



**ARPA**   
**CANADA**  
ASSOCIATION FOR REFORMED POLITICAL ACTION

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**Submission to the Ontario Standing Committee on Social Policy**  
**RE: *Full Day Early Learning Statute Law Amendment Act***

March 29, 2010

The Association for Reformed Political Action (ARPA) Canada would like to thank the Standing Committee on Social Policy for holding public hearings into the potential impacts of Bill 242, the *Full Day Early Learning Statute Law Amendment Act*.

ARPA Canada is a Christian non-profit organization devoted to promoting political awareness and action among members of Canada's Reformed churches (including the Canadian Reformed, Free Reformed, United Reformed, and Heritage Reformed denominations). Alongside the 16 regional ARPA groups that operate across the country, including five regional ARPA's in Ontario, we provide encouragement, resources, and assistance so that grass-roots Canadians can have the assistance they need to be involved in the public square.

ARPA Canada would like to applaud the Government of Ontario for its desire to improve the learning outcomes of all children of the province. We also would like to thank the government for preserving educational choice for parents in this bill by refraining from expanding the compulsory program. However, we disagree with the policy changes set out in Bill 242, as they will provide minimal help for children while further eroding the parent-child relationship that is critical for effective education, all at a staggering cost to Ontario taxpayers.

**The Benefits of Early Learning**

The preamble to Bill 242 states, "Academic research has established the benefits of a comprehensive, full day early learning program. Full day early learning improves outcomes for individual children and for society."

We disagree with the categorical nature of these statements. First, it is clear that a minority of children are simply not ready for full-day, or even half-day kindergarten. Furthermore, kindergarten-age boys are often well behind girls of the same age in neurological development, and are adversely affected when compared against their opposite-sex peers.<sup>1</sup> On the positive side, statistics show that home-schooling of kindergarten produces far better results than any institutionalized system has achieved.<sup>2</sup>

The above statements in the preamble may also be predicated on studies that compare different education programs on a national basis. As such, we would caution the members

of the committee to forego minor short-term fixes and take a long-term approach to improving the educational outcomes of children.

Most of the research cited to support all-day early education programs is based on the outcomes of disadvantaged children, for which the home learning environment is poor.<sup>3</sup> In these situations, the findings are clear that a full-day early learning program mitigates some of the hurdles that these children face. However, as only a small minority of children in Ontario meet this description, a universal program should not be required.

Those studies that do collect representative data make several startling conclusions. A key finding of Britain's EPPE report is that "full-time attendance led to no better gains for children than part-time provision."<sup>4</sup> In addition, the quality of the home learning environment is the largest factor in early learning achievement, more so than whether the child attends early-learning programs or not. As for those benefits observed for children receiving early education, there was no difference from their peers by eight years of age.

### **Parents - The Primary Educator and Caregiver**

ARPA Canada believes that the parent is the primary educator and caregiver of his or her children. This is for the best interest of the children, the family, and society in general. As Christians, we recognize that the family is an institution created by God that is separate from the institution of civil government. As stated in the 5<sup>th</sup> Commandment, parents are entrusted with the responsibility of raising their children.<sup>5</sup> In contrast, civil government is responsible for maintaining justice, peace, and freedom in society.<sup>6</sup> The encroachment by the state on what should be the role of parents undermines the responsibility of both institutions. The truth of this is recognized even in a secular context. The United Nations General Assembly affirmed this with its adoption of the document "A World Fit for Children" which states that "The primary responsibility for the protection, upbringing and development of children rests with the family."<sup>7</sup>

Instances in which the primary role of education was forcibly removed from parents have resulted in a permanent scar, both on the children involved and society in general. Canada's history of residential schools is one example.

Again, the research supports the utility of this position in regards to educational outcomes. The home learning environment is the single most important factor in early childhood education.<sup>8</sup> One study estimates that the effect of the home learning environment is up to ten times as strong a predictor of success than socioeconomic status.<sup>9</sup>

### **What Encourages a Parent to Get Involved?**

Since the most important factor in early childhood education is not the existence of programs, but rather the degree of parental involvement, the Committee should evaluate the factors that encourage and discourage a parent to get involved.

It is believed that parents participate more in their children's' education when they have constructed a personal role in which they are the primary educator. Conversely, they participate less when more external demands are placed on them, such as employment or civic responsibilities.<sup>10</sup>

It is not difficult to conclude, then, that a bill which not only expands the existing kindergarten program to an all-day model, but also installs after-school day-care systems in every school in the province, will discourage parental involvement in their children's' education. Parents will instead be further removed from their traditional role of primary educator, while being incentivized to spend more time away from their families.

### **A Debt on the Next Generation**

Most people would believe it is cruel to give a gift to a child only to demand repayment with interest as soon as the child starts generating income. But that is in effect what we are doing by spending hundreds of millions of dollars on an early-learning program that we cannot fund ourselves.

The Charles Pascal 2009 report estimates that this program would cost a little less than one billion dollars. But an in-depth review of this estimate by the Institute of Marriage and Family Canada (IMFC) reveals that this figure should be increased to 1.8 billion, almost double the original projection. To add to that, the IMFC report notes that "Were the full vision for early learning in the Pascal report implemented - encompassing 'the prenatal period through to adolescence' - the costs would easily rise to \$6.1 billion dollars annually."<sup>11</sup> Even if we only looked at the 1.8 billion dollar figure, the cost averages out to between \$9,199 and \$10,401 per child.<sup>12</sup>

Even if it could be proven that early-learning programs are in the best interest of children, and that it is the role of the state to provide this early education, the provincial government has failed to explain how the massive increase to the province's debt coming from this early-learning program is morally justified. We are in effect stealing from our children to give them what we claim is in their best interest, and then charging them for the cost plus the accrued interest down the road when they have to deal with the debt.

