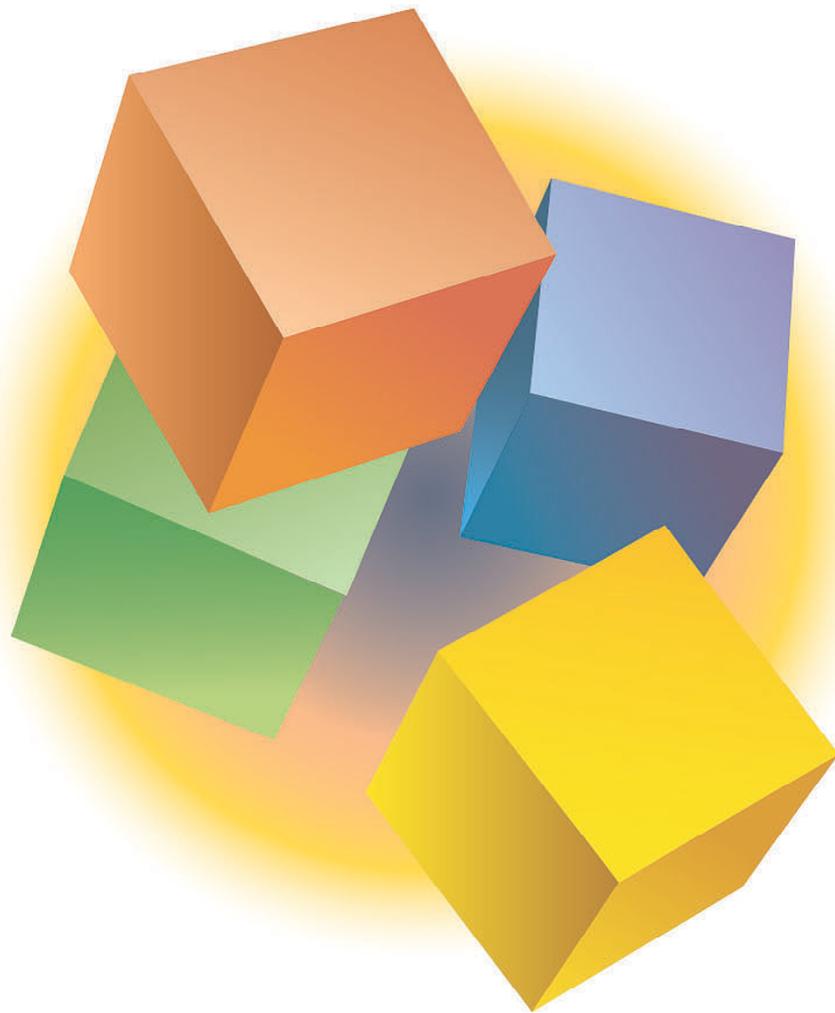


# Investing in Quality

**Policies, Practitioners, Programs and Parents**

A Four-Point Plan to Deliver High Quality  
Early Learning and Care Services  
in Ontario



*Report of the Expert Panel on Quality and Human Resources*

March 2007

## Preface

In November 2004, the Ministry of Children and Youth Services launched Best Start: Ontario's strategy to give *all* of Ontario's young children – regardless of ability, needs, income, language, culture, or geography – and *all* of Ontario's families –whether parents are at home, in school or in the paid workforce -- access to high quality, evidence-informed early learning experiences. The goal is to help children be ready to achieve success in school, in their community and in their personal lives.

As part of the Best Start strategy, the ministry has added almost 15,000 new child care spaces in the province and is supporting community efforts to develop an integrated

system of early learning and care programs that coordinates child care services, related child and family support services such as parenting programs, early literacy programs, early identification and screening, and Ontario Early Years Centres, with kindergarten programs. The longer term vision for Best Start also included a universal half day early learning/preschool program. If these new initiatives are to achieve the Best Start goal, Ontario must have knowledgeable practitioners to deliver high quality programs.

In the spring of 2005, the Ministry of Children and Youth Services established the Expert Panel on Quality and Human Resources, chaired by Professor Donna Lero, Jarislowsky Chair in Families and Work, University of Guelph, to provide advice on quality and human resource issues. The Expert Panel's objectives were to strengthen the quality of early learning and care services by identifying strategies to:

- attract, retain and develop a knowledgeable, committed, qualified early learning and care workforce
- determine the education/qualifications practitioners need to meet the needs of children and their families
- address deficiencies in compensation, working conditions and status of the child care sector
- integrate child care and education professionals in early learning and care settings (preschool, kindergarten).

The Panel's report – *Investing in Quality: Policies, Practitioners, Programs and Parents* -- is based on an extensive review of the literature in Canada and internationally, on data provided by the Ministry of Children and Youth Services and other sources about the workforce, on the work of the Child Care Human Resources Sector Council, and on the collective professional expertise and experience of Panel members. It also takes into account recent reports from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), which reviewed global trends in early childhood education and care services, and

Parents ... have the primary responsibility for the care and nurture of their children. The role of government and society ... is to provide the legislative and policy environment, the institutional and organizational structures, and the fiscal and other supports and services to enable families to ensure their children's healthy development.

A Canada Fit for Children  
April 2004

recommended strategies to improve the quality of early learning and care programs.

The Panel's recommendations will enhance early development for all children in the province, stabilize the early learning and care workforce, strengthen communities, and help Ontario reap the social and economic benefits of investing in young children.

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## Executive Summary

A child's experiences during the early years have the greatest influence of any time in the life cycle on brain development, learning, behaviour and health. The single most important factor affecting young children's development – after a child's home environment and his or her relationship with parents – is the quality of the early learning and care services they receive. Children who experience high-quality early learning and care develop better social skills, have fewer behavioural problems and score higher on achievement and language tests than children who experience low or mediocre-quality care. High quality early learning and care is particularly important for children living in poverty, children with special needs, new Canadians, and children in minority communities: it gives them opportunities to develop the foundational knowledge and skills, resilience and emotional maturity they need to succeed in school and society. It is equally important for children from stable, advantaged families who experience negative effects if programs do not provide responsive, stimulating environments.

The quality of early learning and care services depends on four key factors:

- effective policies, funding and infrastructure
- knowledgeable, committed practitioners with post-secondary education in early childhood development who are appropriately compensated for their work
- well designed programs with the capacity to meet the needs of all children
- strong partnerships with parents.

Investing in high quality early learning and care services for children and families is the most economically efficient investment a society can make. Ontario has made a commitment to invest in high quality early learning and care services that will help **all** of Ontario's young children reach their full potential. To fulfill this commitment, the province must provide significant ongoing leadership to develop the policies, practitioners, programs and partnerships with parents required to deliver high quality services.

## Where We Want to Be

### *We envision a future where ...*

All young children and their families in Ontario will have the opportunity to benefit from affordable, high quality, inclusive early learning and care programs provided by knowledgeable, skilled, caring practitioners working in stimulating, rewarding environments.

Organizations, agencies, school boards, and governments will work collaboratively to develop integrated programs that will give all children and families in Ontario convenient access to high quality, flexible, seamless early learning and care services.

### ***Goals***

- To improve the quality of early learning and care programs for all children in Ontario.
- To build and maintain a knowledgeable, stable, well compensated early learning and care workforce that provides high quality services.

To achieve our vision and goals, Ontario needs a comprehensive policy and regulatory environment that promotes high quality early learning and care services.

## **Where We Are Now**

### ***Policies, funding and infrastructure***

The current regulatory environment is complex. More than one ministry is responsible for early learning and care services, and the services are planned and managed by different organizations (e.g., Consolidated Municipal Service Managers, school boards) at the local level. This complexity makes it difficult to harmonize policies and does not support an integrated, high quality system of early learning and care.

The regulatory environment and funding for child care services – the foundation for early learning and care – were developed at a time when early learning and care services were viewed primarily as a support for parents who work or are in school (paid for by parents) and/or as a support for low income families and children at risk, rather than as a form of early childhood education that promotes young children’s development. The current funding approach (i.e., limited public investment with a heavy reliance on parent fees) puts regulated child care services – the only services that are monitored and required to meet certain minimum requirements for quality – out of reach for many families.

The current regulatory environment focuses primarily on child health and safety, rather than on the quality of early learning and care programs or the qualifications of practitioners. Some municipalities and programs have developed innovative initiatives to improve quality, but there are no province-wide standards for program quality, quality assurance mechanisms beyond licensing inspections, or standards for the profession. The current requirements for practitioner education do not reflect the increasingly complex demands of practice. To provide high quality services, Ontario needs strong post-secondary education programs that enable practitioners to develop the knowledge and skills required as well as up to date information systems, research and collaborative partnerships among all involved in the early learning and care field.

### ***Practitioners***

The single most critical factor affecting the quality of early learning and care programs is the knowledge, skills and stability of the early childhood workforce. The current workforce – the early childhood assistant, educators, resource teachers, supervisors, directors, and home child care providers working in regulated child care and the teachers in kindergarten classrooms -- are highly

committed people who value and want to work with young children and families. However, the field faces serious human resource issues, particularly in the regulated child care sector:

- A significant proportion of practitioners do not have the education or credentials they need to meet the demands of practice and provide high quality early learning and care.
- The workforce is not stable: many qualified people are leaving the child care sector because of low wages, poor working conditions and lack of career opportunities.
- New early childhood education graduates are choosing not to work in regulated child care.
- Of those working in child care now, a significant proportion will retire over the next five to 10 years – and there are not enough people entering the field to replace them.

### ***Programs***

Many early learning and care programs do not have the resources, environments or supports in place to enable them to provide inclusive, evidence-based programs for children from diverse backgrounds and children with special needs.

Practitioners need training and support to implement age-appropriate learning programs, such as the new Early Learning Framework. There is little integration between kindergarten and other early learning and care programs – even when both are located in the same school; however, there is a growing body of knowledge about the factors that contribute to successful integration. Ontario can also build on the lessons learned about integration from Toronto First Duty, the Best Start demonstration sites and experiences in other jurisdictions.

### ***Parents***

Early learning and care programs support young children's learning. They also support parents in their efforts to work or go to school, and in their parenting. When parents feel supported by knowledgeable, caring professionals who share a commitment to their child's development, they are able to be full partners in their children's early learning and care, and make more informed choices. Current staffing requirements do not necessarily support strong partnerships and effective communication with parents. For many parents, high quality programs are not available, affordable or accessible so they lack real choices for their children.

## **How to Create a Comprehensive Early Learning and Care System**

To strengthen the workforce and improve the quality of early learning and care services across the province, Ontario must fundamentally transform the way services are planned, funded, managed and delivered.

The Expert Panel on Quality and Human Resources proposes a comprehensive, four-point plan designed to put in place the essential building blocks for a quality early learning and care system (see Figure 1).

## **1. Strengthen policies, funding and infrastructure**

- 1.1 Develop a regulatory environment that supports high quality, inclusive, integrated early learning and care services
- 1.2 Increase and transform public funding for early learning and care programs
- 1.3 Develop province-wide quality standards for early learning and care programs and local systems to monitor quality
- 1.4 Establish education requirements for the profession that reflect the increasingly complex demands of practice
- 1.5 Provide opportunities for practitioners to obtain and upgrade education and credentials
- 1.6 Gather data and conduct research to guide workforce and service planning
- 1.7 Develop partnerships and collaborations to address quality, human resources and other systemic issues

## **2. Improve education, compensation and career opportunities for practitioners**

- 2.1 Provide wages, benefits and working conditions that will attract and keep knowledgeable practitioners
- 2.2 Invest in the knowledge, skills and competencies of early learning and care directors, supervisors and pedagogical leaders
- 2.3 Invest in the knowledge, skills and competencies of early childhood practitioners
- 2.4 Attract, recruit and retain knowledgeable, skilled and engaged early childhood educators

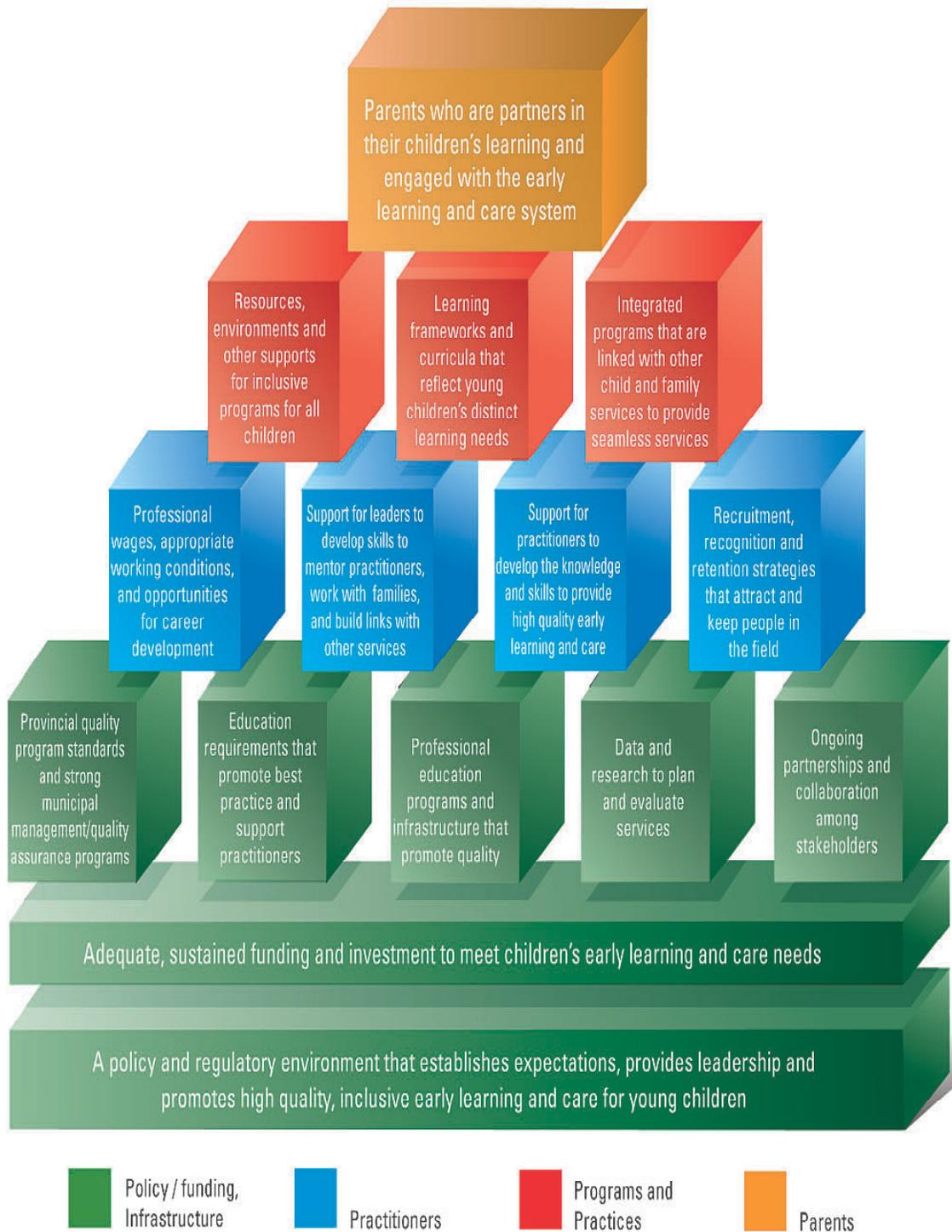
## **3. Deliver high quality, inclusive, evidence-based programs**

- 3.1 Provide the resources, environments and supports necessary for inclusive, evidence-based programs
- 3.2 Develop learning frameworks and curricula that reflect young children's distinct learning needs
- 3.3 Develop integrated programs for four and five year olds

## **4. Forge strong partnerships with parents**

- 4.1 Develop and support staffing models that enable effective, ongoing communication with parents

**Figure 1: The Essential Building Blocks for High Quality Early Learning and Care**



## Timing and Targets

Ontario is not the only jurisdiction working to improve the quality of early learning and care services and strengthen the workforce. Other countries and provinces – including New Zealand, Sweden, Manitoba, Québec, B.C., and Alberta -- have faced the same challenges as Ontario. Those jurisdictions that have been successful in improving quality and strengthening the workforce have done so by making a long-term commitment and strategic investments to support comprehensive systemic changes.

To succeed, Ontario must take the same kind of comprehensive approach. For example, it will not be enough to establish a College of Early Childhood Educators and a recruitment campaign, if the system does not address the fundamental issue of wages and working conditions. It will not be enough to set quality standards, if the system is not funded at a level to support quality. It will not be enough to increase education requirements for practitioners without providing appropriate education programs and accessible, meaningful opportunities for professional development. It will not be enough to upgrade practitioner qualifications if practitioners do not have the resources, learning environments and supports they need to deliver high quality, inclusive, evidence-based programs.

The Expert Panel recognizes that it will take time and ongoing investments – in funding and expertise – to create a high quality system. To provide a means to set priorities and measure progress, the Expert Panel has identified:

- the short term activities and recommendations that should be completed within the next two years
- the medium term activities that should be accomplished within five years
- the long term activities that will take up to eight years to achieve.

Table 1 provides a timetable and road map for implementing the recommendations in this report.

