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ONTARIO'S RENEWED EARLY YEARS AND CHILD CARE POLICY FRAMEWORK

Family Support Institute of Ontario

November 30, 2017

Renewed Early Years and Child Care Policy Framework

- ❖ Ontario's Renewed Early Years and Child Care Policy Framework was released on June 6, 2017. It sets out the following vision for early years and child care in Ontario:

All children and families have access to a range of high-quality, inclusive and affordable early years and child care programs and services that are child- and family-centred and contribute to children's learning, development and well-being.

- ❖ The framework identifies seven key priority areas for action:
 1. Increasing access to early years and child care programs and services
 2. Ensuring a more affordable early years and child care system
 3. Establishing an early years workforce strategy
 4. Determining a provincial definition of quality in the early years
 5. Developing an approach to promoting inclusion in early years and child care settings
 6. Creating an outcomes and measurement strategy
 7. Increasing public awareness of Ontario's early years and child care system

National Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) Framework

- ❖ On June 12, 2017 the National ELCC Framework was signed by the Ministers' Most Responsible for Early Learning and Child Care. It recognizes the importance that quality early learning and child care systems have in the development of young children, as well as the importance of supporting parents, families and communities in their efforts to ensure the best possible future for their children.
- ❖ The Framework's vision aligns with Ontario's vision, and also provides Ontario with the flexibility to continue with its child care modernization plan.
- ❖ On June 16, 2017, under the National ELCC Framework, Ontario became the first province to sign a three-year bilateral agreement with the federal government – the Canada-Ontario Early Learning and Child Care Agreement.
- ❖ The Canada-Ontario Early Learning and Child Care Agreement allocates \$435M, and Ontario will receive approximately \$145M annually over the next three years:
 - \$100M to support children and families access to affordable, high quality child care
 - \$40M for child and family programs
 - \$5M for professional development opportunities to support the early years and child care workforce

1. Increasing Access

Action Items

- ❖ Help 100,000 more children aged 0-4 access licensed child care over 5 years, including:
 - Investing \$200 million, announced in the 2017 Budget, to support access to licensed child care for 24,000 more children aged 0-4, including 16,000 new subsidized spaces.
 - Investing \$1.6 billion in new capital funding to create 45,000 new licensed child care spaces in schools and in other public spaces and communities.
- ❖ Strengthen the licensed home child care sector by providing base funding
- ❖ Work to increase licensed child care spaces in Indigenous communities
- ❖ Launch an innovation fund to provide unique and inventive solutions to child care delivery that respond to pressing, complex child care issues
- ❖ Expand before- and after-school care for Kindergarten to Grade 6
- ❖ Integrate Ontario's existing child and family programs into a single suite of services

Progress to Date

- ❖ Examples of initial steps taken to increase access include:
 - Established a Home Child Care Cross-Sector Reference Group, including agencies, independent providers, CMSMs/DSSABs, First Nation partners and the Home Child Care Association, to strengthen the home child care sector.
 - Engaged with the Minister's Early Years Advisory Committee (MEYAC) and Provincial-Municipal Early Years Reference Group on elements of Innovation Fund design.
 - On September 21, 2017, the Minister announced that more than 80% of schools across Ontario are now offering before-and after-school programs for 4-12 year olds.

2. Ensuring Affordability

Action Items

- ❖ Invest immediately so that more infants, toddlers and preschoolers can have affordable access to high-quality licensed child care throughout the province
- ❖ Increase funding for fee subsidies to help families who need them
- ❖ Improve the current funding approach with a focus on improving affordability and access to fee subsidies

Progress to Date

- ❖ Procured Dr. Gordon Cleveland, an Associate Professor of Economics Emeritus in the Department of Management at the University of Toronto Scarborough to conduct a child care affordability study.

Next Steps

- ❖ Dr. Cleveland and his team will continue leading the affordability study, to be complete in Winter 2018.
- ❖ The study will provide policy recommendations, including ways to improve access to child care subsidies, to support enhanced affordability of licensed child care for families in Ontario.

3. Assisting the early years workforce

Action Items

- ❖ Develop a workforce strategy to support recruitment and retention of early years and child care professionals.
- ❖ Confirm ongoing support for wage enhancement while exploring methods for improving the program.
- ❖ Provide ongoing support for professional development, including two provincially-funded events per year and the establishment of Centres of Excellence.

