



THE ONTARIO FEDERATION OF HOME AND SCHOOL ASSOCIATIONS, INC.

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The Honourable Liz Sandals
Minister of Education
22nd Floor, Mowat Block
900 Bay Street
Toronto ON M7A 1L2

Dear Minister:

The Ontario Federation of Home and School Associations (OFHSA) is a province-wide network of volunteer members committed to informed and pro-active involvement in our homes, our schools and our communities to obtain 'The Best for Each Student'.

Members of OFHSA believe that investing in children during their early developmental years is one way of improving student achievement. We are pleased to see the progression made in phase I of the Child Care and Early Years Act (CCEYA). The regulatory changes reflect public concerns regarding the safety of young children in home child care settings.

Our members are very concerned that recent legislative proposals to the CCEYA for phase II regarding changes to age ranges, staff-child ratios and group sizes in Ontario child care centres do not support the health, development, and well-being of children or the provision of high quality programs. OFHSA members believe in clear and well-defined guidelines to the pupil-teacher ratio and that in the case of budget cuts, that the pupil-teacher ratio would not be affected. We support other like-minded organizations and suggest that the provincial government needs to outline its vision, rationale, principles, short and long-term funding allocations and evaluation mechanisms.

Ontario needs to put in place a full, comprehensive policy process to address key issues such as: affordability; strengthening and maintaining high quality services with a workforce (including home child care providers) equal to the task; ensuring the effective inclusion of children with developmental needs; and smooth child care and kindergarten integration, all in order to transform the child care market to a system that must grow to accommodate more than 20% of children now attending child care and early years programs.

Children's needs have increased over the past 20 years. The learning environment needs to support the developmental level of the children. Research has proven that children learn best in small groups with low ratios. Increasing ratios can be detrimental to the development and delivery of age-appropriate programs, especially if the children in care have developmental needs. Lowering the age range for infants in a group does not ensure that child care, which is vital during the early developmental years, is consistently accessible to families across Ontario. The proposed changes would drastically affect standards of practice developed over many years by Registered Early Childhood Educators (RECEs) and established by the College of Early Childhood Educators.

We call on the Ontario government to abandon Phase II changes. We urge the Ministry to understand such changes can create "institutional" child care, not the "responsive, safe, high quality child care and early years programs... [that] will...contribute to the healthy development of children" identified in Bill 10's Preamble.

OFHSA members urge the government to begin a comprehensive evidence-based policy process with the explicit aim of developing a full plan for developing, over time, a high quality, integrated, equitable, national child care system that supports Registered Early Childhood Educators' standards of practice developed over many years and legislated by the Early Childhood Educators Act, 2007.

Sincerely,

Sandra Binns
President

Cc Hon Kathleen O. Wynne, Premier of Ontario
The Honourable Tracy MacCharles, Minister of Child and Youth Services
The Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario
The Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation
College of Early Childhood Educators

The Best for Each Student

A MEMBER OF THE CANADIAN HOME AND SCHOOL FEDERATION