

Advocacy group wants province to release childcare plan ^[1]

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EXCERPTED

There's been discussions about childcare centres being in the province's second stage of its reopening plan.

But with parents already starting to head back to work, one advocacy group says the province needs a plan to open up childcare, and make it a priority.

Carolyn Ferns with the Ontario Coalition for Better Childcare, says her group has met with staff from the Education Ministry to discuss plans for safely reopening facilities.

"It's so important to parents and also to childcare providers and educators that we get reopening right, and that it be done safely," Ferns says. "For parents I know that that's top of mind, that's what I hear from parents all the time, that they want to ensure when we do reopen childcare that it's done the right way and that it's done safely."

The coalition has released its own plan in the absence of a government one, that give ideas and methods for reopening childcare — From Reopening to Recovery: A plan for child care reopening in Ontario and moving to a publicly funded system.

"I have not seen a plan from the government and we've been talking with the Ministry of Education regularly, and really pushing them to tackle what's needed to reopen childcare safely," Ferns says.

The coalition recommends reducing group sizes, enhancing staff to child ratios and implementing strong health and safety protocols. That means more funding is needed.

"Childcare needs to be a priority for economic and social recovery," Ferns says. "The province of Ontario really needs to take that on and come out with a plan that puts children's safety at the core."

The coalition presented their plan to ministry staff last week, and it hopes the ministry seriously considers bringing it on board.

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