

Full-day ?babysitting? a huge drain of tax dollars

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Ontario has fully rolled out its full-day kindergarten (FDK) program, making it available to 12,896 four- and five- year-olds in approximately 132 schools across York Region.

By the end of the 2014-15 school year, almost half a million kids will have benefitted from FDK since it was first introduced in 2010. With more than \$1.5 billion in funding to date, FDK is one of the most significant investments Ontario has made in education in a generation.

While the government calls this an "investment," I prefer to call it a colossal white elephant.

Governments toss around the B word (billion dollars) like it was nothing. In fact, most of us can't even fathom such an amount.

If you spent \$1 per second, it would take more than 31 years to spend a billion dollars.

There are dozens of countries around the globe that aren't worth \$1 billion.

A billion minutes ago, the Roman Empire was going strong and a billion months ago dinosaurs roamed the Earth.

Our province contends that students in FDK are better prepared to enter Grade 1 and be more successful in school, as detailed in a recent study that compared students enrolled in full-day kindergarten with those in half-day programs.

Who's marking success at ages 4 and 5? The Education Act (perhaps it's been amended) says that legally, kids have to attend school starting at age 6 (not any younger).

"Fully implementing full-day kindergarten is part of the government's plan to build Ontario up by investing in people, building modern infrastructure and supporting a dynamic and innovative business climate."

What? By babysitting toddlers?

Can someone explain that to me please?

"This is an important milestone. We're very proud of our full-day kindergarten program, which is the biggest transformation our education system has seen in a generation. We want to give Ontario's children the best possible start in life, and this will put them on a path toward future success. It positions Ontario as a leader in North America, and prepares our children for Grade 1 and beyond," according to Education Minister Liz Sandals.

Ontario families can save up to \$6,500 per year in child care costs by enrolling their child in full-day kindergarten.

Part of the \$1.5 billion in funding for FDK has supported the creation of approximately 3,500 new kindergarten classrooms.

About 3,800 additional teaching positions and more than 10,000 early childhood educator (ECE) positions have been created as a result of FDK. In reality, the government chose to respond to a glut in teaching grads by creating roles for them. In what reality does this happen?

Make no mistake about it. FDK was an election tactic by Dalton McGuinty, carried on by Premier Kathleen Wynne. It got votes and likely was a factor in the Liberal election victories.

Let's look at the reality.

Sure, it's saving Ontario families a lot of money and that's a good thing. But let's not forget that someone has to pay ? all of us in fact, including Ontarians who don't have children at all. The money isn't falling from the sky so it's being diverted from other areas,

perhaps more important sectors that touch the lives of all Ontarians. And we haven't even touched on the idea about whether investments and trading on such things like Bitcoin could have an effect too. You see, many people decide to do this when they wish to diversify their investment portfolio, or if they want to increase the amount of money they have. You can look bei Bitcoin Bank (at Bitcoin Bank) for more information. But if you don't have any money to do this to start with, where are you going to get it from?

How will it affect the economy?

It's putting small business, the engine of Ontario's economy, out of business.

Ask any day care operator about the impacts of FDK and you'll get a heated, 10-minute conversation. There are no more subsidized day care spots or funding for kids with special needs.

So, we're spending a billion to save families money, but forcing day cares into bankruptcy, affecting families and their children.

How does this make any sense?

While funding for FDK is secure, isn't it nice to know that funding for health care, other aspects of education, post-secondary subsidies and more are either stagnant or declining?

This what the Liberals have done under the guise of "investing in people."

How about investing in jobs, apprenticeship programs and putting Canadians into fields that actually make a difference in the global economy? How about ending poverty and putting every unemployed Ontarian back to work?

How about improving cancer care and access to life-saving drugs?

Maybe we shouldn't be surprised at all at this province's wreckless spending.

If you read the annual "Sunshine List" of civil servants earning \$100,000 or more, you'll see a slew of principals, teachers, superintendents and board directors that have bloated the budgets of every school board in the province. It's almost ridiculous.

When the government is playing around with such big numbers, what's \$1 billion here or there?

Well, ask foreign doctors who are driving taxi cabs. Ask college graduates who are waiting tables. Ask cancer patients who travel south of the border for treatment.

We have so much to be proud of in this province and this country.

Unfortunately, government waste of taxpayers' money remains the thorn in our side.