



NATIONAL ADVOCACY.
COMMUNITY ACTION.



Honourable Stephen Lecce
Minister of Education
438 University Ave, 5th Floor
Toronto, ON, M5G 2K8

April 16, 2021

Dear Minister Lecce,

As the leader of a community association that serves more than 13,000 women, girls and gender diverse residents of Toronto and a child care operator in a COVID hotspot neighborhood, I am writing to urge you to prioritize the vaccination of child care workers during this third provincial shutdown.

While school staff and special education workers were designated to receive their vaccinations in hotspot neighbourhoods across Ontario this week, child care workers were not included in this refocused vaccination approach despite centres continuing to operate.

Early Childhood Educators (ECEs), child care workers and child care providers work with an unmasked, unvaccinated, and vulnerable population. Despite our vigilant efforts to mitigate the transmission of COVID-19 and its deadly variants in our early learning spaces, ECEs and child care workers and providers are in regular direct contact with young children, many of whom cannot wear masks and do not yet understand physical distancing.

Our Bergamot Early Learning Centre, located in the M9W postal code, has had to close three times on account of COVID-19 scares. According to the Ontario government's own data, COVID cases in child care centres have been increasing steadily since early March, the spread driven by extremely contagious variants.

I am sure the health of the economy informed your decision to keep child care open during the shut down – indeed, we need parents working and so we need a healthy child care workforce to provide these services. The child care community has been on the frontline of this pandemic providing vital early learning and care for communities across the city. If you are going to have them deliver emergency child care, ECEs and child care workers and providers need to be vaccinated now. These workers cannot wait until Phase 2 – which could be as late as July – to be protected.

In partnership with fellow community leaders, we are calling on you, Minister Lecce, to take swift action that is proactive, solutions-based and centralizes community care. We look forward to seeing you immediately amend and update this vaccination refocus to include these workers. The health and well-being of both our children and those responsible for leading them in education and care depends on it.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Heather N. McGregor".

Heather McGregor

cc:

Honourable Doug Ford, Premier of Ontario

Dr. David Williams, Chief Medical Officer of Health

Honourable Christine Elliott, Minister of Health

Honourable Jill Dunlop, Minister of Children and Women's Issues

Association of Early Childhood Educators Ontario

Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care