

Nova Scotia pulls funding for free early-childhood school program [CA-NS] ^[1]

Regional News, The News

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AVAILABILITY

See text below.

EXCERPTS

The Nova Scotia government has pulled funding for a free program that was designed to prepare young children for school.

The province started a pilot program at 19 schools in the 2005-2006 school year for children who weren't yet old enough to start Grade Primary, but the government announced Friday it was scrapping the program.

Dennis Cochrane, the province's deputy education minister, says it was a decision of the provincial cabinet, but he says it wasn't taken lightly.

He says instead the province lowered the age requirement for starting gradeschool by four months, allowing 2,200 children to begin Grade Primary a year earlier than they would have been allowed to otherwise.

Andy MacNeil, principal of Ian Forsyth Elementary School in Dartmouth, says he's sad to see the pre-Primary program gone.

He says the program prepared children to enter school while offering early childhood education to families who otherwise wouldn't be able to afford private preschool.

The province says the pilot program cost \$1.9 million at 19 sites around Nova Scotia, while expanding entry into Grade Primary cost \$7.5 million and is in effect everywhere.

However, Liberal Leo Glavine and New Democrat Percy Paris say the province should be extending — not ending — the early learning program.

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- reprinted from The News

Region: Nova Scotia ^[2]

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