**Table 1: Timetable for Investing in Quality**

**1. Strengthen Policies, Funding, and Infrastructure**

	By 2008-2009 ...	By 2010-2012 ...	By 2013-2015...
<b>Policy and Regulatory Environment</b>	The Day Nurseries Act and Education Act are revised to support high quality early learning and care	Ontario has a consistent policy and regulatory environment for all regulated early learning and care services and supports to facilitate the integration of early learning and care and kindergarten programs	
<b>Funding</b>	Provincial funding for regulated child care programs has increased substantially to reflect the true costs of providing high quality programs	Ontario has a comprehensive, streamlined funding model for early learning and care programs that promotes high quality	Parents pay no more than 20 to 25% of the cost of early learning and care programs
<b>Quality Program Standards</b>	Ontario has province-wide quality standards for early learning and care programs, and communicates them to practitioners and parents	All municipalities have quality assurance tools, routinely monitor early learning and care programs and allocate funds for quality improvement initiatives	
<b>Professional Standards/ Education Requirements</b>	The College of Early Childhood Educators has education requirements for practitioners that reflect the increasing complexity of their roles in delivering high quality programs  All early childhood assistants are enrolled in an accredited ECE, ECA or apprenticeship program	All directors and supervisors of centre-based early learning and care programs have a degree in early childhood education/ development or equivalent as well as management training.  All pedagogical leaders/assistant supervisors, resource educators and supervisors of child care centres and OEYCs have a degree or are enrolled in a degree program in early childhood education/ development  All home child care providers have completed an recognized post-secondary course in health, safety, child development or early childhood education  All teachers in kindergarten programs without pre-service education in early	All early childhood assistants have completed year one of their ECE or an ECA certificate or apprenticeship program  All teachers newly hired to work in kindergarten programs have specific course work in early childhood education/ development  All early childhood practitioners participate in ongoing professional education and development

		childhood development are enrolled in an appropriate course	
<b>Post-secondary Education and Infrastructure</b>	<p>All post-secondary institutions that provide education/ development incorporate the Early Learning Framework into their programs</p> <p>All accredited post-secondary institutions ensure consistent quality standards and best practices for all education programs, including apprenticeship and distance education programs.</p> <p>Post secondary institutions have funding and a new funding model to support high quality, inclusive laboratory school programs.</p> <p>All students have at least one mandatory practicum or placement in a lab school setting</p> <p>Post-secondary institutions receive funding to support the development of a leadership and management credential in early childhood services</p> <p>MCYS funds a minimum of 11 additional professional child care resource centres across the province – including at least one Francophone and one Aboriginal centre with satellite outreach programs</p>	<p>All post-secondary institutions that provide education in early childhood education/ development have innovative programs with the capacity to meet the demand for increased credentials – including Ontario college graduate certificate and degree programs to meet the needs of Francophone and Aboriginal communities, management programs, and graduate programs</p> <p>Post-secondary institutions offer a leadership and management credential in early childhood services</p> <p>Post-secondary institutions have a systemic approach to articulation agreements that gives practitioners a choice of education pathways and ensures high quality, articulated professional education with no dead-end training</p> <p>Ontario has 47 adequately funded and staffed professional child care resource centres across the province (one in each municipality)</p>	<p>Post secondary institutions offer collaborative education programs and a common credential for practitioners working in integrated early learning and care/kindergarten programs</p>
<b>Data and Research</b>	<p>Ontario develops and maintains a province-wide information system on early learning and care programs and the early childhood workforce to support quality and accountability</p>	<p>Ontario develops partnerships with researchers and post-secondary institutions, and supports the development of a research agenda to improve quality and HR planning and management.</p> <p>Ontario provides funding for policy and practice-relevant research</p>	

<b>Collaborative Partnerships</b>	<p>MCYS and municipalities clarify their relationship, roles, mandate and funding obligations to ensure consistent, high quality, inclusive early learning and care services</p> <p>A standing interministerial group reviews issues affecting service integration and needed supports</p> <p>Ontario forms a sector council that provides ongoing advice to all relevant ministries on quality and human resource issues</p> <p>A separate task force is established and submits a report on strategies to improve quality and address HR issues in home child care</p>		
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## 2. Improve Education, Compensation and Career Opportunities for Practitioners

	By 2008-2009 ...	By 2010-2012 ...	By 2013-2015...
<b>Wages, Benefits and Working Conditions</b>	<p>Child care programs receive predictable, sustained funding to support appropriate wages and benefits.</p> <p>The Ministry of Children and Youth Services has provincial guidelines for compensation.</p> <p>Municipalities have established appropriate wage scales.</p>	<p>All early learning and care practitioners belong to a pension plan.</p> <p>All practitioners receive wages and benefits comparable to other professionals with similar education, experience and responsibilities</p> <p>Municipalities establish expectations for working conditions that support quality, including time for program planning, paid professional development time, and attractive working hours</p>	
<b>Support for Enhancing Leaders' Qualifications</b>	<p>Ontario has incentive programs that support supervisors and directors in upgrading their qualifications</p>	<p>Programs with more than seven staff have an additional degree-prepared pedagogical leader/assistant supervisor</p>	
<b>Support for Enhancing Practitioners' Qualifications</b>	<p>Ontario has bursaries, forgivable loans, development grants, replacement staff and other incentive programs to help</p>	<p>Programs are required to devote 4% of their budgets to ongoing professional development and are funded appropriately to meet that requirement</p>	

	practitioners upgrade their qualifications	Employers recognize practitioners who have obtained additional qualifications (e.g., increased wages)	
<b>Attraction, Recruitment and Retention Programs</b>	<p>Ontario has a province-wide attraction/recruitment program that targets high school students, guidance counselors, parents, students entering post-secondary institutions, and newcomers with education in early childhood development/education.</p> <p>Ontario provides funding to develop and support a systematic approach to evaluating educational equivalency, credential assessment and bridging programs.</p>	Employers and/or professional organizations provide mentorship programs that help new graduates make a successful transition to the workforce	

### 3. Deliver High Quality, Inclusive, Evidence-based Programs for Children

	By 2008-2009 ...	By 2010-2012 ...	By 2013-2015...
<b>Environment and Resources to Support Inclusive programs</b>	<p>All ECE practitioners have a minimum of two hours of paid planning time per week.</p> <p>Ontario has established a fund to support practitioner development and resources (including additional staff) for programs with children with special needs</p> <p>Practitioners have access to the training and resources they need to meet the needs of all children</p>	<p>Structural changes have been made to early learning and care environments to support inclusive programs. All new programs are purpose-built and accessible.</p> <p>The system has mechanisms to provide ongoing consultation and support to ensure effective inclusion</p>	
<b>Early Learning Framework</b>	<p>Province-wide training is available on the Early Learning Framework.</p> <p>All early learning and care programs receive training and support to implement the Early Learning Framework</p>	The use and impact of the Early Learning Framework is monitored, and pre-service and ongoing education programs adjusted accordingly	
<b>Integrated Programs for Four and Five Year Olds</b>	An interministerial committee reviews the experience of pilot and demonstration sites and addresses key issues	The committee's recommendations are implemented systematically	<p>Integrated programs are in place in all Ontario communities</p> <p>Quality assurance tools are developed and used</p>

	including governance, integration of cultures, compensation, qualifications, ratios, environmental issues and hours of operation.		to assess quality and recommend quality improvements in individual programs
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#### 4. Forge Strong Partnerships with Parents

	By 2008-2009 ...	By 2010-2012 ...	By 2013-2015...
<b>Partnerships with Parents</b>	<p>All programs are required to maintain ratios of qualified staff throughout the day to support effective communication with and support for parents</p> <p>Programs are staffed to give ECEs and parents time to communicate at the beginning and end of the day</p> <p>Parents have access to information that helps them make informed decisions for their children's early learning and care</p>	<p>All early learning and care programs facilitate linkages for parents to other community services they may need</p>	

### Working Collaboratively

Investing in young children's early education and development is the most economically efficient investment society can make. The Ministry of Children and Youth Services has the opportunity to provide the leadership to enable Ontario to reap the social and economic rewards of investing in quality programs for our children – but it cannot create a high quality early learning and care system on its own. The ministry will need the commitment and collaboration of all partners, including:

- other provincial ministries responsible for policies, regulation and funding that affect early learning and care services, including the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities
- the municipalities that plan, manage and fund child care services and the Best Start networks and hubs that are working to integrate early learning and care services and to support quality programs in their municipalities
- the colleges and universities that educate practitioners
- professional and advocacy associations
- early learning and care programs – particularly directors and supervisors – who play the key role in creating supportive, rewarding working environments, attracting and keeping knowledgeable committed practitioners, supporting parents, and enabling all children to achieve their full potential.

The Expert Panel urges all partners and stakeholders to begin the important work of creating a high quality, inclusive, evidence-based early learning and care system that will give all Ontario children the opportunity to achieve their full potential.

# The Call for Action

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Historically, Ontario has been a national and international leader in programs for young children. It was the first province in Canada to introduce publicly funded senior and then junior kindergarten programs, and the first province to regulate child care services. The Day Nurseries Act – the legislation and regulations that govern child care services -- was based on the best available research on child care and set standards for age-appropriate child to adult ratios and maximum group sizes that are still unmatched in many jurisdictions. Ontario is the only province where municipalities are responsible for planning, funding and managing child care services, and for developing services that meet their unique community needs. For many years, Ontario’s early childhood educators earned salaries that were more competitive than their peers in other provinces.

That is no longer the case.

**At a time when society has recognized the critical importance of early learning, Ontario does not have the policies, funding and infrastructure, programs, or enough knowledgeable, qualified practitioners<sup>1</sup> to deliver inclusive high quality early learning and care programs across the province.**

The quality of early learning and care services depends on a number of factors – including policies, funding, standards and programs -- but the most important is the knowledge, skills, attitudes and stability of the workforce: the early childhood educators, home child care providers, and teachers in kindergarten classes who work in early learning and care programs.

Ontario’s early learning and care workforce is made up of highly committed practitioners who value and want to work with young children. However:

- A significant proportion of practitioners do not have the education or qualifications needed to meet the challenging demands of their job and provide high quality care.
- The workforce is not stable: many qualified people are leaving the child care sector because of low wages, poor working conditions and lack of career opportunities.
- New early childhood education graduates are choosing not to work in regulated child care because they can find better paying, more attractive positions in other children’s services occupations or other sectors.
- Of those working in child care now, a significant proportion will retire over the next five to 10 years – and there are not enough people entering the field to replace them.

Although all parts of the province are experiencing shortages in qualified early childhood practitioners, the problem is particularly acute in small, rural and

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<sup>1</sup> “Practitioner” refers to the professionals, paraprofessionals and other providers who deliver early learning and care programs in different settings in Ontario.

remote communities, Francophone communities and programs, Aboriginal communities, and parts of the province where there are large numbers of recent immigrants, who have little proficiency in either official language.

The shortages and instability in the workforce are the result of larger systemic weaknesses that have been neglected for a decade. Because of these pressures, services are in crisis. The quality and sustainability of Ontario's early learning and care programs are under threat.

In the last two years, Ontario has made a commitment to invest in high quality early learning and care services that will support *all* of Ontario's young children and their families. To deliver on this commitment, all those involved in early learning and care services in Ontario – the provincial government, municipalities, post-secondary institutions, practitioners, professional organizations and parents – must act. We must work together to address the critical quality, system and human resources issues that exist now and are becoming more problematic as Ontario increases the number of regulated spaces and moves to integrated child care/kindergarten programs for four and five year-olds.

# The Case for Investing in Quality and Human Resources

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## The early years are crucial to healthy child development.

A child's experiences during the early years have the greatest influence of any time in the life cycle on brain development, learning, behaviour and health<sup>1</sup>. The quality of children's early years shapes their brain architecture, and affects their health and well-being throughout their lives. Positive, stimulating learning experiences in the early years contribute to self-confidence and a positive attitude toward learning, exploring and problem solving. Investments in early learning support later learning, and lead to greater success in school and throughout life<sup>2</sup>.

After a child's home environment and his or her relationship with parents, the quality of early learning and care services is the single most important factor affecting young children's development. Children who experience high-quality early learning and care develop better social skills, have fewer behavioural problems and score higher on achievement and language tests than children who experience low or mediocre-quality care<sup>3</sup>. Children's development suffers when their early learning and care experiences lack nurturing and do not provide appropriate social, language and cognitive stimulation<sup>4</sup>.

High quality early learning and care is particularly important for children living in poverty, children with special needs, recent immigrants, and children in minority communities: it gives them opportunities to develop the foundational knowledge and skills, resilience and emotional maturity they need to succeed in school and society<sup>5</sup>. It is equally important for children from stable, advantaged families who experience negative effects if programs do not provide responsive, stimulating environments. Family income and support from home is not enough to compensate for poor early learning and care experiences.<sup>6</sup>

*Early learning and care* refers to stimulating and responsive services for children under age six that promote their well-being and development.

Learning and care are inextricably linked, and essential to a child's early development. Children need the stimulation that helps them learn to talk, think and communicate. They also need safe well-designed places where they can play, rest and be comforted. Early learning and care programs provide positive environments where young children play, learn and develop skills. They also support parents who are in school, in the paid workforce or involved in other activities.

Early learning and care services are provided in a variety of settings including child care centres, regulated home child care, preschool/nursery schools, kindergarten classes, family resource centres, and Ontario Early Years Centres.

## Young children benefit from knowledgeable practitioners who understand their distinct learning and care needs

Young children learn in different ways than older children. To thrive during their childhood and become competent adolescents and adults, young children need strong attachments with significant adults in their lives as well as opportunities to explore, communicate, develop skills, and learn to respect and get along with others<sup>7</sup>. They need practitioners who:

- are knowledgeable about early child development and young children's learning styles and needs
- understand the impact that culture, race, ethnicity, language, gender, family environment and developmental abilities have on learning – and have the knowledge and skills to address the diverse needs of all children.

Knowledgeable practitioners are key to quality<sup>89</sup>. When young children (in both centre-based and home-based programs) have practitioners with post-secondary education in early childhood development, who is well compensated and supported in their work<sup>10</sup>, the children are more likely to:

- be involved in stimulating, developmentally appropriate activities
- be calmer and more engaged with other children in positive ways
- develop stronger attachments to their primary caregivers (which is essential for early learning) and benefit from interactions with adults who are engaged, nurturing and responsive
- score higher on various measures of child development and in academic performance in the early grades.

Education in early childhood development sensitizes practitioners to each child's needs, abilities, disposition and response to new ideas, people and challenges.

The education, attitudes and expertise of program supervisors and directors are also key factors in the quality of early learning and care services. Knowledgeable leaders are better able to mentor staff, promote best practices, communicate effectively with parents, and link families to other services.

## More families want their children to benefit from high quality early learning and care programs

A growing number of parents are aware of the research on brain development and the impact of high quality early learning and care programs on child development. As a result, the demand for high quality early learning and care services is growing across Ontario. For many parents, the driving force is economic: parents rely on early learning and care programs for their children while they are at work or school. With more parents working (67% of mothers with children under age six were in the paid workforce in 2004 – up from 32% in 1976<sup>11</sup>), the demand for high quality, affordable early learning and care services is increasing. For recent immigrants, early learning and care programs provide a valuable way for children of different cultures to integrate into Canadian society and learn English or French.

The demand for high quality early learning and care is also growing from parents who are not in the paid workforce. Experience in all provinces and territories shows that when kindergarten, nursery school, preschool and child care centres are available and affordable, families enrol their children. For example, when Québec opened its publicly funded early learning and care system to all young children —regardless of whether parents are in the paid workforce – programs were hard pressed to respond to all the families who applied. As a result, 40% of Québec’s young children are now in regulated early learning and care programs<sup>12</sup>.

## **Investing in the very young is the most efficient investment society can make**

As society learns more about how important early childhood experiences are to brain development and life-long health, perceptions of early learning and care are changing. Ontarians now see early learning and care not just as a support for parents who are working or in school, but as an integral part of children’s education (like kindergarten) that should be available to all families.

Children are citizens with rights who enrich our communities now. They will also become the workforce and leaders of tomorrow. When children have the opportunity to develop their full potential, all of society benefits. Ontario’s future health and prosperity depends on our ability to promote each child’s optimal development now.

According to economic studies, for every \$1 invested in high quality early learning and care, society reaps at least a \$2 return<sup>13</sup>. Children who participate in high quality early learning and care programs are more likely to succeed in school and in life, and to earn higher wages. They are less likely to require remedial education, social assistance or correctional services – all costly publicly funded programs. The potential economic benefit is even greater for children at risk. For example, every \$1 invested in early learning and care programs for children who have special learning challenges or who are economically disadvantaged in the United States yields a \$4 to \$10 return. Long-term studies that followed children who participated in the Perry Preschool Program up to age 40, estimated the long-term benefit at \$17 (Cdn) for every \$1 spent on early learning and care<sup>14</sup>.

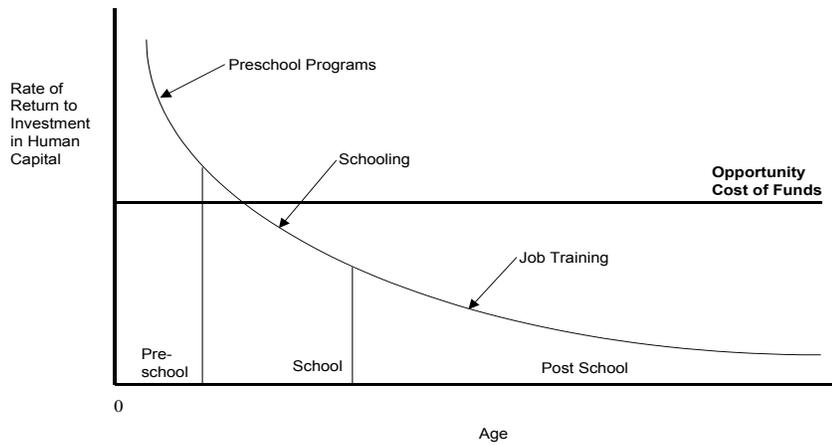
According to James Heckman, a University of Chicago economist and winner of the Nobel Prize in economics, investing in the very young is the most economically efficient investment society can make. As Figure 1<sup>15</sup> illustrates, a society reaps a significantly higher return on its investment in preschool programs

Ontario’s youngest children are citizens with the right to, among other entitlements, respect, affection, care, support, a healthy environment, health care services, and opportunities to grow and learn. As a society, we have an ethical responsibility to nurture young children, and to protect and promote their well-being. The Ontario government fulfills that social obligation through initiatives like Best Start.

Ontario is not alone in recognizing its responsibility to young children and families. Other provinces, such as Québec and Manitoba, and other countries, such as Sweden and New Zealand, have developed policies and programs to help children reach their full potential. Providing early learning and care is a common goal among most countries in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2006), and an effective way to support child development in developing countries.

than on its investment in post-secondary education or job training programs. In fact, the return on investment in education declines steadily as people age – while the opportunity cost of providing education remains the same.

