

Liberal candidates lobby school board ^[1]

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EXCERPTS:

In a highly unusual move, Premier Dalton McGuinty has waded into a local school board's affairs by urging it to continue allowing third-party child care providers to operate before-and after-school programs in local elementary schools - a policy direction his own government didn't initially support.

In a letter sent Friday to Ottawa-Carleton District School Board chairwoman Jennifer McKenzie, seven local Liberal candidates - including McGuinty and incumbent MPPs Bob Chiarelli, Phil McNeely, Madeleine Meilleur and Yasir Naqvi - say parents and community stakeholders want thirdparty operators to continue to provide before-and after-school programs as part of Ontario's new full-day kindergarten initiative.

...

"The vast majority of school boards recognize that having longtime partners work with schools to continue fulfilling day care roles that have been provided, is not only beneficial, but in many cases crucial to providing high-quality care to our youngest students," the letter says.

...

But east-end trustee John Shea called the letter disappointing and said the board is taking the responsible step of consulting with parents this fall before making a final decision.

"It's a little rich for local Liberal candidates to write to us on the eve of an election about this issue when it was they who rushed this program out the door in the first place, are refusing to pay its whole cost, and take months to respond to questions from school boards about it (through the Ministry of Education)," he said.

...

Despite what the letter suggests, the OCDSB doesn't currently have a plan to phase out third-party providers. While it would appear board staff prefer that direction in favour of operating boardrun programs - in part because that's the original mandate they were given by the government - no final decision has been reached.

...

Fearing the board's intentions are clear, many parents have been speaking out in favour of long-running programs, such as the one operated by Child Family Connect at Charles H. Hulse Public School and Alta Vista Public School.

...

-reprinted from the Ottawa Citizen

Region: Ontario ^[2]

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