

To the Editor:

One has to wonder the rationale behind this latest futile decision by the Provincial Liberal government to move the kindergarten program into the school system. Along with the unilateral decision of lowering the age of children to enter into the school system and by placing the kindergarten program into the school system, these decisions simply make no logical or financial sense. Who will this change benefit?

Parents and teachers alike should be wary and paying attention to what is happening as these decisions will no doubt impact the proper growth and development of our Island children. I wonder what parents are going to do on those numerous snow days, Professional Development days, and school breaks when the schools are closed? Kindergartens don't close like the schools do, and many struggling families will be burdened with additional child care expenses.

Our Island children have been taught by professionals in day care centers for many years. The Early Childhood Educators and kindergarten teachers who work daily in these centres take pride in the services they provide and Island Families rely on these educators to pave the way for our future investment, our children. Currently children are taught in smaller settings to ensure one-on-one care can be provided to assist them in their most important first years of development. Why would anyone want to disrupt the foundation of our future?

This move is going to shatter the community-based day care centers. The negative consequences this decision will have on the Early Childhood Educators, the kindergarten teachers, and the children far outweigh any benefit. What will happen to the subsidies these centers depend on for their kindergarten programs, materials, and curriculum of which they have invested into? These questions need to be answered for the sake of our children, professionals, centers, and the families who live in these communities.

Not so long ago the previous Federal Liberal government introduced the National Child Care Program. This was welcoming news for all Canadians as finally we were going to invest in our future. That exhilarating announcement was short lived as the newly elected Federal Conservative government, under the reign of Prime Minister Steven Harper, blew the wind from everyone's sails. The Conservatives abolished the National Child Care Program and threw one hundred dollars a month to families for child care, making Canadians think that this was a good trade off. The only thing this did was move most Canadian families into a higher tax bracket.

Now our own Provincial Liberal government is adding to the insult. Island children are young and eager to learn and putting them into the school system too early will cause them to be swallowed up. This will add to problems of over crowding and will surely decrease their stimulation to learn. Anyone entering a day care center can see the welcoming learning environment they provide with their array of colors, pictures, laughter and fun. We can see that the dedicated staff and owners of these facilities take pride in their work, their communities and the children they educate everyday.

In closing, I would like to note that the Ontario government recently moved to our current model for kindergarten structure as there are so many problems with their own system and for once, wouldn't it be nice for this government to lead the way instead of following in the footsteps of other provinces' poor decisions?

Shelley Ward - President
PEI Union of Public Sector Employees