

April 8, 2021

Dr. Eileen de Villa
Toronto Medical Officer of Health
277 Victoria St, 5th Floor
Toronto, ON
M5B 1W2

Mayor John Tory
Office of the Mayor
City Hall, 2nd Floor
100 Queen St. W.
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

RE: Childcare Workforce Vaccinations

Dear Dr. Eileen de Villa and Mayor John Tory,

On behalf of Gibraltar Point Day Nursery and the children and families we work with, thank you for your ongoing leadership throughout the pandemic.

Gibraltar Point Day Nursery is a non-profit child care centre, in ward Spadina-Fort York who proudly provides vital early learning and care for 16 and their families in our vibrant community.

This week, we heard the Premier of Ontario announce that school staff and special education workers will be prioritized in hotspot neighbourhoods throughout the province. This is good news, however, we are highly concerned that educators who work in child care centres haven't been included in this refocused vaccination approach.

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

The majority of Toronto's non-profit child care centres have remained open during provincial shutdowns, even during school closures. If ECEs and child care workers are truly considered essential to the health, well-being and economy of Toronto, it is essential that we protect them. The Toronto child care community has been on the frontline of this pandemic providing vital early learning and care for communities across the city. Families and caregivers, especially in our most vulnerable neighbourhoods, depend on their child care centre as a safe early learning and care community for their young children. The need for action is urgent; we need vaccinations for our child care workers, now.

As leaders in our province, we look to the city of Toronto and our local public health unit to take swift action that is proactive, solutions-based and centralizes community care. We are seeing Public Health Units in other regions of Ontario refocus their vaccination strategy. The Niagara Region has confirmed that they will be vaccinating all of their frontline educators and Early Childhood Educators over the April 12, 2021 school break. In York Region, they are simultaneously vaccinating frontline workers while rolling out the Province's Phase II of vaccinations. Other regions have created centralized waitlists for education and child care workers to be on call for end of day doses, including Durham and the Kawartha Region. We ask that Toronto Public Health join these other regions in their community-based approaches.

As leaders in early learning and care, we know how critical it is that we prioritize the well-being of the nearly 80,000 young children we provide care for in 1051 child care centres across the city. Vaccinating the child care workforce protects not only our workers, but the children, families and communities we work with. With the current school closures, 433 of which have child care centres located on site, we have a window of opportunity to use these spaces in conjunction with mobile clinics to vaccinate all education workers, including ECEs and child care workers.

We've copied our City Councillor to ensure they are aware of this important health and wellness issue for families in their community, the Toronto Board of Health Chair, and our municipal and provincial ELCC advocacy organizations.

We look forward to seeing the city of Toronto take bold and immediate action regarding a progressive and effective vaccination strategy that includes Early Childhood Educators and child care workers. The health and well-being of both our children and those responsible for leading them in education and care, depends on it.

Sincerely,
Sonia Sommer

cc:

Toronto Board of Health, boh@toronto.ca

Councillor Joe Cressy, councillor_cressy@toronto.ca

Toronto Community for Better Child Care, abigail@childcaretoronto.org

Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care, carolyn@childcareontario.org

Association of Early Childhood Educators Ontario, apowell@aeceo.ca