



A TURNING POINT
FOR WOMEN



The Honourable Minister of Education Stephen Lecce
Ontario Ministry of Education
Toronto, Ontario
By email: minister.edu@ontario.ca / cceya_consultation@ontario.ca

July 21, 2020

Re: YWCA Toronto response to Ontario's *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014.*

Dear Minister Lecce:

On behalf of YWCA Toronto, I am contacting you to provide some feedback on *Ontario's Child Care and Early Years Act*.

YWCA Toronto is one of Canada's leading multi-service women's organizations. We have a long and proud history of providing direct services and tackling systemic issues to help women escape violence, move out of poverty, and access safe, affordable housing. We also operate an Early Learning Centre with 62 child care spots. We advocate at all levels of government for systemic changes needed to create safer communities for women and their families, as well non-binary individuals.

We recommend reviewing the Act in light of the child care challenges highlighted by COVID-19 and make revisions in support of a publicly funded, affordable, and high-quality provincial child care system.

Access to affordable child care is a precursor to women's labour market participation. Since women are disproportionately impacted by job loss related to COVID-19, supporting women's labour market re-entry should be of paramount concern. Without immediate investments and long-term planning for a publicly funded child care system, women will be the last to go back to paid work. Such an outcome will slow down economic development, decrease taxation revenues, and produce gender-regressive economic outcomes at the expense of women and children.

Research shows that non-profit licensed child care models are in the best position to strengthen early years and child care as we offer higher quality of care, better system stability and health standards and, therefore, greater peace of mind to Ontario parents returning to work.ⁱ

Child care is of particular importance to the non-profit and charitable sector in Ontario as 80 per cent of its one million employees are women. Organizations across the sector are very concerned about the impact of a lack of adequate and affordable licensed child care on women workers, and thus on the ability of non-profits to move to 100 per cent service capacity. Some of our own staff have struggled to return to work due to the lack of available child care in Toronto. Of the 62 child care spots that we normally offer, only 10 reopened on July 16. For the majority of the sector's workforce to show up for work and continue serving communities during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond, non-profit workers need accessible, affordable, safe, and high-quality child care. Child care is a key component to pandemic recovery.



Non-profit models produce decent work conditions and higher quality care. Who owns and delivers child care services impacts decent work for the child care labour force, which is linked to quality of care. This includes wages, working conditions, training, staff turnover, staff morale, staff/child ratios, and group size. Numerous studies and reports highlight that a community-based non-profit model delivers higher quality, more affordable, and more equitable childcare in comparison to a market model. Workers in non-profits are relatively better off compared to those employed by for-profits.

The early years are critical in a child's cognitive, social and emotional development. Investing in early childhood education will also support Ontario's economic competitiveness. It is estimated that for every \$1 spent on expanding public enrolment in early childhood education leads to a \$6 return in long-term economic benefits.ⁱⁱ We need a publicly funded child care system so that all parents in our province can access child care services if needed – and be assured their children are exposed to an educational curriculum that supports their development.

Provincial leadership is urgently required to help stabilize child care and build a system that will stimulate economic recovery, buttress gender equality, and produce positive educational outcomes for generations to come. We recommend a public funded child care system that continues the best elements of emergency child care and expands the availability of affordable and non-profit child care spots across the province.

The COVID-19 pandemic has created an opportunity to re-imagine and re-build our province's child care system. We urge you to seize this moment to legislate lasting, positive change.

Sincerely,



Heather McGregor
Chief Executive Officer
YWCA Toronto

CC:

The Honourable Minister of Children, Community and Social Services Todd Smith
By email: ministerMCCSS@ontario.ca

The Honourable Associate Minister of Children and Women's Issues Jill Dunlop
By email: jill.dunlop@pc.ola.org

ⁱ Child Care Resource and Research Unit [What research says about quality in for-profit, non-profit and public child care](#) (2011); Child Care Now [An Analysis of the Multilateral early Learning and Child Care Framework and the Early Learning and Child Care Bilateral Agreements](#) (2019); Martha Friendly [A bad bargain for us all: Why the market doesn't deliver child care that works for Canadian children and families](#) (2019)

ⁱⁱ Globe and Mail <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/article-canada-should-spend-more-on-early-childhood-education-new-report-says/>