Progress to Date

- ❖ Established and started meeting with the Workforce Strategy Technical Advisory Group, a sub-group of MEYAC dedicated to providing focused advice on the strategy.
- ❖ Procured the services of R.A. Malatest & Associates to conduct a Workforce study and provide recommendations to support hiring, recruitment, retention, recognition and professional development.
- ❖ Launched Call for Proposals for the Centres of Excellence on November 22.

Next Steps

- ❖ Continue work with the Technical Advisory Group and R.A. Malatest & Associates
- ❖ Develop the approach to implement provincially-funded events

4. Determining a provincial definition of quality

Action Items

- ❖ Engage with early years partners to co-develop a definition of program quality by 2019.

- ❖ To support a continuum of learning:
 - Ensure that our approach to quality is connected and aligned with our other strategies, and that it includes a strong commitment to diversity and inclusion.
 - Create strong linkages between quality in early childhood settings and approaches to quality used in school settings for children aged 6 to 12.

- ❖ Research and develop mechanisms for measuring program quality as part of our outcomes and measurement strategy.

Progress to Date / Next Steps

- ❖ Continue to review current research on what quality means across Canada and around the world.
- ❖ Initiate process to engage with early years partners in 2018.

5. Developing an approach to promoting inclusion

Action Items

- ❖ Undertake a comprehensive review of current approaches to supporting all children in early years settings
- ❖ Engage with stakeholders to develop a renewed approach to supporting children with special needs in the early years

Progress to Date

- ❖ Initial planning and collaboration activities have taken place to ground upcoming comprehensive review and stakeholder engagement processes

Next Steps

- ❖ Proceed to undertake review and engage with stakeholders.

6. Creating an outcomes and measurement strategy

Action Items

- ❖ Develop and release an annual data report beginning in the fall of 2017
- ❖ Develop a five-year outcomes and measurement strategy to best measure system effectiveness, including an outcomes framework, a data management approach, and a research plan

Progress to Date

- ❖ The first annual data report was posted on the Ministry of Education's website on October 2nd, 2017.
- ❖ The ministry is working on a five year outcomes strategy to help ensure that its decisions on the early years and child care are well-informed, and based in evidence.
 - The child care data presented in the report informs the ministry's policy-making, program development, and monitoring activities.
- ❖ Additional updates on the outcomes and measurement strategy will be discussed in this afternoon's presentation

7. Increasing Public Awareness

Action Items

- ❖ Increase public awareness of the range of early years and child care programs and services that are available to families
- ❖ Create a one-stop online hub for Ontario's early years system, giving parents easy access to comprehensive information
- ❖ Provide a new visual identity for Ontario's child and family programs by January 2018, as part of the integration of its existing programs

Progress to Date / Next Steps

- ❖ On October 24, 2017 the public awareness campaign launched in the form of television and digital advertising. This campaign focuses on the government's commitment to increasing access to licensed child care for 100,000 more children, aged 0-4, over the next 5 years.
- ❖ On October 24, 2017 the Minister announced the launch of the new EarlyON Child and Family Centre brand. The new EarlyON brand will integrate Ontario's four existing child and family programs into a cohesive system of services and supports for children aged 0-6 and their families beginning in January 2018.

EarlyON Child and Family Centres

Branding and Awareness

- ❖ The new EarlyON Child and Family Centre brand will bring together existing programs under one strong brand, designed to resonate with parents, stakeholders and children.
- ❖ Branding of EarlyON child and family centres will begin in January 2018. The Ministry is working closely with service system managers on the implementation of the new brand.
- ❖ As part of the child and family system transformation, the Ministry committed to developing an easy-to-use website to raise awareness and provide easily accessible information about child and family programs and services in local communities.
- ❖ This website will include a comprehensive map where parents and caregivers can find child and family programs in their communities.



EarlyON Child and Family Centres

Investments and New Funding Approach

- ❖ Through the Canada-Ontario Early Learning and Child Care Agreement, an additional \$40M has been allocated to EarlyON child and family centres, which brings our total investment to \$140M.
 - The new federal investments will support up to 100 new EarlyON child and family centres and up to 100,000 more visits over the next three years.
- ❖ The Ministry is also investing approximately \$30M, through the Canada-Ontario Early Learning and Child Care Agreement, to support community-based capital retrofit, renovations and expansions for child and family centres. Details regarding the capital funding process will be provided in the near future.

