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CHILD CARE AND EARLY INTERVENTION REFORMS UPDATE AND POTENTIAL IMPLICATIONS

The Community and Health Services Committee recommends:

- 1. Receipt of the presentation by Cordelia Abankwa, General Manager, Social Services; and**
- 2. Adoption of the recommendation contained in the following report dated October 3, 2012, from the Commissioner of Community and Health Services.**

1. RECOMMENDATION

1. It is recommended that the Regional Clerks Office forward copies of the Modernization of Child Care Discussion Paper response from York Region to the Association of Municipalities of Ontario and the Ontario Municipal Social Services Association.

2. PURPOSE

This report provides a summary of:

- The provincial vision for child care reform and modernization
- Consultations carried out across York Region to respond to the provincial discussion paper *Modernization of Child Care in Ontario*
- York Region's recommendations and response to provincial reform initiatives

3. BACKGROUND

In June 2009, the Province of Ontario announced implementation of full day kindergarten and integrated the child care system under the Ministry of Education

In June 2009, Dr. Pascal released the report "*With our Best Future in Mind*" which contained a number of recommendations for broad changes to the Early Learning and Child Care System in Ontario. These recommendations were focused on system reform to provide enriched early learning experiences for children.

In October 2009, the Province announced the implementation of full day learning. This included full day kindergarten for four- and five-year olds and before and after school programs for four- to twelve-year olds at full day kindergarten schools.

Full day kindergarten is delivered by boards of education, with both teachers and Early Childhood Educators working together in the kindergarten classroom. As of September 2012, in York Region, there are 121 schools (approximately 46% of all schools) that offer the full day kindergarten program. Based on information received from the Ministry of Education (EDU), an additional 58 schools will be added in September 2013 and a final 66 schools will be added in September 2014.

The Ministry of Education allows boards of education to provide before- and after-school child care, either through direct operation of these extended day programs or through the use of a third party operator in the school. In York Region, boards of education provide fee based before and after school programs through third party licensed child care operators.

In 2010, the Ministry of Education assumed policy management, contract management/funding and licensing responsibility for child care. Municipalities now work with the Ministry of Education, and continue to work directly with child care operators both within schools and in local neighbourhoods.

The impact on York Region's child care system due to the implementation of full day kindergarten is so far generally minimal

As reported in May 2012, the impact on the York Region child care system as a result of the implementation of full day kindergarten has been minimal. Some child care operators not located in schools have needed to look at different business models, including service to younger age groups, to remain financially viable. The challenge is that operating costs for the younger age groups is significantly higher than for the older age groups.

The Province is aware of the challenges operators are facing. In 2010 and 2011, the Province announced new funding of \$50 million and \$12 million, over five years, to support the transition of licensed child care and help stabilize child care operators.

In April 2012, the Province announced further funding of \$90 million in 2012-13, \$68 million in 2013-14 and \$84 million in 2014-15 to continue to support stabilization.

Early Intervention Services in York Region have up until now been relatively unaffected by these changes but contract segregation between the Ministry of Children and Youth Services and the Ministry of Education may become an issue

As full day kindergarten continues to proceed to full implementation by September 2014, it is important that children with special needs receive a seamless continuum of services.

This includes services provided by the York Region Early Intervention Services program in conjunction with key community partners. Early Intervention Services staff currently work closely with child care agency staff to support children with special needs and help with the transition to school by working with schools across the Region.

The assumption of contract management and funding by the Ministry of Education created a segregation of budgets for the two provincial programs. The Ministry of Children and Youth Services retains responsibility for the 100% funded Infant Child Development services and the Ministry of Education has responsibility for the cost shared, 80/20, Resource Teacher Special Needs program. Service gaps and contradictory criteria are a future concern.

In addition, approximately half of Early Intervention Services children who are of the age to enter kindergarten remain at home or attend licensed child care because they have behavioural or other issues. While it is mandatory for schools to offer full-day learning, it is not mandatory that children attend. Budget allocations will need to ensure service can be provided in different settings and help keep waiting lists to a minimum.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

York Region continues to act as the Service System Manager providing services for fee subsidy, wage subsidy and Early Intervention Services

The Regional Municipality of York as the Service System Manager for child care, continues to have responsibility for the planning and management of the child care system. This includes the provision of fee subsidies, wage subsidies and early intervention services (special needs resourcing).

Approximately 84% (29,007) of the 34,532 licensed centre-based spaces are covered by a purchase of service agreement with York Region, as of December 31, 2011.

As of June 2012, there are 4,245 monthly average children receiving fee subsidy. There are 5,121 families on the waitlist for child care fee assistance. The waitlist for child care fee assistance continues to be managed on a first come first served basis by geographic zone, according to the four priority waitlist categories as approved by Council:

1. Immediate significant need
2. Families with an annual income of \$36,000 or less
3. Families with an annual income of over \$36,000
4. Future care

As of June 2012, there were 1,849 monthly average number of children receiving special needs resourcing. There were 486 children on the waitlist for special needs resourcing services through Early Intervention Services.

Ministry of Education released the discussion paper, “*Modernizing Child Care in Ontario*”, which outlines key areas of focus over the next three years

The Province took the next step toward child care reform by releasing *Modernizing Child Care in Ontario: Sharing Conversations, Strengthening Partnerships, Working Together* as a discussion paper (see *Attachment 1*). The discussion paper’s stated aim is to “introduce a conversation about the long-term vision for child care in Ontario, as well as targeted medium-term objectives for the next three years.” Answers to specific questions in the paper were due from community stakeholders to the Ministry by September 24, 2012.

The discussion paper, released at the end of June, states that over the next three years modernization will focus on stabilizing the current system. It will also be strengthened to support higher quality, consistent services. Modernization will not include expansion of the system.

Consolidated Municipal Service Managers (CMSMs) are specifically referenced as key partners and the paper indicates that over the next three years, and after, there will be increased flexibility for CMSMs to meet local needs.

Modernizing Child Care in Ontario states that the Government of Ontario’s long-term vision for child care is “to build a high-quality, accessible and coordinated early learning and child care system for children before they start school and for school-aged children”. The discussion paper identified five major principles that guide the long-term vision for early learning and child care in Ontario:

1. Support for children and families
2. Commitment to quality programs for all children
3. Efficient funding formula
4. Supportive legislation and regulations
5. Evidence-based decision-making and reporting

The discussion paper also identified five major areas for action over the next three years as follows:

Operating funding formula: The Province admits that the current funding formula for child care needs improvement. Areas such as fee subsidies for eligible families, wage subsidies to enhance salaries and benefits to staff, and special needs resourcing have all been identified as areas requiring examination. The Province intends to introduce new, streamlined funding allocations based on a current assessment of need.

Capital funding priorities: The Province recognizes that many operators cannot afford the renovations needed to adapt facilities to take younger children. The Province will focus on a “school-first” capital-funding approach. The government will “help child care

operators in schools to retrofit and convert existing child care spaces to serve younger age groups”. It will also help community-based child care operators to relocate to schools. Where relocating into schools is not practical or possible, capital funding will also be available to support operators to renovate facilities outside of schools.

