

Ministry of Education

Associate Minister

Mowat Block
Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1L2

Ministère de l'Éducation

Ministre associée

Édifce Mowat
Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1L2



September 22, 2016

Dear child care and early years partners,

On September 12, 2016, our Government made the historic commitment to create 100,000 new child care spaces for infants, toddlers and preschoolers, over the next five years.

This investment in the early years reflects the government's recognition that quality, affordable, accessible and flexible options for families' child care needs are necessary now more than ever.

We know that high-quality child care is an essential start to a child's journey of education, supporting their social, emotional and cognitive development. Child care and early years programs help get our youngest learners ready for full-day kindergarten, grade one and success beyond the classroom.

Increased access to child care also helps close the gender wage gap by supporting women's participation in the labour market, while supporting our poverty reduction efforts by positively impacting families' labour force participation.

I am very excited that Premier Kathleen Wynne recently appointed me as Associate Minister of Education with a focus on the Early Years and Child Care. Over the coming months, Minister Hunter and I will work closely with parents, child care service system managers, early years and child care advocates, licensed child care providers, academics, early childhood educators and employers develop a strategy for rolling out the government's five-year plan to expand licensed child care access.

I am also committed to working with our federal, provincial and territorial partners on a pan-Canadian Early Learning and Child Care Framework.

Our plan to create 100,000 child care spaces will include both capital and operating funding to support a mixed approach of school-based, community-based and home-based expansion. This will include a large number of new spaces created in school settings through new construction and retrofitting existing excess space. By working closely with municipalities, Ontario will support increased spaces in community and workplace-based settings with a mix of leased, new and retrofitted spaces. The increase in spaces will also come from working closely with licensed home child care providers to create more capacity.

This commitment builds on the work the government has done to date including:

- The introduction and implementation of full-day kindergarten;
- Legislative and regulatory modernization through the introduction of the *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014* which includes greater flexibility for age groupings in child care centres;
- Expansion of before- and after-school care for 6-12 year olds;
- Ongoing investments of \$100 million per year in child and family programs which are currently being transformed to support integration and coordination of services;
- The province's commitment to work with its Indigenous partners to address the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's findings;
- Wage enhancement grants for eligible child care workers and providers to help address the gender wage gap.

Since 2003, the government has doubled child care funding to more than \$1 billion annually.

Over the past three years, our investments, and your hard work, have helped to create 56,000 new licensed child care spaces. And the government is in the midst of creating more spaces by adding 4,000 new child care spaces in schools.

I want to thank you for your partnerships, dedication and all the hard work you do every day to shape our future generation, keep children safe and support families.

This is an incredibly exciting time for Ontario's families and for the child care system in this province. Over the Fall and early Winter, I will be reaching out to the child care and early years sector, to parents and communities and to everyone else who makes high quality child care possible in this province, to ensure that our five-year commitment and the broader policy framework that will underpin it best meet the needs of communities.

I will need your critical advice and perspective to inform this important work. I look forward to continuing our work together as we strive to achieve a high-quality, accessible, affordable and responsive early years system.

Sincerely,



Indira Naidoo-Harris

Associate Minister of Education (Early Years and Child Care)