

Child-care proposals come up short ^[1]

Letters to the editor

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Re: Too young for the toddler room? March 7

In response to outrage about proposals to cut staff: child ratios, group size and monitoring/support in regulated home child care, the Star reported that a Ministry of Education representative said the proposals “strengthen quality, increase access and reflect the feedback we received from child-care licensees and other early years partners in response to past consultations.” I beg to differ on all three points.

To the contrary, the evidence suggests that these proposals would diminish quality as well as threatening access for infants. As well, I urge the Ministry to make public the feedback it received in response to its past two attempts to reduce these regulations (2014 and 2010), which was so negative that they were withdrawn.

What happened to that commitment to “a system of responsive, safe, high quality and accessible child care and early years programs and services will support parents and families, and will contribute to the healthy development of children”? This is clearly not that. Nor is it helpful in representing Ontario as a leader in working towards a universal quality national childcare program.

This needs sober second thought.

Martha Friendly, Executive Director, Childcare Resource and Research Unit, Toronto

A child’s success is my success. I am strongly disappointed in the Wynne government to prioritize cost-saving measures over early childhood investments, as indicated by their ridiculous proposal to lump 12 month olds into the same room as 24 month olds in licenced child care centres.

I am highly skeptical that this change, which would in effect place children in very different developmental stages together, would result in the “strengthen(ed) quality” that was cited by the Education Ministry spokesperson.

Um, how would this work exactly? Because this runs contrary to everything I know as a parent and a researcher.

Heather Whitty, The Offord Centre for Child Studies, McMaster University

To me the answer to the question of this story is yes! Most definitely.

I cannot decide which frustrates me more: that the merging of age groups is even being considered or that it did not come as a shock to hear about it.

Because this is not a new story, the government has always looked for ways to penny pinch. They continue to put forth these ridiculous ideas even though they place the quality of education and the safety of the students at risk.

As a swim instructor, I have worked with all age groups and I cannot imagine teaching a 12-month and an 18-month-old together. They are incredibly different and I would be afraid to step into the classroom.

I hope for the sake of the teachers, infants, and their parents, that this proposal is not approved.

Emilie DeCaen, Toronto

With the declining birthrate, provinces across Canada urge people to increase the birthrate. However, did the provincial governments prepare adequately? Apparently not.

The daycare crisis is not merely a problem for families. It’s related to the decisions of the government, and only through comprehensive policy-making and social welfare can we solve the crisis thoroughly.

In this story, we can see that there are several daycare problems, such as unsafe daycare environments and insufficient caring centres. These problems oblige parents to sacrifice their careers and salaries in order to compensate for the inadequacy of provincial policy.

How do we improve the daycare situation? We should think about creating more child-friendly environments in workplace so that parents can raise their kids while engaging in their jobs. Encouraging enterprise to provide daycare centres or supporting parents to work at home are two options that should be taken into consideration.

Yu-Rung Jeng, Toronto

I am a registered early childhood educator, an aunt to an 18-month-old, an advocate, and a woman who is also in protest to the proposed child care regulations. I would like to know what evidence Education Minister Liz Sandals has to support the comment that such changes to ratios and age groupings would strengthen quality. The knowledge I have about child development and delivering a high quality child care program would suggest that the proposed child care regulation changes will do just the opposite.

Sure, the changes might increase accessible spaces – but at what cost to the children who will receive less than high quality care from burnt-out educators who will be asked to do more, with less. Take a look into any child development textbook – a 12-month-old is an infant, not a toddler, and they shouldn't be morphed into toddlers for the sake of a poor solution to the problem of child care access for families.

Our province should show us the money for child care and create accessible infant spaces for children 12 to 18 months old, and support parents returning to work by investing enough in child care to bring the cost of child care down and retain qualified ECE professionals with respectable wages. Give us a child care system, not some deceiving solution that gives us a false sense of increased access.

Why not take a look at our parental leave benefits while we're talking about helping families – because that benefit is just as much a joke as the proposed child care regulation changes.

Chelsea Dault, East Garafraxa

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Region: Ontario ^[2]

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