Quality programs: The Province acknowledges that the Day Nurseries Act (DNA) does not provide substantive direction on quality program elements or levels of support to be provided to children with special needs. This has resulted in inconsistencies in quality across the province. Over the next three years, the Province says it will develop mandatory guidelines for child care operators. It will also update the framework to support children with special needs.

Modernizing the legislative and regulatory framework: The Province has committed to reviewing their legislation. The goal of this review is to ensure legislation reflects the current research and practices that promote quality health and safety in licensed and informal child care settings. The Province is also seeking specific feedback on improving consistency and clarity in the Act.

Support for accountability and capacity building: The Province plans to move from data focused on inputs and outputs to information more clearly linked to program goals as well as outcomes linked to program objectives. Additionally, the Province is seeking advice on how to ensure licensing procedures reinforce quality.

The Region did broad consultations to obtain input on the Province’s Discussion Paper

The Province recognizes its goals are challenging given they are to be achieved without expanding the current system and during a period of fiscal restraint. In addition, the reforms proposed, and questions asked in the discussion paper, are wide-ranging, complex and could have a long-lasting impact.

Consultations were conducted across the Region by staff in August and early September 2012. In all, there were close to 300 participants. Parents, local municipal recreation staff, Regional staff, child care operators, school board staff, children’s agencies, and CMSM counterparts, and others, all took part in focus groups or consultation sessions.

Recommendations by York Region in the five areas for action emphasize the need for modernization to be flexible and responsive to local need

While there was significant technical and policy feedback, central to the commentary is the emphasis that modernization must be flexible and responsive to local needs and respectful of the role CMSM’s play in planning for and managing local needs.

It is also important to ensure that changes to funding or service models do not break apart York Region’s highly integrated special needs resourcing program, or reduce current

service levels. There was unanimous agreement from parents and providers on this. York Region's model provides single point access and co-location of a range of services for children with special needs that has been cited as a best practice in Ontario.

The recommendations from York Region and the input and feedback provided by stakeholders have been assembled in a response document that was submitted to the Ministry of Education on behalf of the Region by Chairman Bill Fisch on September 21, 2012. (See *Attachments 2 and 3*).

Highlights of York Region's key recommendations in the five areas for action are:

Operating Funding Formula: The new funding formula should be flexible and responsive to local need, maintain system capacity while maximizing the use of existing resources and should not incur a cost to the municipality.

Capital Funding Priorities: Capital funding priorities should occur through the leadership of municipalities to allow for streamlined, co-ordinated collaborative planning approaches that support local communities and access to services for residents.

Quality Programs: In partnership with communities, the Province must develop clear and consistent Provincial quality expectations and standards, which are inclusive of the needs of diverse communities and children with special needs, and are supported by resources and ongoing training for parents and child care professionals.

Modernized Legislative and Regulatory Framework: The Province should improve clarity, consistency and updated legislation that supports modern realities. Resources to encourage increased understanding of how to choose and provide quality early learning programs will also be needed.

Support for Accountability and Capacity Building: Outcomes and service gaps need to be identified in order to service the plan effectively. CMSM's can provide a key role in gathering and producing data on behalf of the child care community, in consultation with stakeholders to support planning of local service.

The Region is pursuing opportunities to have further input into the modernization process

In response to the Province's request for advice and submissions, the Ontario Municipal Social Services Association (OMSSA) put together a working group to help craft OMSSA's response. York Region staff participated on this working group.

York Region was also nominated by the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) to join a select group of municipalities as well as AMO and OMSSA on the Ministry of Education's Funding Model working group.

Ongoing Regional staff participation in these discussions will be crucial to ensuring that York Region's unique perspectives are heard.

Link to key Council-approved plans

The Child Care and Early Intervention Services programs support Vision 2051, the departments Multi Year Plan, the Region's Strategic Plan and the Human Services Planning Board directions through the provision of human services that strengthen communities and increase access to affordable child care for families to help them reach their social and economic potential.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There is no direct financial impact of this report. The 2012 budget for Child Care is \$51.9 million (gross) and \$10.7 million (net). The 2012 budget for Early Intervention Services is \$8.0 million (gross) and \$3 million (net). These figures include funding for fee subsidy, wage subsidy, special needs resourcing (Early Intervention Services) and child care administration. As the Ministry of Education continues to implement the Modernization of Child Care action areas over the next three years, staff will report back to Committee and Council on potential financial implications.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

Child Care and Early Intervention Services are available to residents of all nine York Region local municipalities. Child care fee assistance allows parents access to licensed, quality child care programs so they can pursue employment and/or education opportunities. This, in turn, supports local industry, promotes economic development, and supports families in moving towards independence. High quality early intervention allows parents to support their children in reaching their full potential and to stabilize their family situations.

7. CONCLUSION

The child population and number of lower income families continues to grow in York Region. It is critical that funding for services that support families to achieve success and independence exists. This will in turn allow parents to work and/or receive training to continue to contribute to the communities and economy of York Region. It is also critical that the existing early learning system provides stable, secure, high quality services for families. The ongoing child care reform, and the most recent next step which is modernization of the system, will, over the next three years, have a huge impact on families with children in York Region. Ongoing Regional staff participation in these

discussions and at funding tables will be crucial to ensuring that York Region's unique perspective is represented.

Also, Community and Health Services staff will continue to closely monitor the impact of the implementation phases of the Early Learning Program on the child care system and work with stakeholders to support and manage the system transformation.

For more information on this report, please contact Cordelia Abankwa, General Manager, Social Services at Extension 2150.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

(The three attachments referred to in this clause are attached to this report.)

