



REVISITING "FROM REOPENING TO RECOVERY"

A Child Care Plan for Ontario

**ALANA POWELL &
CAROLYN FERNS**



**ONTARIO COALITION FOR
Better Child Care**



aeceeo

Association of Early Childhood Educators Ontario

Introduction

In May of 2020, we released “From Reopening to Recovery: A Child Care Plan for Ontario”, which included 27 recommendations for how the Ontario government could safely reopen licensed child care centres, better support licensed home child care, support educators and the child care sector to provide safe, quality programs for young children, and ensure access and affordability for parents hard hit by the economic recession.ⁱ

Our plan and its recommendations aimed to keep children, educators and families safe, maintain confidence in the licensed child care system, and ensure stability in the sector while we transitioned to a more publicly funded and publicly planned system. Our recommendations were based on a survey of nearly 4000 Early Childhood Educators and child care staff and consultations with parents, child care directors, researchers, and the best available evidence.

When we released the report there was general consensus across the sector that these 27 recommendations would help ensure a safer child care reopening. We shared copies of our report with the Ministry of Education and presented our recommendations directly to Ministry officials. Frustratingly, in June, the Ontario government announced a reopening plan for the child care sector that roundly ignored this advice. On June 9th, Minister of Education, Stephen Lecce, announced that licensed child care centres could reopen three days later.ⁱⁱ Following the Minister’s announcement inadequate and conflicting guidance documents were released to accompany the reopening.ⁱⁱⁱ

In response to the Minister’s reopening announcement over 23,000 Ontarians signed our Open Letter to Premier Ford and Minister Lecce calling for a re-think of their laissez-faire reopening approach. As we wrote in the *Toronto Star*:

- We recommended expanding emergency child care programs to serve more families. These vital services are being shut down by the end of the month.
- We recommended fully base funding programs to give centres what they need to operate safely, while providing parents with relief from fees. We got vague funding guidelines that do not increase the provincial child care allocation.
- We recommended repurposing available public space so that child care programs could meet higher capacity while respecting low group sizes. Crickets.
- We recommended raising pay and protections for ECEs, who will be on the front lines, keeping our children safe and helping them to navigate and recover from the trauma of a global pandemic. Instead, the minister gave ECEs a “thank you” — it’s hard to pay the bills with that.^{iv}

Subsequent to the reopening of child care in June with a cohort of 10 children and staff, the government announced a move to a cohort of 15 children on July 27th and a move to “full capacity” on September 1st in conjunction with school reopening in September.

On August 13th, the province released updated operational guidance documents to accompany the move to full capacity but, as of the time of writing, the Ministry has still not released updated funding documents.

Current State

Two months after the province announced child care centres could reopen, only approximately half of Ontario's child care centres are operating. The latest information from the Ministry of Education is that 2,700 of Ontario's 5,523 licensed child care centres are open.

There is much that the sector and the public do not know about the current state of child care in Ontario because the province refuses to engage in transparent communication. We do not know how many spaces are operating across the province, but have heard anecdotally that many centres are experiencing extremely low enrolment. We do not know how many licensed home child care providers are currently operating. We do not know how many licensed centres have submitted plans to the Ministry to reopen soon, in the next few months, or how many have already closed permanently.

Since reopening there have been at least six Covid-19 outbreaks at child care programs across Ontario - ranging from one case to five cases each - but each time information is received only via news media. The province appears to have no outbreak communication plan for the child care sector. Thus the sector, families and the public cannot learn necessary lessons from these outbreaks: what could have been done differently to prevent an outbreak or what worked well to limit the spread of infection.

How We've Engaged the Community and What We've Heard

Throughout this period, the OCBCC and AECEO have held individual meetings, webinars and consultations to listen to frontline educators, home child care providers, parents, families, centre and agency directors, education and community partners about their experiences and issues with child care reopening. We have heard deep concerns from all of these groups about financial pressures, health and safety issues, stress and workload. Below is a sample of comments and statements that we have heard from the community:

"We waited on guidelines from the province then had to wait for the municipality to provide their guidelines. They expected us to open and figure out the details later."

