



June 19, 2017

Office of the Hon. Indira Naidoo-Harris, MPP
Associate Minister of Education (Early Years and Child Care)
77 Wellesley Street West
12th Floor, Ferguson Block
Toronto, Ontario
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Dear Honourable Indira Naidoo-Harris,

We are writing to you again on behalf of Family Supports Institute Ontario to comment on the most recent announcements concerning the emerging Early Years and Child Care System in Ontario. As well, we would like to take this opportunity to reflect on the Government of Canada's statement of June 12th on the *Multilateral Early Learning and Child Care Framework*. We recognize the great strides that have been taken by successive Liberal Governments in Ontario and Ottawa in recent years to address this longstanding social, economic, and education policy issue. We are hopeful that with all levels of government working together with a common vision and sufficient investments, over time the "patchwork" of services that we have come to know will be transformed into a "system of responsible, high-quality, accessible, and increasingly integrated early years programs and services" operating under a common mandate, as outlined in the original *Ontario Early Years Policy Framework*.

We note that the emphasis in both announcements is on child care services. Yet, various government documents from McCain and Mustard up to and including *OEYCFCs: A Public Plan* describe a seamless, integrated system of early years services and programs that are available to all families with young children when they need them, in the communities where they live. We understand and support the Government's interest in building licensed child care capacity. At the same time, we encourage you to continue not to lose site of the other components of a full-fledged, responsible, high-quality, flexible, accessible, and integrated early years system that supports all families.

Further, we trust that as you move to invest heavily in increasing the number of licensed child care spaces, you take into account anticipated changes in how people participate in the workforce. Research suggests that within the next ten to fifteen years, more short-term and freelance work will replace traditional full-time jobs and that the emergence of the digital

economy will result in further changes in how, when, where, and what type of work is done. No doubt, this will inform your thinking about child care service planning, how to best support the workforce, and the need for increased flexibility and capital investments. We note that programs are already seeing the impact of workforce changes in increased demand for services, in program take-up, and in who participates.

Implementing the seven priority areas of action are key to system transformation efforts. FSIO supports the integration of existing family support programs, a workforce strategy that includes fair remuneration, professional learning, program quality, and inclusion. As the only organization that has a history of representing the whole family support sector in Ontario, FSIO has the resources, connections, and experience to bring forward the perspectives of staff, children, and families from across program streams and communities. We encourage you to continue to tap into our expertise and to ensure that CMSMs and DSSABs take FSIO's capacities into account as the planning at regional level progresses.

We acknowledge the allocation of \$39.96 million to support access to no cost, high quality early years experiences through the expansion of OEYCFCS, as part of the *Canada-Ontario Early Learning and Child Care Agreement*. Identifying OEYCFCS as a priority area for investment is a positive stride that recognizes the importance of increasing access across the system to meet the needs of all families. We look forward to receiving additional information and encourage all levels of government to commit sufficient investments to meet the ongoing needs of the system.

We agree that it is essential, post-implementation, to understand what happened in communities as a result of the Renewed Early Years and Child Care Strategy through the development of an outcomes and measurement strategy. Notwithstanding this, we respectfully suggest that an implementation measurement mechanism be developed with clearly-articulated strategic goals as outlined in the Framework, plus targets for CMSMs and DSSABs to achieve within a defined timeline, linked to funding. Such a mechanism would allow the Province to better understand where transformation efforts are at any point in time and to take corrective action when needed.

In written communication and through participation in various consultations and advisories, we have provided you with our views on the unique nature of family support programs, core services and values, professional learning needs and opportunities, community impacts, service integration, and the equitable treatment of family support practitioners. As you are aware, we are happy to continue to work with you on any and all of these matters.

Respectfully,

Cindy Smith

Cindy Smith,
Chair