

Province supports integrated child care and learning: Minister ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

Ontario Education Minister Kathleen Wynne says the province supports a plan to turn schools into community hubs for families and children from birth to age 12, as recommended by provincial early learning advisor Charles Pascal.

But the government is still searching for a way to start all-day learning for 4- and 5-year-olds next year, as promised, in a way that doesn't destabilize parenting and childcare programs for younger and older children, Wynne said in an interview today.

"It's a very important vision and we're very happy with the work that (Pascal) has done," Wynne said.

"I'm really interested in taking these first steps and getting it right," she said. "I want to see us provide the best service that we can to the kids in the province."

Wynne was responding to fears among parent advocates, school boards and municipalities that provincial money woes and push-back from elementary teachers are threatening Pascal's ambitious \$1-billion plan to integrate learning and childcare from 7:30 a.m. until 6 p.m. across Ontario.

Pascal understands the political and practical hurdles. But he said Premier Dalton McGuinty specifically asked him to draft a plan for 4- and 5-year olds that integrates services for children from birth to age 12.

"It's the premier's vision and it's the right way to go. I've just provided the blueprint," Pascal said.

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- reprinted from the Toronto Star

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