

# The Saskatchewan Early Childhood Association

March 18, 2020

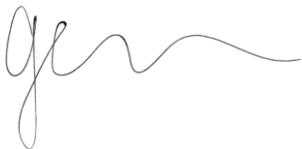
During this challenging and unprecedented time the Saskatchewan Early Childhood Association (SECA) urgently requests the Government of Saskatchewan close all Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) programs in the province to aid in the mitigation and suppression of the COVID-19 virus. This action is one that has already been taken by the governments of QC, NL, NB, NS, PEI, ON, MB, AB and NU, and considers the safety and well-being of all Saskatchewan's children, not just those in schools, as well as the ELCC workforce and families that use ELCC programs each and every day. It is in keeping with the Government of Canada's social distancing and mitigation directives as well as that of the Government of Saskatchewan.

SECA is gravely concerned that, as Dr. Theresa Tam, Canada's Chief Public Health Officer has publicly stated "...the window to flatten the curve of the pandemic is narrow" and we, "all need to act now. COVID-19 is a serious public health threat." The decision to leave child care programs out of public health planning, despite their lower adult-child ratios, and the need to support the Saskatchewan economy and families is being overlooked. This is a serious matter.

Federal and provincial public health authorities have recommended social distancing to prevent the further spread of the COVID-19 virus. This is neither feasible nor a realistic expectation within an ELCC environment, especially with the influx of school-aged children coming into care following school closures. Many Saskatchewan ELCC programs have more than 50 children in a centre. This contradicts the recommendations being communicated by health authorities.

The essence of our sector is to care. How do we care for young children at a time when we are being required to physically distance ourselves from others?

Finally, as we know that closures will have significant financial impact on Early Childhood Educators, programs and staff, we request that funding be provided to ensure the continued viability and economic security of the same. With the announcement of Federal supports we urge the Government of Saskatchewan to work with their federal partners during this unprecedented time to fully support and provide direction to the ELCC sector.



Georgia H. Lavallee  
Executive Director