



Ontario must get child care right from reopening to recovery

New report says Ontario's child care centres need a safe, supported reopening that protects children, families, educators and programs.

With child care centres set to re-open as part of Stage Two of Ontario's economic recovery, two major child care organizations are urgently calling on the Ford government to ensure a safe reopening of child care centres across the province.

"The Province has failed to put the necessary support in place. The early years and child care sector is unheard, unrecognized, unfunded, and therefore, unprepared." said Alana Powell, a report co-author and Executive Coordinator of the Association of Early Childhood Educators Ontario.

The Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care (OCBCC) and the AECEO have released a new report, *From Reopening to Recovery*. The report lays out a plan 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.

A survey of nearly 4000 ECEs and child care staff found that that the child care workforce is deeply concerned about:

- being able to protect themselves while at work;
- having enough staff and support to implement new health and safety protocols;
- their program's ability to access PPE and supplies;
- their ability to ensure a caring experience for young children given increased health and safety protocols.

Based on consultation with the sector, the organizations have put out 27 detailed recommendations to help ensure a safe reopening of child care centres including:

- Start reopening of child care centres with greatly reduced groups sizes and enhanced staff to child ratios;
- Full base funding for all existing programs, including funding for additional staff for screening and cleaning, and consistent staff teams per location to avoid staff transferring between programs and groups;
- Provincial guidelines on eligibility and priority of families;
- 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.

"We know what we need to do. But we need the Ford government to treat child care as a priority and provide the funding necessary to ensure the safety of children, families and educators before we reopen child care. said Carolyn Ferns, a report co-author and Policy Coordinator of the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care.

"We also know that we cannot stop at reopening. Early learning and child care must form the core of economic and social recovery." said Ferns.

The report *From Reopening to Recovery: A Plan to Reopen Child Care in Ontario and Moving to a Publicly Funded System* is available at: https://www.childcareontario.org/from_reopening_to_recovery_a_plan

For media requests:

Carolyn Ferns
Policy Coordinator
Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care
647-218-1275
carolyn@childcareontario.org

Alana Powell
Executive Coordinator
Association of Early Childhood Educators Ontario
613-898-9248
apowell@aeceo.ca