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WANT TO CREATE NEW CHILD CARE SPACES? FUND FAMILIES DIRECTLY SAY CHILD CARE PROVIDERS

For Immediate Release

ONTARIO—September 14, 2021— As federal election candidates promote their parties' child care platforms, the Association of Child Care Operators of Ontario (ADCO) is urging all parties to increase funding for families, rather than government bureaucracies. "Governments at all levels have proven themselves to be incapable of creating the number and types of licensed child care centres families need," says Andrea Hannen, ADCO's executive director. "This is because they typically try and pick winners and losers in terms of which organizations are funded to provide the care, rather than simply opening up the process to all licensed providers."

"Not every licensed centre is right for every family," explains Hannen. "And, not every child will thrive in a licensed setting. Some will do better in a home care setting, with a neighbour or relative. Parents know better than anybody what works best for their family, which is why it's so vital that they be in the driver's seat when it comes to decisions about their children's early years education and care. That's why we encourage all political parties to focus on delivering more funds directly to families."

While some have criticized this approach for not creating new licensed spaces, this criticism is unfounded. In fact, it was used by Quebec Premier Jean Charest. From 2009 to 2010 the number of privately-owned daycare spaces nearly doubled, growing from 6,954 to 11,173, taking the pressure off of its CPE system, which couldn't keep up with the demand for new spaces. Today, privately owned spaces still account for nearly a quarter of the total spaces in that province.

A refundable tax credit system that funds families directly may be preferable to the other approaches being proposed on the campaign trail for other reasons as well. It can start providing families with cost relief in a matter of weeks rather than years, and the costs associated with its implementation are minimal. The federal government and some provinces, including Ontario, already have mechanisms in place for determining eligibility and delivering the funds to families.

One of the biggest advantages of the refundable tax credit is that it poses no risk to any of the existing systems of licensed child care that are in place in the various provinces and territories across the country. "So far, there really hasn't been a fulsome discussion about how the other options may wind up undermining existing systems, causing service disruptions for families," says Hannen. "We've seen this happen twice in Ontario, once during the Rae administration and once during the McGuinty/Wynne years. In both instances, the government of the day tried to limit the growth of child care to public and not-for-profit providers and in both cases, many families were left scrambling when these policies forced many independent licensed child care centres to close. Funding families directly lets us build on our strengths and helps more families."

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ADCO is the industry association for Ontario's independent licensed child care centres, both commercial and not-for-profit. 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. Most are small businesses, owned and operated by women.

For further information, please contact:
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