

March 22, 2010

Embargoed until 2:10pm

**Implementing full-day learning causes “serious concern” to Ontario’s YMCAs:
Suggested amendments presented today at public hearing**

The YMCA of Hamilton/Burlington/Brantford was one of 24 Ontario YMCAs represented at a public hearing today where concerns were shared about the Ontario government’s plan to implement full-day learning for four and five-year-olds starting September 2010.

The YMCA is Ontario’s largest not-for-profit early learning and child care provider for children ages zero to 12 years of age. Locally, the YMCA of Hamilton/Burlington/Brantford serves 5,081 children through its pre-school-aged and school-aged child care programs, operating in 93 sites in three communities.

YMCAs in Ontario support the vision for full day learning for four and five year olds, says Jim Commerford, President & CEO of the YMCA of Hamilton/Burlington/Brantford.

“From both a developmental and educational perspective, this is sound public policy. Our concern is that Bill 242 goes far beyond the government’s stated objectives and will have the unintended effect of de-stabilizing Ontario’s overall licensed child care system. Ultimately, parents will be left with fewer options and higher costs.”

The YMCA’s concerns centre on Bill 242’s requirement that school boards directly operate extended day programs (before and after school hours) for children enrolled in junior and senior kindergarten. The Bill specifically prohibits school boards from partnering with local not-for-profit providers to offer those extended day programs.

Ontario’s YMCAs and YMCA-YWCAs provide child care programs in nearly 500 schools across Ontario. “If school boards are required to establish and operate separate extended day programs in addition to programs already on-site or close by, we’ll have duplication on a massive scale,” says Jim Commerford. “Eighty-one per cent of YMCA child care centres in Ontario are located in schools. Locally, 78 of our child care centres are located in schools.”

YMCAs want the Bill amended to allow school boards the option of entering into or continuing partnerships with community providers like the YMCA. “We are already partners with schools, the model is working and it’s cost effective,” Jim Commerford says. “We can help the Ontario government achieve its vision for ensuring our children have the best quality education and care.”

The YMCA’s presentation and requested amendments were endorsed by the Quality Early Learning Network and the Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada (Ontario chapter). The presentation was made to the Standing Committee on Social Policy in Toronto.

-30-

CONTACT:

Jim Commerford, President & CEO
Tel: 905-317-4919 / Cell: 289-260-7503 / jim_commerford@ymca.ca

Nicki Glowacki, Vice President Community Operations
Tel: 905-681-1140 / Cell: 905-536-0119 / nicki_glowacki@ymca.ca

Backgrounder attached.

BACKGROUNDER

How Bill 242 affects overall child care system sustainability:

- Ontario's licensed child care system depends on a mixed-age cohort for financial stability: since older children are less expensive to care for than infants, the four and five year olds effectively subsidize the infants and toddlers.
- If YMCAs are prevented from partnering with school boards to provide before and after school programs, there is no opportunity for them to offset the cost impacts associated with the transfer of four and five year olds to a full school day. The cost of licensed child care for zero to 3.8 year old children would have to rise, making it less accessible for parents and driving many of them to lower-cost but unregulated providers.
- It is expected that the cost of before and after school care could double from the approximately \$17 per day currently charged to parents by the YMCA, up to \$35 per day if the programs are directly operated by school boards.

YMCA Child Care Numbers

- YMCAs in Ontario currently have 15,877 pre-school-aged children and 8,229 school-aged children enrolled in programs.
- YMCAs operate 598 licensed child care centres across the province
- Of those, 483 are located in schools (81 per cent)