Child Care and Early Intervention Reforms Update and Potential Implications

**Presentation to Community and
Health Services Committee**

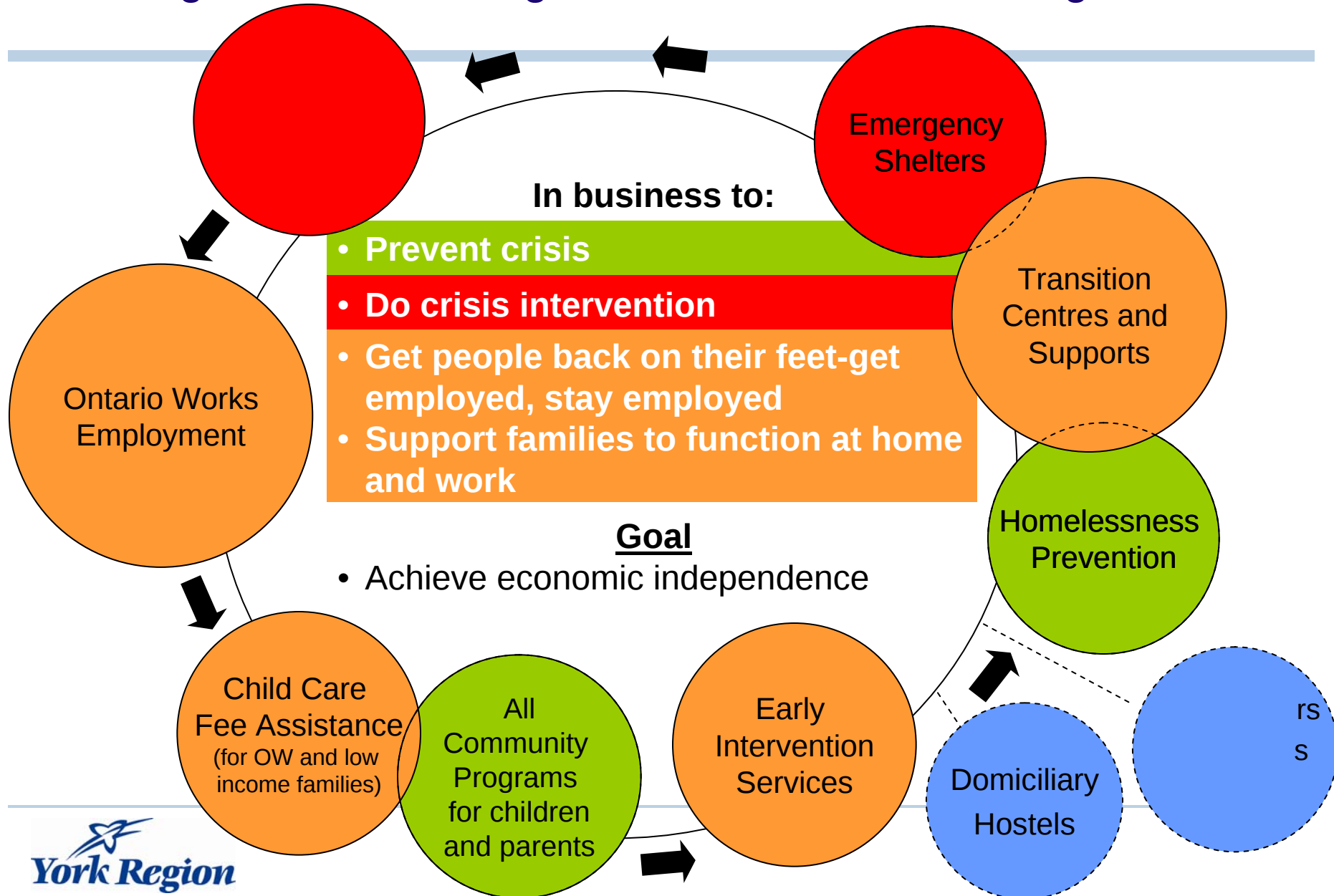
**Cordelia Abankwa
General Manager, Social Services
October 10, 2012**

Overview

Here to provide:

- ❑ Overview of York Region's current child care and early intervention services
- ❑ Provincial Vision for next stages of Reform
- ❑ Implications for York Region
- ❑ York Region's response to reform initiatives

Social Services evolving toward deliberate collaboration and integration, facilitating economic and social integration



York Region is the Manager of the Regional Early Intervention and Child Care System

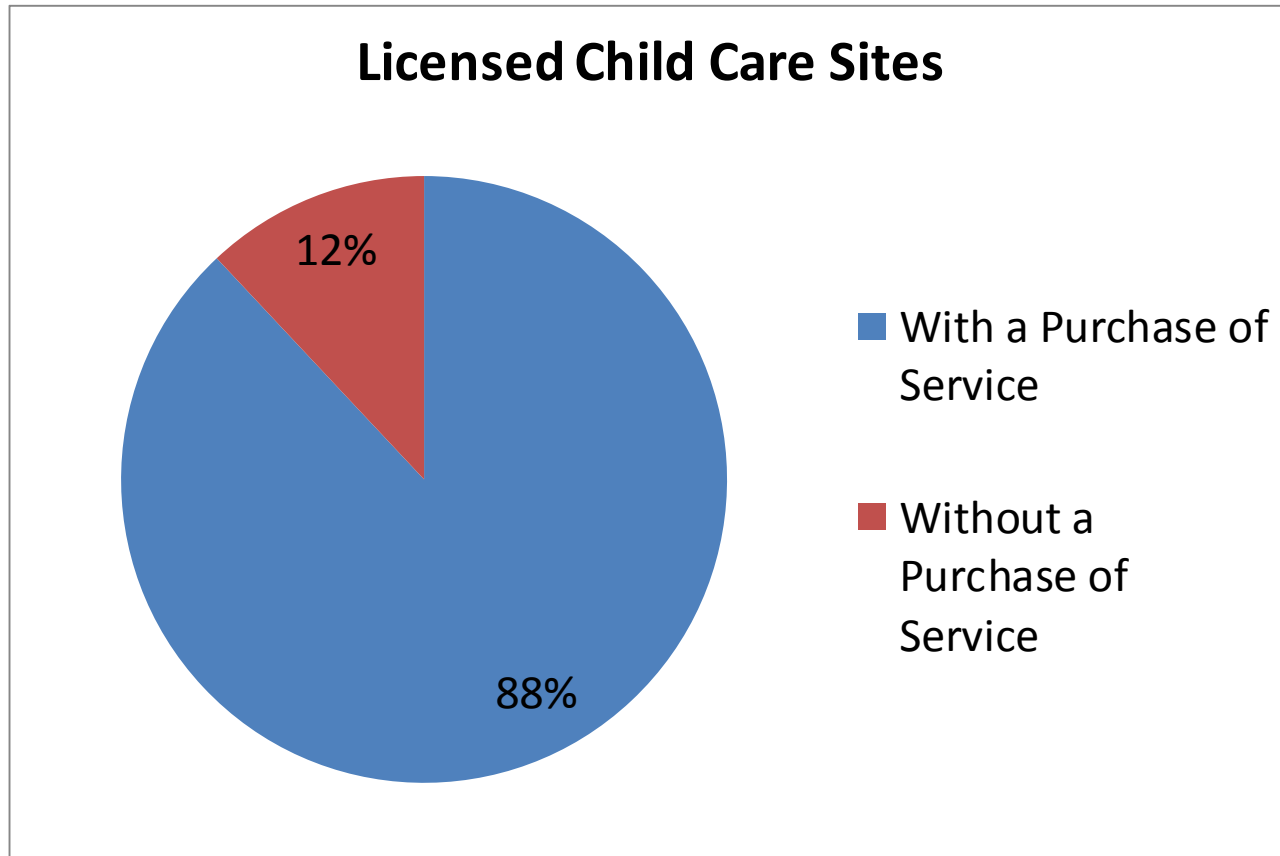
Social Services Branch plans and directs administration of:

- ❑ Child Care Subsidies
- ❑ Special Needs Resourcing(EIS)
- ❑ Other service supports for the early learning community

