

Premier Ford and Minister Lecce neglect child care in school reopening plan ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

TORONTO — The Ford government's reopening plan, including the option for child care centres to operate at full capacity, ignores calls from parents, workers in child care, and unions to adequately fund child care centres for a safe reopening.

"Premier Ford and Minister Lecce continue to show their contempt for workers in child care and have completely ignored the sector in recent school reopening announcements," says Carrie Lynn Poole-Cotnam. "There has been no new funding or resources announced for child care, including necessary space to ensure that children and workers in child care can adequately physically distance."

CUPE Ontario warns that the Ford government's half-baked plan presents huge and unnecessary risks to children and child care staff. Since class sizes and child care cohorts are being permitted by the government to operate at pre-COVID-19 levels, parents, unions, and workers in child care are concerned that children will be the next victims of major COVID-19 outbreaks.

"Ontario's school reopening plan also presents huge operational, health, and safety concerns for child care centre operators. Before-and-after school programs are a mix of students from various classes—yet, there is no plan in place to minimize cohort-to-cohort exposure in child care centres," says Carolyn Ferns, Policy Coordinator at the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care (OCBCC). "Parents are starting to question this government's plan, and in turn, the child care system in Ontario. We're all losing confidence in Premier Ford and Minister Lecce's ability to protect children, families, and workers from the pandemic."

To date, the Ford government has not announced any new funding to child care centres who are already on the brink of collapse, reports CUPE Ontario.

"Children will move from overpacked classrooms to underfunded and under resourced child care centres—time is running out, Premier Ford and Minister Lecce need to create a safe reopening plan that creates a universally accessible, high-quality system of child care for all," Poole-Cotnam adds.

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