Figure 1:  
Rates of Return to Human Capital Investment  
(Carneiro & Heckman, 2003)



High quality early learning and care provided by knowledgeable practitioners is an investment that will reap economic and social benefits throughout children's lives.

# High Quality Early Learning and Care for All Children and Families

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To provide high quality early learning and care services for all, Ontario must have a clear vision of what it is trying to achieve, and set goals with measurable targets and timelines. The Expert Panel recommends the following vision, goals and principles.

## Vision

All young children and their families in Ontario have the opportunity to benefit from affordable, high quality, inclusive early learning and care programs provided by knowledgeable, skilled, caring practitioners working in supportive, rewarding environments.

Organizations, agencies, school boards, and governments work collaboratively to deliver consistent, integrated programs that will give all children and families in Ontario convenient access to high quality, flexible, seamless early learning and care services.

## Goals

- To improve the quality of early learning and care programs for all children in Ontario.
- To build and maintain a knowledgeable, stable, well compensated early learning and care workforce that provides high quality services.

## Principles Guiding High Quality Early Learning and Care

- All children have the right to live and learn in a society that supports their early development, health and well-being.
- All children are entitled to participate in programs that enable them to reach their full potential regardless of family income, language, ability, cultural background, parents' employment status, geographic region, or other potential barriers to access and participation.
- All early learning and care settings are inclusive<sup>2</sup>, and share a commitment to meet the needs of all children in the community, including children from diverse backgrounds and children with special needs.
- All parents are entitled to resources to support their role as parents, to make choices that optimize their children's healthy development and to be active participants in their children's early development and learning.

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<sup>2</sup> Inclusion takes place when principles, legislation and resources that promote equity and social justice are infused into values, program standards, practices, professional education and ongoing professional development

- Early learning and care practitioners deserve appropriate compensation, working conditions, respect, and opportunities for ongoing professional education and career development.
- All communities benefit from integrated<sup>3</sup> programs delivered by a diverse, knowledgeable, skilled workforce that contributes to the quality of daily life of young children and their families.
- Governments have a responsibility to develop a policy and regulatory environment and provide stable, adequate public funding in order to give all children and families access to high quality early learning and care services.

### Principles Guiding Integrated Services for Four and Five Year Olds

- Integrated services for four and five year olds are child and family-centred. They meet the needs of the whole child, and are provided in a variety of settings, including full-day programs in schools, full-day programs in centre-based child care programs, and through coordination between school and either centre-based or home-based regulated child care programs.
- Services are delivered by a mix of practitioners with appropriate knowledge and skills in early childhood development, working as a team to deliver developmentally appropriate, integrated learning programs for all children.

A high quality early learning and care program is one that meets the needs of all children and parents, and values practitioners. In a quality program:

- Children feel accepted and supported by the adults. They form positive relationships with adults and other children, and participate in interesting play-based activities that help them explore the environment, experiment, discover language and ideas, and solve problems.
- Parents feel their culture and values are respected. Their children -- including children with special needs -- have opportunities to learn, play, develop skills and achieve their full potential. The program is safe, accessible, and affordable.
- Practitioners are valued and respected. They form cooperative and supportive relationships with colleagues and supervisors. The work environment and working conditions contribute to job satisfaction and pride in their work, and they have opportunities for ongoing learning and career development.

Friendly, Doherty & Beach (2006). *Quality By Design. What Do We Know about Quality in Early Learning and Child Care, and What Do We Think? A Literature Review.*  
Toronto: Childcare Resource and Research Unit, University of Toronto.

### Policies, Practitioners, Programs and Parents: The Building Blocks for Quality Early Learning and Care

To create a province-wide system of services that provide quality early learning and care experiences for children, critical building blocks must be in place. Quality depends on:

- effective **policies**, sustained funding and appropriate infrastructure
- knowledgeable and committed **practitioners**
- evidence-informed, age appropriate **programs** and practices
- **parents** who are partners in their children's early learning.

<sup>3</sup> Integrated programs describes services for 4/5 year olds that are complementary and harmonized contributing to healthy child development.

Each building block in Figure 1 is essential to support a high quality early learning and care system.

**Figure 2: The Essential Building Blocks for High Quality Early Learning and Care**



## **The Foundation: Effective Policies, Funding and Infrastructure**

**Policy, regulation and funding provide the foundation for a high quality early learning and care system.** They are the means by which governments demonstrate leadership and commitment, set minimum requirements for early learning and care services, and provide the resources that enable programs to meet minimum requirements.

But policies, regulation and funding are not enough. A high quality system also requires other infrastructure supports, including:

- province-wide quality program standards that set consistently high expectations for programs/services and mechanisms to monitor program quality and incorporate new knowledge about children and how they learn
- education requirements that reflect professional standards, promote best practices and support practitioners
- post-secondary institutions and other structures that develop, coordinate and provide pre-service and ongoing professional education programs
- ongoing consistent data collection and research to help plan evidence-informed and needs-based services, and to monitor quality
- ongoing partnerships and collaboration among all stakeholders – including professional associations and unions -- to address quality, human resource and other systemic issues.

## **Building Blocks: Knowledgeable, Committed Practitioners**

**Knowledgeable, committed practitioners are key to quality** early learning and care. The strong policy and regulatory environment, professional organizations and post-secondary programs identified above provide the foundation for developing and maintaining a strong workforce. In addition, a high quality early learning and care system must provide:

- professional wages that reflect practitioners' education and responsibilities, benefits, positive working conditions, and opportunities for career development
- support for directors and supervisors to develop the expertise required to manage programs, mentor staff, and work with parents and other services in the community
- support for practitioners to obtain the education and qualifications they need to provide high quality early learning and care services
- recruitment, recognition and retention programs that will attract suitable people to the field, and encourage them to build careers in early learning and care.

## **Building Blocks: Evidence-informed, Age-appropriate Programs**

**A quality system offers evidence-informed, age-appropriate programs that meet young children's unique learning needs.** The system must provide:

- the resources, learning environments and other supports that enable practitioners to deliver well-designed inclusive learning programs for all children

- learning frameworks and curricula that enable practitioners to deliver programs that are age appropriate and reflect new knowledge about how young children learn
- integrated programs that link child care, kindergarten and other child and family services, giving families access to seamless services.

## Parents as Partners

High quality programs engage parents in their children’s early learning and care, and treat parents as partners, respecting each family’s culture, values, language and composition. They provide opportunities for parents and practitioners to communicate each day, and share information about children and their interests, activities and well-being. They also provide opportunities for parents to connect with one another, and to other community resources that can enhance their child’s development, and give parents the information and support they need to make informed choices for their children.

## Challenges and Opportunities

### Creating a Province-wide System of High Quality Early Learning and Care

Ontario does not currently have a coordinated system of early learning and care services. Families use a variety of early learning and care programs to meet their children’s needs, including:

- regulated child care programs – both centre-based programs and regulated home child care -- which provide early learning and care for children between the ages of 0 and 12 (while their parents work or attend school)
- regulated part-day preschool and nursery school programs
- junior and senior kindergarten programs
- other child and family support services, such as family resource programs, Ontario Early Years Centres and early literacy programs
- unregulated child care services provided by family members, recreation programs, neighbours, and independent child care providers.

It is not unusual for parents to use combinations of early learning and care services to give their children a mix of experiences and to accommodate their own work and/or school schedules. For example, some families may have a young child enrolled in a part-time preschool program and use an unregulated child care provider in their immediate neighbourhood for the remainder of the day. Parents may go with their young children to participate in programs offered by an Ontario Early Years Centre. Some families may have a

In 2006:

- there were 229,871 licensed (regulated) child care spaces in Ontario
- an estimated 500,000 children were cared for by unregulated child care providers

In 2004/05:

- 116,534 children were enrolled in junior kindergarten
- 124,196 children were enrolled in senior kindergarten.

young child at home two days a week and in a regulated child care centre or home-based care three days a week.

Parents of four and five year olds may use a combination of regulated and/or unregulated child care and kindergarten; kindergarten alone; or child care alone. Their choice often depends on where programs are located, their cost, and the hours and days that kindergarten services are available.

## **Building on Our Strengths**

Ontario has what the Expert Panel refers to as “spotty points of brilliance”. Some municipalities, local service managers and organizations have been highly innovative in their efforts to put in place the policies, supports for practitioners, programs, and partnerships with parents required to provide high quality early learning and care services (see Table 1). These individual initiatives are improving the quality of early learning and care in their communities but, as the 2005 Auditor General Report on Child Care noted, the province falls short of having a province-wide system of early learning and care that provides consistent, high quality, inclusive, accessible programs.

To build on the investments and progressive steps taken by some municipalities and organizations – to put the building blocks in place and ensure they work effectively to meet our goals for Ontario’s children and families -- will require provincial leadership, municipal commitments, and the involvement of all stakeholders.

## **Learning from Other’s Experiences**

Other jurisdictions – including Sweden, New Zealand, Manitoba, and Québec -- have faced the same challenges as Ontario: a lack of policies, funding and infrastructure to support high quality early learning and care; shortages of knowledgeable practitioners; programs not geared to the way young children learn; and programs that do not recognize parents as partners or meet their needs.

The jurisdictions that have been successful in improving quality and stabilizing their early learning and care workforce have made comprehensive systemic changes. They have established a policy and regulatory framework that promotes quality, raised education requirements, and worked with stakeholders to develop quality standards and quality assurance programs. They have also supported leadership development in the field, improved wages and working conditions, actively recruited people to the field, and provided the resources required to deliver quality programs.

**Table 1: Examples of Quality Initiatives in Ontario**

Policy and Infrastructure	Practitioners	Programs	Parents
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The province’s French school boards provide full-day, publicly funded programs either in junior and senior kindergarten programs or through purchase-of-service agreements with child care agencies, which provide a learning program.</li> <li>• The <i>Raising the Bar</i> program developed in Hamilton and used in six other communities sets standards for high quality centre-based early learning and care services, and provides training and other supports to help programs achieve specific benchmarks.</li> <li>• The City of Toronto Children’s Services has developed city-wide operating criteria for quality practices for licensed child care, regulated home child and family resource programs. The criteria were developed with the child care community and are used by programs for self-assessment and by City staff to ensure accountability.</li> <li>• The City of Sudbury has developed indicators for program quality for all its regulated child care programs.</li> <li>• The Quality Assurance Child Care Committee of Bruce/Grey has developed workshops for supervisors, boards of directors and cooks in rural centre-based child care programs in this area and recognizes programs that meet specific milestones.</li> <li>• The Elora Group has developed quality criteria and piloted a process to accredit home child care providers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration funds a pilot three-year bridging program offered by the Association of Early Childhood Educators of Ontario (AECEO) in partnership with George Brown College and the Thorncliffe Neighbourhood Office, which gives practitioners educated outside Ontario language supports, training in early childhood education in Canada and – for those who successfully complete the program – the opportunity for paid work experience.</li> <li>• The City of Ottawa provides first aid and CPR training as well as consistent basic training on topics such as nutrition, child development, age appropriate activities, health and safety, and behaviour management for all home child care providers.</li> <li>• A rural network for home child care in Bruce/Grey County provides resources and professional development opportunities for rural home child care providers.</li> <li>• Guelph and Wellington County Child Care Services has funded research on quality, wages and working conditions, and training needs in both centre-based and home-based regulated child care.</li> <li>• Trillium funding is supporting <i>Reaching-In, Reaching Out</i>: a program operated by five community partners that trains practitioners in several pilot communities in strategies to promote resiliency in young children.</li> <li>• The Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care has developed a management guide for child care directors that is available on their web site.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Hanen <i>Learning Language and Loving It™</i> Program teaches early childhood educators how to provide interactive environments where <b>all</b> children (including new immigrants and children with special needs and language delays) can develop language skills. (Previously, only speech-language pathologists offered the program).</li> <li>• The City of Toronto and the region of Halton have researched supports for the effective inclusion of children with special needs in child care programs.</li> <li>• The City of Ottawa provides funding for one-to-one program assistant support to help children with special needs integrate successfully into regulated child care programs – including providing comprehensive training for staff in programs where children with special needs are enrolled.</li> <li>• Toronto First Duty has successfully piloted models for integrated early learning and care for four and five years old, and the model will be used across the Toronto school board.</li> <li>• The Best Start demonstration sites have piloted innovative integrated early learning and care/kindergarten programs and are developing best practice models.</li> <li>• Since 1988, the Waterloo Catholic School Board has worked with the Region and the child care field to develop collaborative programming and establish child care centres in new schools. The physical environments are designed to support young children’s learning, the child care centre has access to the library and gym, teachers and early childhood educators meet monthly to plan curriculum units, and children in child care attend major school assemblies.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Association francophone à l’enfance de l’Ontario and the Association francophone de parents d’enfants dyslexiques have developed a project called «L’aventure du parent entraîneur». The project provides workshops for parents, educators and teachers that promote exchanges between parents and practitioners, encourage community networking, and help both parents and practitioners understand each other’s challenges and successes.</li> </ul>

# **A Four-Point Plan to Invest in Quality**

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To regain its position as a national and international leader in early learning and care, Ontario must fundamentally transform the way we think about, plan, fund and manage early learning and care services. We must invest – time, people, money and other resources – to create high quality programs that meet the needs of children and their families.

To create an early learning and care system – to put in place the building blocks for quality -- Ontario must take the same kind of comprehensive approach used in other jurisdictions. We must invest in quality across the system and take a consistent, province-wide approach to standards, qualifications, training and early learning programs. The Expert Panel proposes a four-point plan:

- 1. Strengthen policies, funding and infrastructure**
- 2. Improve education, compensation and career opportunities for practitioners**
- 3. Deliver high quality, inclusive, evidence-based programs for children**
- 4. Forge strong partnerships with parents.**

# 1. Strengthen Policies, Funding and Infrastructure

## 1.1 Develop a regulatory environment that supports high quality, inclusive, integrated early learning and care services

### *Where We Are Now*

The current regulatory environment is complex. More than one ministry is responsible for the early learning and care services that Ontario families use, and those services are planned and managed by different organizations at the local level. Different policies, legislation and requirements, different funding approaches, and different expectations for quality and human resources make it difficult to harmonize services and create an integrated system (Figure 3).

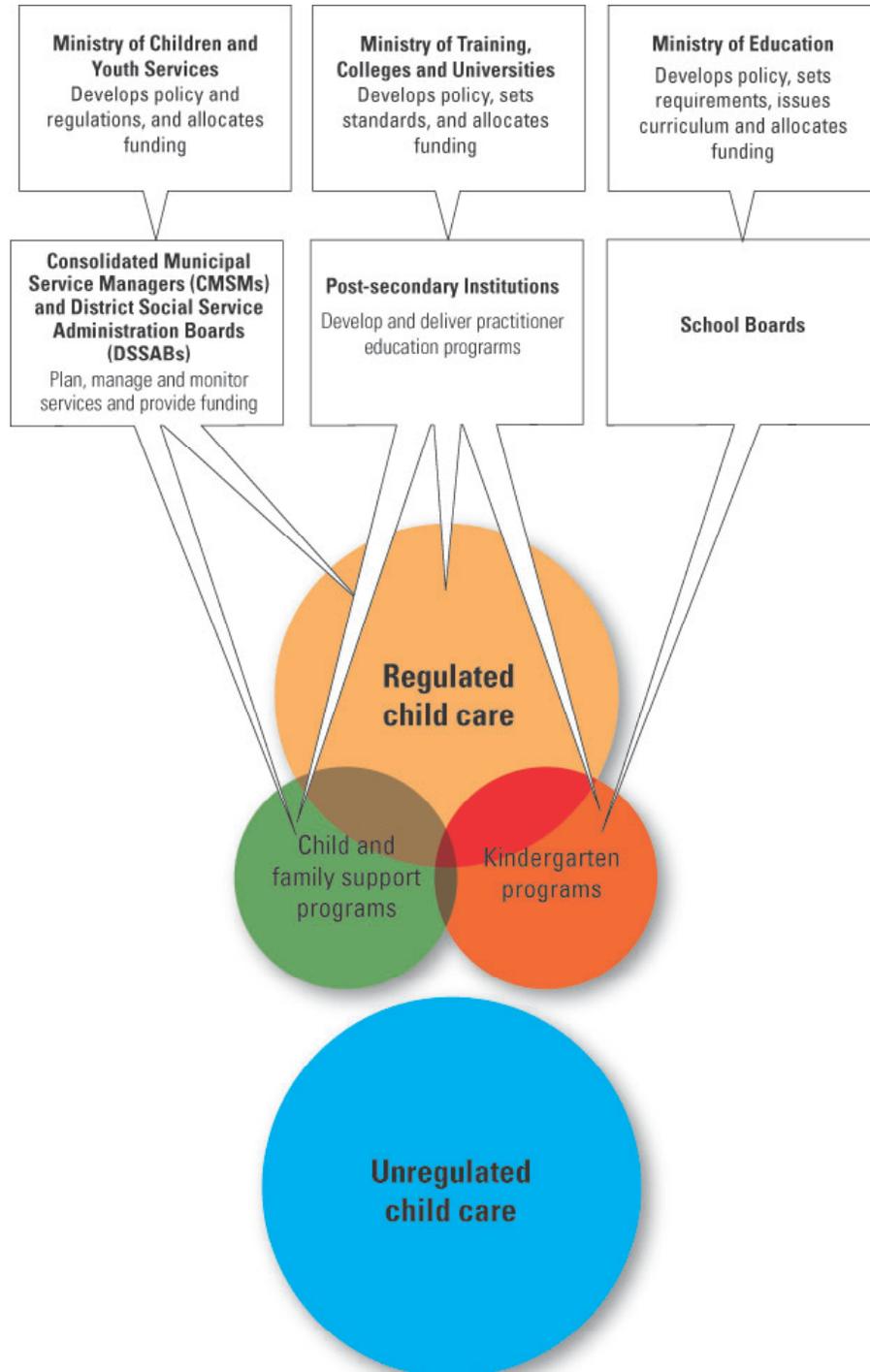
For example:

- The Ministry of Children and Youth Services is responsible for developing the policies and regulations that guide all regulated child care/early learning and care programs – including centre-based child care, home child care and regulated preschool and nursery programs. The ministry also sets policy for the Ontario Early Years Centres, literacy programs and parent resource centres.
- Kindergarten programs are the responsibility of the Ministry of Education, and are managed by local school boards.
- The province's 47 designated Consolidated Municipal Service Managers (CMSMs) and District Social Service Administration Boards (DSSABs) are responsible for planning and managing child care services at the local level. Some municipalities operate early learning and care programs directly and provide leadership in improving the quality of child care services across all programs in their region. Some municipalities have developed quality assurance programs, and monitor the services delivered in their regions; others leave that responsibility to the provincial licensing system, which is managed by the Regional Offices of the Ministry of Children and Youth Services.
- The Ministry of Children and Youth Services and municipalities are also responsible for planning and managing related child and family services, such as Ontario Early Years Centres and literacy programs. Some municipalities also continue to cost-share, plan and manage family resource centres.
- Unregulated child care providers are not subject to the policies or direction of any ministry. With the exception of some legal restrictions on the number of children they can care for, unregulated child care providers are not subject to any monitoring or quality assurance other than that which parents can provide.

