

Premier Doug Ford pressed on child care, education during appearance in Cambridge ^[1]

MPP Mike Schreiner says Ford should be helping schools plan instead of "campaigning around the province"

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EXCERPTS

Ontario Premier Doug Ford was pressed on his plans to reopen schools during a stop in Cambridge Tuesday afternoon.

Guelph MPP Mike Schreiner has asked the province to guarantee that children will have a place to go five days a week come the fall, through a combination of in-class learning and childcare. He warned of a "mass exodus" of parents from the workforce if distance learning continues.

At the same time, the social media hashtag #SchoolsBeforeBars has criticized how Ontario and other parts of North America have moved to reopen businesses, including bars, ahead of schools.

Asked about the hashtag Tuesday during a press conference in Cambridge, Ford said opening bars was "the last thing [he's] worried about."

"What I'm concerned about is [the businesses that own] the restaurants and the bars, keeping them alive, keeping them afloat," said Ford, who added that he doesn't drink.

Ford said Thursday he's indicated to boards and trustees that he wants students to be in schools five days a week in the fall. Boards have been asked to come up with three different plans — including online schooling, in person schooling and a combination of both — to prepare for all possible scenarios, he said.

Ford said he also wants 100 per cent of daycare facilities to open by September.

But Schreiner said he thinks the province is stalling. In a statement, Schreiner said Tuesday that Ford should be planning for the fall by hiring more teachers and support staff, instead of "campaigning around the province."

"We should already be hearing about plans to utilize outdoor education and repurpose community centres and other local spaces to accommodate students safely," Schreiner said, adding that he's concerned about how more time out of school could affect students' mental health and literacy skills.

"All signs point to a government that is not ready and that will pass the burden onto parents, teachers and local trustees to figure it out at the last minute," he said.

First stop in tour

Ford made the comments during an appearance at Eclipse Innovations Inc., in Cambridge, an affiliate of the company Eclipse Automation Inc.

The province is investing more than \$1.4 million in the company to help increase domestic production of N95 masks. Part of the project also involves hiring 17 new people.

Ford said Tuesday the investment is part of a broader goal for the province to become less reliant on other countries for medical supplies and personal protective equipment.

Ford also appeared at Challenger Motor Freight in Cambridge and Shaver Industries in Kitchener Thursday. Throughout the summer, Ford said he plans to tour businesses across the province to "acknowledge and thank" them for their work during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Region: Ontario ^[3]

Tags: economic recovery ^[4]
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during-appearance

Links

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/20/07/premier-doug-ford-pressed-child-care-education-during-appearance> [2]

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/kitchener-waterloo/premier-doug-ford-visit-cambridge-kitchener-july-14-1.5648732> [3]

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