

CHILD CARE AND EARLY YEARS REVIEWS, NEWS AND PLANS FOR CHANGES TO THE CURRENT SYSTEM

Over the past year or more, the Ministry of Education has made significant efforts to “transform Ontario’s child care and early years system.” The Ministry has recognized that in order to improve our early years and child care system, there needs to be changes to the current laws and regulations that oversee the sector.

In early 2013, Ontario introduced its Early Years Policy Framework, which provided a vision for the early years. By December 2013, the Ministry of Education introduced Bill 143, the Child Care Modernization Act, 2013. The major change that Bill 143 would have, if passed, would be to repeal and replace the existing Day Nursery Act (DNA) with the new Child Care and Early Years Act, 2013. This change has been well received by most of the child care community who recognize that the current DNA (which was first introduced in the 1940’s) may no longer reflect our current society, and is due for a change. Bill 143 also includes amendments to both the Education Act and the Early Childhood Educators Act, 2007, ensuring that all three Acts are aligned to support quality programs for children, with increased oversight and enforcement.

The proposed changes to regulation focus on three main areas of: program quality; access and flexibility; and health and safety. Some of the proposed changes include a “policy statement to guide program content and educator practice”, an amendment to the private-home day care qualifications for home visitors (i.e. those people employed by licensed home child care agencies to visit/inspect the homes), and some revised guidelines on age groupings for children, and teacher to child ratios. Although some of these changes have been received well, there have been some concerns expressed over any changes to ratios that could increase the numbers of children in one group and/or decrease the ages of those children.

Throughout this process of change, the Ministry of Education has sought insight and feedback from various stakeholders, providing child care associations and organizations with the opportunity to make recommendations for an improved system.

You can find additional information on some of the recent and proposed changes by checking out the following links:

Ministry of Education/Child Care

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/childcare/index.html>

Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care/Changes to the Child Care Legislation and Regulation

http://www.childcareontario.org/child_care_modernization_act

Association of Early Childhood Educators of Ontario/Child Care Modernization Act

<http://www.aecce.ca/content/child-care-modernization-act.html>