

March 16, 2020

## **Open Letter to Canada's Premiers -- Early Learning and Child Care Planning COVID-19:**

Most of your governments have or will be announcing COVID-19 plans and strategies to minimize and mitigate risk and transmission specific to children in schools. Outside of Quebec, PEI, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Labrador and Alberta is the absence of plans specific to the Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) sector. It is a serious omission as the safety and security of all children and the Early Childhood Educators (ECE's) who care for them in intimate, close contact each and every day, as well as their families are just as worthy of fulsome COVID-19 mitigation and planning.

Public health decisions affecting children must include **all children** -- not just those that are enrolled in the public-school system. Understanding that ELCC programs are not a part of public system as schools are, they are still subject to provincial/territorial/municipal regulations, licensing and funding and as such, are within the purview of public safety plans.

Closing schools and classrooms while still keeping child care programs open, no matter where they are situated, does not satisfy a holistic approach to children's welfare. It also does not recognize the reality of spaces used, group sizes and the very act of caring for children. Further, it shows little regard to the women and men that work in Canada's ELCC sector.

Of serious concern and counter to what the Canadian Government's social distance policy is trying to achieve, ELCC programs across Canada will feel tremendous pressure to remain open in order to meet the urgent child care demands of families. Without adequate financial supports in place to support their temporary closing and to ensure the continued economic security of the ELCC workforce, many programs will feel compelled to continue their operations, despite the immediate safety concerns.

We urgently recommend that immediate federal, provincial and territorial funding be dedicated to support program closures, and aid the ECE workforce and families that are impacted—so that Canada's ELCC sector can follow the immediate call for social distancing protocols.

All children, ELCC programs and families deserve no less than your full planning consideration. The window to significantly alter the effect and impact of the COVID-19 virus is quickly closing—we need to fully act now, not when it is too late.

Sincerely,



Don Giesbrecht  
CEO

Cc: The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau Hon. Ahmed Hussen, Hon. Bill Morneau, Hon. Maryam Monsef, Hon. Chrystia Freeland