

Doug Ford wants to pit big business against children – and he's throwing his weight behind the millionaires, CUPE says ^[1]

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Excerpt

TORONTO – New Ontario Education Minister Todd Smith signaled to the province where he wants the child care sector to go – and it should be deeply concerning to anyone who cares about children, workers, or the judicious use of tax dollars.

In his first public statement about the sector in crisis, Smith asked federal Minister Jenna Sudds to roll back the existing limit which caps for-profit operators at 30 per cent of the spaces within the publicly funded federal system. Advocates have already pointed out that this decision would be both unnecessary and dangerous. But the move is wholly unsurprising given Doug Ford's disastrous track record of hollowing out public services while siphoning off tax dollars for millionaires.

"Smith could have asked the federal government to support small and struggling centres. He could have asked for funding for wages to address the workforce crisis as workers leave the sector in droves. Instead, his go to move was to open the floodgates to big business by using taxpayer dollars to subsidize private operators' profits" said Fred Hahn, President of CUPE Ontario which represents more than 5,000 child care workers across the province. "Smith is new in this role, so it's no surprise that he doesn't know what every expert, parent, and child care worker understands: non-profit centres are the gold standard when it comes to quality services and good jobs."

The Ford government framed this call as clearing away red tape for for-profit centres operated by single mothers who are pulling themselves up by their bootstraps. Nothing could be further from the truth. The billions of dollars of private equity that are prepared to flood the Ontario market in the form of big-box operators gobbling up smaller centres are not motivated by a desire to provide excellent care but because of a cynical opportunity to make a quick dollar.

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