

**Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care**  
**Coalition ontarienne pour de meilleurs service éducatifs à l'enfance**



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Dr. Dan Patterson, President  
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Dear President Patterson,

As Ontario's advocacy organization for child care funding and policy, the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care supports a vision of universal, affordable, and non-profit child care. The news that Niagara College plans on closing their child care program and lab school was indeed disturbing.

Given your college's commitment to the early childhood education profession and the Niagara community, we are writing to you today to ask you to reconsider the closure of your college's child care program and lab school and to offer our support in any efforts to secure proper government support to ensure that Niagara College continues to run a child care program and lab school.

In Ontario, we are proud to have many excellent college early childhood education programs. A major strength of these programs is the placement program where students learn through direct experience working with children in real life settings.

The best ECE programs ensure that students do one placement in a lab school where the students experience a high quality environment and where faculty and staff have the opportunity to individually supervise students before they graduate. Lab school placements allow the most current and relevant research to be integrated into high quality programming for young children. In addition, lab schools promote the necessity for community connections as part of professional practice – for students, faculty and parents.

Niagara College undoubtedly has high quality automotive shops, workshops, teaching wineries, and kitchens for their excellent programs in automotive services, culinary studies, and other such trades and programs. Certainly you can see the connection between high quality facilities and a high quality education.

Another major consideration is the impact to the surrounding community, which the centre has served for the last 43 years. The infant spaces at this program are among the very few in Niagara. Closing this program will have a major impact on families, particularly students at your college, who are hoping to continue their studies. For student parents, on-campus child care can literally make the difference between the ability to balance education and family responsibilities and not going to school at all.

This is a time when Ontario is recognizing the importance early learning and care, and the sector is undergoing a huge transformation. Child care has been moved to the Ministry of Education, and in the coming months the

ministry is undergoing a consultation process in which they will be considering dramatic changes to not only legislation governing child care programs, but also the ways in which child care is funded.

The concerns you have raised about viability amidst the changes brought-on by full-day kindergarten are important and must be addressed. The Government must be called upon to provide the necessary supports to enable the child care program and lab school to continue, in recognition of the important role of the centre in increasing access to education for students with children and offering irreplaceable hands-on learning opportunities in connection with the ECE program.

The OCBCCC would be keen to work with the College, the community, the parents and students to promote the importance of lab schools and to urge that the Government respond to the financial challenges being experienced faced by child care programs across the province. The OCBCCC will be appealing to the Ontario Government to work with you, the community, parents and students, to ensure the viability of the child care program and lab school. Please let us know how we can be of further assistance in working to protect this valuable resource for parents and students alike.

We would urge that it's not too late to reconsider the decision to close. The presence of the ECE program begs a College-run and delivered child care centre and lab. We know these are difficult times for all publicly funded institutions but feel it is imperative that we do resist such cuts to crucial hands-on learning opportunities and protect the services which ensure that education is accessible for parents with children.

Sincerely,

Sheila Olan-MacLean  
President, Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care

Cc:

Hon Glen Murray, Minister of Training Colleges and Universities  
Hon Laurel Broten, Minister of Education  
MPP Peter Tabuns, NDP Education Critic  
MPP Lisa MacLeod, PC Education Critic  
MPP Cindy Forster, Welland  
Jim Grieve, Assistant Deputy Minister, Early Learning, Ministry of Education  
OCBCCC Executive and Council  
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