



INTERFAITH SOCIAL ASSISTANCE REFORM COALITION

March 8, 2010

Hon. Premier McGuinty
Ontario Legislature
Fax to: 416-325-3745

Subject: Ontario Budget and child care funding

Dear Premier McGuinty,

We are writing to you following the 2010 federal budget, which includes no federal funding for regulated child care services.

Interfaith Social Assistance Reform (ISARC) agrees with you on the importance of investing in children and families and ensuring that all children have the opportunity to succeed in life. You have followed through on this commitment with significant new initiatives. Your government has moved boldly to establish the Early Learning Program for 4 and 5 year olds in the education system, and you have set out Ontario's Poverty Reduction Strategy with a target to cut child poverty by 25% by 2013.

While the Province is strengthening Ontario's early learning services for children aged 4 and 5, it is important that the child care sector that serves children from birth to 4 years is retained. Our child care system needs to be supported as it goes through this transition, especially when care of children under 4 years old is more intense and requires more staff than care for 4 and 5 year olds. Our child care system has been able to accommodate younger children because costs are less for older children in the system.

Secondly low income families relying on subsidized child care – the families which your government is trying to lift out of poverty through Ontario's Poverty Reduction Strategy – will be hit hardest by the loss of child care. For low and modest income families, having access to affordable high quality child care in those early years is the difference between poverty and making a living.

Without new funding Ontario will lose 7,600 child care subsidies. There will be further fallout as child care centres close and other shortfalls are passed down to parents in reduced services and higher fees.

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The report of your early learning advisor foresaw these circumstances and recommended that all child care savings realized from full day learning, plus additional capital and transition funds, be available to sustain and reorganize the sector through this change. Full implementation of full-day learning for 4 and 5 year olds will result in substantial child care savings over the next five years. But the crisis in child care for Ontario families is now. According to the Ministry of Children & Youth Services, 48% of Ontario's child care centres will be affected by the implementation of full day learning in the first year alone.

Thirdly, property taxes are not sufficient to pay for child care. Municipal governments realize the need for child care transition, do not want to lose child care services, cannot increase the waiting lists for subsidy, and yet cannot increase property taxes.

We are asking that you stabilize and sustain access for low and modest income families in the upcoming budget. Child care services must have adequate income to adjust to the new environment and to refocus their programs to the needs of younger children and their families.

Two of your government's main social policy planks – The Early Learning Program and Ontario's Poverty Reduction Strategy – will falter if child care is allowed to collapse. ISARC urges you to do the right thing in support of Ontario children and families.

Yours sincerely,

The Rev. Susan Eagle, chairperson
ISARC Steering Committee

The Rev. Dr. Brice Balmer, director
ISARC

Cc. Hon. Laurel Broten, Minister of Children & Youth Services
Hon. Dwight Duncan, Minister of Finance