

Daycare centres coping with loss of clients to full-time kindergarten ^[1]

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EXCERPTS:

Daycare and early childcare centres are struggling to stay in business due to the government's full day kindergarten program.

The program allows children ages four and five to attend school full time instead of dividing their time between school and a daycare centre. The government plans to fully implement the program by September 2014.

It's currently in its fourth year with approximately 184,000 children enrolled at about 2,600 schools, according to Lauren Ramey, press secretary to Ontario's Minister of Education.

Losing clients to full day kindergarten isn't easy for daycare businesses but they are trying to cope with the changing times.

At Aurora Children's Centre, they run Zumba dancing, yoga and Spanish classes to entice parents and their kids.

"We all put our heads together to see how we can make the most out of a difficult situation," Shelley Ambing, executive director at Aurora Children's Center, told CTV Toronto.

The daycare industry says if they can't afford to alter or expand their programming, they may lose not only clients but staff as well.

The Ministry of Education isn't tracking the number of child care closures due to the transition to full day kindergarten. It has promised to pledge \$51 million annually to help daycare centres.

"We actually have provided transition funding for some community based childcares to help them move to cater to a market of younger children," said Education Minister Liz Sandal.

The ministry believes parents will be better off in the end with this transition.

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