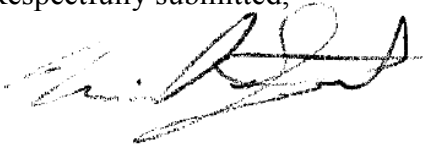
Even proponents of this bill have to admit that state-funded early-learning programs are a luxury. How can we justify massive spending on luxuries at a time when we face worrying deficit and debt levels? Since families are the primary educator and caregiver of children, they should be encouraged to fulfill this responsibility first and foremost.

### **Conclusion**

ARPA Canada urges the Ontario government to abandon Bill 242 because it is based on flawed research, encourages state intervention in the family at the expense of the role of parents, and comes at a great financial cost that will burden the very children we claim to be helping.

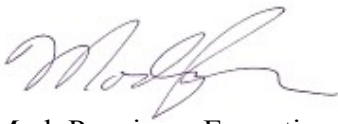
ARPA Canada requests that the Ontario government promote policies that strengthen the role and position of the traditional family unit. As much as possible families, and not the state, should be encouraged to care for their children. Supporting parents does not mean replacing them.

Respectfully submitted,



Neil Dykstra, Board of Directors

and



Mark Penninga, Executive Director

ARPA Canada

## End Notes

<sup>1</sup> Sax, L. (2001) *Reclaiming Kindergarten: Making Kindergarten Less Harmful to Boys*  
[http://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&q=cache:tXqdTNmVk7QJ:www.boysadrift.com/Sax\\_APA\\_2001.pdf+kindergarten+harmful+to+some&hl=en&gl=ca&pid=bl&srcid=ADGEESgWol3bDh9mZWAtY\\_x0FyrQeiZMjHg3eegTGXj39\\_DZVlaF\\_REy56\\_5eyaurYmvBzswkcllQdTjd05Fow7cQr4ccKKfXyC7V6NTo5sXPxYR6jTjKr-5g33pwk9zyImlu9YaCP2W&sig=AHIEtbRpNFsmVaDUDT3SmJyBekXI22P1kw](http://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&q=cache:tXqdTNmVk7QJ:www.boysadrift.com/Sax_APA_2001.pdf+kindergarten+harmful+to+some&hl=en&gl=ca&pid=bl&srcid=ADGEESgWol3bDh9mZWAtY_x0FyrQeiZMjHg3eegTGXj39_DZVlaF_REy56_5eyaurYmvBzswkcllQdTjd05Fow7cQr4ccKKfXyC7V6NTo5sXPxYR6jTjKr-5g33pwk9zyImlu9YaCP2W&sig=AHIEtbRpNFsmVaDUDT3SmJyBekXI22P1kw)

<sup>2</sup> Ray, B., (1997) *Strengths of their Own – Home Schoolers Across America*  
<http://www.amazon.com/Strengths-Their-Own-Characteristics-Longitudinal/dp/0965755401>

<sup>3</sup> Schweinhart, L., Barnes, H., Weikart, D., (1993) Significant Benefits, the HighScope Perry Preschool Study Through Age 27  
[http://books.google.ca/books?hl=en&lr=&id=V4CoDuB8gIUC&oi=fnd&pg=PA9&dq=perry+preschool+study&ots=A GdqWHEYHh&sig=U1quYlvqc5pfAqJZp\\_hDi0Epu3E#v=onepage&q=perry%20preschool%20study&f=false](http://books.google.ca/books?hl=en&lr=&id=V4CoDuB8gIUC&oi=fnd&pg=PA9&dq=perry+preschool+study&ots=A GdqWHEYHh&sig=U1quYlvqc5pfAqJZp_hDi0Epu3E#v=onepage&q=perry%20preschool%20study&f=false)

<sup>4</sup> Sylva, Melhuish, Sammons, Siraj-Blatchford, Taggart (2004), Effective Provision of Pre-school Education Project  
<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/publications/0/1159/>

<sup>5</sup> Exodus 20: 12, Proverbs 6:20-23

<sup>6</sup> Romans 13

<sup>7</sup> [http://www.unicef.org/specialsession/docs\\_new/documents/A-RES-S27-2E.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/specialsession/docs_new/documents/A-RES-S27-2E.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> Sylva, Melhuish, Sammons, Siraj-Blatchford, Taggart (2004), Effective Provision of Pre-school Education Project  
<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/publications/0/1159/>

<sup>9</sup> Walberg, H.J. (1984), Improving the Productivity of America's Schools  
[http://eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/custom/portlets/recordDetails/detailmini.jsp?\\_nfpb=true&\\_ERICExtSearch\\_SearchValue\\_0=EJ299536&ERICExtSearch\\_SearchType\\_0=no&accno=EJ299536](http://eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/custom/portlets/recordDetails/detailmini.jsp?_nfpb=true&_ERICExtSearch_SearchValue_0=EJ299536&ERICExtSearch_SearchType_0=no&accno=EJ299536)

<sup>10</sup> Hoover-Dempsey, K., Sandler, H., (1995) Parental Involvement in Children's Education: Why Does it Make a Difference?

[http://www.vanderbilt.edu/peabody/family-school/papers/childrens\\_education.pdf](http://www.vanderbilt.edu/peabody/family-school/papers/childrens_education.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> [http://imfcanada.org/article\\_files/IMFC-Cost-of-a-free-lunch.pdf](http://imfcanada.org/article_files/IMFC-Cost-of-a-free-lunch.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.