

February 9, 2010

Sent by fax – 416-325-3745

Honourable Dalton McGuinty
Premier of Ontario
Legislative Building, Queen's Park
Toronto, ON M7A 1A1

Dear Premier McGuinty,

For more than two decades, the Canadian Auto Workers union (CAW-Canada) has been advocating for a national child care program.

The CAW has made great strides at the bargaining table with respect to child care, beginning in the early 1980's when we negotiated and developed high-quality, non-profit, licensed child care centres in Windsor and Oshawa. Since then we have taken our commitment to child care even further by negotiating child-care subsidies for members in some of our major workplaces. However, we can never bargain enough child care to meet the needs of our members. It is our belief that governments must play a larger, more dynamic and vigorous role in the early learning and care of our youngest citizens.

I would like to congratulate the provincial government on the decision to offer full day learning for four and five year olds beginning September 2010. This program is a good first step but must come with the necessary tools to support the transition to an Early Learning Program.

Having said that we are concerned that while we focus on building a new system for four and five year olds, without a transition plan to ensure the current system remains stable and sustainable, our existing child care centers will be dealing with empty spaces and drastically declining revenues.

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The recent decision by Windsor city council to close nine city operated daycare and early learning operations in September should be a warning bell for all Ontario. A collapsing child care system can only be seen as a disaster for full day learning. Parents will lose child care options for younger children and child care centers will be financially vulnerable or close without sufficient funding to maintain existing levels of child care now operating in our communities.

Reports indicate the announced closures in Windsor were made in anticipation of a planned \$63.5 million cut to Ontario child care programs in the provincial budget. The closures will eliminate thousands of good paying jobs in a province that cannot afford to lose them and leave many children from low income families without child care.

A recent report by the Center for Spatial Economics highlights the impact on families and how the province's decision will have a ripple effect that will lead to a catastrophic collapse on an already fragile child care system.

As a result the cuts of \$63.5 million would mean a direct loss of 1862 good jobs for child care workers across Ontario leaving 7,600 children from low income families without child care. In addition 3480 parents would leave their jobs without access to a child care subsidy at a time when the people of Ontario are trying to recover from the worst economic crisis seen in years. The study indicates that low income families and single parents will be the hardest hit once again. Projecting those 3480 parents will be forced to leave their jobs or school when they lose access to safe, quality care for their children.

Cities like Toronto who currently have 16,000 children on a waiting list for subsidized child care without the continued provincial funding will be forced to cut thousands of child care subsidies. The situation would be similar for other regions.

With the loss of funding the impact on child care centers in the future is bleak as centers face a declining enrolment, empty spaces and declining revenues force layoffs and increased fees, ultimately leaving many centers vulnerable to closures.

I urge your government to allocate sufficient funding to maintain the existing levels of child care services currently available in Ontario in the 2010 provincial budget. It is imperative as we move forward with the government's plan for full day learning for four and five year olds that parents with younger children don't lose options due to lack of funding to existing child care centers in Ontario.

Charles Pascal in his report "With Our Future in Mind" stated "Federal funding that now supports Best Start child care spaces is scheduled to end in early 2010. This support needs to be maintained as part of the effective implementation of full-day learning. The province should make it clear to its municipal partners that it will secure continued support from the federal government for the original Best Start funding base or replace federal funding with provincial resources to ensure stability."

Your government has an opportunity to put in place the building blocks of a lasting legacy but it needs to do be done right from the start. I believe the people of Ontario want an early learning and child care system for all preschool children that is well-funded and provide high quality affordable services. This is a critical time. We are about to lay down the fundamentals of a new system but it must not be at the expense of our existing child care system.

That's why we must get this right from the start by ensuring that in the 2010 budget the province provide sufficient funding to maintain the existing levels of child care service and at the same time provide the necessary tools to support the transition to an early learning program with base funding for child care programs comparable to the full day learning program in order to ensure our existing child care system remains stable and sustainable.

We have an opportunity to build a program of which our province can be proud of that could become a model for other provinces to follow, a program that was built not on the basis of expediency or half measures but on solid, basic principles with the ultimate goal of building a national early learning child care system for all Canadian children.

I look forward to hearing from you regarding the importance of continued funding for Ontario's child care centres in the upcoming provincial budget.

Yours truly,



KEN LEWENZA
National President

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Hon. Dwight Duncan Finance Minister (Fax 416-325-0374)
Hon. Laurel Broten, Minister of Children and Youth (Fax 416-212-7431)