"I am a home care provider and I felt completely ignored by the Ministry of Education and Health. No word on funding, raising of rates etc."

“I am struggling to keep up with the cleaning and other expectations for COVID during the pandemic, especially when I’m alone with the maximum ratio for my age group. There needs to be funding for all centres to get [additional staff] to do the COVID cleaning. I am struggling to keep up!”

“It’s constant cleaning, sanitizing and guiding and watching. I don’t feel we have time to interact very much with the toddlers.”

“I feel like our workload has increased three times but we are not making [more] money for all the extra work.”

“In child care centres in September my toddler program is going to full capacity. It has been very hard to social-distance between the children and there are only 9 right now. I don’t know how we will do it with more children in September.”

“I need child care to work, but my child’s centre has not reopened. And I don’t know when it will or if it will.”

“Currently, my child’s daycare is closed because they are unable to open without policy changes and financial support from the provincial government....Without access to childcare, I have to scramble for help if I have a Zoom call or hope that my child can remain quiet during the call.”

“At this point, I have so little faith in the government’s reopening ‘plan’ that I don’t think I even want my child to go back.... Even though it will be stressful and exhausting for me, I feel like it’s in my child’s best interest to stay at home.”

The challenges experienced across the sector by parents, educators and operators are a direct result of the failure of the province to provide safe and sufficient conditions for reopening. With such a weak plan from the province, child care centres are reluctant to reopen and parents are increasingly reluctant and anxious about sending their children back to child care. This threatens the stability of quality licensed programs and forces parents to lose confidence in the child care system. Ultimately this will encourage movement into unregulated settings as many are left with no other options. The lack of thorough policy, funding and system planning from the provincial government sends a clear message that individual families, caregivers, educators and operators should just figure it out alone.

The government's refusal to ensure that all educators, providers, operators, and schools have what they need to reopen safely will have a devastating impact. Weak provincial policy, funding, and system planning is forcing families and educators into private, unregulated care arrangements that offer a guise of safety in smaller numbers, but will have lasting implications for society. Ontario could be building a competent early learning and child care system but instead is choosing to entrench individualized and inequitable approaches to delivering care and education in our communities.

Occasionally Ministry documents will put forth statements about valuing educators, but these belie the passive and unsupportive approach taken by the provincial government toward the child care workforce. For example, in their *Operational Guidance During COVID-19 Outbreak: EarlyON Re-Opening* (pg. 4) the Ministry of Education states that “involving educators in planning for re-opening right from the beginning values their expertise and ideas and is critical for a successful re-opening ... Educators who experience being valued contributors will be more able to support children and their families during the re-opening transition.”^v This is a statement that describes the importance of preparation time, communication, and valuing ECEs, early years staff and child care providers. Yet, the Ministry has not involved educators in reopening “right from the beginning”. They have not supported enhanced staffing ratios to address workload issues and did not extend pandemic pay to educators. We continue to hear from educators and operators across the province who feel ignored, undervalued, isolated and confused.

We have seen throughout the pandemic that meaningful and caring pedagogical programs continue to exist; they are making the most of a difficult situation and are making it work. They are doing this in spite of inadequate policy and funding. Imagine what would be possible if educators in every program were well supported. Imagine what would be possible for children and families if the early years system in Ontario was well-funded and well-managed.

Setting a Path Forward

The provincial government has continued to treat the crisis facing the child care sector, children and families as a short-term issue. They have not set out a long-term vision or strategy. We need to immediately shift our focus to looking at long-term planning and solutions.

In this report, we revisit our recommendations from *Reopening to Recovery*, review the government’s response and (in)action on each topic, discuss current issues, and update our recommendations. Our goals *continue to be* to ensure:

- A safe reopening;
- Adequate funding and support for educators and programs; and
- A strengthened child care system at the core of economic and social recovery.

