

NDP's Tabuns' modernizing child care submission ^[1]

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Excerpts:

As education critic for Ontario New Democrats, I am pleased to submit to you the following comments in response to your Ministry's discussion paper entitled "Modernizing Child Care in Ontario."

Action is badly needed to address the current child care crisis in this province. As numerous advocates and experts have indicated, Ontario lacks a comprehensive early learning and care system.

Currently in Ontario, we only have licensed child care spaces for one out of every five children. Licensed child care, where available, has become unaffordable for many parents with fees reaching as high as \$2,000 a month. Modest-income parents who qualify for a subsidy are forced to wait months or even years before securing financial help. Furthermore, communities across Ontario are seeing some of the best child care centres shut their doors - victims of chronic underfunding and impacts of the implementation of full-day kindergarten.

With the lack of licensed child care, and the majority of parents in the paid workforce, more parents are forced to rely on unregulated child care where there is no assurance of quality. And worse, large for-profit companies are expanding in Ontario further compromising the quality of care. Finally, working conditions for many workers in the child care sector are unacceptably poor, with wages that are simply too low to reasonably live on. As a result, trained child care workers are exiting the sector leaving behind them a shortage of trained staff.

Ontario's New Democrats are committed to taking action to ensure that Ontario families have access to public, non-profit, affordable, high quality child care. We made significant commitments in the last election campaign of freezing child care fees, and investing to help centres survive the transition to full day kindergarten. In addition, as you know, we made child care a top priority in negotiations around the 2012 budget, and worked with your government to secure significant additional funding to help stabilize and support child care centres.

Much more needs to be done. Likewise, based on discussions with parents, teachers and experts in the field of early childhood education and care, we are submitting to you some suggested directions for action to build an accessible and sustainable child care system in Ontario.

First, it is important to establish some overarching goals which should guide our actions:

Accessible child care for all: There must be a clear commitment from this government that affordable, accessible and flexible child care and early learning opportunities will be available for children from all families who need or want it. We know this can't be done overnight but it must be the goal towards which we aim.

High quality care: Parents need to know that when they drop their children off for the day they can rest assured not only that their children are safe, but they are thriving in a nurturing, stimulating and educational environment.

Public and not-for-profit delivery: Research indicates that both the quality of care and working conditions for staff are compromised in for-profit child care settings. The Ministry of Education must ensure that public funds go towards high quality public and non-profit programs for Ontario's children.

Adequate and sustainable funding: Government has a responsibility to ensure adequate funding for the delivery of quality care, and to ensure funding is sustainable.

Comprehensive policy framework: Child care and early learning programs should be integrated into a comprehensive early learning framework that includes other family support and community services.

Region: Ontario ^[3]

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/research-policy-practice/12/10/ndps-tabuns-modernizing-child-care-submission> [2] <https://www.petertabuns.ca/news-and-press/504-modernizing-child-care-submission.html> [3] <https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/7856>