

Child care meets full-day kindergarten: The Agenda ^[1]

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AVAILABILITY

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Episode available online ^[2]

Excerpts from the blog:

Right from the start, advocates and foes alike recognized that full-day kindergarten (FDK) would directly impact child care in the province. Foes said it was just a free daycare program through the back door. Advocates said parents would save a bundle. Everyone knew it would mean something to take all those four and five-year-olds out of their existing arrangements and organize extended care in schools.

Now, with the program rolled out in communities across the province -- some 1,700 schools already have it and the rest will have it by 2014 -- we want to hear from parents about what impact it has had on their child care arrangements.

If enrollment numbers say anything about how parents feel, early data suggests people are flocking to the program, even at the expense of the existing daycare arrangements. That's already having an impact on child care more broadly: In Ottawa, parents were upset when it meant the closure of a popular city-run daycare. In Toronto, some see a child care crisis looming, even as daycares say they face pressure about delivering the extended day part of the promised full-day learning plan. Peel Region will close all 12 of its municipally-run centres, and put the savings into more subsidies at daycares. Others say it's putting the cost of child care for other ages through the roof. That's just a snippet of what's out there, and given that more than 70 per cent of mothers with children three to five years old -- and 79 per cent of mothers with children under 16 -- work, child care will remain a challenge for most Ontario families.

...

On Wednesday, May 22, we're hoping to have Liz Sandals, the minister of education, on the program to talk about all of this, followed by a broader discussion involving several guests about the state of child care in the province. We want to hear from parents across the province to get your voices into this conversation.

...

[The Agenda is asking people to respond to the following questions]

How has FDK affected your family's child care arrangements?

Has the cost of your child care gone up or down or stayed the same?

Has implementation in your area been smooth and effective?

Did the extended care part of FDK present a real solution for you?

Should the province back off before and after care altogether or expand it all the way up to grade 6?

What do you think is good, bad, or otherwise about child care in the province in the wake of FDK?

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