Original Recommendations, Government Response, Current Issues and Revised Recommendations

Original recommendation 1. A minimum of three weeks’ notice before reopening, prior to which the sector must already have had access to sector-specific reopening guidelines, which specify new operating regulations and funding plans. Guidelines should be informed by an Expert Committee comprising both community and government, including public health;

Government response and current issues: The province’s reopening announcement was made three days before reopening could begin. Operational guidance documents were released after the reopening announcement. Funding guidance was shared only with municipalities and not the sector, leading to weeks of miscommunication, conflicting messages before funding details were released publicly. Funding guidance for full reopening (set to begin on September 1, 2020) has not yet been released.

The lack of coordination between levels of government and the community has been palpable, something that the Expert Committee that we recommended could address. For example, school reopening plans seem to have little understanding of before- and after-school programs or how to limit cohort-to-cohort mixing. If child care, school, public health and Ministry officials collaborated on plans this issue would have been flagged immediately and a coordinated plan could have been developed.

Updated recommendation: An Expert Committee is urgently needed to coordinate and inform the next phases of child care and school reopening and recovery. This committee should comprise both community and government (including early childhood educators, centre directors, municipal representatives, Ministry of Education, school boards and public health). Any relevant guidance and funding documents should be provided to the sector a minimum of three weeks before changes are implemented and in advance of, or at the time of, political announcements.

Original recommendation 2. A transparent, phased approach to reopening child care that meets current best practices in the funding and operation of Emergency Child Care (ECC). This includes:

- a) Start reopening of child care centres with greatly reduced groups sizes and enhanced ratios (for example some ECC programs are operating with a 1:3 ratio and maximum group of six children);
- b) Full base funding for all existing programs, including:

- i) funding for additional staff for screening and transition to program, and consistent staff teams per location to avoid staff transferring between programs and groups.
- ii) funding and support to Licensed Home Child Care Agencies to ensure full compensation commensurate with increased wages in emergency child care for licensed home child care providers who maintain smaller group sizes in alignment with recommended reopening ratios and group sizes.
- c) Provincial guidelines on eligibility and priority of families;
- d) Using family age groupings as appropriate to keep sibling groups together and reduce social bubbles;

Government response and current issues: Emergency child care programs were shut down on June 26th. The reopening of licensed child care centres began with groups of 10, then moved to 15 and now will move to full capacity on September 1st. While this could be considered a “phased approach”, there has been no evaluation or communication on outcomes of each phase or what has informed the move to the next phase of reopening.

Far from the fully base funded approach of Emergency Child Care programs, licensed child care has reverted to primarily a parent fee model in conjunction with inadequate public funding. Funding guidelines have been unclear and many programs are facing mounting deficits from the closure and reopening periods. There were no clear eligibility criteria for families. The lack of planning has meant that some parents who need child care cannot access a space, while other centres have many vacancies.

Updated recommendation: Full base funding for all existing programs is necessary to move forward to transition to a publicly funded child care system. The need becomes more pressing as we consider the continued financial pressure on parents in an economic recession and the instability facing the sector during reopening and should we face another closure period.

Original recommendation 3. Assurance by licensing and public health that programs have met a threshold of health and safety and decent work practices before reopening. Operators should have a plan approved that includes use of physical space;

Government response and current state: Licensed child care centres were allowed to reopen with a signed Attestation Form, which “confirmed that programs had developed and reviewed enhanced protocols” with staff and that the policy has been made available to parents. A copy of the centre’s Covid-19 policy needed to be attached to the form. Forms could be submitted just two days prior to reopening, and did not require training or detailed plans for health and safety, physical environment, staffing or assurance of decent work practices.

Updated recommendation: The province should ensure health, safety and decent work for child care staff, including enhancing staff to child ratios. The province should recommend a

staffing model that supports decent work. Educators and providers cannot be expected to take on additional responsibilities for cleaning and disinfecting, screening and accompanying children into and out of the program, on top of all regular duties. In centre-based care, no staff should be working in isolation. The province should ensure provisions for home-based care, to support providers who are solely responsible for all additional protocols.

