

Province on verge of giving in to teachers [CA-ON]^[1]

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AVAILABILITY

See text below.

EXCERPTS

The province, in a move that would appease the elementary teachers' union, is close to approving a plan that would put kindergarten teachers at the front of their classroom for the entire school day.

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The model recommended by early learning adviser Charles Pascal had teachers continuing with the current half-day of instruction per class and early childhood workers overseeing the other half as well as before- and after-school care.

A high-profile group of about 130 - including former Toronto mayor David Crombie and early childhood expert Dr. Fraser Mustard - is issuing a letter today urging that the province stick with all of Pascal's recommendations.

Pascal himself said yesterday that, while he has no knowledge of the government's plans, his report presented just one staffing option. "But there are lots of different expressions ... there are lots of variations that can be done locally" to implement the plan, he said, which would be unique in North America.

"The most important thing is that the adults with the kids have a great understanding of child development" and that there's strong engagement with parents, he added.

The teachers' union has been adamant that teachers be in charge of full-day kindergarten.

New president Sam Hammond said yesterday he's waiting to hear the province's proposal, but teachers would welcome early childhood educators into their classrooms, as "they bring a unique set of skills and knowledge."

He does not believe such a move would cost much more, as using teachers would reduce implementation expenses. However, he added, "if it does cost more, it's money well spent in terms of students."

Sources say that to afford the full-day teacher model, the cap on kindergarten classes would be bumped from the current 20 pupils to 26.

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"The recommendations in the early learning report are interdependent parts for wholesale positive change. Implementing some changes ... will lessen their effectiveness, add to the fragmentation that now plagues education and family services and will fail to provide accountability for investments and results," the letter says. It backs Pascal's timetable, a three-year rollout starting next September.

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Hammond said more than 140 public and Catholic classrooms in Ontario already offer full-day kindergarten taught by teachers.

He allayed fears that a full day taught by teachers would be academic overload for youngsters.

"It should be a play-based model," he said yesterday. "The vision of kindergarten students sitting at their desks for a full day as they would in Grade 8 is misconstrued."

But he said teachers should be the only ones responsible for teaching the curriculum and reporting, evaluation and assessment.

-reprinted from Toronto Star

Region: Ontario^[2]

Tags: kindergarten^[3]

full-day early learning^[4]

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/09/11/province-verge-giving-teachers-ca> [2] <https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/7856>
[3] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/kindergarten> [4] <https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/8149>