

Peterborough letter: Early childhood learning is vital education ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

As the pedagogical link for Compass Early Learning and Care, I have been hearing rumblings about our advocacy for quality child care, such as “We have known about the safety guidelines,” we are “just like every other business” and should “just go back to work.” That we “have enjoyed being home and getting paid” or “it’s just daycare.”

Let me share some context. In the past three months our educators have been deeply engaged in learning, taking up topics of anti-bias and treaty education, studying documentation, and practicing with learning protocols. We have been meeting for book studies and leadership work, connecting with families, sharing stories and music with children, and dropping off play materials. We have been thinking of ways to support the emotional and physical health of children and educators upon return, and have poured over budgets after budgets ... that don’t balance. We are looking at deficits that could collapse our sector. Hours have been cut to 75 per cent while many are working 150 per cent.

We miss the joy, laughter and hugs we shared each day with children and families. Our emergency child care has been an amazing experience, teaching us how to work safely in our new context. We are anxious to support children’s transition back into care.

Due to the need for smaller groups to ensure safety we are looking at three times the costs to deliver child care. As a nonprofit, even before the pandemic, every dollar was needed to get by.

Although the government gave us three days’ notice to open, we would have opened immediately, had the resources been available. We want to do what’s best for children, families and our dedicated educators.

So, let me ask you this: Would you open a business knowing there was no way to pay your staff, bills, or for proper health and safety equipment? That you couldn’t charge more, both because families cannot afford it, and because you have mandated by the province? And that you would have to lower wages of an already underpaid sector?

I have been in this field for more than 35 years and to this day, continue to experience judgment for my profession. We are part of the education system, caring for, and nurturing children at a time that has the greatest impact on brain development. We are serious about this work and are essential to our future and the economy!

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