

Federal-Provincial/ Territorial Social Services Ministers reach consensus on early learning and child care ^[1]

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Source: Social Development Canada

Format: Press release

Publication Date: 11 Feb 2005

AVAILABILITY

Press release ^[2]

Text of press release:

Federal, Provincial and Territorial Ministers Responsible for Social Services met today and discussed a national vision and principles for early learning and child care systems in each province and territory in our country. Ministers acknowledged that any approach must be flexible in its implementation and that we must focus on quality outcomes for children.

Given the urgent need to accelerate development of quality early learning and child care across the country, Ministers have agreed to meet again once funding is confirmed in the federal budget.

This will be an important agreement for the children of this country, to allow parents to work and study and be confident that their children are participating in the kinds of quality, inclusive, and developmental programs that best meet their needs.

"We have moved another step forward. There are still some steps ahead. We have made progress in a tight timeframe" said federal Minister of Social Development, and meeting co-chair, the Honourable Ken Dryden. "By working together we have an opportunity to define success collectively. We can better define the core elements that make up quality early learning and child care. Federal, provincial and territorial ministers are committed to clear accountability to their citizens that allows them to track their respective governments' progress in early learning and child care and better outcomes for children."

Provinces and Territories are extremely pleased with the progress we have made," said the Honourable Chester Gillan, meeting co-chair and Minister of Health and Social Services in Prince Edward Island. "We look forward to the federal Budget and the details around the federal commitment. Ministers recognized the Prime Minister's historic commitment of \$5 billion over 5 years to early learning and child care. We will be reporting back to our respective governments on today's meeting, and look forward to concluding an agreement and seeking final approvals from our governments."

Ministers discussed the importance of ensuring that early learning and child care recognizes the unique needs of every child, and provides opportunities for children to develop to their full potential. They also discussed that quality early learning and child care must recognize and value the qualified and dedicated early childhood educators and child care providers, who provide children with enriching experiences in safe, stimulating environments each day.

"Recognizing that early learning and child care is an area of provincial and territorial jurisdiction, the proposed new federal money complements existing provincial and territorial investments and should allow us to significantly improve early learning and child care," said the Honourable Joanne Crofford, Minister of Community Resources and Employment in Saskatchewan.

Ministers recognized the critical need to continue to engage Aboriginal leaders in discussions about the best approaches for Aboriginal children.

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