

Waterloo Region Early Learning Coalition

Frequently Asked Questions

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The province's position

- The Pascal Report that recommended all day kindergarten also called for a “seamless day” where before and after school care would be provided by the school in the child’s classroom.
- The province introduced full day kindergarten with a seamless day as recommended.
- After understanding the major disruption the seamless day would have on licensed child care providers, the province decided to change the rules and allow school boards to decide if community organizations could continue to offer before and after school care.
- [Premier McGuinty said in Ottawa](#) he preferred the hybrid model.
- [Education Minister Laurel Broten recently spoke in Toronto](#) in favour of the hybrid model.

What is the role of trustees?

- According to the Waterloo District Region School Board, the role of trustees in extended learning is only to approve program fees. But [a guide on good governance](#) developed by a collaboration of groups including Ontario’s public and Catholic school trustees says:

“Recent amendments to the Education Act clarify the responsibility of individual trustees to bring to the board the concerns of parents, students and supporters of the board and to consult with them on the board’s multi-year plan. It is through the process of collaborating and engaging in joint decision making as members of the board that trustees work with the values, priorities, and expectations of the community to translate them into policy.

Once the board of trustees has voted, individual trustee members are legally bound by the majority decision, regardless of whether they supported it during debate or voted in opposition. They are required to support the implementation of resolutions passed by the board.”

- No vote has been taken by either the public or Catholic school trustees to approve their board’s seamless day and so trustees are not bound to the decision by staff.
- We are looking for trustees for both boards to fulfill their role and hold consultations on their plans to implement the extended day and the alternatives being used across Ontario.

Is the current system of using community organizations to provide before and after school programs working?

- Parents who use our programs are happy with the quality of care their children are receiving and they value the relationships they have established—often over years.
- We would like to offer our programs to more kids. With access to the same funds and operating guidelines available to the school board, we could.
- We recognize that there are many schools without programs. We welcome the school board’s desire to provide those communities with the option of an extended day.

The report on full day kindergarten by Charles Pascal recommended that the public education sector take the lead on before and after school care. Shouldn’t we follow his recommendation?

- The province’s initial legislation bringing in full day kindergarten agreed with Pascal’s recommendation.
- When they learned about the impact on community organization’s already providing this care, they revised the legislation to allow for a hybrid or dual system to allow for both the school board to offer programs while allowing existing programs to continue.
- Waterloo Region is alone in Ontario in having school boards’ plan to offer these programs in all schools—even where programs are already offered by community organizations.

What are the consequences in our region of the school board’s plan for children, families and the community organizations that serve them?

- higher costs for before and after school care—up to \$2,000 per child for 10 months of care
- an increase in child care costs for younger children by as much as 30%
- uncertainty about programs for 8-12 year olds
- licensed summer care that suits parents’ work schedules will be less available
- a loss of several hundred child care spaces

Is it true that parents will pay more for school board delivered before and after school programs?

- Yes.
- The school boards charge \$24 to \$26 per day.

- Our coalition charges between \$17 and \$22 per day.
- The difference could be up to \$2,000 for 1 child over 10 months.
- Subsidies are available to eligible families for programs offered by the boards or by community organizations.

Will community organizations provide care in the summer for 4 – 7 year olds when schools are not?

- Community organizations will continue to offer recreational programs and camps as they have in the past but licensed care that starts as early as 6:30 a.m. and operates until 6 p.m. will no longer be an option for parents.
- Licensed child care may not have enough available spaces.
- The Catholic school board is “assessing the potential of a pilot project” next summer but that does not reassure parents who rely on licensed child care in the summer because of its longer hours of operation.

Most of the media has focused on the Waterloo Region District School Board. What is the position of the local Catholic school board?

- In a column in the Record on Nov. 26, Roger Lawler, the director of education for the Waterloo Catholic District School Board confirmed publicly for the first time that his board also planned to provide the extended day in all of its schools even where its partners are already providing it.
- Catholic trustees have not voted on this decision and there have not been consultations with parents.
- The families involved have not had any opportunity to have a say in the care their children will receive.
- A survey of which parents are interested in before and after school and talking to a couple advisory committees is not satisfactory for a new policy with profound effects.

I heard there were 8 school boards assuming responsibility for the extended day in all of its schools. Why does the coalition say our situation is unique in Ontario?

- Two of the eight boards are our local boards. They are the only two major school boards to take this approach in the same region.
- The two main Ottawa school boards are also on the list but neither of them should be. The Ottawa-Carleton public board trustees voted on November 22 to change course and implement a hybrid system after holding public consultations. The Ottawa Catholic board already operates a hybrid model and has no plans to change.
- The other four boards are French as a first language boards that cover a wide geographic area that reduces the impact of their decision on child care in their jurisdiction.

- Only the child care system in Waterloo Region is at risk by the extended day plans of its two largest school boards.

Why is Waterloo Region alone in having its two main school boards offering all before and after school programs?

- In theory, the school boards’ extended day plans are wonderful.
- If there were not any before or after school programs being offered in any school, we could support their plan.
- But in practice if implemented, the boards’ plan has unintended negative consequences.
- We have tried to communicate to the boards why we are concerned about the impact of their plans on children and families across Waterloo Region including children from birth to 3 years old.
- We are not sure why they are determined to proceed without even consulting parents.

Isn’t the move to full day kindergarten the real threat to community organizations offering child care?

- We understand and respect the provincial government’s decision to implement full day kindergarten.
- Our plans take into account the move to full day kindergarten.
- We anticipated though that when the province allowed community organizations to offer before and after school care that the local school boards, who have always been valued partners, would agree we could continue to offer existing programs—especially since so many child care centres are located inside schools.
- We are now making sure that parents understand the consequences of the boards’ plan.

Why don’t the school boards use the hybrid model other boards have chosen?

- The school boards say that they need locations with programs run by community organizations to offset higher costs in schools where enrolment is lower.
- Other school boards have not found it necessary to operate programs in all schools in order to operate a hybrid system
- In fact, the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board preferred a plan similar to our school boards. After it held public consultations, staff and a board committee recommended a hybrid model that received unanimous Trustee approval on November 22.