

Expanding BC Kindergarten Programs BACKGROUNDER

This Backgrounder summarizes key developments related to the expansion of BC Kindergarten programs from the 2008 BC Throne Speech commitment to explore the feasibility of 'full school day' programs for 3-5 year olds to the 2010 BC Throne Speech. It will be updated as developments occur.

2008

- Feb. BC Throne Speech makes a commitment to explore the feasibility of 'full school day' programming for 5, 4 and then 3 year olds.
- Spring BC's Early Childhood Learning Agency undertakes a study of the feasibility of full day kindergarten for 5 year olds and the possibility of future full day pre-kindergarten programs for 4 year olds and 3 year olds.

2009

- Feb. BC Speech from the Throne and provincial budget state that government will not implement full day kindergarten in September 2009 as initially indicated. Three factors are cited for delay: current economic circumstances; the need to develop appropriate space; and time to recruit qualified educators.
- Instead, Ministry of Ed will focus on staffing strategies, facilities planning and program development and expansion of StrongStart BC early learning program.
- April BC's Early Childhood Learning Agency releases *Expanding Early Learning In British Columbia For Children Age Three to Five* affirming the evidence that:
- Quality early learning programs have a range of benefits for children
 - Care and education are not separate concepts
 - Quality matters
 - Programs should be play-based, holistic and developmentally appropriate
 - Before and after-school child care needs to be part of an integrated system
 - Specialized, adequately paid educators are important to programs' success.
- Report highlights international "trend towards full coverage by the education system for children age three to six. Many countries are working towards offering two years of free (publicly funded) early learning before Grade 1."
- May Provincial election sees both major parties supporting All Day Kindergarten for 5 year olds in principle but making no commitment to act until economy improves.
- June Charles E. Pascal, Ontario's Special Advisor on Early Learning releases *With Our Best Future in Mind: Implementing Early Learning in Ontario*.¹
- Report proposes integrated, universal, publicly funded program for 4 and 5 year olds with child-focused curriculum, planned and delivered by team of certified teachers and early childhood educators, using common space and resources in schools.
- Families have option of enrolling their 4 and 5 year olds for the full school day or half day. Extended-day options provided but funded by parent fees.
- Pascal recommends that services for children under 4 be developed through school based 'hubs' under municipal jurisdiction.

¹ http://www.ontario.ca/en/initiatives/early_learning/STEL01_139326

June 2009 continued

Harris/Decima poll reports that 71% of Canadians believe government plans to support full-day kindergarten and daycare programs for 4 and 5 year olds is a good idea. Support in BC higher than national average.²

- Aug. BC Throne Speech announces that publicly-funded, universal full school-day kindergarten for 5 year olds will be implemented over the next three years.

BC government cuts Minor Capital Child Care Grants from a maximum of \$5,000 a year to \$2,000 a year per 'facility address'. Funding for BC's Child Care Quality Enhancement Grant, managed by BC Council for the Family, comes to an end.

- Sept. BC Budget Update allocates \$151 million over 2 years (\$44 million in year 1) to begin implementing full school day Kindergarten for 5 year olds but makes cuts to other parts of the Education budget.

BC government says that by September 2010, 50% of BC 5 year olds will have access to full school day Kindergarten and that by September 2011, all BC 5 year olds will have access to full school-day Kindergarten.

Key education stakeholders indicate in a letter to the Minister of Education that the cuts to existing services will negatively impact students.

Budget update allocates no new funds for child care, projects fewer CCOF funded spaces in 2009/10 and includes no strategies to address BC child care crisis.

MCFD terminates funding for provincial and regional advisors for Infant Development Program, Supported Child Development services and Children First.

- Nov. Boards of Education submit K expansion plans for September 2010 to Ministry of Education.

Ministry of Education informs Boards that, for analysis purposes only, it is looking at data for anticipated implementation of pre kindergarten (for 4 year olds) beginning in September 2013.

- Dec. Ministry of Education confirms School Districts' full school day kindergarten allocation for September 2010 contingent on Districts having classroom space available without impacting StrongStart BC and on-site child care services.

2010

- Jan. Boards of Education inform the Ministry of Education of their space requirements for further expansion of full school day kindergarten in 2011.

- Feb. BC Throne Speech announces "New partnerships with the private sector and parents will enable the establishment of neighbourhood preschools for four-year-olds and three-year-olds within communities over the next five years. They will provide families new voluntary options for public and private preschool across B.C."

Stay tuned for more developments as they occur....

² Retrieved from http://www.harrisdecima.com/en/downloads/pdf/news_releases/062609E.pdf