Planning and Transformation

- ❖ Local plans and needs assessments for EarlyON child and family centres were submitted to the Ministry on September 29, 2017. Service system managers continue to work with their communities and child and family program operators in preparation for the transformation.
- ❖ We recognize that 2018 will be a transition year for some communities as programs and services are transitioned in a thoughtful, informed way and aligned with local needs assessments and local plans. The Ministry will continue to work with service system managers and partners on the implementation of local plans.



The Journey Together

- ❖ In Winter/Spring 2017, EDU invited CMSMs/DSSABs, provincial off-reserve Indigenous organizations, and Provincial/Territorial Organizations (PTOs) to apply for funding to support the objectives of the Journey Together early years initiative, including:
 - Off reserve – Up to \$70M over the next two years (including capital investments) for child care and child and family programs delivered by Indigenous-led organizations, with ongoing annual operating funding of up to \$30M beginning in 2018-19; and
 - On Reserve – Up to \$23.5M over the next two years for new and enhanced child and family programs delivered by First Nations, with up to \$12M in ongoing annual operating funding beginning in 2018-19.
- ❖ Under Journey Together, Ontario has provided approximately \$1M in ongoing operating funding to five existing First Nations that deliver provincially-funded child and family programs to expand services in their communities. In addition, the province provided almost \$400K in one-time operating funding to support program expansion costs.
- ❖ To support enhanced relationships and collaborative planning at the local level, EDU made capacity funding available to Indigenous organizations and CMSMs/DSSABs.
- ❖ The Ministry is in the process of reviewing the TRC proposals that have been submitted as of the deadline of September 29, 2017.

Workforce Strategy

Workforce Strategy

Objective

The objective of Ontario's Early Years and Child Care Workforce Strategy is to increase the sector's ability to attract and retain an engaged, integrated and knowledgeable workforce that provides high quality programming that is culturally-responsive and inclusive of all children.

Action Items

- ❖ Develop a strategy to support recruitment / retention of early years and child care professionals.
- ❖ Confirm ongoing support for wage enhancement while exploring improvements to the program.
- ❖ Provide ongoing support for professional development including two provincially-funded events per year

Progress to Date

- ❖ Established a workforce Technical Advisory Group dedicated to providing focused advice on the strategy. The Technical Advisory Group has met five times since July 2017
- ❖ Through a competitive procurement process, the ministry has obtained the services of R.A. Malatest & Associates Ltd. to conduct a Workforce study and provide recommendations to support hiring, recruitment, retention, recognition and professional development.
- ❖ R.A. Malatest has completed a number of consultation activities to inform the study, including:
 - 15 key informant interviews that were completed with experts / advisors.
 - A survey on employment in the sector that was distributed to all licenced child care centres, home child care agencies, child and family programs, and special needs resourcing agencies across Ontario. The survey closes December 4.
 - Presentations to the Technical Advisory Group.

Workforce Strategy

What we've Heard

- ❖ Early years and child care professionals make valuable contributions to the lives of children and families by helping to build a foundation for children's life-long learning and well-being.
- ❖ Working conditions in the sector often do not reflect these valuable contributions. Some frequently-mentioned challenges we have heard include:
 - Relatively low pay
 - Low perception of the value of the work performed by early years and child care staff
 - Prevalence of split shifts, high levels of stress, precarious employment and high turnover
 - Relatively few opportunities for professional development and career advancement
 - Quality of new registered early childhood educators entering into practice
 - Shortage of qualified and high quality staff in some communities

Next Steps

- ❖ Meet with the Technical Advisory Group on December 7.
- ❖ Develop the approach to implement two-provincially funded events.
- ❖ Receive R.A. Malatest's final report in February 2018.
- ❖ Develop a workforce strategy to increase the sector's ability to attract and retain an engaged, integrated and knowledgeable workforce that provides high quality programming that is culturally-responsive and inclusive of all children.

Workforce Strategy

Questions for Discussion

- ❖ What are some of the opportunities, best practices and principles that have the potential to improve recruitment, recognition and retention in the early years and child care workforce?
- ❖ What are the priorities, interests and needs of early years and child care professionals with respect to professional learning? What are examples of best practices in supporting professional learning? What makes them best practices?
- ❖ What is the top priority regarding compensation (e.g., raising the floor, more consistency across settings, opportunity for growth, inclusion of benefits, increases for additional qualifications, etc.)?
- ❖ What can all stakeholders (government, educational institutions, employers, advocates, etc.) do to raise the public profile of early years and child care professionals?