports to parents, such as the Canada Child Benefit and CARE tax credit allow parents to access the widest range of options... options that truly meet their needs. Since COVID, Canadians’ work arrangements have become even more diverse. The need for flexible, innovative options has never been greater and parental trust in large institutional settings is at an all-time low.”

ADCO, which represents independent licensed centres, many of which are small businesses owned and operated by women, cautions against any plan that seeks to implement a one-size-fits-all approach to child care. “Thinking in terms of systems and institutions means a lot of families will wind up excluded,” says Hannen. “It could also force the closure of many of the licensed centres that currently exist.” In most communities, centres that used to have lengthy waiting lists, now have vacancies thanks to the pandemic. If parents aren’t supported if they use their usual, neighbourhood centre, only the centre assigned to them by the government, many woman-owned centres will close.

“Our hope is that the Province of Ontario will show its support for these woman-owned small businesses and encourage the federal government to ensure its “feminist agenda” embraces women’s entrepreneurship and ongoing investment in Ontario’s licensed child care sector. This will provide Ontario parents with greater stability by building on what’s already working, rather than having to start from scratch by replacing centres that already exist with new taxpayer-built facilities.”

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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 small businesses, owned and operated by women.

For further information, please contact:
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