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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**April 8, 2011**

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**Hidden Education Act amendments abandon early learning vision to bring private sector operators into Ontario schools, warns CUPE Ontario President**

**Changes throw early learning vision, “out the window—sneak private sector in,” says Fred Hahn**

**TORONTO, Ont.** – Amendments to the Education Act hidden in last week’s Provincial Budget toss the government’s vision for early learning and the public’s ability to meaningfully respond “out the window,” warned the President of the Canadian Union of Public Employees, Ontario Division (CUPE Ontario).

“The potential impact these changes could have goes well beyond the extended day program. What’s effectively being proposed here is the privatization—by stealth—of our public schools.

“These amendments aren’t just budgetary ‘housekeeping,’” Fred Hahn said today. “These hidden changes to the Education Act—buried in a 146 page budget bill—completely abandon the vision of consistent care in early learning that the government committed to more than two years ago.”

Key to the success of the early learning program the government endorsed was a ‘seamless day’, in which a single team of teachers and early childhood educators provide service to children and families from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. The new legislation abandons the ‘single team’ approach in favour of bringing in private business providers, shuffling children from one team in the morning, another during the day, and potentially a third team once the school day ends.

If approved, these changes would also enshrine privatized service delivery in Ontario public schools, through the Education Act by empowering school boards to contract out a mandated service to third-party providers.

“These hidden amendments sneak in dramatic change to our education system in a way that ensures no meaningful public consultations or hearings. Parents were promised a full day of public hearings on changes to the extended day program. This, like the vision Dalton McGuinty endorsed two years ago, has now gone out the window,” said Hahn, who urged the public to contact their Member of Provincial Parliament and demand these proposals be subject to Province-wide hearings.

“There is still time to stop the Government from going down this path, and parents will not stand by idly while Dalton McGuinty tries to sneak through such dramatic changes without consulting them,” he said.

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For more information, contact:  
Fred Hahn, President, CUPE Ontario, 416-540-3979  
Kevin Wilson, CUPE Communications, 416-821-6641