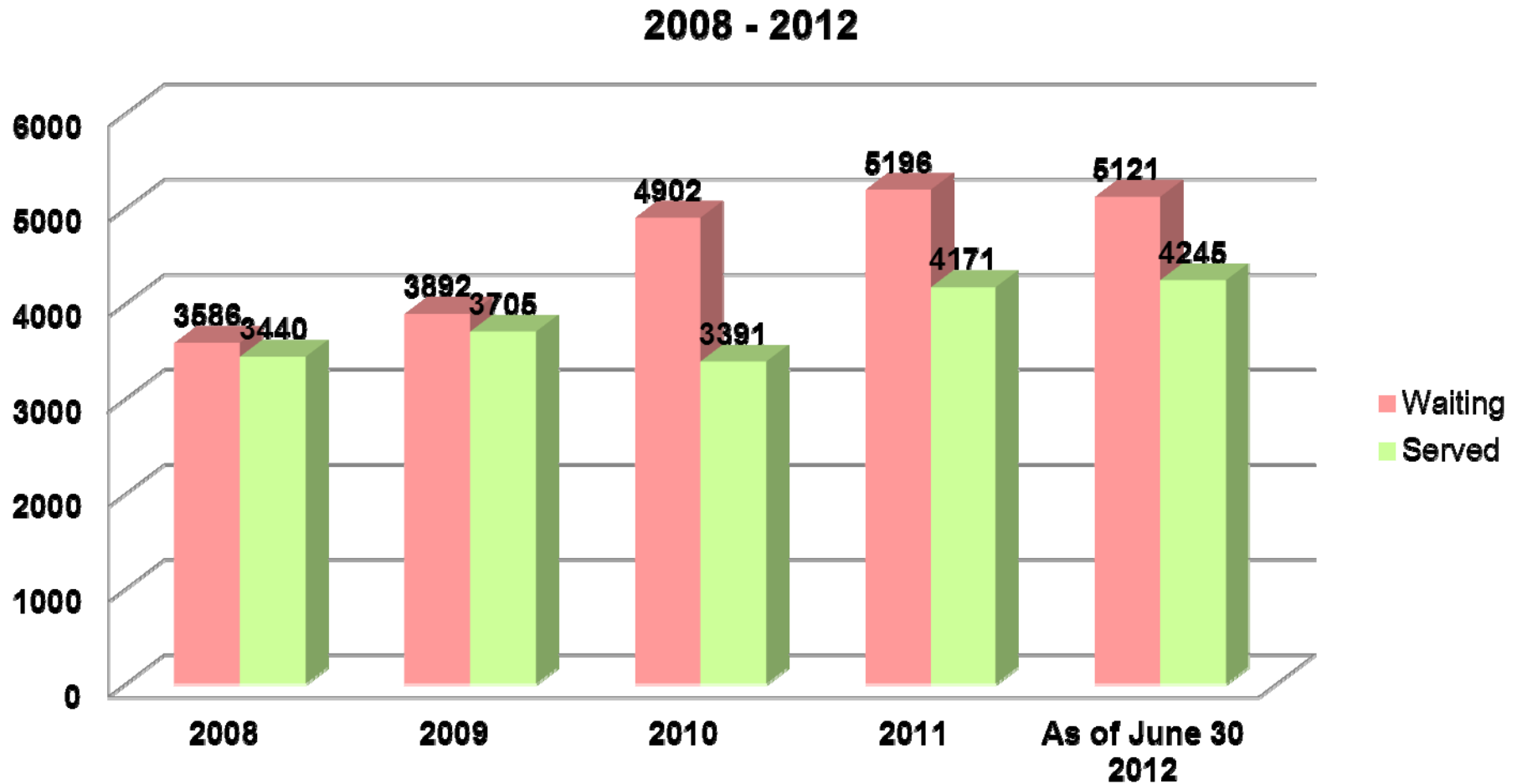
Child Care Services Delivered



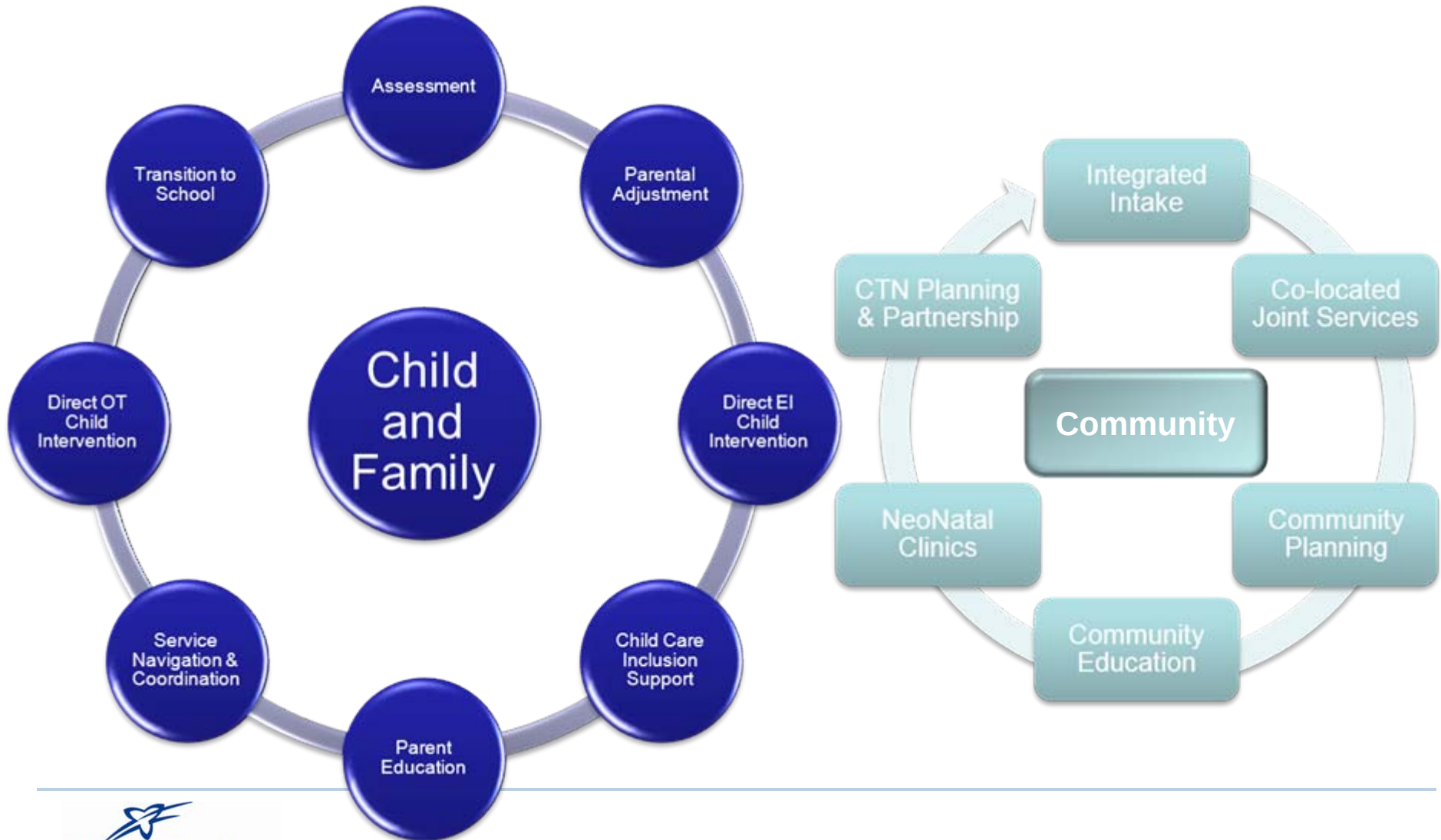
