



Ontario needs a real child care system: A statement to all members of the Ontario Legislature

Last month the Ontario government withdrew reductions to adult: child ratios and increases to group sizes planned as part of new provincial child care regulations. It was no wonder the government stepped back. A province-wide chorus of disapproval had erupted when this plan was made known last February. Thousands of parents, early childhood educators and researchers called for the government to halt: penning responses, holding meetings, signing petitions and flourishing placards.

While many concerned Ontarians are gratified by the government's withdrawal, we are not reassured by the policy-making process. Government policy-makers have access to the considerable evidence about what contributes to improving quality and access in child care. Thus, good policy-making shouldn't need to depend on efforts by alarmed parents, ECEs and researchers to ensure that provincial policy is based on the best evidence.

The Ontario government has asserted its intention to improve child care quality and access. If so, the current approach to policy-making is woefully inadequate. What is increasingly clear is that Ontario very much needs to formulate a well-designed child care policy—beginning without further delay to develop a comprehensive evidence-based long-term plan for the universal, high quality early childhood education and care system that families and children need in 2016.

If not, Ontario families and service providers will continue to be beleaguered by an antiquated and deteriorating child care situation. The challenges of high fees, low availability, quality challenges, poor workforce conditions, reliance on unregulated care all stem from the privatized child care market that Ontario clings to instead of building the publicly-managed, adequately funded, evidence-based system that can deliver what modern families and children need.

There is no better time than now. As the government in Ottawa is once again indicating willingness to be a partner, Ontario must seize the opportunity to be a leader.

We call on the Ontario government to begin this work now. A solid foundation for an early childhood education and care system has been proposed by cross-Canada child care groups— [*A Shared Framework for Building an Early Childhood Education and Care System for All*](#) envisions an ECEC system that can grow to meet the needs of families, children and the child care workforce in each province and territory. We call for a transparent process for transforming the current child care patchwork into a universally accessible, high quality, comprehensive system based on the evidence-based *Framework*.

The *Child Care and Early Years Act 2014* commits Ontario to “a system of responsive, safe, high quality and accessible child care and early years programs and services will support parents and families, and will contribute to the healthy development of children”.

To make this commitment into reality, we need a well-formulated action plan to get the architecture right and build a real child care system.

We call on you all to do the right thing for Ontario's children and families.