Child care programs and practitioners are regulated under the *Day Nurseries Act* (DNA), while kindergarten programs are regulated under the *Education Act*. The Ontario Early Years Centres, parent resource centres, and other child and family support services are not covered by any regulatory system. Despite some recent changes to the DNA, policies and regulations are not harmonized. There are no common education requirements or credentials for the professionals who work with young children across these various programs and services, and no education

ladders to support career development within the early learning and care sectors. These differences and disparities make it difficult for early learning and care programs to integrate with kindergarten programs.

**Figure 3: Roles, Responsibilities and Relationships**



Complexity is not the only issue: the current regulatory environment does not reflect new knowledge about early childhood development. Each regulatory system has specific areas that must be addressed. For example:

- The DNA focuses primarily on ensuring compliance with health and safety requirements rather than on the quality of early learning and care programs.
- The focus of the DNA means that the program advisors who monitor regulated child care programs – and who are required to have “knowledge of principles/practices of child/youth development, programming requirements in day care/group residential setting” – focus more on enforcement than quality improvement.
- Education requirements for practitioners and supervisors – in centres and home-based programs – do not reflect the increasingly complex demands of their jobs (i.e., more children with special needs, more diversity, families under greater pressure, and the capacity to plan and deliver integrated programs).
- The number of qualified to unqualified staff required in the DNA does not promote quality. To meet minimum licensing requirements, programs are only required to have one qualified early childhood educator per group of children<sup>4</sup> and, because programs often operate for 12 or more hours a day, the qualified practitioner is not required to be there at all times.
- The Ontario College of Teachers does not require teachers in kindergarten programs to have any specific courses in early childhood development or any specific practice teaching experiences in programs for young children.
- Some requirements in the DNA make it financially more attractive for home child care providers to work outside the regulated system.

#### **Experience in Other Jurisdictions**

- A number of countries, including the UK, Denmark, Finland, New Zealand, Norway, Spain and Sweden, co-ordinate policy development, planning and program administration across all early learning and care programs, including kindergarten.
- New Zealand and the UK have integrated responsibility for child care and kindergarten into a single department.
- Québec has increased the ratio of qualified practitioners to lesser trained staff.
- The Manitoba government developed a new Best Practices in ELCCC manual that is available on their web site.
- A number of jurisdictions require all practitioners, including home child care providers, to have a certain amount of training to support quality.

#### ***Where We Want To Be***

Ontario has a comprehensive policy and regulatory environment that promotes high quality early learning and care services.

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<sup>4</sup> The number of children in a group varies based on their age: 10 for infants, 15 for toddlers, 16 for pre-schoolers, and 30 for school-age children

## *How To Get There*

### **1.1.1 Develop a consistent and, within five years, common regulatory environment for all regulated early learning and care programs**

While municipalities will continue to play a vital role in service planning and quality assurance, the provincial government must provide the vision, leadership, and regulatory framework, to fulfill its commitment to provide equitable access to high quality early learning and care services for all children and families across the province. Policies and regulation should focus on the quality of children's early learning and care experiences, as well as ensure their physical health and safety.

Based on research on quality programs, legislation would establish consistent requirements for:

- practitioner education at every level
- staffing levels and child to staff ratios in all settings
- higher numbers of qualified staff to lesser trained staff
- physical space and equipment
- supports to facilitate the effective inclusion of children with special needs (e.g., increased staffing, professional development, physical modifications, equipment)
- health and safety
- ongoing education and support for program advisors who license early learning and care programs, and can play a key role in quality improvement.

Any changes in policies, legislation, and regulation should take into account the challenges of delivering early learning and care services for children with special needs, in northern, rural and remote communities, and in Francophone, Aboriginal and newcomer communities. The policy and regulatory environment must be flexible enough to support innovative models and alternative staffing strategies, while still ensuring that all services meet quality standards.

Regulations should also recognize that, depending on children's needs, some programs may need more staff, trained assistants or support from resource teachers/resource consultants to be able to provide individualized programs for children with special needs within an inclusive social and learning environment.

#### **Who**

The Ministry of Children and Youth Services and the Ministry of Education in collaboration with municipalities and the early learning and care field

#### **When**

- By 2008/09, the *Day Nurseries Act* and the *Education Act* are revised to support high quality early learning and care.
- By 2010-12, Ontario has a consistent policy and regulatory environment for all regulated early learning and care services as well as supports to facilitate the integration of early learning and care and kindergarten programs.

## 1.2 Increase and transform public funding for regulated early learning and care programs

### *Where We Are Now*

Adequate, sustained funding is key to quality and accessibility. For example, 86% of four year olds and 95% of five year olds of Ontario children are enrolled in kindergarten programs – which are 100% publicly funded. This is not the case with regulated child care in Ontario, where 50 to 80% of the cost of care is paid by parents. The portion paid by parents is significantly higher than the 20 to 25% recommended by the OECD. Despite efforts to keep fees low, regulated early learning and care services are beyond the reach of many low and middle income families. Both the affordability and availability of regulated care are factors that affect access and parent choice. As a result, a minority of Ontario’s young children are able to benefit from regulated, high quality early learning programs. According to NLSCY data, in 2002-03, fewer than one third of Ontario children between the ages of six months and five years of age attended a regulated child care program while their parents worked or studied. Most children were cared for relatives and unregulated providers<sup>16</sup>.

Government provides funding to subsidize child care spaces for low income families as well as grants for particular purposes such as wage enhancements and resources for children with special needs. However, there are not enough subsidized spaces to meet the needs of low and middle income families or enough funding to support the inclusion of all children with special needs.

In October 2006, the City of Toronto had more than 10,000 families on a waiting list for child care subsidies – up 20% from the previous year. In March 2006, Sault Ste Marie had 800 families on waiting lists for regulated child care – despite the 55 new spaces provided by Best Start. In the Region of Peel in December 2006, families wait 18 months for subsidies – up from six months in January 2006. In January 2007, the provincial government moved to income testing to determine eligibility for child care subsidy. Under income testing, more families will be eligible; however, middle income families will still have difficulty affording full fees – especially for more than one child.

With the exception of Best Start initiatives that are 100% provincially funded, the portion of program costs and fee subsidies paid by government are shared between the province (80%) and the municipalities (20%)<sup>5</sup>. Municipal involvement in planning and funding early learning and care services is a strength because services are more likely to meet local needs. Many municipalities invest significantly more than their legislated obligations in order to maintain certain standards of service and offer better quality programs (e.g., the Region of Peel contributes 27% of program costs). However, the current approach to funding can lead to inequities: some municipalities -- particularly those with a small tax base - - do not have the option of paying more than their share. Small, more remote municipalities may also face higher costs to deliver early learning and care

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<sup>5</sup> Note: *administrative* costs are shared 50:50 by the provincial and municipal governments

services across larger, more sparsely populated geographic areas. Municipal councils are increasingly concerned about their growing share of child care costs and their ability to meet local demands.

Ontario's relatively low public investment in regulated child care is based on the traditional view of early learning and care programs as a private investment made by parents to enable them to work or study or as a form of enrichment for children -- rather than the current economic view of high quality early childhood education as the most effective way for society to invest in children's development.

According to the 2006 Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) review, weak public funding for services for children under age five is a "fundamental flaw in the early education and care system in Canada".

The financial situation is critical now and, without provincial leadership, it will become worse, jeopardizing the success and sustainability of the recent gains made by creating new spaces and providing more integrated learning and care programs. The 100% provincial funding for Best Start initiatives was based on the 2004 federal government commitment to provide \$1.9 billion over 5 years as part of the Bilateral Early Learning and Child Care agreement with Ontario. This agreement was prematurely terminated by the federal government in 2006, and federal support has been substantially reduced.

#### **Experience in Other Jurisdictions**

- Saskatchewan has announced that it will move forward with its complete early years' plan – despite the federal policy changes.
- Alberta is investing \$13.5 million annually to recruit and retain staff to work in day care centres, family day homes, agencies contracted by Children's Services and women's shelters.
- Nova Scotia recently announced increased investment in its licensed child care centres.

### ***Where We Want To Be***

All children and families in Ontario have access to affordable high quality early learning and care.

### ***How To Get There***

#### **1.2.1 Increase and transform provincial funding for early learning and care programs**

To fulfill its goals for young children and families and improve the quality of early learning and care services, Ontario must substantially increase funding for early learning and care services and transform the way services are funded.

#### **1.2.2 Develop a comprehensive, streamlined funding model for regulated early learning and care services that reflects the importance of early childhood education and the costs of providing high quality programs**

It is time to invest in quality programs and services rather than fund or subsidize spaces. According to the OECD review, direct public funding of services results in more effective control, advantages of scale, better quality, more effective

training for educators and higher degree of equity in access and participation than providing subsidies.<sup>17</sup>

The appropriate level, share and type of funding for early learning and care must be negotiated annually with municipalities and should take into account:

- the real costs of providing quality programs, including wages and benefits that reflect practitioners' responsibilities and education, funding for ongoing pay equity adjustments for the predominantly female workforce<sup>6</sup>, and ongoing professional development
- the costs associated with providing high quality early learning and care programs for different populations and in different regions of the province (i.e., northern, rural and remote areas and Francophone, Aboriginal and newcomer communities)
- the costs of quality assurance programs
- the role of each level of government (i.e., mandate, resources and accountability)
- administrative ease and efficiency (i.e., current funding methods involve multiple grants and are administratively unwieldy and require a disproportionate amount of directors' time to complete reports and meet accountability requirements).

Ideally, the Expert Panel would prefer that regulated early learning and care services – like other education for children -- be 100% publicly funded. However, increasing public funding to the level where parents pay no more than 20 to 25% of total program costs will make services accessible to many more families, and bring more children into the regulated system, where programs must meet certain regulations and quality standards. This change will also bring Ontario into line with other jurisdictions, and with the recommendations of the OECD.

**Who**

The Ministry of Children and Youth Services in collaboration with its regional offices and the municipalities

**When**

- By 2008-09, provincial funding for regulated child care has increased substantially to reflect the costs of providing high quality programs.
- By 2010-12, Ontario has a comprehensive streamlined funding model for early learning and care services, which promotes quality.
- By 2013-15, parents pay no more than 20 to 25% of the cost of early learning and care programs.

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<sup>6</sup> At the time this report was written, provincial government pay equity agreements for early childhood educators had recently expired and had not been extended.

### 1.3 Develop province-wide quality standards for early learning and care programs and local systems to monitor quality

#### *Where We Are Now*

The Education Act and the DNA set *minimum* requirements for early learning and care settings, but high quality programs and systems strive to do more than meet minimum requirements. They set high standards for their services – based on evidence -- and work to meet those standards. They develop a culture of continuous quality improvement, and measure themselves against their peers. Some municipalities have established standards for their early learning and care programs – and work has been done nationally and internationally to identify quality standards – but there are no consistent Ontario standards for early learning and care services across the province or mechanisms for monitoring quality beyond current licensing inspections.

#### **Experience in Other Jurisdictions**

- The Alberta Association for the Accreditation of Early Learning and Care Services evaluates and rewards agencies that meet standards of excellence.
- The Alberta Resource Centre for Quality Enhancement, a province-wide technical assistance agency, works to enhance best practices in child care centers and family home child care agencies.
- The US military increased standards for its child care programs and provided funding to support quality improvements. As a result, the quality of the programs increased significantly.

#### *Where We Want To Be*

Children and families have access to high quality, consistent early learning and care programs regardless of where they live in the province.

#### *How To Get There*

#### **1.3.1 Develop province-wide quality standards that will promote best practices and communicate them to practitioners and parents**

Ontario should build on the work done by a number of municipalities and leaders in the early learning and care field to establish provincial quality standards. The focus should be to encourage continuous quality improvement in:

- evidence-based, developmentally appropriate learning programs, including the use of the work completed by the Early Learning Framework Expert Panel
- child/practitioner interactions
- the early learning environment
- effective inclusion of children with special needs
- practitioner/family communications
- ongoing relevant professional development
- quality assurance mechanisms
- integration with other early years services.

#### **Who**

The Ministry of Children and Youth Services in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, municipalities, and the early learning and care field

#### **When**

- By 2008-09, Ontario has province-wide quality standards for early learning and care programs, and communicates them to practitioners and parents.
- By 2010, all municipalities have quality assurance tools, routinely monitor early learning and care programs, and allocate funds for quality improvement initiatives.

### 1.3.2 Develop and promote the use of existing quality assurance tools and enhance the ability of municipalities to monitor quality and support programs

Municipalities will continue to play the key role in managing early learning and care services, working with programs to continuously improve the quality and effectiveness of the services provided. Their efforts should be supported by a network of child care resource centres, professional associations, and college and university programs. To develop quality assurance tools, Ontario should build on innovative initiatives already in place in the province, such as Raising the Bar, the Elora Group's work on home child care accreditation, and the operating criteria and other tools developed by municipalities.

## 1.4 Establish education requirements for the profession that reflect the increasingly complex demands of practice

### *Where We Are Now*

Education requirements for practitioners do not reflect the demands of practice, new knowledge about how young children learn or the research on the link between post-secondary practitioner education and children's developmental outcomes<sup>18</sup>. Under the *Day Nurseries Act*, only one staff member per group in a regulated centre-based program is required to have a two-year diploma in early childhood education (ECE) or equivalent. According to provincial estimates, only about 40% of staff currently working in centre-based programs have the two-year ECE diploma or equivalent. The proportion of home child care practitioners with education in early childhood development is even lower because they are not required to have any entry-level credential or training specific to their work.

Since 2000, there has been a deskilling of the child care workforce largely due to efforts to contain costs and more recently to the shortage of trained practitioners. Some regulated child care programs that were maintaining a higher ratio of qualified staff than required by the DNA have been replacing qualified practitioners with lesser or untrained staff.

Between 2000 and 2003, the ratio of qualified to lesser trained staff in the City of Toronto's non-profit child care programs dropped from 3.16 to 2.65<sup>19</sup>.

Practitioners who have the required two-year diploma in early childhood education may not be adequately prepared for the increasingly complex demands of the job, which include:

- adapting programs for children with special needs
- meeting the needs of more complex families

#### **Experience in Other Jurisdictions**

- Saskatchewan requires all entry-level practitioners to complete a 120-hour Orientation to Child Day Care course, which is equivalent to three first year courses in the ECE diploma.
- Alberta requires all child care staff to have training in early childhood education.
- Manitoba requires all practitioners (assistants, early childhood educators, and supervisors) to complete 24 hours of ongoing professional development each year.
- Quebec requires that 2/3 of staff be trained.

- keeping pace with new knowledge
- implementing new curriculum requirements
- supervising untrained staff and students, including apprentices
- working in integrated models with teachers in kindergarten classrooms and other practitioners
- developing innovative programs.

The gap between education requirements and job expectations is particularly great for directors and supervisors who may be managing large programs, and are accountable for providing pedagogical leadership and meeting higher fiscal, regulatory and reporting requirements. Under the *Day Nurseries Act*, supervisors are currently required to have a minimum of a two-year ECE diploma plus two years experience. However, because the ECE program includes little if any course work that prepares practitioners for supervisory responsibilities, these requirements are not adequate to meet the growing demands of these positions, which include:

- providing leadership in meeting the complex needs of all children and families
- providing pedagogical leadership, developing or implementing new curriculum approaches, and setting program standards
- fostering a respectful workplace environment
- managing human resources (i.e., hire, mentor, supervise, train and support staff)
- working with community partners to help meet the needs of children and their families
- working collaboratively with other early learning and care programs to plan and provide integrated programs
- assessing the effectiveness of the program and setting targets for quality improvements
- managing increasingly large and complex budgets
- meeting increased levels of accountability required by governments and regulatory bodies.

The issue of education requirements extends to teachers in kindergarten classrooms who may have primary-junior training (junior kindergarten to grade 6) but who may not have had education that focuses specifically on the learning needs of younger children -- although faculties of education in Ontario now offer an optional additional pre-service education course addressing kindergarten programs (e.g., Nipissing University).

### ***Where We Want To Be***

All practitioners who work with young children have the education and credentials to fulfill their roles.

### ***How To Get There***

#### **1.4.1 Establish consistent roles, education requirements and practice standards for all early learning and care practitioners**

The Expert Panel recommends that:

- the Ministry and the proposed College of Early Childhood Educators determine the qualifications required to fulfill different roles in the early learning and care system, and provide opportunities for education and career development
- all practitioners – including those providing home-based child care – be required to have some post-secondary education in early child development
- programs continue to retain entry-level positions (i.e., early childhood assistant) that will enable new people to enter the field and support them to obtain credentials as they work
- the two-year diploma in early childhood education from an accredited community college be the base credential for entry into the proposed College of Early Childhood Educators
- education requirements for all practitioners – including teachers and teaching assistants in kindergarten classrooms and regulated home child care providers – be based on the knowledge and skills they need to fulfill their role in a high quality early learning and care system
- all directors and supervisors be required to have a degree in early childhood education or equivalent as well as management training
- all practitioners be required and supported to participate in ongoing professional development to maintain their standing in their profession.

