

Mandated provincial all-day childcare could impact YMCA ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

After providing childcare services in Ontario schools for decades, the YMCA is worried proposed legislation to implement full-day learning for four-and five-year-olds will make the organization's service redundant, said Tom Coon, CEO of the Simcoe/Muskoka YMCA.

The legislation, which if passed could come into effect this fall, mandates that school boards, without community providers, provide before-and after-school care. Locally, the YMCA operates out of four Orillia schools and one in Ramara Township, providing this service to 236 children.

In Ontario, 81% of the YMCA's childcare centres are in schools.

"It doesn't make sense that boards would be mandated to turn around and duplicate the service that already exists at a pretty affordable level when we've been great partners for decades," Coon said. "That could have a serious impact on the YMCA's ability to continue to deliver not only after-school care for kids, but also in terms of our financial stability to maintain zero to 3.8-year-olds."

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"The childcare system is dependent on a wide mix of age groups in order to make it financially stable," he said. "You rely on an entire age range to help support the whole system."

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"If they needed to take the space back to make room for the new (junior kindergarten/ senior kindergarten), then it's possible we would have to exit the schools," he said. "We're hoping that won't happen and that's not an issue we are concerned about at the moment."

Full-day care for four-and five-year-olds will also impact childcare providers not offering the service inside schools. The purpose of the legislation is to create 35,000 new childcare spaces for younger children, but Shannon Daggett, program supervisor at Orillia Central Preschool, said daycare centres depend on children aged four to five to pay the bills.

As per Ontario's Day Nurseries Act, children aged two-and-a-half to five years require one staff member for every eight children, while children aged 18 months to two-and-a-half years require one staff member for every five children.

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"That age group, due to the ratios, is sort of a money-maker for any daycare," Daggett said. "Because the child-to-teacher ratio is higher, it affects the rest of the daycare in the sense that it helps

pay our bills."

The result could be centres closing, she said.

"Over the course of the next few years, it will hugely impact the profitability of a centre," Daggett said.

"Because all the children will be at all-day learning that will have a huge impact on everybody's viability in the community as a daycare."

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- reprinted from the Packet & Times

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