

June 14, 2010

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky
Minister of Education
22nd Floor Mowat Block
900 Bay Street
Toronto, ON M7A 1L2

Hon. John Milloy
Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities
3rd Floor Mowat Block
900 Bay Street
Toronto, ON M7A 1Y7

Dear Ministers:

The closure of child care centres in community colleges is, quite frankly, an attack on three fronts:

- o a vital component of the curriculum of Early Childhood Education Programs;
- o accessible, quality child care for students; and
- o decent wages for important work.

In recent years, a number of colleges have closed their child care centres. Cambrian College will close its daycare and home child care agency as of June 30 and Northern College will close the daycare at its Porcupine campus as of June 25. Experienced staff, several with 20 years of service, will be out of work.

As you know, college daycares are run by their Early Childhood Education Programs (ECEPs). College presidents complain the daycares lose money but this is a deliberate mis-reading of the reasons for the daycares' establishment. They were opened to be lab schools for the colleges' ECEPs and to provide child care to the colleges' students, many of them mature students returning to school after a period of time in the workforce.

The daycares are considered a critical component of the ECEPs because they ensure students learn of the social, emotional, physical and cognitive development of children both through academic studies, as well as in the practical setting of the lab school. The knowledge and skills that ECEP students develop from their time in the daycares are vital to producing the high quality graduate that employers expect.

As such, the college daycares are recognized for providing the very best in child care and early learning. They also provide much-needed placement opportunities for other college programs, including Child and Youth Worker and Nursing programs.

Equally important, the establishment of the daycares was an affirmation of the simple truth that people can't work, study or re-train without access to affordable child care. The loss of on-site child care will be a barrier to college enrollment for students of all ages, but particularly for laid-off workers who need to train for a new career after the recession wiped out their jobs.

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One of the most disturbing aspects of the closures is the fact that a decent, living wage for child care staff is viewed as a problem. College presidents blame the closures on the decent wages paid to the mainly-female staff of their daycares.

This happened most recently at Cambrian when college administrators met with parents of the Play 'n' Learn Day Care after the college announced its closure. We have since learned that Play 'n' Learn's equipment will go to a daycare with which the City of Greater Sudbury has a purchase of service contract. This move appears to be a blatant end-run around paying decent wages for the important work of building children's positive social and academic development.

Ministers, college child care centres are a vital component of the curriculum of Early Childhood Education Programs, as well as providing accessible, quality child care to the wider student body. Do not allow them to be closed.

I request that your ministries immediately develop a plan for funding these child care centres and share such a plan with the colleges and communities affected, as well as my union.

Sincerely,



Warren (Smokey) Thomas
President

WS/mp