

Go public, take leadership: The path to better child care in Ontario ^[1]

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Source: Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives

Format: Report

Publication Date: 17 Sep 2012

AVAILABILITY

Full document in pdf ^[2]

Today, Ontario fails to have a coherent early childhood education and care policy. It has services, but no public policy to tie them together, nor the commitment to go public that could revive the sector. As a result, the small supply of public (municipal) child care in Ontario is dwindling through government neglect.

Over the years, Ontario has developed various early learning initiatives, including expansion, quality improvement, enhanced training, inclusion, changes to funding arrangements, information for parents, Best Start, full-day kindergarten, and others. These have, by-and-large, been disconnected from one another and disconnected from well-coordinated forward planning.

In recent years, some Ontario provincial initiatives on early learning have been unfurled with clear disregard for well-respected evidence about what works and what doesn't. Certainly in the case of Ontario's full-day kindergarten implementation, the new program threw into crisis a child care system that was already teetering from underfunding. It was a fully preventable crisis.

There is, of course, an alternative to the status quo. Rather than leaving the demand for more and better child care options to the market, it's time to go public. After three generations, the market has proven not to be responsive to the real needs of working families, nor will it be.

It's time for Ontario's provincial government to take leadership on child care. Working together with the community, municipalities, school boards and boards, it's completely within the Ontario government's ability to create a child care system with services that are publicly managed, widely accessible, affordable, high quality, publicly funded, public and non-profit - a child care system that would make the Bettys, Susans, Ashleys and Aminos of this world proud to raise their families here.

Region: Ontario ^[3]

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