York Region Service System



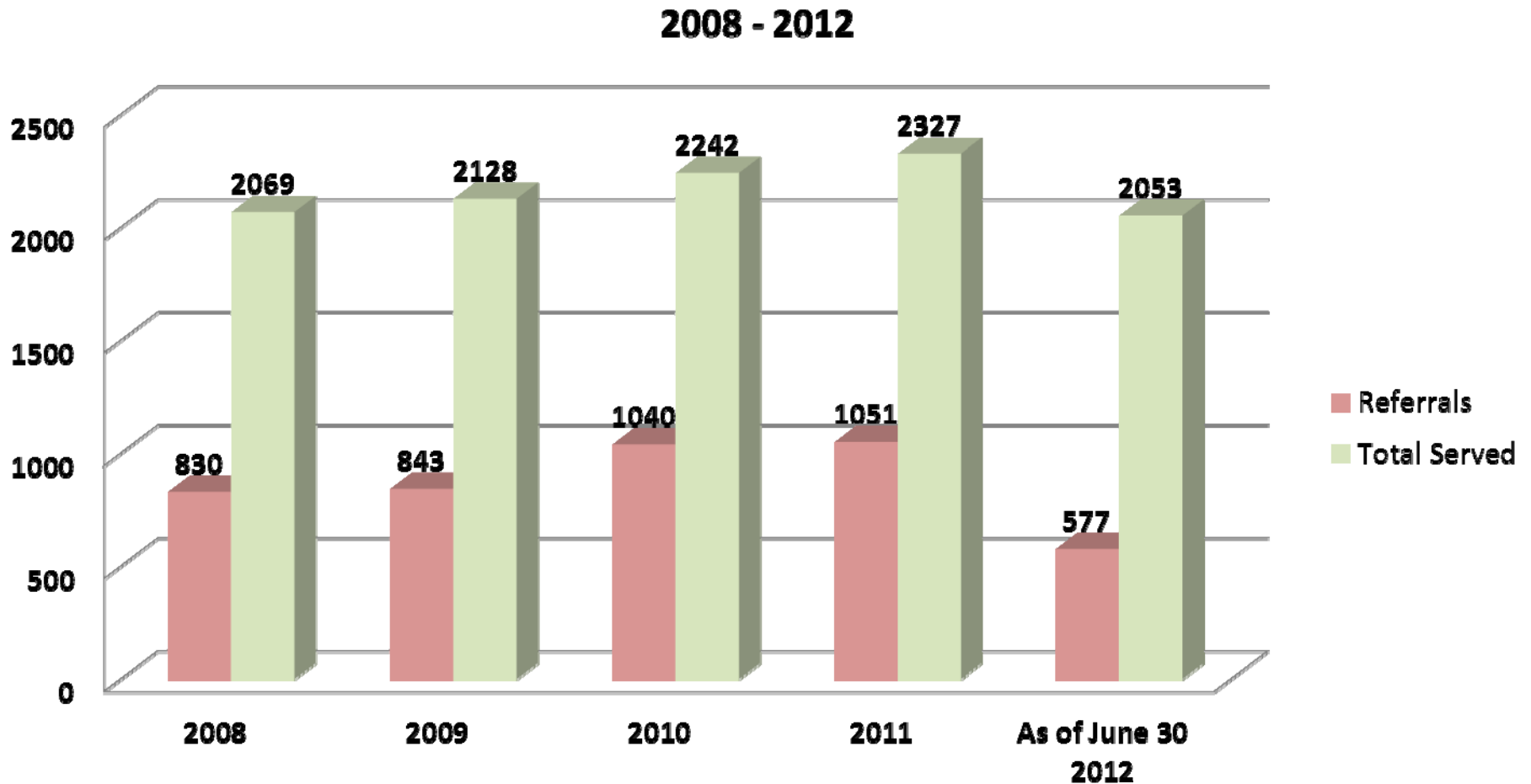
Child Care Services – Growth in Demand and Service