Original recommendation 4. Repurposing existing and available public space - including schools, recreation and outdoor public assets - to accommodate the increased need for physical space as a result of reducing group sizes and enhancing ratios;

Government response and current state: There has been no response to the recommendation to repurpose additional public space for child care programs. The ‘unlocking’ of School Board reserve funds is an insufficient solution to this ongoing issue. Despite the government’s eagerness to “return to full capacity”, the safest method to do this has been ignored. Had this recommendation been seriously considered when our report was released in May we could have had a summer that allowed for existing outdoor programs to flourish and serve as exemplars for other child care operators to explore the necessary adaptations to begin outdoor learning that could have continued into the fall and winter seasons.

Updated recommendation: Now with a tighter space crunch facing us with the reopening of schools in September, the provincial government, school boards and municipalities must take up this recommendation and work collaboratively with child care programs to repurpose indoor and outdoor public space to allow for smaller cohorts. We should also be thinking long-term. As Bezanson, Bevan and Lysack have recommended we must begin construction of “satellite-to-permanent” child care sites, which will address the current need for smaller cohorts while building the capacity of the child care system for the recovery period.^{vi}

Original recommendation 5. Paid time for staff to return to prepare programs and to undertake training on sector-specific public health guidelines (for example: social distancing between rooms, protocols for food distribution, protocols for laundering and cleaning to reduce transfer between groups, etc.);

Government response and current state: The government’s reopening announcement did not mandate or support training for educators prior to reopening. This responsibility was downloaded to municipalities, who without advanced notice, posted online training modules sometimes weeks after reopening began. The Province’s unclear guidance document and inconsistent messages have resulted in varying interpretations of the guidance document across the Province (e.g., differing understandings of requirements for social distancing). Many ECEs and early years staff have not had paid time to return and prepare, collaboratively and meaningfully, for welcoming children back to programs.

Updated Recommendation: The Ministry of Education must ensure ECES, staff, and child care providers have access to paid time for training, collaborative problem solving, planning, and to review and adapt to new and changing operational guidance and public health guidelines. This requires additional funding to child care operators and licensed home child care agencies.

Original recommendation 6. Clear health and safety guidelines for home child care providers, with increased funding to Licensed Home Child Care Agencies to support home child care providers in meeting increased health and safety procedures where no additional staff is available (i.e., provision and distribution of Personal Protective Equipment, increased virtual check-ins);

Government response and current state: Licensed Home Child Care (LHCC) was not closed alongside licensed centre-based care. While LHCC agencies have been included in the Funding Guidance document, there has been insufficient support to LHCC agencies for the provision and distribution of PPE and to provide additional resources for LHCC providers in implementing new protocols or to cover vacancies. While health and safety guidelines have been applied to LHCC settings, they are increasingly burdensome to individual LHCC providers without necessary financial and site-specific support.

Updated Recommendation: The Ministry of Education must ensure health and safety guidelines specific to LHCC are developed. Increased funding must be delivered to LHCC Agencies to support LHCC providers in meeting additional requirements and to ensure their programs remain viable. (i.e., provision of PPE and cleaning material, funding to cover increased labour costs of cleaning).

Original recommendation 7. Training by local public health authorities on Personal Protective Equipment, screening, and health and safety procedures for staff, families, boards and operators;

Government response and current state: Local public health in collaboration with CMSMs/DSSABs made training available online. Training has not been updated to reflect changing operational guidance documents. Training is not delivered for all sector stakeholders (e.g., families, boards) but is self-directed and the responsibility of individual operators, staff, and providers.

Updated Recommendation: The Ministry of Education must ensure training from public health is updated as guidelines change and includes relevant research evidence which justifies decisions (i.e., increasing in cohorting, changes to screening protocols) to ensure transparency and build confidence from the sector regarding necessary new protocols.

Original recommendation 8. Clear Covid-19 testing policy;

Government response and current state: The provincial government has released COVID-19 Provincial Testing Guidance Document that outlines broad guidelines for testing, and relies on Local Public Health to provide additional guidance. This has led to confusing and conflicting information across the Province and within Local Public Health, unclear guidance on legitimacy of doctors' notes, challenges with communication with families, and meeting program staffing needs.

