

# Extended kindergarten urged in document [CA-ON]<sup>[1]</sup>

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## AVAILABILITY

See text below.

## EXCERPTS

Ontario should use \$58 million in new federal child-care funds to provide extended-day kindergarten for 4- and 5-year-olds as early as this fall, says the co-author of the province's 1999 Early Years study.

Combined with existing kindergarten funding, the federal money could create 20,000 spaces for 10-hour-a-day care and instruction by teams of certified teachers and child-care workers, says Margaret Norrie McCain in a new discussion paper released yesterday.

Under the scheme, provincial funds currently spent on child care for this age group would be reallocated to stabilize daycare for other age groups, says the discussion paper which was co-authored by Royal Bank vice-president Charles Coffey and Atkinson Charitable Foundation executive director Charles Pascal.

But Toronto children's services officials say they're not sure the authors' math adds up.

The discussion paper is being circulated among child-care advocates and educators interested in early childhood development with a view to kick-starting development of a universal program for Ontario's children, similar to Quebec's \$7-a-day daycare system.

It was also hand-delivered last week to Premier Dalton McGuinty and Children's Minister Marie Bountrogianni as a way for the Liberals to begin implementing their so called "Best Start" election promise to make schools community hubs for early learning, child care and parental support.

The five-page document notes that if the new federal money were applied to the traditional child-care system, it would create just 8,500 spaces this year. Under their proposal, the federal money available through a \$2.2-billion joint federal-provincial child-care agreement signed last year would help create 45,000 extended-day spaces for 4- and 5-year-olds within four years.

About 250,000 children in this age group currently attend publicly funded half-day kindergarten programs.

Child-care advocates welcomed the discussion paper and agree with the need to move towards a universal system of early learning and care in Ontario. But they are worried about the short-term needs of day-care centres in crisis.

- reprinted from Toronto Star

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

**Tags:** funding<sup>[3]</sup>

kindergarten<sup>[4]</sup>

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