

# Province's daycare plan falls short, coalition says [CA-ON] <sup>[1]</sup>

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## EXCERPTS

Ontario's Best Start child care plan is a pale version of what Dalton McGuinty's Liberals promised during the election campaign and will only make early learning programs more fragmented, say daycare advocates who are to lobby MPPs at Queen's Park today.

The plan falls woefully short of the \$4.6-billion system the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care believes children and parents in the province deserve.

"By creating new child care spaces to wrap around part-time junior and senior kindergarten programs, Best Start essentially perpetuates the fragmented approach to early learning and care," said the coalition's executive director Kira Heineck.

The province's long-term plan to provide a half-day preschool program with child care for the rest of the day for children between the ages of 2 1/2 and 4, would introduce more fragmentation, she said. Daycare for these children is currently provided in a single program, she said.

"This is the opposite of what the child care community has been trying to achieve in Ontario," she said.

Coalition members will meet privately with about 40 MPPs today in an attempt to persuade the Liberals to move closer to their 2003 election pledge to build a universal, high quality, seamless child care system.

They will repeat their call for Ontario to use \$5 billion in new federal child care funds to build a Quebec-style child care system for all children under 12 with the education system picking up full-day kindergarten for 4- and 5-year-olds.

Instead of a system based on parent fees and subsidies, the coalition wants Ontario to fund programs directly and charge all parents a flat rate similar to Quebec's \$7-a-day fee.

The coalition believes the province could build such a system within 10 years at a cost of about \$4.6 billion annually.

- reprinted from the Toronto Star

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