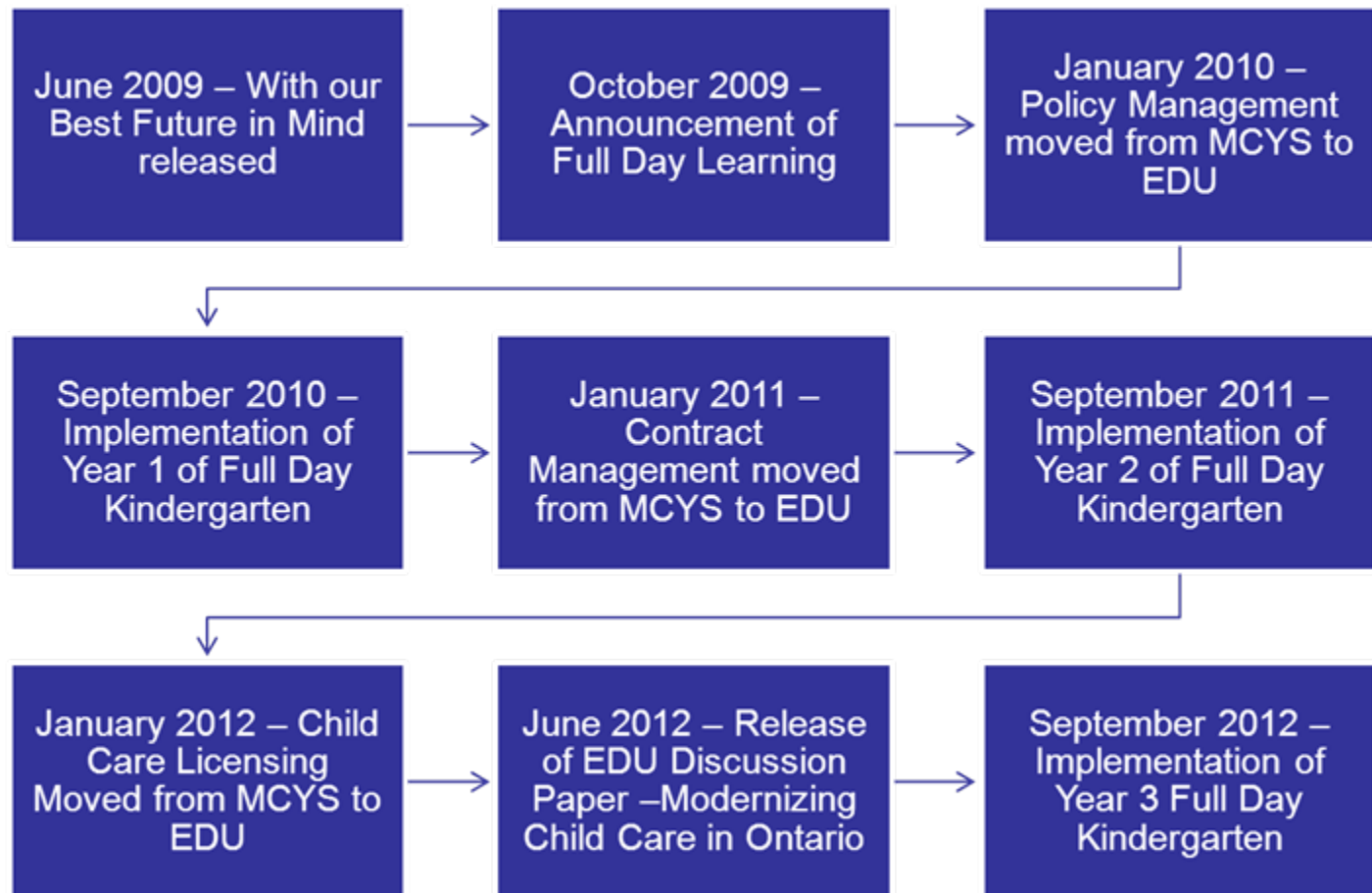
EIS & Services Delivered



EIS – Growth in Demand and Service



Recent Changes to the Child Care System



What has changed in the Child Care System between 2009 & 2012

- ❑ Municipal child care system managers now report to Ministry of Education
- ❑ Full Day Kindergarten(FDK) Program now exists
- ❑ Every FDK school must provide a before and after school program
- ❑ More intensive system manager role for municipalities as liaison between school boards and child care community
- ❑ Increased focus on service provision to child care in the community for children 0 – 3.8 years of age
- ❑ Increased focus on EIS service provision during after school hours

What has not changed in the Child Care System between 2009 & 2012

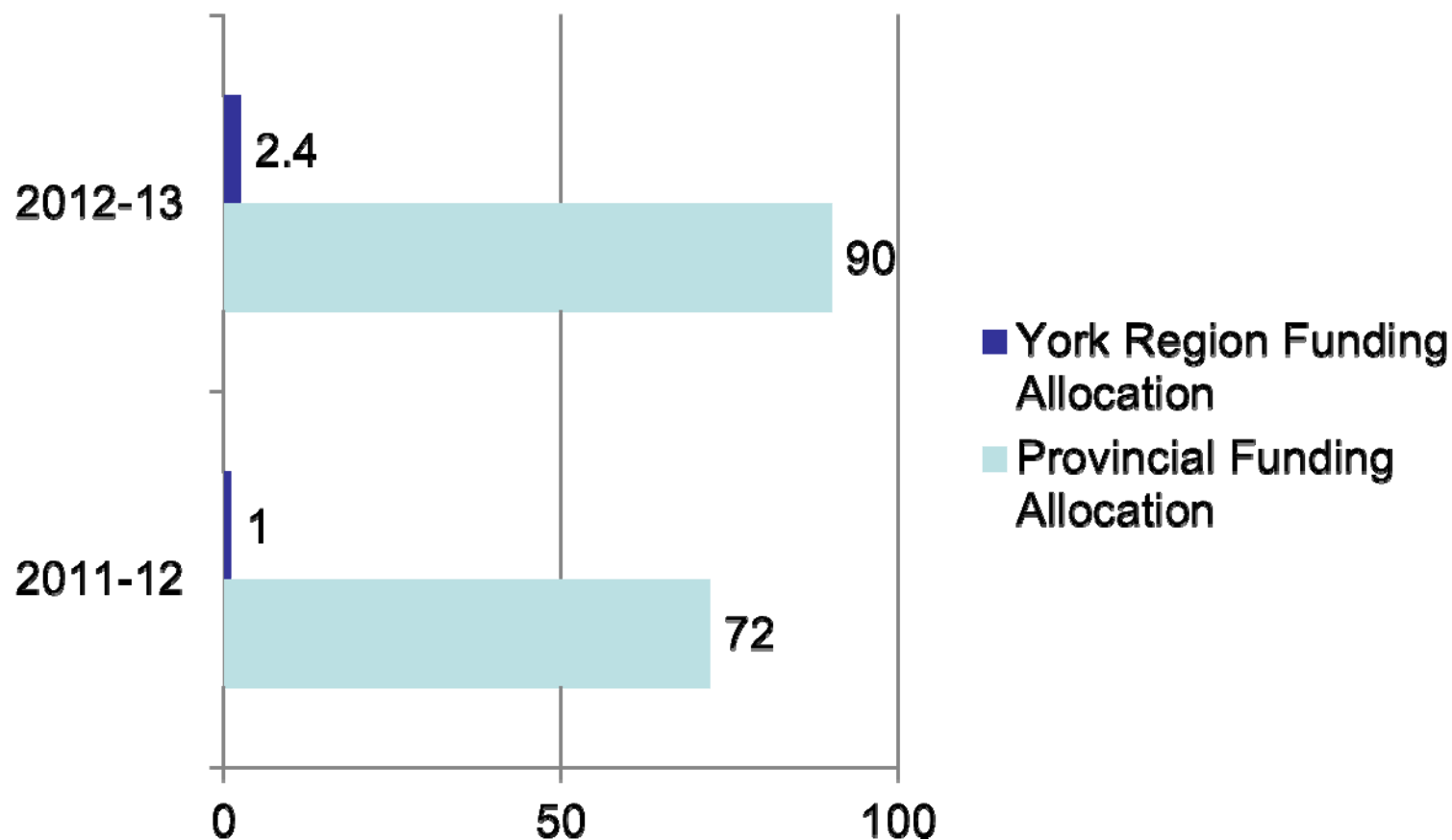
- ❑ Service System Manager role is still responsibility of York Region
- ❑ Licensed child care continues to exist in schools and in the community
- ❑ EIS continues to be provided in an integrated service delivery model
- ❑ There continues to be service pressures in child care and EIS

Impact on Child Care System

Impacts on the child care system are minimal so far however licensed child care operators not located in schools are facing:

- ❑ Increased vacancy rates
- ❑ Increased costs in order to serve younger age groups (infants to 3.8 years of age)
- ❑ Increased financial viability concerns

Provincial Transition Funding



Modernizing Child Care in Ontario is the newest step in reform

Provincial discussion paper, *Modernizing Child Care in Ontario*, released in June 2012 which provided:

- ❑ Long term vision for child care
- ❑ Five principles to guide the vision
- ❑ Medium term objectives and action areas for the next three years
- ❑ Questions for communities to answer about how best to achieve the vision

