

# 'Poor decision' has everyone scrambling [CA-YT] <sup>[1]</sup>

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## AVAILABILITY

See text below.

## EXCERPTS

On May 14, the Yukon Child Care Association (YCCA) wrote the Yukon government's Child Care Services Unit the following letter to outline the consequences child care operators are faced with in the news that all kindergarten children in Whitehorse may attend school for full days.

The government has recently introduced full-day kindergarten throughout the territory. The YCCA would like to respond to how it affects the operations of child care.

- There are currently not enough spaces for school-age children in child care settings.
- Recruitment and retention of child care employees are the industry's primary concern, with school-age caregivers the most difficult to retain.
- There is no busing service for part-day kindergarteners.
- Funding for kindergarten spots is unclear.

Currently, schools often close four days per trimester for parent/teacher interviews and professional development days.

On these days, families require full-day child care, as they do on school holidays. Seldom do all schools close on the same day, and typically, one child care facility serves children from three schools.

Child care operators are expected to find employees who are willing to work from 3-6 p.m. daily and then on occasional days at a base rate of average \$10.

None of these issues, difficult to cope with as they seem, has been addressed by the child care industry because there are always more pressing issues.

Now, the government has included kindergarten children in this foray.

The second point is that of funding. Currently, kindergarten subsidy rates are \$450 a month, as they are full-time. The direct operating grant considers the kindergarten spaces full-time as well.

Should funding change, many operators will not be able or willing to use full-time spaces for their part-time kindergarten children.

We cannot state clearly enough that the funding must remain the same in order that the child care operations do not feel the financial burden, thus lowering the quality of care for the infant-preschool programs.

Two things are certain. Without full-time funding in both the subsidy and direct operating grant, government will find child care operations must sacrifice their kindergarten spots for full-time spots. This will leave a whole grade full of children without licensed child care.

The YCCA would encourage Child Care Services to act swiftly to build new school-age programs and, for the interim, fund kindergarten spaces at a full-time basis.

This will alleviate the stress on the preschool programs so that quality in their arenas are not compromised and give school-age children the programs necessary while their parents cannot care for them.

On Monday, exactly 100 days later, the government responded.

In its response, it failed to address the need for increased school-age programs, and the funding for kindergarten children is to decrease by 50 per cent to reflect the time the kindergarten child spends in child care.

There will be no grandfathering in for a period of time, so the child care industry can work with government to create a real plan, as Health and Social Services Minister, Peter Jenkins told YCCA members at their annual general meeting last June.

With just days before school starts, the government has child care facilities and families of kindergarten children scrambling to adapt to

this poor decision at a critical time.

The child care system is being broken down from the inside-out.

\* Cyndi Desharnais is President of the Yukon Child Care Association

- reprinted from the Whitehorse Daily Star

**Region:** Canada <sup>[2]</sup>

Yukon Territory <sup>[3]</sup>

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