Updated Recommendation: The Ministry of Education must ensure clear and consistent testing and outbreak policy including: guidance for an outbreak; expectations for return to program for staff/providers and children; and consistent communication to child care operators and providers. In addition, testing policy and outbreak plan must be updated to clearly and concretely articulate lessons learned from cases and outbreaks in Ontario's child care sector.

Original recommendation 9. Funding for and organized access to all necessary Personal Protective Equipment, health and safety supplies, and laundering supplies, as defined by Public Health agencies. This should be provincially funded and efficient distribution should be organized through CMSM/DSSABs and licensed home child care agencies;

Government response and current state: The Province suggested that existing 2019 funding can be used during this period, in combination with Federal funds, to purchase PPE and necessary supplies. The funding guidelines were unclear and messages inconsistent across the Province, leaving many operators and providers struggling to meet demand. The Province has now announced organized or distributed PPE thanks to new federal investments from the Safe Restart Agreement.

Updated Recommendation: The province should continue organized access to PPE. At a minimum Ontario should match the recently announced federal funds from the Safe Restart Agreement to provide additional supports for health and safety, smaller group sizes and staffing needs in child care.

Original recommendation 10. Immediately increase paid sick and emergency leave days for all RECEs and early years staff to at least 21 days;

Government response and current state: Ontario has not addressed this recommendation. This is an urgent concern for many ECEs, early years staff, child care providers and parents.

Updated Recommendation: In line with recommendations from the Decent Work and Health Network we call on the Ontario government to immediately ensure 21 paid sick and emergency leave days for all workers (7 permanent days and 14 additional days during public health emergencies). These must be universal, permanent and accessible (i.e., flexible, no wait for

approval, no disruption to income) with support of public funds to ensure they do not increase parent fees.

Original recommendation 11. Immediate extension of pandemic pay to all program staff, and funding to ensure a \$25 minimum wage for all RECEs;

Government response and current state: Ontario has not responded to our calls to address the grossly underpaid early childhood workforce. The work of RECEs, early years staff, and child care providers has been vital to our children, families, and communities - and must be met with appropriate compensation. The failure of the province to meet this need has meant increased challenges in recruiting and retaining qualified staff at a time when they are of great importance to children, families and communities. Many educators are exiting the sector due to the persistent low-wages now coupled with increased risk and responsibility.

We know decent work conditions lead to safe, confident ECEs, staff and providers and more meaningful and caring learning environments for children. It is unacceptable that RECEs, early years staff, and child care providers continue to sustain and subsidize the child care system with their low wages. The only way to address this challenge is increased public funding.

Updated Recommendation: The Ministry of Education must immediately develop and implement a publicly funded wage grid that ensures a \$25 minimum wage, and growth commensurate with experience and education, to recruit and retain Early Childhood Educators, early years staff and child care providers to ensure safe, meaningful, pedagogical, quality ECEC programs continue to be available for children and families in Ontario.

Original Recommendation 12. Pedagogical support, including training on trauma-informed practice;

Government response and current state: The Ministry of Education released a supporting document *Building on How Does Learning Happen?*, a resource to support ECEs, early years staff and child care providers in thinking about pedagogy in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. While we appreciate the acknowledgement throughout the document of the experiences of emergency child care operators and educators, this is insufficient in ensuring that everyone in the sector has the conditions required to actualize HDLH in practice. A reference document on a website does not replace the need for time, pedagogical support and training province-wide. While the sector has self-organized training and some staff and providers have been able to have access to such opportunities, the sector's ad hoc response does not constitute a thorough and equitable provincial response, nor create equitable conditions for Ontario's children.

Updated Recommendation: The Ministry of Education must ensure that all ECEs, early years staff and child care providers have access to ongoing paid preparation and planning time, and opportunities to collaborate with other professionals and child care providers in order to engage in pedagogical thinking and learning, which is necessary for them to support children in, and returning to, early years programs.

