



September 13, 2012

Earlier this summer, the Ontario Liberal government announced its intention to undertake a three-year “modernization” initiative of the province’s piecemeal child care system.

On June 27, Education Minister Laurel Broten released an online discussion paper called “Modernizing Child Care in Ontario” (<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/childcare/modernizing.html>). The deadline to make submissions online is September 24, 2012.

While the discussion the government wants to have is limited to set questions, CUPE in our submission focused on broad policy areas that we believe will achieve a comprehensive high quality, affordable public and not-for-profit system of early learning and care.

A copy of the CUPE submission is attached. We encourage you to read it. Use the CUPE submission as a guide for your own response to the ministry’s online consultation process before the September 24 deadline. To submit a response based on your personal experiences working in child care and early learning environments or as parent accessing child care please visit this link: <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/childcare/modernizing.html>.

A few key areas from the CUPE submission we want to highlight

Three areas of concern with the government’s discussion process:

1. Although there are tens of thousands of families province-wide waiting for accessible, licensed child care, the Ontario Liberals say that while the review is ongoing they do not intend to expand access to child care;
2. At a time when for-profit, corporate-style child care is expanding at a record pace in Ontario, there is no discussion offered by the government as a part of their “modernization” initiative on whether continuing to fund and license for-profit child care is good public policy. As a key building block of a long-term plan that not only “modernizes” child care but expands public and not-for-profit program, CUPE is calling for a moratorium on licensing of for-profit child care. CUPE believes a moratorium is needed to create the breathing room to develop a truly comprehensive vision and plan for early learning and care;
3. The “modernization” discussion is limited to an online process with set question parameters rather than real community-based consultations with parents, child care and early learning educators and other stakeholders.

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Principles that underpin CUPE's ECEC advocacy:

1. Early childhood education and care (ECEC) must be universally accessible, that is, available, affordable, inclusive and meeting diverse needs in all communities, all regions, all families and children.
2. ECEC programs must be high quality.
3. ECEC programs should be delivered as part of a publicly-managed system, not on private providers to deliver programs.
4. A comprehensive range of service and policy options should be available, that is, real choices for families that meet children's, families' and communities' needs, (such as part-day participation, regulated family child care) as well as strengthened maternity and parental leave.
5. Regulatory changes (including to the Day Nurseries Act) must be focused on raising the floor on quality indicators such as group size, child-staff ratios, early childhood education requirements and quality indicators that include education play-based learning environments, not on diluting standards.

CUPE believes that to develop a truly modern child care system will require adequate:

- core operating funding to support affordability to parents and improving wages and working conditions for early childhood educators and workers;
- capital investments for system and physical infrastructure;
- funding for supports and services for children with special needs;
- allocations that reflect the needs of First Nations and northern communities;
- on-going investments to support the child care workforce to implement an early learning curriculum that reflects young children's learning needs (ages 0-12) and ensures low staff-to-children ratios; and provision of practical support to the early learning workforce to take part in flexible training programs.

If you have questions about CUPE's submission, accessing the government website <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/childcare/modernizing.html> or making your own submission please contact Carrie Lynn Poole-Cotnam, Chair of the Social Service Worker Coordinating Committee at carrielynnpoole@rogers.com or Sarah Declerck, Social Services Coordinator at sdeclerck@cupe.ca or 905-739-3999 ext. 221.

Join the “modernization” conversation

The Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care (OCBCC) is holding a free telephone town hall about the province's child care modernization initiative on September 18th from 7 – 8:30 pm. To join the telephone town hall, visit www.childcareontario.org to register. Join other child care workers and ECE's, parents, faculty, students and allies in the discussion.