

Submission to the Standing Committee on Social Policy; **Re: Bill 242**

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Since all-day schooling for 3 to 5 years olds was announced by Dalton McGuinty in 2007, it was obviously a done deal.

Parents' voices were silenced early on. In a December 5, 2007 TVO interview Charles Pascal, your go-to-it Kindergarten man, preemptively bullied parents who didn't want more school for little kids, including but not limited to his infamous comments about these parents 'having issues'. As it is still overwhelmingly mothers who do the care and education work this is a sort of weird return to the 50s when mothers then who wanted to work outside the home were told, by men, that they had 'issues'. Don't for a second pretend that parents were brought to the table on this one.

Research shows that children this age spending more time in school is **not** beneficial. Over several newspaper articles, I have written about why the outcomes for young children are worsened. If your concern is genuine please read them.

Indeed, reports used to actually justify your program would not withstand a minute of international scrutiny.

In his interview, Pascal gave as 'evidence' the decades-old Ypsilanti Perry Preschool Study, a study so irrelevant to today's world that it is rendered impotent as justification for programs such as yours. In fact in May 2006, the Evidence for Policy and Practice Information and Coordinating Centre at the University of London emphatically warned policy makers to not use this study. It states that, "On the basis of this review, the widespread international use of the most favourable headline findings, and in particular of the Perry High/Scope study, is unjustified." It goes on, "The Perry High/Scope study, started in the 1960s, was a small, single-site study, where children were given **part-time nursery education** and their parents were given support through home visits." **PART-TIME**. You are using a study of part-time nursery education from the early 60s to advocate the movement of hundreds of thousands of little kids from a part-time program to full-time schooling. This borders on, if not outright defines, negligence.

And it goes on. Helen Ward, the President of our country's non-profit Kids First Parents Association of Canada is submitting a statement to this committee. It is a must read. Ward, whose work is cited internationally, goes over Pascal's repeated bending of others' work to justify your program including the research of Nobel laureate James Heckman to seemingly bolster his argument without the absolutely necessary qualifier that Heckman is a known opponent of universal programs. In yet another example, Pascal references in his add-on report summarizing his "evidence" the Baker, Gruber & Milligan study, again in a manner that seemingly supports his position while failing to mention that anyone with even

a grade 2 reading level would quickly determine that this award-winning study of the Quebec situation comes nothing close to endorsing that province's troubled universal daycare program. In fact the evidence is so compellingly the opposite that the well-regarded David Leonhardt of the New York Times used this Quebec report to explain why universal programs of this nature **backfire** for kids and families.

With tax savings from declining school enrollment you could have reduced class sizes across the board. Science labs, cooking classes, woodworking shops, school gardens and music as a part of each child's every day life were all things our collective pot of money could have been spent on.

Or you could have given Kindergarten parents a voucher to put them at the heart of their child's education, through a Kindergarten Credit.

You could have used vouchers – a tool of the compassionate left – as a means of empowering citizens. The great left-liberal James Coleman, author of the iconic 'Equality of Educational Opportunity' and Ivan Illich whom the über left Utne Reader lauded as the greatest social critic of the 20th century were both strong, strong supporters of vouchers. Conversely, de facto mandatory early schooling and daycare schemes such as yours are increasingly being seen for what they really are. In the words of Berkeley's Bruce Fuller, the author of the pivotal book **Standardized Childhood**, your type of program is being seen by many as a conservative (as in right wing economics) attempt to fit mothers and children into the corporate economy.

Serious educational reformers know that regardless of how much schooling children receive, the effects of the home will always, always be much stronger and that is why they know that the only solution is to empower those very parents in that home.

This is where research actually backs up the claim. A special homeschooling double issue of the prestigious peer-reviewed Peabody Journal of Education had many findings including those by Susan MacDowell, the journal's editor, who wrote about the beneficial empowerment that homeschooling mothers feel.

Further peer-reviewed research, has found that, "students taught at home by mothers who never finished high school scored a full 55 percentage points higher than public school students from families with comparable education levels." This is obviously about more than homeschooling – it is about the irrefutable fact that when given the lead role in their child's education – whether they provide it themselves or direct their voucher to care and education **of their own choosing** – the lives of children, mothers and families are enhanced, particularly those who were never served well by the system in the first place.

And, money directed to families of course provides a much larger economic stimulus than having it sucked right back into state coffers because of the greater marginal propensity for spending by those in need and the needs of parents are greater than almost any other group.

This would provide an immediate reduction in child poverty rates as estimates put this Kindergarten voucher for even just a half day at between \$4500 and \$5000 per year. You say this schooling scheme is linked to poverty reduction. We don't see it. Unless you mean the kind where mothers are now supposedly liberated from the home to go out and work at exciting minimum wage service sector jobs.

Ironically, Ontario is coming to the early schooling / daycare frenzy so late that we are not so much getting on a boat that's already set sail, but on one that has already sunk.

The most famous early adopter – Sweden – is now addressing the destruction wrought by having parents shut out of their children's educational lives. Visionary politicians like Mats Gerdau, now a member of the Swedish national parliament, set up mothers as their own enterprises so they could be paid for their previously unpaid work. And then there are people like Bo Pettersson, webmaster of 'A Child's Right to Their Parents Time', a growing parents group which pushed for and achieved remarkable success when their government was forced in 2008 to start giving vouchers worth up to \$7500 directly to parents.

I have no confidence you will put a halt to a program that was clearly founded on faulty information. But I have much confidence in that great tool of our age – the internet – to get Hansard transcripts out to the growing international community of mothers and fathers who are pushing back against these programs which while masquerading as benevolent left-liberal offerings are anything but.

People understand this. Check out any news outlet, even the Toronto Star – where columnist Rosie DiManno wrote a brilliantly scathing critique of All-day Kindergarten – and you will find blog-posters critical of your cynical attempt to appease the teachers unions and augment your own power at the expense of the very people you purport to serve.

One mother I see at our local grocery store, always with her two young children in tow, opened her coat to show me the rips and tears in it telling me that that was all she could afford. She doesn't want more daycare or schooling. What she wants – and what she deserves – is more financial help for the few years while her kids are young so that she and her husband can provide the most crucial ingredient in the successful upbringing of their children – time, time with their own kids. I'm not sure what part of that you refuse to understand.