Modernizing Child Care in Ontario

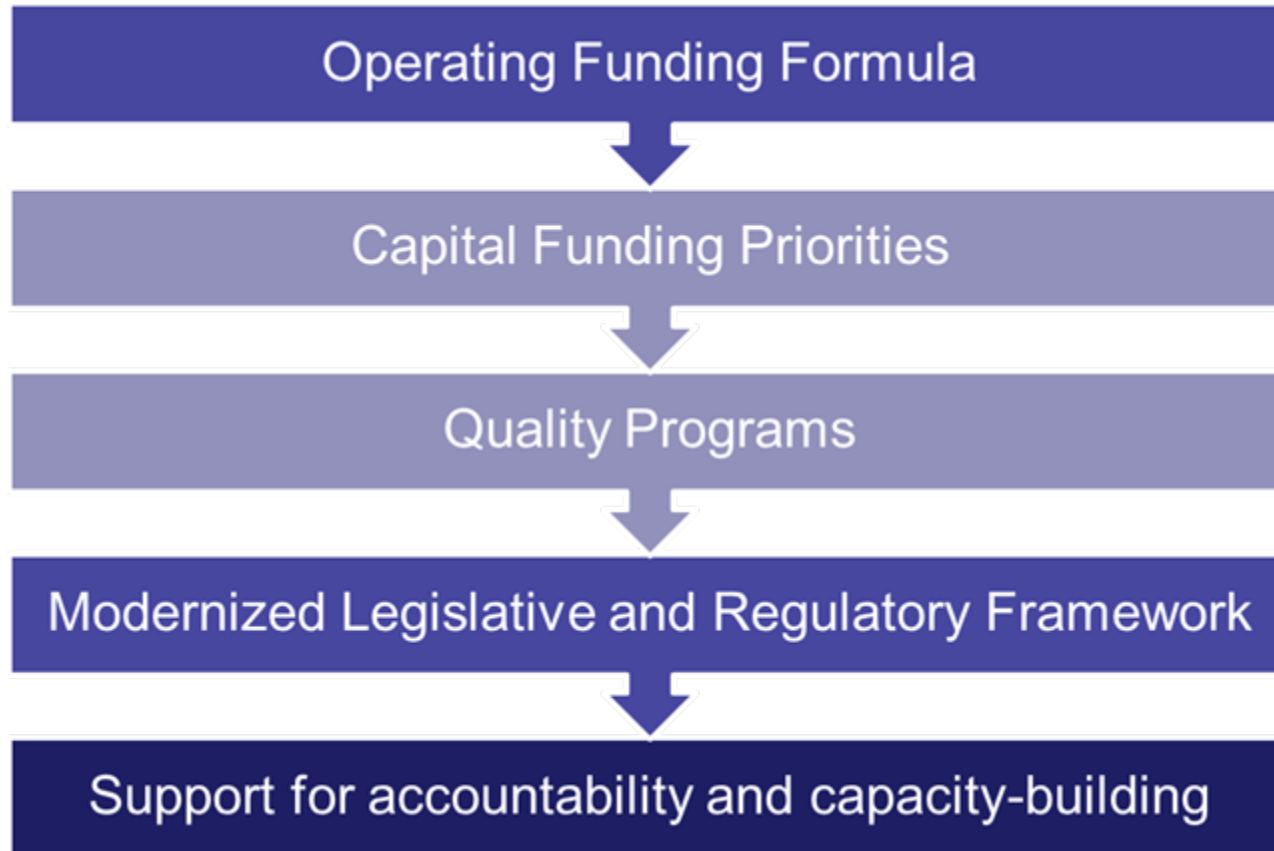
Long Term Vision:

***“To build a high quality, accessible and co-ordinated
early learning system
for children before they start school
and for school age children”***

Five major principles that guide the vision



Areas for action over the next three years

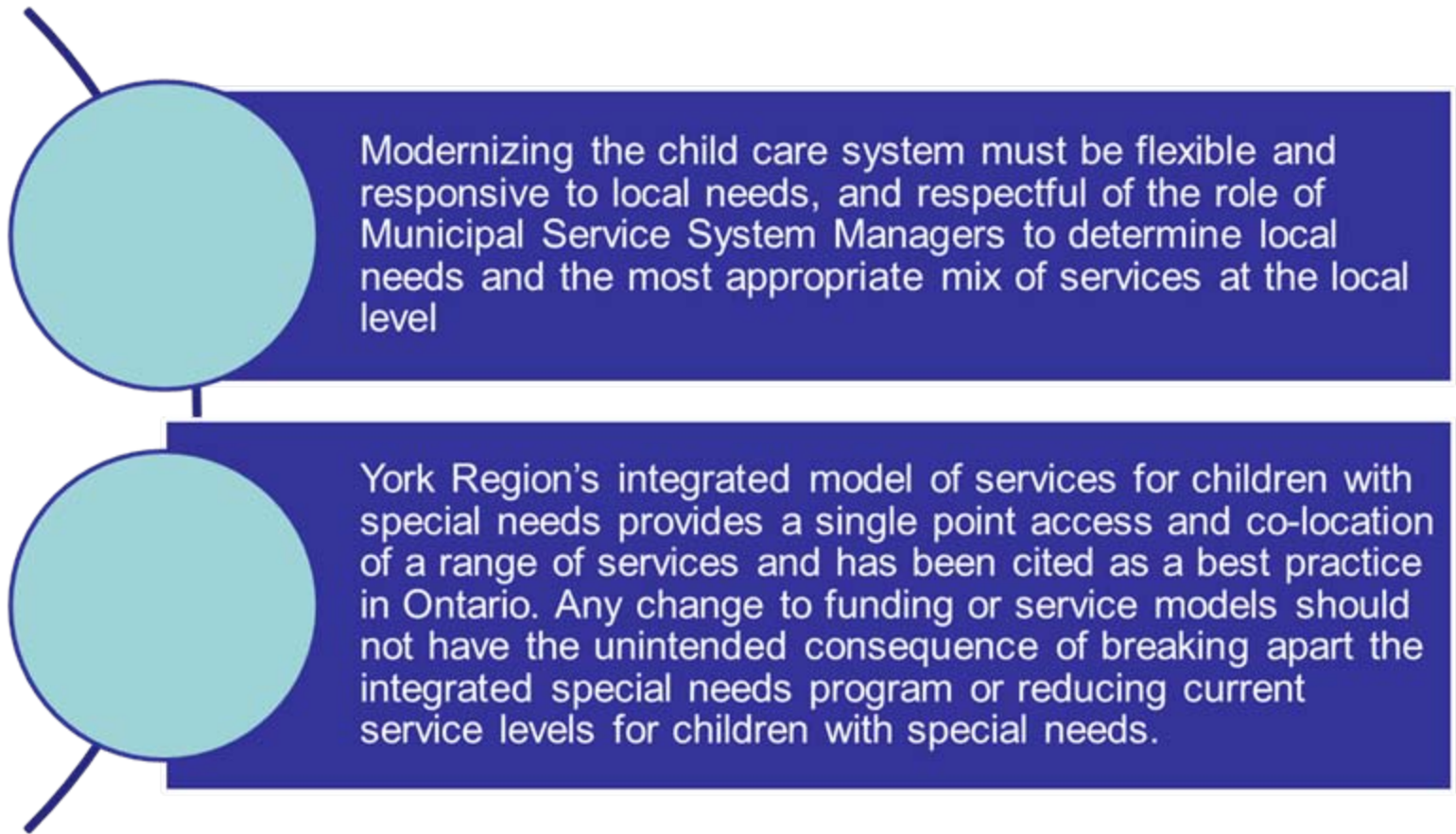


Region wide Community Consultation on Child Care and EIS

Consultations completed August –
September 2012

- ❑ 16 consultations and focus groups
- ❑ Close to 300 participants including child care operators, parents, community partners
- ❑ OMSSA consultation and feedback
- ❑ EDU Funding Model Working Group