Table 2 sets out proposed roles for early learning and care practitioners, and the education required to qualify for and maintain that role.

**Who**

The proposed College of Early Childhood Educators and the College of Teachers in collaboration with the Ministry of Children and Youth Services, Ministry of Education and Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities

**When**

By 2008/09:

- The College of Early Childhood Educators has established education requirements for practitioners that reflect the increasing complexity of their roles in delivering high quality programs.
- All early childhood assistants are enrolled in an accredited ECE, ECA or apprenticeship program.

By 2010-12:

- All directors and supervisors of centre-based early learning and care programs have a degree in early childhood education/ development or equivalent as well as management training.
- All pedagogical leaders/assistant supervisors, resource educators and supervisors of child care centres and OEYCs have a degree or are enrolled in a degree program in early childhood education/ development.
- All home child care providers have completed an recognized post-secondary course in health, safety, child development or early childhood education.
- All teachers in kindergarten programs without pre-service education in early childhood development are enrolled in an appropriate course.

By 2013-15:

- All early childhood assistants have completed year one of their ECE or an ECA certificate or apprenticeship program.
- All teachers newly hired to work in kindergarten programs have specific course work in early childhood education/ development.
- All early childhood practitioners participate in ongoing professional education and development.

**Table 2: Proposed Practitioner Roles/Education Requirements/Career Ladder**

Level	Role	Description & Responsibility	To Qualify	To Maintain
Level 1	<b>Early Childhood Assistant or ECE Candidate (Primary Level or ECE in Training)</b>	Adults who work under the supervision of an ECE/pedagogical leader.* Work independently only for short periods with children in an ECE’s absence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ 18 years or older</li> <li>➤ Standard First Aid + child specific CPR</li> <li>➤ Criminal Reference Check</li> <li>➤ TB test, Immunization &amp; Health Assessment</li> </ul>	Must be enrolled in an accredited ECE or ECA program, or recognized apprenticeship and complete first year within 5 yrs*
	<b>Family/Home Child Care (F/HCC) Provider</b>	Responsible for a group of children; provide care and learning opportunities that meet the needs of small group of children in partnership with parents and in collaboration with agency staff.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ 18 years or older</li> <li>➤ Standard First Aid + child specific CPR</li> <li>➤ Criminal Reference Check</li> <li>➤ TB test, Immunization &amp; Health Assessment</li> <li>➤ Meet minimum DNA standards</li> <li>➤ <u>New to Field</u> – attended F/HCC agency orientation</li> </ul>	
Level 2	<b>Early Childhood Educator</b>  NB: Proposed entry to College of ECE	Responsible for a group of children; plan and implement learning opportunities and care that meet the needs of all children in partnership with parents and other community professionals. Responsible for implementation of the Early Learning Framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ ECE Diploma or ECE Degree; AECEO/AFESEO equivalency certificate</li> </ul>	Professional Development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ ECE diploma or degree is an early step in life long learning for the professional</li> <li>▪ Recommend provincial regulation for upgrading requirements and tracking</li> <li>▪ Explore role of College of ECE in setting expectations for individuals in taking/tracking upgrading courses</li> </ul>
	<b>Family Resource Program/OEYC Practitioner</b>	Provide information and programs to support children, families & caregivers to enhance strengths; guided by the Early Learning Framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Degree or diploma in ECE or Human Services or related field and Certificate <a href="#">in Family Supports</a></li> </ul>	
Level 3	<b>Pedagogue or Assistant Supervisor</b>	Provide pedagogical leadership; plan, implement & evaluate curriculum, assesses children’s progress; supervise, co-ordinate and/mentor staff & students; work with families and community professionals; collaborate with kindergarten teacher in Education System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Above and leadership experience mentoring/supervising staff/students, facilitating professional development &amp; pedagogy</li> <li>➤ Option 1: Degree in ECE/Child Youth &amp; Family Studies</li> <li>➤ Option 2: Related degree + ECE diploma or Ontario College Graduate Certificate Program (Infant/Toddler or School Age)</li> </ul>	
	<b>Resource Educator or Interventionist</b>	Facilitate inclusion through consultation, role modeling, providing resources, training and support-special needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Option 1: Degree in ECE/Child Youth &amp; Family Studies</li> <li>➤ Option 2: Related degree + ECE diploma or ON College Graduate Certificate Program (Resource Teacher)</li> </ul>	
	<b>Resource Specialist/ Consultant</b>	In addition to above, provide case management, service co-ordination, community education & liaison and family centered services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Option 3 :3 year Resource Educator/Consultant diploma</li> <li>➤ In addition to above, an adult education credential</li> </ul>	
	<b>Resource Centre/ OEYC Supervisor/Manager</b>	Provide information to support children, families & caregivers to enhance strengths, build capacity & further community development. Program is guided by the Early Learning Framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Option 1: Degree in ECE/Child Youth &amp; Family Studies</li> <li>➤ Option 2: ECE diploma + Family Support Worker or BSW or SS diploma</li> </ul>	
	<b>Home Child Care Coordinator/Visitor</b>	Recruit and support providers; monitor & ensure program standards maintained; match families with providers; provide in service training. Build capacity & further community development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Experience mentoring or supervising adults, facilitating professional development &amp; pedagogy</li> <li>➤ Option 1: Degree in ECE/Child Youth &amp; Family Studies</li> <li>➤ Option 2: Related degree + ECE diploma + ON College Graduate Certificate Applied degree</li> </ul>	

	<b>Teachers in JK/SK programs</b>	Plan, implement & evaluate Early Learning Framework and Kindergarten Program; provide pedagogical leadership; assess & report children's progress; work w/families and community professionals; collaborate with pedagogue in Ministry of Ed or ELCC program; work w/parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Option 1: University degree + course work in early childhood education/development + ON Teaching Certificate</li> <li>➤ Option 2: ECE related degree and ON Teaching Certificate</li> <li>➤ Option 3 Joint credential (under development)***</li> </ul> Short term: DSBs will recognize and financially compensate current teachers in kindergarten classes who have ECE credentials. Long term: teacher in kindergarten classes will have an ECE credential	Courses offered for AQ (Additional Qualifications) will include those which can be accredited by a College or University toward an ECE credential
<b>Level 4</b>	<b>Centre supervisor/ Program Director</b>	Administer, supervise, and evaluate an ECE program. Provide pedagogical and human resources leadership (affirm values, set goals, articulate vision) and carry out management functions(orchestrate tasks, set up systems to carry out mission)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Option 1: Degree in ECE/<a href="#">Child Youth &amp; Family Studies</a> + ON College Graduate Certificate Program(ECE Administration)</li> <li>➤ Option 2: Related degree + ECE diploma + ON College Graduate Certificate Program *(Management)</li> <li>➤ Option 3: Leadership/Management ECE Degree (in development)</li> </ul> * Other generic management training + pedagogy	Biannual participation in regional or national conferences or workshops for supervisors/directors
<b>Level 5</b>	<b>Manager/Executive Director</b>	Responsibility for multi program operation	Above plus 2 or more years in Administration	Ongoing management training

\* Incentives for increased education will ensure success.

\*\* See report recommendation regarding a separate work-group to address issues in home child care and attract more home child care providers to the regulated system.

\*\*\* Refer to report for discussion on integrated JK/SK and Ministry of Education JK/SK teacher requirements

## 1.5 Provide opportunities for practitioners to obtain education and credentials

Ontario cannot increase education requirements for practitioners without providing high quality post-secondary education programs and opportunities for practitioners to participate in those programs. Practitioners who will be required to obtain or upgrade their credentials will create more demand for education – both to prepare for practice and for ongoing professional/career development.

### *Where We Are Now*

**Preparation for practice.** All 24 of Ontario’s publicly funded community colleges and five of its universities offer a variety of high quality pre-service programs in early childhood development and related fields – including some distance programs and college-based apprenticeship programs that make education accessible to students across the province.

Although many of the province’s pre-service education programs are strong, some face challenges. For example, there are no province-wide standards for apprenticeship and distance programs. Some communities – particularly Francophone and Aboriginal communities -- do not have enough qualified faculty or local leaders to deliver apprenticeship or distance programs.

Most education programs cannot ensure that all students experience field placements that demonstrate best practices. Some students report that poor field placement experiences have dissuaded them from entering the early learning and care workforce. Community colleges have traditionally operated best practice laboratory pre-schools or child care centres where students can learn first hand how to provide high quality inclusive services. These laboratory schools are part of the instructional program and are supervised by college/university faculty and practicum supervisors. They provide structured learning opportunities for students, as well as a venue for research on early childhood learning and development in a high quality, inclusive environment. Some programs offer the opportunity for students to gain experience in a full-day integrated program for four and five year olds. Because lab schools are totally staffed by qualified practitioners who are unionized and receive higher wages, they are more expensive to operate than most other early learning and care programs and their

### **Experience in Other Jurisdictions**

- Manitoba has invested \$1.4 million to increase college seats for early childhood education, and increase opportunities for francophone training
- Newfoundland gave the College of the North Atlantic a one-time grant of \$1.7 million to expand capacity in their demonstration or lab schools and provide more quality placements.
- The New Brunswick Community College is working with the Department of Family and Community Services to design affordable, accessible training opportunities – including distance education courses in both official languages. The College has also developed a process to determine equivalency of prior training.
- Nova Scotia now offers a program in Management Development for Early Childhood Education Administrators for practitioners interested in taking on administrative roles.
- Articulation committees in BC and Manitoba accredit post secondary ECE programs.
- Quebec’s distance-education project in ECE is a modular approach that maps out a program-wide vision of training consistent with the full-time program for the province.

future is in doubt. The funding formula developed by Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities does not recognize the expertise needed to provide a quality learning experience to students and does not cover the full cost of these programs. Some community colleges absorb the extra costs, but many have closed their lab schools. The loss of this component of the education infrastructure is a serious threat to the delivery of high quality early learning and care programs in Ontario. In parts of the province, students and apprentices may not have any practicum experience in a lab school environment. Field placements/practica are also an issue for teachers in kindergarten programs, who may never have an opportunity for a placement with young children.

**Equivalency/Credential Assessment.** Ontario needs to strengthen the capacity and infrastructure to determine equivalencies or assess the credentials of practitioners educated outside the province and provide bridging programs. The task of assessing the credentials of early childhood educators has traditionally been done by the Association of Early Childhood Educators of Ontario (AECEO) and l'Association francophone à l'éducation des services à l'enfance de l'Ontario (AFÉSEO). These organizations rely on members' fees to cover the cost of their activities and do not have the resources to assess large numbers of applicants. As a result, Ontario's early learning and care programs are not able to benefit from a diverse group of workers who could enrich early learning and care programs. The problems of integrating trained practitioners are compounded by the lack of labour mobility policies that would support practitioners who want to relocate to Ontario from other jurisdictions.

**Ongoing professional education.** Teachers in kindergarten programs have six funded professional development days each school year as well as access to continuing education programs and consultants who arrange professional development events. This is not the case for practitioners working in regulated child care settings, who do not have access to a formal, supported system of ongoing professional education.

In the past, the provincial government provided funding for:

- professional development programs for early learning and care practitioners through TVOntario
- a certificate program for administrators
- annual conferences and professional resource centres.

Although the funding for many of these programs was cut in the 1990s, some regional offices and municipalities have continued to support professional resource centres, which act as training centres for early learning practitioners and provide services, supports, resources, lending libraries and information for all early learning and care settings. The centres also provide leadership and support for operators who are developing new programs, services and opportunities, and linking with other services in the community. Professional resource centres are a valuable part of quality assurance, but they are inequitably distributed across the province.

Even when early learning and care practitioners have access to ongoing professional education, the workshops or courses usually do not lead to an advanced credential, an increase in salary or a promotion. Practitioners do not want to invest their time or money in “dead end” training. The current disconnect between education and recognition may explain why the proportion of practitioners participating in ongoing professional development dropped from 87% in 1991 to 76% in 1998<sup>20</sup>.

**Advanced degrees and credentials.** There are very few innovative graduate and post-graduate programs in Canada or Ontario for supervisors or directors, or to prepare the next generation of policy analysts, researchers and faculty in early childhood education. There are also no formal joint programs to prepare early childhood educators and teachers in kindergarten program to work together in integrated programs.

A consortium of Ontario Colleges of Applied Arts and Sciences recently applied to the Postsecondary Education Quality Assessment Board to develop and deliver a four-year applied degree in early childhood education leadership and management. There is also interest in developing a similar program at the BA level at the University of Guelph-Humber and an applied 1-year Masters program in Early Childhood Services at the University of Guelph. However, dedicated funding is required to support the development of new programs, including faculty positions and financial support for students.

### ***Where We Want To Be***

All practitioners have easy, straightforward access to the pre-service, credential assessment, and ongoing professional development required to obtain and maintain their qualifications, develop their skills and advance their careers. There is no dead-end education. Certificate, diploma and degree programs are constructed in a way that practitioners can continue to acquire credits towards a credential and benefit from investments in their career. The system rewards additional education and experience with wage increases, new role opportunities or other forms of recognition.

### ***How To Get There***

#### **1.5.1 Improve the quality, consistency and capacity of post-secondary education in early childhood development**

The province should invest in:

- delivery models that make education more accessible to practitioners working in all parts of the province without compromising quality (e.g., regular program, continuing education, distance education, apprenticeship programs)
- enough best practice field placements/capacity to allow all students to complete a minimum of one placement in a lab school and to have access to other quality field placements, including supervised placements for early childhood educators in kindergarten classrooms and placements for elementary teachers in early learning and care settings

- post-secondary education programs that incorporate the Early Learning Framework and other evidence-based learning curricula
- the capacity to meet the demand for pre-service and ongoing professional education
- education programs and training materials to meet the needs of Francophone and Aboriginal communities
- innovative degree programs to help directors and supervisors acquire the knowledge and skills they need – including new Early Childhood Education Leadership and management degrees
- collaborative education programs and a common credential for practitioners working in integrated early learning and care/kindergarten programs
- curricula that prepare practitioners to provide high quality, inclusive early learning and care programs
- consistent quality standards and best practices for all accredited education programs for early learning and care practitioners, including apprenticeship and distance education programs, and courses for kindergarten teachers
- a systematic approach to articulation agreements among the post-secondary

**Who**

The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities and accredited post-secondary institutions in collaboration with the Ministry of Children and Youth Services, the College of Teachers, the proposed College of Early Childhood Educators, and the post-secondary institutions

**When**

By 2008/09:

- All post-secondary institutions that provide education in early childhood education/ development incorporate the Early Learning Framework into their programs.
- All accredited post-secondary institutions ensure consistent quality standards and best practices for all education programs, including apprenticeship and distance education programs.
- Post-secondary institutions have funding and a new funding model to support high quality, inclusive laboratory school programs.
- All students have at least one mandatory practicum or placement in a lab school setting.
- Post-secondary institutes receive funding to support the development of a leadership and management credential in early childhood services.
- MCYS funds a minimum of 11 additional professional resource centres across the province – including at least one Francophone and one Aboriginal centre with satellite outreach programs.

By 2010-12:

- All post-secondary institutions that provide education in early childhood education/ development have innovative programs with the capacity to meet the demand for increased credentials – including Ontario college graduate certificate and degree programs to meet the needs of Francophone and Aboriginal communities, management programs, and graduate programs.
- Post-secondary institutions offer a leadership and management credential in early childhood services.
- Post-secondary institutions have a systemic approach to articulation agreements that gives practitioners a choice of education pathways and ensures high quality, articulated professional education with no dead-end training.
- Ontario has 47 adequately funded and staffed professional resource centres across the province (one in each municipality).

By 2013-15:

- Post-secondary institutions offer collaborative education programs and a common credential for practitioners working in integrated early learning and care/kindergarten programs.

institutions that give practitioners a choice of education pathways and ensure there is no dead-end professional education in early learning and care

- timely, equitable, affordable credential assessment and bridging programs for practitioners educated outside Ontario
- post-graduate programs to develop the next generation of policy analysts, researchers and faculty.

### **1.5.2 Expand the network of professional resource centres across the province**

The network of professional resource centres should be established in partnership with accredited post-secondary institutions. These centres would:

- develop and provide ongoing professional training
- provide technical assistance to programs developing mentoring programs and implementing quality assurance programs
- support programs and practitioners in implementing the Early Learning Framework
- enable all practitioners and programs to have access to ongoing professional development and support
- support recent graduates with job searches and developing their professional portfolio
- participate/collaborate in research, including evaluation studies on quality assurance methods and tools.

## 1.6 Gather data and conduct research to guide workforce and service planning

Better data and information are essential to planning services and monitoring quality.

### *Where We Are Now*

Ontario currently has accurate data on children in kindergarten programs and their teachers but not on children or practitioners in regulated early learning and care programs. Some municipalities maintain their own databases and use that information for service planning, but the data collected in different municipalities are not consistent and cannot be used to develop a provincial profile or make comparisons across communities.

In preparing this report, the Expert Panel was discouraged by the lack of basic information about the number of practitioners, compensation, qualifications, and working conditions across the province. The Ministry of Children and Youth Services is now working with its IT Cluster and its Research and Outcome Management Branch to find ways to gather consistent workforce data in a timely manner. This information is critical for Human Resource planning, for accountability, and for evaluating Ontario's progress in achieving benchmarks, timetables, and targeted improvements.

#### **Experience in Other Jurisdictions**

- Provinces such as Manitoba and Newfoundland register all practitioners.
- Québec has a child care sector council that plans for and analyzes data on the workforce.
- Both Québec and Manitoba routinely collect HR and salary data.

In terms of research capacity, the province has a number of internationally recognized researchers in the field of early learning and care, but no comprehensive early learning and care research agenda or funding for ongoing strategic research in the field.

### *Where We Want To Be*

Ontario has comprehensive data on the early learning and care system, and conducts research designed to enhance policy and practice in the field.

