

# Ford government reverses policy to protect not-for-profit day cares <sup>[1]</sup>

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## AVAILABILITY

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## EXCERPTS

Changes are coming to a system designed to protect Ontario's children.

An internal memo the Ministry of Education sent to day cares, and obtained by CityNews, highlights changes coming to child care programs, including the reversal of a key protection for not-for-profit day cares.

Advocates say the removal of the For Profit Maximum Threshold opens the door to the expansion of big-box corporate day cares in Ontario.

"It means that there's no longer a control for how much funding can flow to for-profit corporations," said Carolyn Ferns of the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care.

"We think that's a really dangerous move and can lead to the takeover of Ontario's child care sector by big box for profits."

The cap was put into place two years ago and limits how much funding the government can provide to for-profit daycares.

While the government argues the reversal will encourage more daycares to open in the province amid a shortage, advocates say the goal should be to expand not-for-profit child care centres and point to decades of research showing they provide higher quality care to children.

"For-profit child cares tend to cut back on staff wages and working conditions are poorer there, and what you see then is higher staff turnover, less staff satisfaction and all of that boils down to the type of care provided for kids," said Ferns.

Brooke Richardson, a mother of four, knows first-hand about the shortage of child care centres in her community. Still, she wants quality over quantity.

"Parents, including myself, don't want child care spaces that aren't going to really provide rich learning and experiences for their children," said Richardson.

"Children and families deserve really quality care experiences and you get that through things like paying your staff well, having well-trained staff. These are the key indicators of quality. And to make a profit in child care, that's where you have to cut corners."

The province said it's all about choice.

“This threshold has created a barrier to child care expansion in some communities that rely on for-profit care to meet increasing demand,” it said in a statement. “It has also created inequitable access to child care fee subsidies for families living in communities where there is no non-profit care available. This change gives parents and communities more choice and flexibility to best meet their needs.”

But advocates argue this move is not only a step back for families, but for taxpayers too.

“I think it’s a waste of taxpayer dollars,” said Ferns.

“If a certain portion of our public funding is going into shareholders’ pockets, into making a profit for business owners, I think that’s the wrong use of public education dollars.

“This is the Ministry of Education’s money, and it should be going to children.”

**Related link:** Limiting for-profit child care key to quality care [3]

**Region:** Ontario [4]

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