



John Tory  
Mayor

February 5, 2017

The Honourable Kathleen Wynne, MPP  
Premier of Ontario  
Room 281, Main Legislative Building Queen's Park  
Toronto, ON M7A 1A1

Dear Premier,

As you know, the need for child care greatly outweighs the supply in Toronto and the cost of high quality child care is simply unaffordable for many families.

Your government has committed to creating 100,000 new child care spaces, and you have set the goal of bringing 40% of children (0-4 years old) into licensed child care. While I greatly appreciate this promised investment you are making and the attention you have brought to bear on this issue, I am compelled to tell you that more needs to be done.

After our last meeting, I stated it was not business as usual between our two governments. I firmly believe that when it comes to issues like child care and housing, it can no longer be business as usual because the status quo leaves Toronto taxpayers footing the bills that the province should be paying. Given your recent comments and concerns about affordability for Ontario residents, I want to draw to your attention the child care affordability crisis unfolding in Toronto and the need for Queen's Park to address the issue.

Toronto needs the Province's help to address affordability by increasing subsidies and providing greater base funding. Growth in the system has not kept pace with the number of subsidies, and the ratio of subsidies to spaces has been in decline since 2010. We ask that the Province act immediately to prevent us from falling even further behind, by (at minimum) providing the additional 4,918 subsidies needed for us to catch up and bring the ratio back to where it was in 2010.

.../2

Going forward, we also ask that any new provincial initiatives to expand the early learning and child care system, including capital investments and growth in school age programs, be accompanied by investments in additional fee subsidies and other measures that address affordability barriers for families, and that such funding keep pace with the annual rate of inflation.

Last year, the City of Toronto commissioned an in-depth Licensed Child Care Demand and Affordability Study, and the findings starkly highlight the need for affordable child care in Toronto:

- Only 20% of children are in licensed child care; if child care was affordable, over 50% of families would access licensed care;
- There would be a much higher demand for licensed care if subsidies were available for all eligible families, or if fees for licensed care were lower;
- There are not enough subsidies for Toronto, with over 18,000 children on our waitlist;
- The income threshold for subsidies is outdated and is not indexed to inflation, so the number of eligible families and the amount of subsidy per family does not represent the true need; and
- Middle-income families are squeezed: they make too much to receive a subsidy but not enough to afford licensed care.

City Council adopted the study at its meeting of November 8, 2016 - I hope you get a chance to read the staff report on Growing Toronto's Licensed Child Care System, enclosed for your information, and available on-line at:

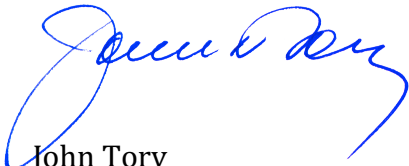
<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2016.CD15.2>

The City of Toronto also strongly supports embedding child care as part of early learning, and giving children in child care the same opportunities and supports as are available in the elementary system. Currently however, the early years system has distinct disadvantages related to the operating, capital and maintenance (occupancy) costs of space. Last summer, the City worked with key actors in Toronto's child care system (including the Toronto District School Board, Toronto Catholic District School Board, Conseil scolaire Viamonde, and Conseil scolaire de district catholique Centre-Sud and City of Toronto Children's Services) to convey our concerns to the Ministry of Education and asked that school boards be directly funded for the full cost of space used by early learning, child care and before- and after-school programs (see enclosed). I encourage you to give this request your serious attention, and look forward to making progress together. Once again I would strongly argue that this cost should not be borne by local taxpayers. In this regard I welcome the recent comments of your ministers noting that Ontario's economic growth leads the G-7 and unlike property tax revenues, this growth will translate into significant additional funds which can help finance more child care.

Investing in child care is investing in our future. Quality child care represents an opportunity to close the achievement gap for vulnerable children facing poverty and support lifelong success by breaking the cycle of poverty. The City of Toronto is moving ahead with a five-year early learning and child care growth strategy, and I expect staff to report to City Council in March 2017 with the details. I urge you to consider how the Province might help us develop our plan by providing Toronto with the resources and flexibility needed to effectively address the child care needs of our families, and at the same time fulfill your government's commitments on poverty reduction and early learning.

I look forward to discussing these issues with you further in the near future. I know child care and early learning are of keen and heartfelt interest to you as Premier. With the promised investment to come from the Trudeau government, I believe, as with housing, that we are right now at a moment in time in which we can forge a historic partnership to benefit kids and families. Let's not miss the chance.

Sincerely,



John Tory  
Mayor of Toronto

Encl.

c. Hon. Mitzie Hunter, Minister of Education