

More data needed on full-day learning ^[1]

Author: Marchese, Rosario

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EXCERPTS

Full-day learning is set to be implemented in Ontario starting this September. But even at this late date, we have almost no information on how exactly this will happen.

This is a significant problem. Parents are already enrolling their children in full-day kindergarten and expecting to enroll in before and after-school programs. But they don't know how those programs will be offered, or what they will cost. They don't know if they will need to find care during summer holidays, or if the school will provide that, as daycares do currently. They don't even know basic things like how (or even if) their children will be fed during the school day.

Meanwhile, school boards have already signalled that they will likely have to cut from other programs in order to bring in all-day kindergarten.

And day care operators are warning that without transitional funding to compensate for the loss of four-and five-year-olds, they will be forced to cut spaces or raise fees -- neither of which parents can afford.

Questions about the particulars of Bill 242 were raised in committee hearings on the bill last Monday, by me and by others, but it was clear the government members in committee felt these details were more of a nuisance than a priority.

They repeated the same answer to almost all the questions, which is that the questions were inappropriate, and clarity would come later in the regulations.

But when pressed as to when the regulations would be defined, they were unable to provide a timeframe.

Instead of answering the questions, the government decided to retreat into a calculated non-reply that absolves them of all accountability, saying only it had full confidence in the school boards to make the right decisions.

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Having some clarity around how such a massive new program will be implemented is not a triviality to be dealt with at some later point.

The new school year is less than five months away. Parents need answers now.

- reprinted from The Observer

Region: Ontario ^[2]

Tags: integration ^[3]

full-day early learning ^[4]

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