

**Ministry of
Community and
Social Services**

Office of the Minister

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Ontario

January 23, 2002

Ms. Heather McGregor
Executive Director YWCA
of Greater Toronto 800
Woodlawn Avenue East
Bongard House Toronto,
Ontario M4T 1C1

Dear Ms. McGregor:

Thank you for your letter of November 28, 2001 concerning child care in Ontario. Please excuse the delay in my response.

I appreciate hearing your comments and would like to take this opportunity to address your concerns regarding recent media reports.

I can appreciate that misleading reports about the possibility of a \$200 million cut to the child care system have heightened people's anxiety about the direction of child care in the province of Ontario. I would ask that you allow me the opportunity to set the record straight.

The document referred to in recent reports is a draft of a preliminary discussion paper for the creation of an integrated child benefit. Previously, there had been some interest expressed in the creation of such a benefit, and one of the proposed ways to fund it was a reduction in child care spending. I would like to emphasize that this is not an option that I have considered or am considering.

As the Minister Responsible for Children, I am committed to building a prosperous future for all children. Child care is only one of many programs designed to actively promote and support the healthy development and well-being of children. Recent examples of that commitment include:

- A 115 per cent increase in funding for children's aid societies so they can enforce our tough new laws to better protect children from abuse and neglect;

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- Supporting the Breakfast for Learning program, which provides a nutritious meal for over 135,000 Ontario children every schoolday; and
- \$70.5 million for the Healthy Babies, Healthy Children program, which provides a commitment to screen 139,000 babies each year to assess their risk of poor development and put families in touch with the needed community supports.

I recognize that for many of you, child care is an important resource that helps balance the challenges of work and family. That is why this government is making sure that we provide the flexible supports to families that need them. In 1984/85, the government spent \$87.3 million on child care. This year, the Ministry of Community and Social Services plans to spend over half a billion dollars on the child care system to help parents with their child care needs. In addition, over \$200 million is directed exclusively to low- and modest-income families through the Ontario Child Care Supplement for Working Families. Since this government came into office in 1995, child care spending has increased by over 33 per cent.

I trust that this letter has helped to alleviate some of your concerns. Please be assured that I will keep your comments in mind in ongoing discussions with my Cabinet and caucus colleagues.

Once again, thank you for writing.

Sincerely,



John Baird, MPP
Minister