



June 12th, 2020

Dear Treetop Families,

As you are aware, the provincial government announced on June 9th that childcare in Ontario will be allowed to open as early as June 12th. The childcare community is alarmed by the insufficient lead time offered to daycares, the lack of an overall provincial strategy to support daycares; finally, the childcare community is concerned that the announcement has created false hope for parents.

Over the past couple of months, Treetop Children's Centre has been carefully thinking through what childcare will look like as the government reopens the economy by stages. This letter is to help you understand our capabilities, given the current situation.

Summer Childcare Implications for Families

Given the current guidance and policies from the provincial government, the Treetop Board of Directors is NOT confident we can viably offer families a childcare solution for the summer. We want to be honest and direct so that parents do not have false hope, and so they have advance notice to seek alternative summer arrangements, if required.

We will continue to look for viable solutions, however, any solution would require policy changes and/or financial support from the provincial government. You can help play a role in getting us this support by voicing your concerns to your local MPP (see below).

Current Provincial Government Policies and Supports

Treetop fully supports the need to have strict safety policies in place during the pandemic. However, it is impossible to viably operate while adhering to those policies under our current funding model. Some of the key guidelines and their implications include:

1. Reduction in enrollment and revenue by at least 80%

- Maximum of eight children in a room with two staff members (1:4 ratio)
- Previously our ratios were 1:8 for preschool, 1:13 for kindergarten and 1:15 for school-aged
- Parents fees are to remain the same as per pre-COVID Treetop policies

2. Increasing total operating costs, without additional funding

- Increased staffing ratios result in the same total staffing cost, even with reduced child enrollment
- Additional safety measures (PPE, screening staff, additional cleaning requirements) create new fixed costs

While we do not dispute the need for any of the individual guidelines proposed by the provincial government, Treetop cannot viably operate in this environment and would need funding relief from the provincial government in order to do so. It is worth noting this is not a “Treetop issue” - this is structural issue across all daycares in the province and the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care is advocating for a solution. We encourage families to read the following article from yesterday’s Toronto Star for further information and context from other local daycares.

<https://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2020/06/10/the-nice-ladies-of-child-care-are-furious-at-lack-of-lead-time-and-financial-support-from-the-province-on-daycare-reopening.html>

Treetop Children, Families and Staff Remain Our Top Priority

We are committed to adhering to the strictest safety standards as outlined by the provincial government’s guidance document.

During this period of closure, Treetop's management team has been actively engaged in preparing for re-opening. We want to assure you that the Board of Directors and staff are committed to ensuring our re-opening plan is carefully created and executed. We will follow all guidelines to ensure both children and staff are safe.

In addition, we are fully aware that as early childhood educators, our role is to provide for the well-being of the whole child and not just their physical health. Physical, emotional and social well-being are all part of high-quality childcare, so we will carefully balance all the health and safety protocols with other guidelines to create a nurturing and supportive practice of care.

Re-opening

At this time, we are unsure of when Treetop will be able to re-open. As outlined above, given the current provincial government's guidelines and policies, we are unable to provide childcare. We will continue to advocate for better policies to support childcare in our community and will continue to evaluate the situation as new provincial government announcements are made.

In the meantime, when we are able to re-open, we need to keep the following in mind:

We must be prepared for a new normal. Although we are unsure of exactly what policies and guidelines will be in place when we open, we should all understand that Treetop childcare will not look the same. There are several examples from across Canada that can provide us with a glimpse of what childcare looks like during a pandemic.

There will still be some risk, and we will do everything possible to mitigate the risk. There are currently eight emergency childcare centres operating in Toronto; however, even with enhanced cleaning and screening there was an outbreak. We are mindful that nothing is risk-free, but it is important for the well-being of children, families and our community that we work together to find a childcare solution while also mitigating risks.

Next Steps and How You Can Help

We at Treetop remain committed to finding a solution, but we need your help. The Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care is advocating for a solution, but we need parents in our community to speak up and play an active role.

Please send a message to your MPP (in Toronto-St. Paul's it is [Jill Andrew](#)) and voice your concerns about viable childcare solutions for parents.

https://www.childcareontario.org/child_care_needs_a_safe_reopening_and_recovery

Children, families, and educators deserve safe, quality programs when they re-open and this takes both time and financial support. The provincial government's current re-opening plan missed the mark. We demand and deserve better.

We will continue to remain in touch as future provincial government childcare announcements are made. If you have any questions, please reach out to Amy O'Neil.

Sincerely,

Amy O'Neil and the

Treetop Board of Directors