

Parents take concerns to board: Bypass roundtable discussions for answers about board-run care ^[1]

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Source: Cambridge Times

Format: Article

Publication Date: 25 Jan 2012

EXERPTS:

In the midst of the school board's series of six community roundtables on extended daycare, four parents took their concerns with the program directly to the school board.

"I have nothing against you trying to set up something for the people that don't have daycare. What bothers me is that without even asking me...you just thought you could go ahead with your own agenda and take my own licensed daycare away," Joanne Crocker told trustees Monday night.

The Waterloo Region District School Board currently plans to have board-run daycare programs for students between the ages of four and seven in its schools by 2014.

Daycare is currently available at 29 of the board's 103 elementary schools, operated by third-party providers such as the YMCA.

Parents of children currently in third-party care have spoken out against the board's plan, saying that they are concerned about price increases and are happy with the level of care they already receive.

"My child's going to be lost in a number, and then she's going to have some 15 year old who has no idea what to take care of with her. I don't want that. I wouldn't even put her into that," said Crocker, who works out of town - as does her husband - and questioned whether she would receive the same peace of mind from a board-run program.

Gene DiMara, a Waterloo parent whose children receive third-party care through the Millen Woods Child Care Centre, drew trustee's attention to a recent study in Peel Region, in which the regional government determined that they should withdraw from providing daycare and leave it in the hands of third-party providers.

"They felt it was much more effective for them to completely exit the business," said DiMara.

While the difference in costs between board-run daycare and existing third-party services can be as small as \$2 per day, "those two dollars will drive parents to find grandparents or other homes and bundle kids together on the street," said DiMara.

Other parents suggested that the board only introduce its own program in schools not already serviced by third-party providers.

In an interview after the meeting, board chair Catherine Fife said the parents' comments were consistent with what the board had been hearing from concerned parents for some time and that the Peel Region study was not entirely applicable.

-reprinted from the Cambridge Times

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