



Fact sheet: Proposed changes to Ontario's child care regulations

New child care legislation and new regulations – at the same time?

- The Ontario government has tabled new child care **legislation** that makes many changes including new limitations on unregulated child care.
- At the same time, they have proposed significant changes to child care **regulations** that are closely linked to quality for young children and working conditions for staff.
- These two actions are separate:
 - Passing the legislation does not require the regulation changes to be made.
 - The regulation changes can be made by the governing Liberal party without a vote in the legislature.

What's the problem?

It's primarily the regulation changes that are of concern. Most details in the massive legislation package are generally supported or welcomed.

Quality for the youngest children—infants and toddlers—is the main concern. The proposal is to substantially increase both the number of children cared for by one adult (**ratio**) and the size of the group with whom the children spend most of their day with (**group size**).

Proposed ratios and group sizes

0-1 yrs = 1:3 ratio; max. 10

1-2 yrs = 1:5 ratio; max. 15

2-4 yrs = 1:8 ratio; max. 16 or 24

4-6 yrs = 1:13 ratio; max. 26

6-8 yrs = 1:15 ratio; max. 30

9-12 yrs = 1:20 ratio; max 20

Research shows that high staff to child ratios and low group sizes are key to high quality in child care, especially for infants and toddlers. Research also shows that the ratios and group sizes now proposed by the Ontario government are substantially below acceptable minimum levels that benefit children and provide environments that support and value staff.

Another concern is that loosening child care regulations in Ontario may act as a magnet for corporate big box child care operators to set up, as has occurred in other low-regulation countries.

The Ontario government's commitment to quality

One of five Guiding Principles: "Commitment to quality programs for all children. Program quality must be a priority across service settings" (*Modernizing child care in Ontario: Sharing conversations, strengthening partnerships, working together*, Ministry of Education, 2012).

Proposed changes to key regulations linked to quality in centres

Ratios will be significantly reduced and group size substantially increased:

- For 1 – 1 ½ year olds, ratios will increase from 1: 3 to 1:5; group size will increase from 10 to 15
- For 2 -2 ½ year olds, ratios will increase from 1:5 to 1:8; an increased group size of 24 will be an option.
- No increases in required numbers of ECE-trained staff are proposed.
- Operators will be able to choose from two different ratio/group size models (the existing option and the new option).

Proposed changes to key regulations linked to quality in regulated home child care

- The legislation will increase the total number of children per caregiver from 5 to 6
- Regulatory proposal to remove the limitation to 3 children under 3 years
- There is currently no ECE training requirement in home child care and none is proposed.

Introduction of multi-age groupings

- Regulation changes propose two new multi-age grouping options, one of which would allow a maximum group size of 20 for a group including children from 0-4 years.

I've got the facts, now how can I get involved?

1. Write a personal or group response to the Ontario government .

The provincial government's website says:

"All interested parties including early learning, education, child care sector partners, parents/guardians, service system managers, First Nations, and other stakeholders are encouraged to provide input to the ministry. Feedback can be provided in one of three ways:

1. By using the comments field at:

<http://www.ontariocanada.com/registry/view.do?postingId=14762&language=en>

2. By email: Feedback in document format may be emailed to: CCGE_modernization@ontario.ca

3. Feedback can be provided by regular mail to the following address:

Child Care Modernization
c/o Early Years Division
Ministry of Education
900 Bay Street, 24th floor Mowat Block
Toronto, ON M7A 1L2

2. Sign on to the Open Letter.

All organizations, service providers and early childhood leaders are encouraged to sign on the Open Letter to Education Minister Liz Sandals.

The text of the letter can be found at:

http://www.childcarecanada.org/sites/default/files/OPEN_LETTER_TO_ONTARIO_EDUCATION_MINISTER_FEB2014_0.pdf

If you agree with the spirit of the letter, encourage your workplace, college or university, student group, union or other organization to sign on.

To sign, email Eduarda Sousa at: esousa@aeceo.ca