### *How To Get There*

#### **1.6.1 Develop and maintain a comprehensive service and workforce information system that will support the delivery of high quality early learning and care services across the province**

Information should be regularly and systematically collected on:

- children and families participating in early learning and care programs (subsidized and non-subsidized)
- programs and their characteristics
- services for children with special needs

- the early learning and care workforce, including number of staff and their characteristics (e.g., age, gender, education, wages, benefits)
- working conditions
- home child agencies and providers
- amount of funding used to support and achieve quality standards.

The province must also have the capacity to analyze data by:

- type of early learning setting
- rural and urban settings, and region of the province
- auspice (i.e., municipal, non-profit or commercial)
- specific populations (Aboriginal, Francophone, other cultures).

The information system should comply with all privacy legislation.

### **1.6.2 Develop partnerships with researchers in post-secondary institutions, develop a research agenda, and provide funding for research**

To improve the quality of early learning and care services and support inclusion, Ontario needs research on innovative programs and best practices. Knowledge developed through research must be shared with policy makers and the field so it can be used to shape policy and practice. Partnerships among policy makers, researchers and practitioners have been used effectively in other countries to develop evidence-informed policies and high quality programs.

To support research efforts, early learning and care database(s) should be accessible for planning, program evaluation, education, research, and linkage to other data collection efforts. They should also be used to help create a national picture of the early learning and care workforce, and address cross-jurisdictional issues, such as practitioner mobility and credential requirements and assessments.

#### **Who**

The Ministry of Children and Youth Services in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, the College of Teachers, the proposed College of Early Childhood Educators, municipalities, post-secondary institutions and researchers

#### **When**

By 2008/09:

- Ontario develops and maintains a province-wide information system on early learning and care programs and the early childhood workforce to support quality and accountability.

By 2010-12:

- Ontario develops partnerships with researchers and post-secondary institutions and supports the development of a research agenda to improve quality and HR planning and management.
- Ontario provides funding for policy and practice relevant research.

## 1.7 Develop partnerships and collaborations to address quality, human resources and other systemic issues

### *Where We Are Now*

Over the past few years, Ontario has established early years planning tables and – most recently -- Best Start networks that bring together all early years services in each CMSM/DSSAB. Their role is to work and plan together, and build a local service system. However, Ontario’s early learning and care sector is large and complex, and many quality and human resource issues need more than a local solution: they must be addressed at the provincial level through the creation of planning bodies and work groups.

**Home child care.** One of the key issues facing the system is the quality of home child care services. Based on information from the 2003-04 cycle of the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth (NLSCY), just under 20,000 Ontario children receive home child care from regulated providers and at least 60,000 receive home child care from unregulated practitioners such as neighbours or family members while their parents worked or studied. As noted earlier, unregulated home child care providers are not subject to any monitoring or quality assurance other than what parents can provide and measured quality is quite variable.

At the current time, Ontario has trouble attracting individuals willing to provide regulated home child care and agencies report that turnover is an issue. Per diem rates are significantly lower than in the private market and do not increase with education or experience. Restrictions on the number and ages of children are inflexible and low wages are disincentives to drawing home child care providers to the regulated sector. The advantages of being part of the regulated system such as access to support, education programs and other resources are not sufficient to attract providers or retain them once they have some training and experience.

The regulated home child care sector faces complex issues related to the mandate of home child care agencies that require serious attention. Community agencies receive little or no funding for providing training and instituting quality enhancement procedures. The current lack of training requirements for home child care providers and their status as independent contractors limit agencies’ capacities to require home child care providers to participate in training or other quality assurance procedures.

#### **Experience in Other Jurisdictions**

- in the United Kingdom, anyone caring for children under age 8 for more than two hours each day must be registered (licensed) and meet certain standards related to the physical environment, health and safety, food, and care, learning and play.
- In B.C., individuals who care for no more than two children in their home do not have to be licensed, but they are required to register with the local Child Care Resource and Referral program, which provides ongoing support and training designed to improve quality. Anyone caring for more than two children must be licensed.
- Australia and Belgium offer tax relief only to parents whose children are in regulated early learning and care settings

## ***Where We Want To Be***

Ontario has partnerships and collaborations that help address province-wide and system-wide issues, and improve quality and strengthen the workforce. All home child care providers – regulated and unregulated – have the education and support they need to provide high quality early learning and care services. This is done without making standards and requirements too onerous for home child care providers

## ***How To Get There***

### **1.7.1 Establish a standing interministerial committee on high quality early learning and care**

This committee should include the Ministries of Children and Youth Services, Education, Municipal Affairs and Housing, and Community and Social Services.

One of its tasks should be to clarify the roles and relationships of the Ministry of Children and Youth Services and municipalities in planning, managing, program expansion and quality assurance. It should also be responsible for encouraging all ministries to maintain the capacity to contribute to comprehensive, innovative, evidence-informed early learning and care policy.

### **1.7.2 Establish a sector council to provide ongoing advice on quality and human resource issues**

Since the inception of Best Start, Ontario has made effective use of expert panels to provide advice on different initiatives. As the province implements the recommendations in this and other Expert Panel reports, it will continue to need collective advice from the field as well as assistance in monitoring progress and assessing the impact of different strategies.

At the federal level, there is a pan-Canadian Child Care Human Resources Sector Council that includes child care professional and advocacy organizations, unions, employers, trainers and government in a strategic alliance focused on human resource needs that enable the sector to thrive. Although the research it conducts is beneficial to Ontario, it provides a limited snap shot of the sector and workforce in Ontario, and is not comprehensive enough to support planning.

To fill this gap, the Expert Panel recommends a provincial sector council that would bring key people to the table, including:

- policy makers from the Ministries of Children and Youth Services, Education and Training, Colleges and Universities
- Consolidated Municipal Services Managers(CMSM) and District Social Service Administration Boards (DSSAB)

#### **Who**

The Ministry of Children and Youth Services in collaboration with all other stakeholders

#### **When**

By 2008/09:

- MCYS and municipalities clarify their relationship, roles, mandate and funding obligations to ensure consistent, high quality, inclusive early learning and care services.
- A standing interministerial group reviews issues affecting service integration and needed supports.
- Ontario forms a sector council that provides ongoing advice to all relevant ministries on quality and human resource issues.
- A separate task force is established and submits a report on strategies to improve quality and address HR issues in home child care.

- College of Teachers and proposed College of Early Childhood Educators
- representatives from all early learning and care settings – centre-based programs, home child care, integrated early learning and care/kindergarten programs, and Ontario Early Years Centres.
- post-secondary institutions
- provincial child care organizations
- professional associations, unions and advocacy organizations
- researchers and service providers who understand the particular challenges of providing inclusive high quality early learning and care in urban, northern, rural, and remote communities as well as in Francophone, Aboriginal and culturally diverse communities.

### **1.7.3 Strike a separate task force on home child care to develop strategies to help home child care providers deliver high quality services for children in their care**

Home child care is – and will continue to be – a vital part of Ontario’s early learning and care system. The proposed task force should provide advice on the following complex issues:

- clarifying the role of home child care within Best Start at both the policy and practice level, and the relationship with Best Start hubs
- options for improving the quality of home-based early learning and care, including bringing all home child care providers into the regulated system and using existing resources, such as licensed home child care agencies, professional resource centres, and the Ontario Early Years Centres, to support regulated and unregulated providers
- role of providers and agencies and municipalities in quality assurance given that home child care providers are independent, self-employed contractors
- support for the inclusion of children with special needs
- funding for per diem rates that reflect the home care provider’s education and experience as well as the type of service provided (e.g., caring for children with special needs)
- employment issues, such as access to workers’ compensation, insurance and other benefits
- the need for appropriate, accessible pre-service and ongoing education programs, training activities, opportunities for networking and mentoring, and education and career ladders
- the need for funding to support quality enhancements, training and supports for home child care practitioners providing early learning and care for children with special needs
- any changes required to the DNA or new early learning and care legislation to remove financial disincentives to home care providers being part of the regulated system
- any unintended impacts of Best Start initiatives on home child care.

## 2 Improve education, compensation and career opportunities for practitioners

After parents, practitioners have the greatest influence on the quality of children's early learning experiences. An investment in the early learning and care workforce is an investment in quality. Every effort must be made to recognize the value of the work done by early learning and care practitioners, provide appropriate compensation<sup>7</sup>, help practitioners obtain the education they need to do their jobs, and attract and retain people in the field. These critical HR issues must be addressed to sustain existing early learning programs and to support province-wide expansion and integration with schools and other community services.

### 2.1 Provide wages, benefits and working conditions that will attract and keep knowledgeable practitioners

#### *Where We Are Now*

Low wages are having a serious effect on the quality and stability of the early learning and care workforce. Low wages, limited benefits and the devaluing of the early childhood workforce are the main causes of job dissatisfaction and staff turnover in child care programs. Practitioners either gravitate to programs that pay higher wages or leave the field, and parents are becoming increasingly concerned about the impact of staff changes on their children.

Early childhood educators and assistants earn much less than other workers with comparable levels of education (see Figure 4<sup>21</sup>), and most do not have pensions or other benefits. The amount that practitioners earn can vary substantially depending on where they work. For example, wage rates for an Early Childhood Educator in one Ontario community ranged from a low of \$8.25 an hour to a high of \$24 an hour. Practitioners working in programs operated by municipalities, community colleges or other unionized environments usually earn higher wages, have a good benefit packages and registered pension plans. These programs also provide higher quality care, are more likely to include children with special needs, and provide high quality student placements<sup>22</sup>. However, municipalities, colleges, and other non-profit employers are under pressure to contain salaries and reduce program costs, and in recent years, several municipal and college programs have closed or been downloaded to the private sector. To pay wages that will attract staff, many of these organizations limit spending on program items such as age appropriate toys

**Figure 4: Comparison of Average Annual Earnings of Graduates of Community College Diploma Programs (Ontario, 2005)**

Health	\$40,405
Technology	\$32,104
Business	\$27,380
Applied Arts	\$27,367
Early Childhood Ed	\$23,916

<sup>7</sup> Compensation includes funding and policies to support the remuneration, benefits and working conditions necessary to attract and retain a skilled and knowledgeable workforce to work with young children and reduce high rates of turnover and its detrimental effect on children.

and equipment, teaching resources, equipment, and operational costs to maintain their facilities. After many years, this practice has taken its toll on service quality – and organizations are still not able to provide appropriate compensation, benefits or pension plans. This approach is not sustainable, and does not help develop a community-wide system of high quality early learning and care.

Low wages also make the field unattractive to new people: high school counselors and family members are now advising students not to go into ECE programs and many recent graduates of ECE programs do not even consider a career in child care<sup>23</sup>. In fact, some ECE programs actively encourage graduates to consider career paths outside regulated child care, such as assistants in kindergarten programs, where they will earn higher salaries and/or have more opportunities for advancement.

Conversely, the parts of the early learning and care system that provide appropriate wages have no difficulty attracting and keeping practitioners. For example, practitioners working in school-based kindergarten programs are paid based on board-set wage scales, negotiated with federation representatives, and their compensation reflects their education and experience. As a result, Ontario has no shortage of people willing to work as teachers or assistants in primary programs.

### ***Where We Want To Be***

Early learning and care is a career of choice. Committed, knowledgeable, qualified early childhood practitioners receive compensation commensurate with their education and experience, and are recognized for the valuable work they do.

Practitioners do not jeopardize their financial security or future well-being by choosing to be an early childhood educator or regulated home child care provider.

### ***How To Get There***

**2.1.1 Immediately increase funding for early learning and care services to enable programs to implement substantial wage and benefit increases over the next four years**

**2.1.2 Provide predictable and sustainable funding that allows for regular annual increases for inflation and maintains legislated pay equity**

#### **Experience in Other Jurisdictions**

- The starting salary for an early childhood educator in Manitoba is now \$27,000 to \$30,000 and wage scales reflect qualifications.
- Over the next four years, Québec is investing \$150 million to raise starting salaries from \$34,000 to \$39,000.
- Saskatchewan increased salaries 6% in 2005 and 9% in 2006.
- New Brunswick provides compensation linked to education: increasing the hourly wage rate by \$4.11 for practitioners with credentials in early childhood education and by \$2.56 an hour for those without qualifications.
- Nova Scotia has increased the annual salaries of qualified staff by \$4,000 and lesser trained staff by \$1,000.

The funding required to increase wages and benefits should be a provincial investment, and not passed on to municipalities or child care operators. This funding should be provided as part of base program funding – and not based on multiple complex formula or enhancement that creates additional reporting requirements for municipalities and programs.

**2.1.3 Develop provincial guidelines for wages, benefits and working conditions for early learning and care practitioners**

**2.1.4 Establish municipal minimum salary scales and benefits for all early learning and care practitioners and support staff that reflect education and responsibilities**

**2.1.5 Establish municipal expectations for working conditions that support quality**

In their role as service planners and managers, municipalities should establish wage scales and benefits for programs and practitioners in their jurisdictions, as well as expectations for working conditions. Municipal scales and expectations should:

- be commensurate with practitioners' education, experience and responsibilities
- be comparable to those paid to other professionals with similar education and experience
- be consistent with provincial guidelines
- be based on wages and benefits currently paid by municipal programs and in other unionized environments (i.e., use municipal wage scales as a benchmark)
- reflect the principles of pay equity and avoid gender discrimination
- include provisions for a registered pension plan
- set out the conditions that support quality, including time for program planning, paid professional development and working hours.

Municipalities should also monitor child care programs to ensure they meet these expectations as an indicator of quality.

**Who**

The Ministry of Children and Youth Services in collaboration with municipalities, and early learning and care programs

**When**

By 2008-09:

- Child care programs receive predictable, sustained funding to support appropriate wages and benefits.
- The Ministry of Children and Youth Services has provincial guidelines for compensation.
- Municipalities have established appropriate wage scales.

By 2010-12:

- All early learning and care practitioners belong to a pension plan.
- All practitioners receive wages and benefits comparable to other professionals with similar education, experience and responsibilities.
- Municipalities establish expectations for working conditions that support quality, including time for program planning, paid professional development time, and reasonable working hours.

## 2.2. Invest in the knowledge, skills and competencies of early learning and care directors, supervisors and pedagogical leaders

Directors and supervisors are responsible for establishing and maintaining quality standards for their agencies and programs. Effective leaders create organizational cultures and work environments that support quality and ongoing learning. They play a crucial role in implementing age-appropriate learning programs, developing curricula and building relationships with parents and other services in the community. Strategic investments in leaders will have a trickle down effect, raising standards and improving quality throughout early learning and care programs.

### *Where We Are Now*

Most early learning and care programs operate with only one supervisor who has many administrative responsibilities as well as responsibility for providing pedagogical leadership for staff. Most child care supervisors and directors have a diploma in early childhood education; only a small proportion have a degree and/or management training. To meet the education requirements recommended in this report, a large number of directors and supervisors working in the system will have to upgrade their qualifications.

### *Where We Want To Be*

Directors and supervisors are supported in their efforts to enhance their skills and upgrade their credentials. They are able to build teams, mentor staff, improve morale and improve the quality of children's early learning experiences. Leadership practices contribute to an increased sense of teamwork, better morale, more effective support for staff developing inclusive programs for children with special needs, and higher quality programs.

### *How To Get There*

#### **2.2.1 Provide support and incentives for directors and supervisor, such as bursaries and time off to attend programs, to encourage them to upgrade their qualifications.**

To improve the quality of early learning and care programs and raise skill levels, the system should give priority to enhancing the knowledge and skills of practitioners in leadership positions. Practitioners now working as supervisors, directors, resource teachers and home child care coordinators/visitors should be supported in their efforts to upgrade their credentials. Others who have the potential to be effective leaders should be identified and targeted for increased education and support in order to develop strong future leaders.

#### **Experience in Other Jurisdictions**

- New Zealand pays directors of early learning and care programs the same salaries as elementary school principals because "an education leader should be paid at the same level for the same amount of work, regardless of the age of the children".

**2.2.2 Establish a new role in centre-based programs: the pedagogical leader, a degree-prepared practitioner who has experience mentoring staff and students, and is responsible for working with staff to implement the Early Learning Framework and working with families**

Depending on the size of the early learning and care program, the pedagogical leader may be the program supervisor or director. Programs with more than seven staff would have two pedagogical leaders, including the supervisor/director. This recommendation will require a change to the *Day Nurseries Act*.

**Who**

The Ministry of Children and Youth Services in collaboration with municipalities, post-secondary institutions, and professional associations

**When**

- By 2008-09, Ontario has incentive programs in place that support supervisors and directors in upgrading their qualifications.
- By 2010-12, programs with more than seven staff have an additional degree-prepared pedagogical leader/assistant supervisor.

**2.3. Invest in the knowledge, skills and competencies of early childhood practitioners**

*Where We Are Now*

The proposed changes in education requirements have serious implications for practitioners. At least 50 to 60% of the current child care workforce will have to upgrade their credentials, and a number of teachers in kindergarten classes may also need to take courses in early childhood development.

Although early childhood educators have historically demonstrated a keen interest in ongoing learning, the number participating in professional development activities (e.g., courses, conferences, workshops) has declined. In 1991, 87% of practitioners had taken some ongoing professional development and 20% of early childhood educators had taken a credit course. By 1998, the proportions had dropped to 76% and 6%<sup>24</sup>.

A number of barriers keep early childhood educators from taking courses, attending conferences or participating in other education activities, including<sup>25</sup>:

- the lack of recognition for pursuing ongoing professional education: early childhood educators typically do not receive wage increases based on education

**Experience in Other Jurisdictions**

- Manitoba provides a \$250 training grant for early childhood assistants to help with the cost of the 40 hours of training they are now required to have in their first year of employment.
- Newfoundland provides 50 training bursaries a year – each worth \$5,000.
- Alberta Child Care Accreditation provides up to \$1,000 a year in development grants for accredited centre-based practitioners and trained home child care staff.
- Québec requires all employers with a payroll  $\geq$  \$1 million to invest at least 1% in employee training.
- Alberta and New Brunswick are providing increased funding for improved qualifications.