Original Recommendation 13. Clear provincial directives, guided by public health, on eligibility of vulnerable staff and providers to access adapted work or refuse to work, and ensure they continue to be paid;

Government response and current state: The Ministry of Education has taken no action to ensure that vulnerable staff are able to access adapted work or paid leaves. This is concerning for many ECEs, early years staff, and child care providers who find themselves with no choice but to leave the sector. This will exacerbate the long-term challenge of recruitment and retention, threaten the stability of the sector, and be a devastating loss to both educators and children.

Updated Recommendation: The Ministry of Education must provide clear provincial directives, guided by public health, on eligibility of vulnerable staff and providers to access adapted work or refuse to work, and ensure they continue to be paid.

Original Recommendation 14. Clear rules for families on: health screening, including requirements to disclose any symptoms and medication; emergency pick-up in case of illness; when and on what conditions children can return to program after illness;

Government response and current state: While the Ministry of Education has provided operational guidance to child care programs, EarlyONs, and Before and After School Programs, many guidelines are unclear and contradictory information between agencies is common. Centres and providers have been downloaded the responsibility of clearly communicating these protocols with families. With the reopening of schools, the roles and responsibilities for screening, exclusion, between schools and before- and after-school programs will become further confused. One clear and coordinated approach must be clearly outlined in Ministry documents.

Updated Recommendation: The Ministry of Education must consult the ELCC sector and clearly address inconsistencies and contradictions in written communication to all sector stakeholders, including parents. Clear responsibilities between schools and child care programs must be defined by the Ministry of Education, in collaboration with all parties to ensure consistency and shared responsibility.

Original Recommendation 15. Additional and dedicated support from provincial and local public health authorities;

Government action and current state: The Ontario government has provided no additional funding and made no concerted effort to ensure ongoing dedicated support from provincial and local public health (LPH) authorities, as they have marginally for school reopening. While we have heard that many LPH agencies have been collaborative and supportive, we have also heard of ongoing challenges with mixed and contradictory messages, delays in communication, and a lack of responsiveness which threatens safe operation. These challenges will only increase as more ELCC programs reopen and capacity continues to prematurely increase. Given the context we are in, it is necessary that resources be increased to ensure LPH agencies can adequately support the ELCC sector.

Updated Recommendation: The Ministry of Education must immediately work with provincial and local public health agencies to ensure that additional and dedicated support is available for the ELCC sector.

Original Recommendation 16. Additional funding for base-funded programs that are following strict health and safety protocols to cover increased liability/insurance costs related to any COVID-19 related expense, such as WSIB claims;

Government action and current status: The Ministry of Education has not increased early years funding beyond 2019 levels or moved to a base-funding model that would alleviate concerns related to additional liability/insurance costs. Many programs in Ontario are currently unable to reopen due to insurance costs, and many educators are being required to sign waivers releasing any liability for illness. This is problematic as it downloads the burden of illness to individual educators, as opposed to acknowledging the failure of the province to provide a robust and thorough reopening plan, including taking all measures to protect staff (such as operating at reduced group sizes).

Updated Recommendation: The Ministry of Education must move to a base-funding model with increased funding for the ELCC sector that will support programs to reopen safely. We reassert our recommendation that additional funding for base-funded programs that are following strict health and safety protocols to cover increased liability/insurance costs related to any COVID-19 related expense, such as WSIB claims.

Original Recommendation 17. Ministry and CMSM/DSSAB staff communicate directly and regularly to operators when providing sector updates.

Government action and current status: We recognize the provision of memos and operational guidelines to CMSMs/DSSABs, child care operators, and agencies. However, we continue to be concerned about a lack of transparent and consistent communication. We know that many

questions and concerns arise in response to changing circumstances, new guidance documents, and funding guidelines. We also know that operators, educators, child care providers are individually seeking clarity, responses, and consistency from the Ministry of Education. This is becoming unbearable, burdensome, and stressful for many and threatens the ability of programs to reopen safely in Ontario.

