

Cash-strapped Ontario won't scrap full-day kindergarten: Duncan ^[1]

Author: Jones, Allison

Source: Globe and Mail

Format: Article

Publication Date: 13 Feb 2012

EXCERPTS:

Asset sales and privatization are on the table as Ontario looks to balance its books, but scrapping full-day kindergarten is not, the province's finance minister said Monday.

Ontario will sell the LCBO's headquarters property, a move expected to generate \$200-million, Dwight Duncan said in a speech to the Economic Club of Canada. But cuts are coming, he said, and he stood by the government's timeline of eliminating the deficit by 2017-18.

"The more we are able to transform the way we deliver public services, the less we will have to cut, and that means we will be better able to protect schools and health care," he said.

Mr. Duncan said the Drummond report will recommend axing full-day kindergarten, a pillar of Ontario's self-described education premier's mandate, but that's not on the table.

The report will contain 362 recommendations, and the Liberal government does not agree with all of them, but they will work with opposition parties to strike the right balance, Mr. Duncan said.

The government will "seriously" consider freezing the corporate tax rate, as per a suggestion from the NDP, who backed off from a proposal to raise it, Mr. Duncan said.

Progressive Conservative finance critic Peter Shurman said he doesn't doubt the Liberals will follow through with a corporate tax rate freeze, as a way to get the NDP to support the minority government's next budget.

He also slammed the government for not campaigning on any of the new plans last fall.

"This government essentially misled Ontarians in the election in October," he said. "They talked about stability and what they've done is destabilize."

In addition to the sale of the LCBO headquarters property, ServiceOntario will have more private sector involvement. It is five times more costly for an Ontario resident to access those services in person versus online, so the government is eyeing savings by driving people to the ServiceOntario website, Mr. Duncan said.

But doing so requires a "significant capital investment," for which the province will look to the private sector.

Privatization of ServiceOntario makes no sense, said NDP Finance critic Michael Prue, who said the agency turns hundreds of millions of dollars in profit.

"It'll be worse service because of things like auditing," he said. "They're not going to pay for things that won't make them money, so you're not going to have things like special audits to make sure it's done right."

Mr. Duncan also said he will look at cutting the \$345-million in subsidies given to horse racing in Ontario each year through the OLG.

"That kind of money would pay for over nine million hours of home care or insulin pumps and supplies for five years for almost 17,000 people," Mr. Duncan said.

"We are reviewing every program, every asset and every function of government. We are considering if government should be in a specific line of business or service delivery."

Mr. Prue said ending the subsidy would be "the death knell of horse racing in Ontario."

It is a major industry in Ontario. It employs a lot of people...If you're going to get rid of it then it needs to be staged so that at least some part of that racing industry survives in Ontario."

-reprinted from the Globe and Mail

Region: Ontario ^[2]

Tags: kindergarten ^[3]

Source URL (modified on 27 Jan 2022): <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/12/02/cash-strapped-ontario-wont-scrap-full-day-kindergarten-duncan>

Links

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/12/02/cash-strapped-ontario-wont-scrap-full-day-kindergarten-duncan> [2]

<https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/7856> [3] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/kindergarten> [4]

<https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/8149>