

Ontario Alternative Budget: No time to lose & An action blueprint for Ontario ^[1]

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AVAILABILITY

- Full document in pdf ^[2]

- Brief in pdf ^[3]

Excerpts from the report:

Child care: Renewing the promise of Best Start

Following a decade of provincial funding cuts in excess of \$160 million, the 2003 Liberal election promise to invest public funds in ELCC and to provide every child in our province with a Best Start was met with great optimism.

Ontario's intentions on the early years were critical in paving the way for the achievement of an historic federal-provincial agreement on early learning and child care. These federal investments — \$1.4 billion over five years — and \$300 million in new provincial investments were the underpinnings for the province's 10-year rollout of Best Start.

Best Start got off to a promising start with plans for wraparound care for 4- and 5-year-olds; the development of Local Best Start Networks; comprehensive, integrated Healthy Baby Healthy Children programs; the creation 14,000 new spaces; three pilot program fast-tracks; and the introduction of Expert Panels to guide and inform the development of Best Start.

While the cancellation of the ELCC agreement by the federal Conservative government in 2006 was a wrenching blow, Ontario's response was unacceptable.

Other provinces — including Quebec, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan — have committed to continue building their provincial ELCC systems with provincial dollars. But Ontario took the final federal installment and spread it out over four years. Nowhere in the 2006 provincial budget was there mention of the \$300 million McGuinty pledged to the electorate in September 2003 for early learning and child care.

Ontario is rightly leading the demand for federal re-engagement in building a pan-Canadian system of Early Learning and Child Care services. But this leadership must be backed by example. Today, the province's nascent ELCC system is at a critical point: without sustained provincial funding commitments, the investment in the future and well-being of Ontario's children is at risk.

Related link: EDITORIAL: It's not too late to keep child-care promise [CA-ON] ^[4]

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