



Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care
Coalition ontarienne pour de meilleurs services éducatifs à l'enfance

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August 9th, 2012

Mayor Dave Canfield

Dear Mayor Canfield,

The Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care is Ontario's advocacy organization in support of a vision of universal, affordable, and non-profit child care.

We just became aware today that the Kenora City Council plans to vote to close the Castle of Learning Children's Discovery Centre and the city-run before-and-after school programs at a Council meeting only four days from now.

Across Ontario, four out of five children lack access to a licensed child care program. The child care sector has suffered from long-term underfunding. Families in every community rely on licensed child care to provide a safe, nurturing and positive early learning experience for young children at a critical developmental age.

With licensed child care, parents are assured that a child care centre is high quality, regulated and has trained and professional staff. Licensed child care helps children, families and communities. Given the need for licensed child care in every community, we must preserve our existing spaces while we work to expand licensed child care options for families.

A rash decision to close the city-run child care program, and after-school programs, will affect not only Kenora's children, but it will have an impact on Kenora's community as a whole. By closing the city-run child care programs, Kenora City Council will leave more than 200 children (24 child care spots and 180 before-and-after care spaces) without care. What is Council's solution for the approximate 180 parents who need child care? How will parents continue in the workforce? Has Council consulted parents and community members about the impact that the closure would mean to the community? Other existing programs within the community already struggle to meet the high demand within the community, with most having long wait-lists.

I am writing to you today to ask you to reconsider the closure of your city's child care programs. The Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care works to ensure affordable, high quality child care for all children.

The vote on closure of the centre comes at a critical time for the early learning and child care sector. Child care has been moved to the Ministry of Education, and in the coming months the Ministry is undergoing a consultation process in which the Ministry will be considering changes to legislation governing child care programs, and also the ways in which child care is funded. In addition, the Ontario Government has just announced stabilization funding of \$242 million over the next three years.

The concerns you have raised about viability amidst the changes brought-on by full-day kindergarten are important and must be addressed. Our organization, along with Ontario's municipalities, will continue to press the Provincial Government for adequate funding for high quality child care. Unfortunately, if Kenora City Council votes to close its city-run centre, it will increase instability and make it more difficult for local families to find a great environment for their children – during the day or after-school.

In Ontario, we are proud to have many municipalities running early childhood education and care programs. It is important for cities to ensure that parents have access to affordable child care spaces with high quality environments. Child care programs allow parents to participate in the workforce without having to worry about the care of their children.

The OCBC would welcome the opportunity to work with the City of Kenora, the community and parents to promote the importance of child care programs. We support your call for adequate funding to respond to the financial challenges being experienced faced by child care programs.

It is not too late to reconsider the decision to close the Castle of Learning Children's Discovery Centre. Instead, we invite you to work with us to expand licensed child care. Please let us know how we can be of further assistance in working to protect and grow Ontario's child care system.

Sincerely,

Andrea Calver
Coordinator, Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care

Cc:

Hon Laurel Broten, Minister of Education
MPP Peter Tabuns, NDP Education Critic
MPP Lisa MacLeod, PC Education Critic
MPP Sarah Campbell
Jim Grieve, Assistant Deputy Minister, Early Learning, Ministry of Education
Councillor Ron Lunny
Councillor Charito Drinkwalter
Councillor Sharon Smith
Councillor Rory McMillan
Councillor Roderick (Rod) F. McKay
Councillor Louie Roussin
MP Greg Rickford
OCBC Executive and Council