- the cost of courses, workshops and conferences
- lack of paid professional development time
- inability to get release time from their program
- providing replacement staff
- lack of information about available courses
- the lack of coordination among organizations offering training within the community, and the repetitive nature of available (introductory level) training courses and workshops
- the lack of recognized education and career ladders and the lack of articulation among college and university programs: in most cases, continuing education courses do not lead to an advanced degree or certificate or to career opportunities
- distance from training locations.

In order for practitioners to meet new education requirements, they will need support to overcome these barriers.

***Where We Want To Be***

All early learning and care practitioners have easy access to the education they need to be life-long learners, provide high quality programs, and progress in their careers.

***How To Get There***

**2.3.1 Provide supports and incentives for practitioner to upgrade their credentials**

Recommended forms of support include:

- recognition for completed programs (e.g., increased wages, credits towards an advanced credential)
- requiring all funded programs to devote a proportion of their operating budgets to ongoing professional development (e.g., 4%)
- bursaries and forgivable loan programs
- paid professional development time
- an education fund for practitioners who want to upgrade their qualifications or pursue specialized training
- funding for practitioners to attend conferences and education programs
- funding for agencies to hire replacement staff and free up staff to participate in education programs
- online/distance education programs that are linked to post-secondary programs and have quality assurance mechanisms.

The proposed provincial sector council should monitor

<p><b>Who</b></p> <p>The Ministry of Children and Youth Services in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, municipalities, post-secondary institutions, and professional organizations</p> <p><b>When</b></p> <p>By 2008-09:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ontario has bursaries, forgivable loans, development grants, replacement staff and other incentive programs to help practitioners upgrade their qualifications.</li> </ul> <p>By 2010-12:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Programs are required to devote a minimum of 4% of their budgets to ongoing professional development and are funded appropriately to meet that requirement.</li> <li>▪ Employers recognize practitioners who have obtained their qualifications (e.g., increased wages).</li> </ul>
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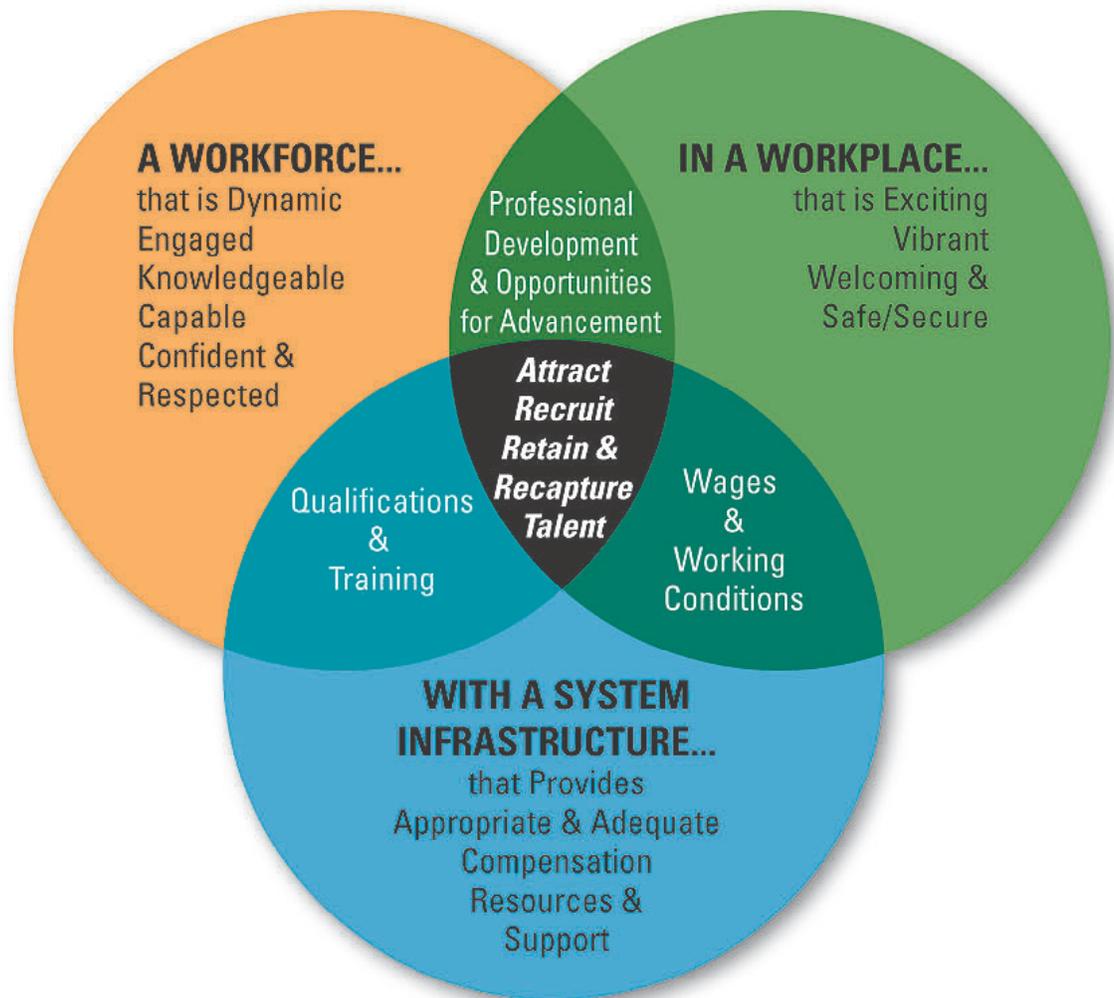
the impact of these supports and incentives to identify those that are most effective.

#### 2.4. Attract, recruit and retain knowledgeable, skilled and engaged early childhood educators

As Figure 5 illustrates, a number of factors affect practitioners' work-life and job satisfaction. To keep practitioners in the field and attract new people, early learning and care programs must:

- provide opportunities for education and advancement
- provide appropriate wages and working conditions
- create exciting, welcoming, learning workplaces.

**Figure 5: Factors Affecting Work Life and Job Satisfaction**



### *Where We Are Now*

There continue to be profound misconceptions about what early learning and care practitioners do. Many current and potential practitioners are unaware of the potential career paths available in the early childhood service sector (see Figure 6). As a result, people who would make excellent practitioners do not consider careers in early learning and care.

Practitioners do not seem to strongly identify with their profession. Fewer than 2,000 of Ontario's early childhood educators are members of the AECEO.

This is considerably lower than the proportion of the workforce who are members of their professional associations in Manitoba and Saskatchewan.

Professional associations and advocacy organizations play an important role in promoting best practices and helping retain practitioners in the field. Practitioners who have the opportunity to be involved with their colleagues are more likely to feel connected professionally and to be satisfied in their careers.

This report has already addressed the issues of education and compensation; however, working conditions also affect the field's ability to keep practitioners. For example, most programs do not give practitioners paid time to plan programs. Some programs offer split working schedules (e.g., 6:30 am to 9:30 am and 3:30 pm to 6:30 pm) that are not attractive. In many cases, new graduates are put into positions where they are responsible for supervising students or untrained staff before they have had time to consolidate their own skills.

#### **Experience in Other Jurisdictions**

- Newfoundland, with the help of a grant from Services Canada, developed a provincial recruitment and retention strategy.
- Manitoba established a Recruitment Fund to recapture qualified early childhood educators who have been away from the field for at least two years.
- BC provided a one-time \$2 million grant to the Early Childhood Educators of BC to provide professional development and reduce staff turnover.
- Saskatchewan requires all students in early childhood education programs to be members of the professional child care association. This strategy encourages more students to consider careers in early learning and care.

### *Where We Want To Be*

The early learning and care system attracts, recruits, retains and recaptures early childhood educators who have the commitment, knowledge, skills and desire to work with young children.

### *How To Get There*

#### **2.4.1 Develop recruitment and retention programs that target high school students, guidance counsellors and parents**

These programs should:

- reinforce how important and meaningful the job is for children, families and communities

- stress the satisfaction that practitioners receive from their work (e.g., “Working with children is very rewarding. I am contributing to their healthy development and I am making a difference in their lives.” CCHRSC, 2005)
- communicate clearly the knowledge, skills and attitudes required to promote children’s development and early learning
- describe the education pathways available (e.g., students can start with an apprenticeship program or two-year diploma, then continue to complete a degree)
- provide incentives for students and practitioners to become members of an early learning and care professional association/advocacy organization
- promote the career ladders available and ensure that practitioners have the opportunity to move and develop – without leaving the field.

The federal Child Care Human Resources Sector Council has already developed recruitment materials that can be adapted for use in Ontario.

### 2.4.3 Develop mentorship initiatives for new graduates

New graduates and practitioners in training are more likely to succeed and stay in the field when they receive mentoring from skilled leaders who help them make the transition to the workforce. Mentoring is a key strategy to build a stable, committed workforce. Earlier recommendations to increase both the number of leaders in each setting, and their supervision, mentoring, and management skills will help create a more supportive environment for new graduates and students. In addition, early learning and care programs must develop effective mentorship programs, and the capacity/expertise to support apprenticeship training.

### 2.4.4 Improve working conditions

In particular, programs should:

- provide time for program planning
- provide appropriate space for and give practitioners scheduled breaks away from the children
- provide paid time for practitioners to take courses or attend professional development workshops
- offer more attractive working hours
- provide recognition (e.g., salary increases, more responsibility, titles or designations) for practitioners who increase their credentials

#### Who

The Ministry of Children and Youth Services in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, municipalities, post-secondary institutions, and professional organizations.

#### When

By 2008-09:

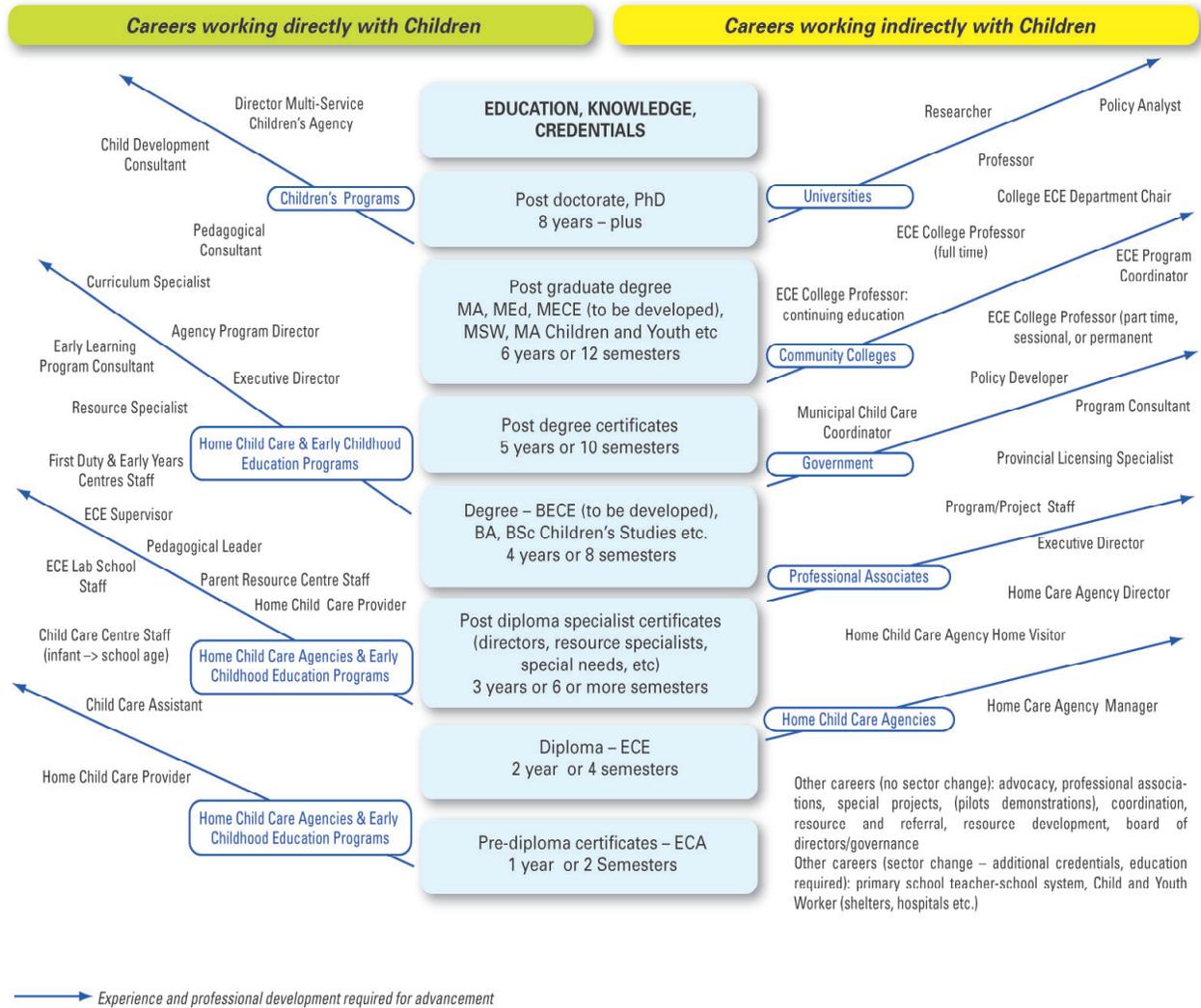
- Ontario has a province-wide attraction/recruitment program that targets high school students, guidance counsellors, parents, students entering post-secondary institutions, and newcomers with education in early childhood development/education.
- Ontario provides funding to develop and support a systematic approach to evaluating educational equivalency, credential assessment and bridging programs.

By 2010-12:

- Employers and/or professional organizations provide mentorship programs that help new graduates make a successful transition to the workforce.

- provide access to professional resources on site.

**Figure 6: Early Learning and Care Career Opportunity Map<sup>26</sup>**



### 3. Deliver high quality, inclusive, evidence-based programs

#### 3.1. Provide the resources, environments and supports necessary for inclusive, evidence-based programs

##### *Where We Are Now*

Over the past few years, the Ontario government has invested a significant amount of money in preschool speech and language programs, autism programs and other services to help children with special needs. Many of these children spend a large part of their day in child care programs. Most early learning and care settings recognize the value and importance of including all children, but they often lack the skilled practitioners, resources, equipment, materials and supports to provide evidence-based programs for each child. Currently many programs are not able to hire additional staff to meet the needs of children with disabilities and behaviour problems – sometimes because of lack of funding, sometimes because of problems finding and keeping practitioners who have the training and/or confidence to work with children with special needs and who are willing to take contract positions. Some buildings, rooms and playgrounds cannot accommodate children with special needs. These are issues in kindergarten as well as child care programs.

Across the province, there are also serious gaps in programs for Francophone children, Aboriginal children and children from recent immigrant families who may not speak English or French and who would benefit from programs that help them integrate into their communities.

##### *Where We Want To Be*

All children are able to participate in high quality, inclusive early learning and care programs. All programs have practitioners with the knowledge, skills, materials and resources to provide inclusive, evidence-based programs for all children as well as support from other services and professionals in the community.

##### **Experience in Other Jurisdictions**

- A BC program, Child Care in Multicultural and Aboriginal Communities, promotes awareness and accessibility of child care in multicultural and Aboriginal communities.
- Saskatchewan’s Child Care Inclusion Program provides support to families and programs, such as assisting with the cost of adapted equipment, providing wages for additional staff, and training and resources for practitioners.
- Newfoundland’s Enhancing Quality and Inclusive Practices (EQUIP) provides professional development and other tools.
- Manitoba provides staffing grants as well as grants for renovations and equipment.
- Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Newfoundland and PEI provide on-site consultation to support quality improvements and inclusion practices.

## *How To Get There*

### **3.1.1 Provide resources to support inclusive programs**

Programs need:

- time for practitioners to plan programs for all children including those with special needs and to coordinate with parents and community professionals
- practitioner education in early learning and care for children with special needs – including opportunities for ongoing professional development plus replacement staff
- funding to hire extra staff if required to meet the unique early learning and care requirements for children with special needs
- access to resource consultants for both centre-based and regulated home child care programs
- appropriate equipment, materials and supplies, and access to specialized equipment when needed
- structural changes to buildings, rooms and playgrounds to make them more accessible.

#### **Who**

The Ministry of Children and Youth Services in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and municipalities

#### **When**

By 2008-09:

- All ECE practitioners have a minimum of two hours of paid planning time per week.
- Ontario establishes a fund to support practitioner development and resources (including additional staff) for programs with children with special needs.
- Practitioners have access to the training and resources they need to meet the needs of all children.

By 2010-12:

- Structural changes have been made to early learning and care environments to support inclusive programs. All new programs are purpose-built and accessible.
- The system has mechanisms to provide ongoing consultation and support to ensure effective inclusion.

### **3.2 Develop learning frameworks and curricula that reflect young children's distinct learning needs**

High quality programs use evidence-based curricula.

#### ***Where We Are Now***

Historically, there has been no consistent provincial curriculum for child care programs to follow; instead, practitioners have developed their own learning programs. In some cases, they have used or adapted evidence-based programs such as High Scope, Emergent Curriculum, Montessori programs and Waldorf programs; however, despite these individual initiatives, the quality of learning programs varies widely across Ontario.

Over the past year, Ontario has made significant progress in evidence-informed early

#### **Experience in Other Jurisdictions**

- The Government of Manitoba provided \$120,000 to the Manitoba Child Care Association to provide multimedia resource materials to all licensed child care centres, family child care homes and nursery schools.
- Nunavut, working with an Elders Committee, developed an Early Childhood Curriculum that reflects traditional learning and teaching, and includes a strong language and cultural component based on Inuit values and beliefs. The program is delivered in kindergarten and early childhood programs.

learning programs for children. In 2006, the Ministry of Education introduced a revised kindergarten program that reflects new knowledge about how young children learn. In the same year, an Expert Panel appointed by the Ministry of Children and Youth Services developed an Early Learning Framework to guide curriculum development in all early learning and care settings. When implemented, the Early Learning Framework will establish the standard for effective, evidence-based, age appropriate, inclusive programs for young children.

### ***Where We Want To Be***

The Early Learning Framework and other evidence-based programs are used consistently in all early learning and care settings throughout Ontario. Pedagogues and practitioners feel confident using the Framework to plan their programs.

