



April 22, 2021

Dr. Eileen de Villa

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Mayor John Tory

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Toronto Board of Health

Julie Lavertu
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Dear: Dr. Eileen de Villa, Mayor John Tory, Toronto Board of Health

Re: Vaccinate Early Childhood Educators/Essential Childcare Worker and Prioritize the Health and Safety of ALL Childcare Workers

On April 12, 2021, the Toronto Board of Health passed a motion to call on the Province of Ontario to ensure that early childhood educators and essential frontline childcare workers are eligible for COVID-19 vaccinations as part of Ontario's initiative to vaccinate education workers. Meanwhile, the Province has assigned individual municipalities the responsibility of administering programs for COVID-19 vaccinations through their local public health units.

As of today, neither the Province of Ontario, nor the City of Toronto have created a path to vaccinate

early childhood educators and essential frontline childcare workers employed by independent childcare operators. **Thousands of early childhood educators and essential frontline workers in the childcare sector therefore remain unvaccinated, yet they continue to work in intimate settings with the most vulnerable residents of our City.**

Even more astoundingly, early childhood educators and essential frontline childcare workers *employed by school boards* are now eligible for COVID-19 vaccination through the Provincial vaccination program for “education workers”, while those *employed by independent operators* are not. There is not one shred of epidemiological or other evidence to support this delineation. Both groups work in close and intimate settings with young children. Both groups work indoors for prolonged hours and face repeated exposure to bodily fluids and airborne droplets. Both groups are exposed to hundreds of families whose children they serve throughout the City of Toronto. In many cases, early childhood educators employed by school boards and those employed by independent operators work in the **same buildings**, yet those employed by school boards are eligible for COVID-19 vaccination as “education workers”, while those employed by independent operators are not.

These disparate realities are further punctuated by the fact that, with schools and school-based childcare sites currently closed, the risk of exposure to COVID-19 is much higher for early childhood educators and frontline childcare workers employed by independent operators. **The differential treatment of school-board-employed early childhood educators and frontline childcare workers and those employed by independent operators is therefore tremendously inequitable, arbitrary, and irrational.** This is not an appropriate exercise of our government’s discretionary authority.

Finally, childcare operators have struggled to remain open since the onset of this pandemic last spring. Despite drastically decreased enrollment and financial uncertainty and the dangers associated with the close and intimate contact required of their work, childcare workers have continued to serve our most vulnerable population. **Early childhood educators and essential childcare workers, whether employed by school boards or not, are the backbone for working families.** Community stakeholders, including childcare operators, families, and school boards, have desperately asked that **all** early childhood educators and essential frontline childcare workers be eligible for immediate COVID-19 vaccination. In March 2021, early childhood educators and essential childcare workers were finally declared essential workers, yet thousands remain unvaccinated!

COVID-19 case numbers and hospitalization rates continue to skyrocket throughout the City of Toronto. Neither essential childcare workers, their families, nor the families of the children in their care, should have to choose between earning an income and being safe. The stakes are much too high.

ACTION SOUGHT: Immediately make all existing COVID-19 community vaccination programs for education workers available to ALL early childhood educators and essential childcare workers, whether they are employed by school boards.

Early childcare educators and essential frontline childcare workers cannot rely on pop-up clinics - childcare workers do not have any flexibility during the workday to “pop out” and line up for a vaccine. First, legislated child-staff ratios must be maintained. Second, staffing gaps cannot continuously be filled by temporary workers because childcare groupings/cohorts must remain static for COVID-19 safety purposes. Our government’s delay to vaccinate **all** early childcare educators and essential frontline childcare workers at these initial stages means that our community’s hard-working and highly exposed staff will not even be fully vaccinated until after 2021 summer programs have

ended. **All childcare workers need, *and deserve*, priority access to the same stable and accessible vaccination programs as education workers.**

We are confident that our childcare community will quickly mobilize to obtain vaccines as soon as our workers are eligible to do so. Our community's resilience and safety must be respected and restored. Our City must take this important action now.

Sincerely,

Cedric Canu, Chair
Treetop Children's Centre Board of Directors

Amy O'Neil, Director
Treetop Children's Centre

cc:

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