Updated Recommendation: The Ministry of Education must ensure clear, direct, transparent, consistent, frequent and written communication to CMSMs/DSSABs, operators, agencies, educators, and child care providers which addresses questions, concerns, and contradictions in response to, and between, sector updates and changes.

New Recommendations

18) The Ministry of Education must ensure increased funding delivered through a base funding model covers vacancies in order to ensure stability of existing licensed home- and centre-based child care programs so the sector is prepared to meet the needs of families when they return to care.

19) The Ministry of Education must develop a comprehensive HR strategy that addresses loss of hours and income for ECEs, concerns with increased group sizes, and the lack of decent work experienced by early years staff and child care providers due to low-enrollment, restricted shifts due to cohorting, and/or current lack of financial support in order to retain and recruit qualified educators and preserve existing workforce capacity.

20) The Ministry of Education must ensure clear directives and expectations regarding responsibility and roles between school boards and child care programs are developed in collaboration with educators, operators, administrators and additional relevant sector stakeholders to address gaps such as cleaning of shared spaces, transition between programs, communication and record keeping.

Recovery

We reassert the following recommendations as necessary for ongoing sector stability during the recovery period and to ensure preparedness should Ontario experience a second wave of infection. These recommendations assume the first 20 have been met in full.

21) Continue to update provincial guidelines on eligibility, with clear communication on updates to the expansion or restriction of eligibility criteria;

22) Continue to expand use of public spaces and community hubs to slowly and safely bring more children back to programs;

- 23) Continue to base fund all existing programs, expand the system through the public and nonprofit sector;
- 24) Ongoing sufficient funding for and organized access to all necessary Personal Protective Equipment, health and safety supplies, and laundering supplies, as defined by Public Health agencies;
- 25) Bi-weekly check-ins between operators and local licensing officers and LHCCA home visitors to update on health and safety and decent work practices, any changes in phased approach, and to troubleshoot;
- 26) Virtual or physical licensing inspections as appropriate for licensed child care centres and licensed home child care;
- 27) Continued updates on directives (guided by public health) on eligibility of vulnerable staff to have access to adapted work, refuse work, and ensure they continue to be paid;
- 28) Clearly communicated updates on rules for parents/families;
- 29) Ongoing and dedicated public health support; and
- 30) Ongoing training by public health on updates to PPE, screening, and health and safety procedures for staff, parents, boards/operators.
- 31) As we move forward, update the mandate of the Expert Committee to help inform the development of a universal, publicly funded early learning and child care system as a core part of social and economic recovery.

ⁱ Powell, A. & Ferns, C. (2020) Reopening to Recovery: A Child Care Plan for Ontario. Available online at: https://www.childcareontario.org/from_reopening_to_recovery_a_plan

ⁱⁱ Ontario Government News (2020, June 9). "Ontario helping parents return to work". Available online at: <https://news.ontario.ca/opo/en/2020/06/ontario-helping-parents-return-to-work.html>

ⁱⁱⁱ Ontario Ministry of Education. "Covid-19: Reopening child care centres". <https://www.ontario.ca/page/covid-19-reopening-child-care-centres#section-0>

^{iv} Ferns, C. & Powell, A. (2020, June 15). "Stephen Lecce's letter to parents doubles down on the Ford government's half-baked child care plan" *Toronto Star*. Available online at: <https://www.thestar.com/opinion/contributors/2020/06/15/stephen-lecces-letter-to-parents-doubles-down-on-the-ford-governments-half-baked-child-care-plan.html>

^v Government of Ontario. Ministry of Education (2020, August) Operational Guidance During Covid-19 Outbreak: EarlyON Re-opening. Available online at: <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/childcare/early-on-guide-child-care.pdf>

^{vi} Bezanson, K., Bevan, A. and Lysack, M. (2020) Canada needs a childcare system for recovery and beyond. *First Policy Response*. Available online at: <http://policyresponse.ca/canada-needs-a-childcare-system-for-recovery-and-beyond/>