### ***How To Get There***

#### **3.2.1 Provide training and support to implement the Early Learning Framework**

The Expert Panel on Quality and Human Resources endorses the recommendations for implementing the Early Learning Framework set out by the Expert Panel on Early Learning, which include:

- changes to post-secondary education programs for early learning and care practitioners to incorporate the framework.
- orientation workshops and resource materials for all early learning and care settings
- systematic, province-wide training.

Practitioners in all settings – child care, kindergarten and integrated programs – will need training in how to use these documents to plan programs that meet the needs of each child, and support their growth and development.

#### **Who**

The Ministry of Children and Youth Services in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, municipalities, post-secondary institutions, professional resource centres and professional associations

#### **When**

By 2008-09:

- Province-wide training is available on the Early Learning Framework.
- All early learning and care programs receive training, resources and support to implement the Early Learning Framework.

By 2010-12:

- The use and impact of the Early Learning Framework is monitored, and pre-service and ongoing education programs adjusted accordingly.

### 3.3 Develop integrated programs for four and five year olds

#### *Where we are now*

Many families with four and five year olds make complex arrangements for their children who attend kindergarten and require some other form of early learning and care before and after school hours. There are some schools and school boards where teachers in kindergarten programs and early childhood educators meet regularly to co-plan programs together but, in most cases, there is little integration between the two programs – even when both are located in the same school. The programs tend to co-exist, and do not complement or build on one another, or work together to meet each child’s needs. This leads to a fragmented day for children and parents, and lost opportunities for learning to be reinforced and extended.

#### **Experience in Other Jurisdictions**

- Several programs in Ontario, such as Toronto First Duty and the Best Start demonstration sites are piloting integrated programs that provide a seamless day of learning and care for young children.
- New Zealand has developed an integrated program for four and five year olds.

Ontario is working to transform and consolidate programs into a coherent, responsive system.

**Critical success factors.** Through their efforts, early learning and care practitioners and policy makers are beginning to identify the critical elements for high quality integrated programs, including:

- a coherent learning framework, curricula and programs that complement each other
- a shared vision and commitment to children’s early learning and well-being
- pedagogical leadership (from the director of the early childhood program and, in some cases, board of directors and the principal)
- practitioner education and understanding of how young children grow and learn
- effective teamwork, joint planning time and professional development, communication and mutual respect between teachers and early childhood educators
- workplaces that value the practice of all practitioners
- commitment to a partnership with parents and an understanding of their values and needs.

Following the implementation of the Early Learning Framework, Ontario could expect that early learning programs will complement the kindergarten program. The next step is to assemble the other building blocks for effective integration, including leadership, structures and teams. Many of the earlier recommendations in this report – such as a common, consistent regulatory framework, education for all practitioners in early childhood development, and strategies to improve compensation -- will help lay the foundation for integrated programs.

### *Where we want to be*

All four and five year olds in Ontario have access to integrated programs, delivered by a mix of practitioners, that meet the needs of the whole child –in a variety of settings, including full-day programs in schools, full-day programs in centre-based child care programs, and coordinated programs across school, centre and regulated home child care settings.

### *How To Get There*

#### **3.3.1 Establish an interministerial committee to address current and emerging issues related to integrated programs**

The integration of regulated child care and kindergarten programs calls for a major reorganization of two well-defined, but different systems. Providing a seamless day for children and families will require new policies and a new way of thinking about learning environments. In particular, integrated programs will have to address:

- governance issues between programs run by school boards with those operated by child care agencies or municipalities
- the roles and responsibilities of different practitioners – including educational assessments and reporting on children’s progress
- the disparity in wages and working conditions between teachers and early childhood educators
- the different expectations of kindergarten (e.g., offered for a set period of time) and child care (e.g., offered throughout the day to meet families’ needs)
- the effects of having a different ratio of children to *qualified* practitioners –in child care than in kindergarten
- the space and environmental changes required to meet the daily needs of young children, including:
  - an area for food preparation
  - an area for health care for mildly ill children
  - suitable washrooms close to program for easy supervision and to facilitate self regulation, independence, and accommodate children with special needs
  - rest areas (when children need a rest or quiet place);
  - appropriate indoor and outdoor space for active play
  - a suitable place to meet with families at drop off and pick up, as well as time to exchange information and resources, and conference space that assures confidentiality

#### **Who**

The Ministry of Children and Youth Services in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, the College of Early Childhood Educators, the College of Teachers and professional associations

#### **When**

By 2008-09:

- An interministerial committee reviews the experience of pilot and demonstration sites and addresses key issues, including governance, integration of cultures, compensation, qualifications, ratios, environmental issues and hours of operation.

By 2010-12:

- The committee’s recommendations are implemented systematically.

By 2013-2015:

- Integrated programs are in place in all Ontario communities.
- Quality assurance tools are developed and used to assess quality and recommend quality improvements in individual programs.

- release time and a suitable place for staff to meet, plan and have access to resources (e.g., computer, Internet, print materials)
- issues faced by early learning and care programs located in schools (e.g., occupancy costs charged by school boards, custodial staff only available certain times of the day, access to facilities such as the library or gym)
- the risk of developing a two-tier system of early learning and care where parents feel that only school-based programs provide integrated services.

The task force would be responsible for:

- analyzing the findings from Best Start demonstration sites, Toronto First Duty and other sites as well as reviewing the results of the Integration Project to develop standards and best practices for integrated programs
- identifying the supports required to establish effective integrated programs, including training and mentorship for practitioners
- piloting different models, including integrated programs in community child care settings
- making recommendations about the structure and staffing of integrated programs – including wages, working hours and working conditions
- considering issues unique to providing integrated programs, such as transportation and summer arrangements.

### **3.3.2 Develop a common credential that would prepare practitioners to implement both the Early Learning Framework and the kindergarten program**

This strategy is being used in New Zealand. That country has developed a three-year post-secondary training program, which focuses on the distinct learning needs of young children and leads to a diploma in early childhood teaching. By 2012, all staff in integrated kindergarten and centre-based programs in New Zealand will be required to have this qualification.

## **4. Forge Strong Partnerships with Parents**

### **4.1 Develop and support staffing models that enable effective, ongoing communication with parents**

Early learning and care programs support young children's learning. They also support parents in their efforts to work and go to school, and in their parenting. Depending on parents' schedules, children may be dropped off any time between 7 and 9:30 am, and picked up anytime between 3:00 and 6:00 pm – even later for programs designed to accommodate parents who work shifts. Practitioners provide care for children, but they also support parents coping with the stress of work/life balance, parenting challenges, parental concerns about their child's health and development, and other issues.

For parents, it is very important to have regular contact each day with the practitioner most responsible for their child's care. They need time to be informed about what their child is doing and his/her progress, to talk about any concerns, or to provide instructions about medication.

When parents feel supported by knowledgeable, caring professionals who share a commitment to their child's development, they are able to be full partners in their children's early learning and care, and make more informed choices.

#### ***Where We Are Now***

Under the *Day Nurseries Act*, centre-based programs are allowed to have fewer qualified staff at the beginning and end of the day. As these are the times when parents are dropping off or picking up children, it is important to have adequate numbers of qualified practitioners on site who can communicate effectively and engage with parents.

#### ***Where We Want To Be***

Practitioners have effective relationships with parents, and are available to talk to parents, answer their questions, and provide information about resources. Parents have the information they need to make informed decisions about their child's care and access to other child and family services and supports when needed.

#### ***How To Get There***

**4.1.1 Revise the Day Nurseries Act to require programs to maintain a high ratio of qualified staff at key times of day to support parents**

**4.1.2 Develop useful and informative materials that will help parents understand the factors that contribute to healthy child development, and assist them in choosing quality programs for their children**

Information for parents should include:

- relevant community resources
- provincial quality standards for early learning and care services in centres and home child care settings

- suggestions for what to look for when choosing a child care program or regulated child care home, and how to play an active role in supporting quality services
- the benefits to children, families, communities and the province of high quality early learning and care services
- the importance of public investments in early learning and care services.

Information for parents should be accessible through a provincial web site, Best Start hubs, OEYCs and all regulated early learning and care programs. Materials should convey respect for parents from different cultural backgrounds and from Aboriginal communities and should be available in English and French (and other languages in specific communities).

**Who**

The Ministry of Children and Youth Services in collaboration with municipalities, regulated early learning and care programs, Best Start hubs, OEYCs and professional associations

**When**

By 2008-09:

- All programs are required to maintain ratios of qualified staff throughout the day to support effective communication with and support for parents.
- Programs are staffed to give ECEs and parents time to communicate at the beginning and end of the day.
- Parents have access to information that helps them make informed decisions for their children's early learning and care.

By 2010-12:

- All early learning and care programs facilitate linkages for parents to other community services they may need.

## Conclusion

Ontario has historically been a leader in early learning and care for its youngest citizens. In 2007, the province has the opportunity to transform its early learning and care services and re-establish its lead in this field. Investing in the quality of early learning and care services is the right thing to do for children and families. It is also the right thing to do to secure Ontario's future prosperity. Through sustained investments in early learning and care, the province will reap massive social and economic returns in the form of:

- generations of children who will achieve their full potential and become effective parents, leaders, entrepreneurs, workers
- higher productivity
- lower social and justice system costs.

To create an early learning and care system – to put in place the building blocks for quality -- Ontario must take the same kind of comprehensive approach used in other jurisdictions. We must invest in quality across the system and take a consistent, province-wide approach to standards, qualifications, training and early learning programs. This strategic, systemic approach will require leadership, commitment and collaboration from all those involved in governing, planning, managing and delivering early learning and care services and in educating and regulating practitioners.

The Expert Panel proposes an ambitious but achievable four-point plan to:

1. Strengthen policies, funding and infrastructure
2. Improve education, compensation and career opportunities for practitioners
3. Deliver high quality, inclusive, evidence-based programs for children
4. Forge strong partnerships with parents.

The number of recommendations may seem daunting but they are doable. Some, such as those related to regulation changes and funding, must be implemented immediately because they form the foundation for others. Some, such as providing province-wide training to support the new Early Learning Framework, can be accomplished quickly; others, such as developing a common policy and regulatory environment for early learning and care services and increasing the number of practitioners with the credentials required to fulfill their increasingly complex roles, will take time.

Table 3 organizes the Expert Panel's recommendations into three categories: short-term (to be completed within the next two years), medium-term (to be completed within five years) and long-term (to be completed within eight years). This timetable for successful investment in the quality of early learning and care could form the basis for concrete work plans to put the four-point plan into action.

**Table 3: Timetable for Investing in Quality**

**1. Strengthen Policies, Funding, and Infrastructure**

	By 2008-2009 ...	By 2010-2012 ...	By 2013-2015...
<b>Policy and Regulatory Environment</b>	The Day Nurseries Act and Education Act are revised to support high quality early learning and care	Ontario has a consistent policy and regulatory environment for all regulated early learning and care services and supports to facilitate the integration of early learning and care and kindergarten programs	
<b>Funding</b>	Provincial funding for regulated child care programs has increased substantially to reflect the true costs of providing high quality programs	Ontario has a comprehensive, streamlined funding model for early learning and care programs that promotes high quality	Parents pay no more than 20 to 25% of the cost of early learning and care programs
<b>Quality Program Standards</b>	Ontario has province-wide quality standards for early learning and care programs, and communicates them to practitioners and parents	All municipalities have quality assurance tools, routinely monitor early learning and care programs and allocate funds for quality improvement initiatives	
<b>Professional Standards/ Education Requirements</b>	The College of Early Childhood Educators has education requirements for practitioners that reflect the increasing complexity of their roles in delivering high quality programs  All early childhood assistants are enrolled in an accredited ECE, ECA or apprenticeship program	All directors and supervisors of centre-based early learning and care programs have a degree in early childhood education/ development or equivalent as well as management training.  All pedagogical leaders/assistant supervisors, resource educators and supervisors of child care centres and OEYCs have a degree or are enrolled in a degree program in early childhood education/ development  All home child care providers have completed an recognized post-secondary course in health, safety, child development or early childhood education  All teachers in kindergarten programs without pre-service education in early	All early childhood assistants have completed year one of their ECE or an ECA certificate or apprenticeship program  All teachers newly hired to work in kindergarten programs have specific course work in early childhood education/ development  All early childhood practitioners participate in ongoing professional education and development

		childhood development are enrolled in an appropriate course	
<b>Post-secondary Education and Infrastructure</b>	<p>All post-secondary institutions that provide education/ development incorporate the Early Learning Framework into their programs</p> <p>All accredited post-secondary institutions ensure consistent quality standards and best practices for all education programs, including apprenticeship and distance education programs.</p> <p>Post secondary institutions have funding and a new funding model to support high quality, inclusive laboratory school programs.</p> <p>All students have at least one mandatory practicum or placement in a lab school setting</p> <p>Post-secondary institutions receive funding to support the development of a leadership and management credential in early childhood services</p> <p>MCYS funds a minimum of 11 additional professional child care resource centres across the province – including at least one Francophone and one Aboriginal centre with satellite outreach programs</p>	<p>All post-secondary institutions that provide education in early childhood education/ development have innovative programs with the capacity to meet the demand for increased credentials – including Ontario college graduate certificate and degree programs to meet the needs of Francophone and Aboriginal communities, management programs, and graduate programs</p> <p>Post-secondary institutions offer a leadership and management credential in early childhood services</p> <p>Post-secondary institutions have a systemic approach to articulation agreements that gives practitioners a choice of education pathways and ensures high quality, articulated professional education with no dead-end training</p> <p>Ontario has 47 adequately funded and staffed professional child care resource centres across the province (one in each municipality)</p>	<p>Post secondary institutions offer collaborative education programs and a common credential for practitioners working in integrated early learning and care/kindergarten programs</p>
<b>Data and Research</b>	<p>Ontario develops and maintains a province-wide information system on early learning and care programs and the early childhood workforce to support quality and accountability</p>	<p>Ontario develops partnerships with researchers and post-secondary institutions, and supports the development of a research agenda to improve quality and HR planning and management.</p> <p>Ontario provides funding for policy and practice-relevant research</p>	

<b>Collaborative Partnerships</b>	<p>MCYS and municipalities clarify their relationship, roles, mandate and funding obligations to ensure consistent, high quality, inclusive early learning and care services</p> <p>A standing interministerial group reviews issues affecting service integration and needed supports</p> <p>Ontario forms a sector council that provides ongoing advice to all relevant ministries on quality and human resource issues</p> <p>A separate task force is established and submits a report on strategies to improve quality and address HR issues in home child care</p>		
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## 2. Improve Education, Compensation and Career Opportunities for Practitioners

	By 2008-2009 ...	By 2010-2012 ...	By 2013-2015...
<b>Wages, Benefits and Working Conditions</b>	<p>Child care programs receive predictable, sustained funding to support appropriate wages and benefits.</p> <p>The Ministry of Children and Youth Services has provincial guidelines for compensation.</p> <p>Municipalities have established appropriate wage scales.</p>	<p>All early learning and care practitioners belong to a pension plan.</p> <p>All practitioners receive wages and benefits comparable to other professionals with similar education, experience and responsibilities</p> <p>Municipalities establish expectations for working conditions that support quality, including time for program planning, paid professional development time, and attractive working hours</p>	
<b>Support for Enhancing Leaders' Qualifications</b>	<p>Ontario has incentive programs that support supervisors and directors in upgrading their qualifications</p>	<p>Programs with more than seven staff have an additional degree-prepared pedagogical leader/assistant supervisor</p>	
<b>Support for Enhancing Practitioners'</b>	<p>Ontario has bursaries, forgivable loans, development grants,</p>	<p>Programs are required to devote 4% of their budgets to ongoing professional development and</p>	

<b>Qualifications</b>	replacement staff and other incentive programs to help practitioners upgrade their qualifications	are funded appropriately to meet that requirement  Employers recognize practitioners who have obtained additional qualifications (e.g., increased wages)	
<b>Attraction, Recruitment and Retention Programs</b>	Ontario has a province-wide attraction/recruitment program that targets high school students, guidance counselors, parents, students entering post-secondary institutions, and newcomers with education in early childhood development/education.  Ontario provides funding to develop and support a systematic approach to evaluating educational equivalency, credential assessment and bridging programs.	Employers and/or professional organizations provide mentorship programs that help new graduates make a successful transition to the workforce	

### 3. Deliver High Quality, Inclusive, Evidence-based Programs for Children

	By 2008-2009 ...	By 2010-2012 ...	By 2013-2015...
<b>Environment and Resources to Support Inclusive programs</b>	All ECE practitioners have a minimum of two hours of paid planning time per week.  Ontario has established a fund to support practitioner development and resources (including additional staff) for programs with children with special needs  Practitioners have access to the training and resources they need to meet the needs of all children	Structural changes have been made to early learning and care environments to support inclusive programs. All new programs are purpose-built and accessible.  The system has mechanisms to provide ongoing consultation and support to ensure effective inclusion	
<b>Early Learning Framework</b>	Province-wide training is available on the Early Learning Framework.  All early learning and care programs receive training and support to implement the Early Learning Framework	The use and impact of the Early Learning Framework is monitored, and pre-service and ongoing education programs adjusted accordingly	
<b>Integrated Programs for</b>	An interministerial committee reviews the	The committee's recommendations are	Integrated programs are in place in all Ontario

<b>Four and Five Year Olds</b>	experience of pilot and demonstration sites and addresses key issues including governance, integration of cultures, compensation, qualifications, ratios, environmental issues and hours of operation.	implemented systematically	communities Quality assurance tools are developed and used to assess quality and recommend quality improvements in individual programs
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#### 4. Forge Strong Partnerships with Parents

	By 2008-2009 ...	By 2010-2012 ...	By 2013-2015...
<b>Partnerships with Parents</b>	<p>All programs are required to maintain ratios of qualified staff throughout the day to support effective communication with and support for parents</p> <p>Programs are staffed to give ECEs and parents time to communicate at the beginning and end of the day</p> <p>Parents have access to information that helps them make informed decisions for their children's early learning and care</p>	All early learning and care programs facilitate linkages for parents to other community services they may need	

## Endnotes

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