

Budget clouds early-learning plans [CA-ON]^[1]

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See text below.

EXCERPTS

The province will go ahead with full-day learning starting next September, but says it might not be able to move as quickly on implementing changes because of budgetary restraints, Education Minister Kathleen Wynne said yesterday.

Her comments came as a group of high-profile community members and educators urged the province to act on all aspects of a report by early learning adviser Charles Pascal - the full-day, before- and after- school and summer care for children from ages 4 to 12, as well as turning schools into local hubs with parenting and other family supports.

"Everyone thinks it's a great idea and they want us to get going, I know that. We'll make an announcement soon," Wynne said yesterday at the International Plowing Match in Earlton, Ont. The government has committed \$200 million in September 2010 and \$300 million the following year.

"We know it is not enough money," she added. "We'll be able to get started; we may not be able to move as quickly as we would have wanted to, but we made that commitment to start in September."

At Queen's Park yesterday, representatives from a group of more than 120 people, including former premier Bill Davis, released an open letter to Premier Dalton McGuinty saying that "all eyes are now rightly on Ontario," and urged him to "do the right thing."

"Families and children are ready," the letter states. "Municipalities and school boards are ready. Educators and champions of publicly funded education are ready.

"This is our opportunity to get it right, for children and families today and the benefit of all into the future."

...

Annie Kidder, who signed the letter, said the government cannot hive one part out of Pascal's plan without putting the rest of it at risk.

"This is the premier's chance to do something that's truly visionary" and would be a model in North America, she said.

Just implementing full-day kindergarten would be "disruptive to all the other, interdependent pieces," such as after-school care for elementary schoolchildren up to age 12.

- reprinted from the Toronto Star

Region: Ontario^[2]

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