

New minister pushes dual daycare: Hybrid model useful for implementing full-day kindergarten: Broten ^[1]

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EXCERPTS:

Ontario's new Education Minister says school boards should work with third-party childcare providers to implement the extended day program as part of the province's full-day kindergarten initiative.

"I know in my own community and in the conversations I had across the province, many, many parents pointed to providers like the Y, like others, and said, 'We need them to continue that important role,'" said Laurel Broten. "And I believe they have a really important role to play as a partner with us in delivering that wraparound day."

The minister, appointed last month to replace Leona Dombrowsky, who was defeated in the Oct. 6 provincial election, made the comments Saturday at a conference in Toronto organized by the advocacy group People for Education.

They come days before Ottawa public school trustees debate a motion calling for the board to implement a hybrid model, meaning it would offer before-and after-school programs at schools where no such program currently exists and work with outside agencies to continue operating programs in schools many are already established in.

Broten said she supports the hybrid model and added many not-for-profit providers have much to offer school boards.

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A pair of former provincial education ministers who also attended the conference echoed Broten's comments.

Janet Ecker, who served from 1999 to 2002 under Progressive Conservative premier Mike Harris, said the implementation of full-day kindergarten is "killing" the childcare industry.

Ecker said the rollout should be flexible and sensitive to the needs of different communities.

"The needs of a child in Pickle Lake are very different from the needs of a child in downtown Toronto, and I think that there needs to be some sensitivity to local conditions in terms of moving forward with this," she said.

"School boards are not meant to necessarily be the deliverers of everything, they're meant to be managing a system within their region. There are some fabulous providers out there who do great before-and after-school programs for kids, so why would you want to kill them and create something new? It doesn't make sense to me. Let's build on what's really working," Ecker said.

Gerard Kennedy, a former Liberal MPP who was minister from 2003 to 2006 before he entered federal politics, agreed.

"Child care centres have been doing this for quite a long time and it would be very, very important for the schools not to see them as competition, but rather to see it as part of their duty to sustain as much of those services as possible," he said.

Kennedy reiterated his support for the full-day kindergarten program, but said he wasn't necessarily wedded to the vision outlined by Charles Pascal, which called for school boards to run the extended day program.

"This is a good thing to do, but it can't be done adversarially," he said. "A good centre is a really good thing."

- reprinted from the Ottawa Citizen

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