

For immediate release

YMCAs welcomes funding to preserve child care spaces but continues to be concerned about impact of full-day learning bill

Toronto, ON March 25 2010 – While the YMCAs of Ontario welcome the province’s announcement today to permanently continue the funding for 8,500 subsidized child care spaces, it doesn’t address the concerns raised by the YMCA and other not-for-profit community providers about the implementation of full-day learning for four and five-year-olds beginning this September.

YMCAs in Ontario are asking the government to amend Bill 242 before it is passed into law, and appeared at public hearings on Monday, along with many others, saying the draft legislation for full-day learning is flawed and will have the unintended impact of leaving parents with higher costs and fewer child care options.

“While we’re very pleased these spaces will not be lost, it doesn’t solve the issues we have raised” says Jim Commerford, CEO of the YMCA of Hamilton/Burlington/Brantford and spokesperson for Ontario’s YMCAs. “Bill 242 needs to be amended if full-day learning is going to be a positive step forward. That’s where the government needs to focus its attention.”

YMCAs want the Bill amended to allow school boards the option of entering into or continuing partnerships with community providers like the YMCA for extended day programs. *“We already partner with school boards in nearly 500 schools across Ontario to deliver innovative, quality programs,”* Mr. Commerford said. *“The Bill requires school boards to set up and operate their own extended day programs, which would create enormous duplication. We are ready to help the Ontario government make full-day learning a success, so we’re saying, ‘don’t shut us out.’”*

Mr. Commerford said if partnerships with school boards are no longer allowed, full day learning will have the unintended consequence of risking the destabilization of child care in Ontario and increasing costs to parents. *“Today’s announcement will not change this. Only amendments to Bill 242 will protect the high quality child care options for young children, parents and families to ensure that children will be ready for full day learning.”*

The YMCA is Ontario’s largest not-for-profit early learning and child care provider for children from infancy to 12 years of age, with more than 24,000 children currently enrolled in licensed programs. The YMCA is also the lead operator of eight Ontario Early Years centres.

The YMCAs, in cooperation with the Quality Early Learning Network and the Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada (Ontario), submitted a number of amendments which they had jointly developed for consideration by the Standing Committee on Social Policy on March 22, 2010.

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