Recommendations from York Region



Recommendations from York Region

-  The new funding formula should be flexible and responsive to local need, maintain system capacity while maximizing the use of existing resources and should not incur a cost to the municipality
-  Capital funding priorities should occur through the leadership of municipalities to allow for streamlined, co-ordinated collaborative planning approaches that support local communities and access to services for residents
-  In partnership with communities, the province must develop clear and consistent provincial quality expectations and standards, which are inclusive of needs of diverse communities and children with special needs, and are supported by resources and ongoing training for parents and child care professionals.
-  The province should improve clarity, consistency and updated legislation that supports modern realities. Resources to encourage increased understanding of how to choose and provide equality early learning programs will also be needed.
-  Outcomes and service gaps need to be identified in order to service plan effectively. CMSMs/DSSABs can provide a key role in gathering and producing data on behalf of the child care community, in consultation with stakeholders to support planning of local services

Modernization of Child Care – What We Know

- ❑ Anticipate more information and future action areas as the Ministry synthesizes responses
- ❑ There will be a greater role for Service System Managers
- ❑ New Funding Formula will be developed
- ❑ New Framework for Children with Special Needs will be developed

Modernization of Child Care – What We Don't Know

- ❑ Impact of the new Funding Formula
- ❑ Impact of the new framework for Children with Special Needs
- ❑ Impact of Year 4 and 5 Full Day Kindergarten implementation on community licensed child care
- ❑ Specific timelines for implementation of activities related to the identified action areas
- ❑ Funding allocations to support transition of the child care system for 2013 and 2014

Where Child Care Services and EIS Fit



Next Steps

Request:

- ❑ Receive for information and share with OMSSA and AMO

Next Steps:

- ❑ Continue to report back on all outcomes of reforms and impacts as they move forward

Discussion Paper



Modernizing Child Care in Ontario



*Sharing Conversations,
Strengthening Partnerships,
Working Together*



This discussion paper is available online at Ontario's Regulatory Registry website: www.ontariocanada.com/registry. Written feedback on the content of this paper can be provided via the registry, by email to CCGE_modernization@ontario.ca, or by regular mail to:

Child Care Modernization
c/o Early Learning Division
Ministry of Education
900 Bay Street, 24th floor Mowat Block
Toronto, ON M7A 1L2

We value diverse cultural, linguistic, geographic and ability perspectives, and welcome comments from all individuals and groups, including those from First Nations, Métis, Inuit, francophone, and northern, rural and remote communities.

This publication is also available on the Ministry of Education's website, at www.ontario.ca/edu.

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*Working towards a high-quality,
accessible and coordinated early
learning and care system for all
children in Ontario*

Early learning and child care are crucial to Ontario's success. High-quality child care programs benefit children by providing enriching early learning experiences that promote future well-being. What's more, the sustainability and growth of the economy depends on the strength of our workforce, and many parents and families rely on child care in order to work, go to school or participate in retraining.

Ontario is at the forefront of a transformation in early learning. Full-day kindergarten (FDK) marks the biggest innovation in our education system in a generation and positions Ontario as a leader in North America. FDK is designed to give children a stronger start in school and in life by helping them to develop valuable skills that give them every opportunity to succeed.

The evidence is clear that child care, like FDK, plays a key role in promoting healthy development during the most critical years of a child's life. As FDK is implemented, it is clear that we need to build on the advice of Dr. Charles Pascal and develop a comprehensive vision and plan for child care that works with FDK. We now have the opportunity to take a closer look at child care and to work with partners to deliver a higher-quality, more accessible and coordinated system that better supports children and families.

Strengthening the child care sector will be challenging in a climate of fiscal restraint. Over the next three years, the process of modernization will not be about expanding the current system. It will be about stabilizing and transforming the system to enable higher-quality, consistent services that can support growth in the future. As we undertake this transformation, it is important that we acknowledge our strengths and weaknesses, share our knowledge and experiences, and work together to develop achievable and sustainable solutions that put children and families first.

Putting Children and Families First

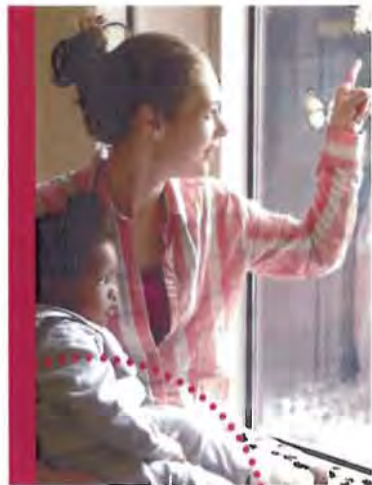
Since 2003, the Government of Ontario has made great strides in providing early learning and child care services that support young children and their families. During this time, the government introduced the Best Start program and has taken important steps towards creating more integrated children's services and Best Start Child and Family Centres. The government also established the College of Early Childhood Educators (the first self-regulatory body in Canada overseeing a professional membership of early childhood educators). More recently, the government launched full-day kindergarten, with full implementation expected by 2014. The government's commitment to modernize the child care system is the next step in the process of transformation.

The child care system in Ontario has many strengths. Every day across the province, thousands of children and their families receive services and supports from capable and caring child care providers in diverse settings. The child care system is supported by constructive relationships between the provincial government, municipalities and service system managers, First Nations, child care providers, early childhood experts, and parents and families who work hard every day to put children first. Many of these parties are striving to break down barriers and establish connections, participate in local planning and find innovative ways to meet the unique needs of diverse communities.



Nonetheless, we have heard from partners and stakeholders that we need a comprehensive vision and plan for child care that works with FDK. Stakeholders have told us that there are challenges with the current funding system and that the legislation (the Day Nurseries Act) governing child care is outdated and needs to be revised to reflect current evidence and experience. We also know that program quality varies across the province and greater supports are required to promote consistency and foster the healthy development of children. Finally, accountability within the sector must be strengthened, and better access to local data is required to inform decision-making and measure success.

The Government of Ontario is committed to working with partners to modernize the child care system. This paper is meant to introduce a conversation about the long-term vision for child care in Ontario, as well as targeted medium-term objectives for the next three years. The conversation is intended to include service system managers and First Nations partners, child care operators, children's service providers, registered early childhood educators, school boards, parents and families, as well as others interested in the child care system in Ontario.



Healthy development starts at home

- ♦ The government recognizes the primary and fundamental role of parents, guardians and families and strives to incorporate this fundamental recognition into our work. This paper, however, focuses on the child care that children receive when they are not in the care of their families.
- ♦ To recognize and support parents and families as primary caregivers, we will work to provide them with information and resources about the types of care available so that they may make informed decisions when choosing care for their children.

A Long-Term Vision for Child Care

The Government of Ontario's long-term vision is to build a high-quality, accessible and coordinated early learning and child care system for children before they start school and for school-aged children. The system will focus on learning in safe and caring play-based environments, on healthy physical, social, emotional and cognitive development, and on early identification and intervention for children in need of supports. Where possible, services will be located in or linked with schools to enhance seamlessness for children and families.

Guiding Principles

Five major principles guide the long-term vision for early learning and child care in Ontario:

Support and choice for children and families

The healthy development and well-being of children should always come first. Child care services and supports should be convenient, and parents and communities should have a range of quality care options. Parents and families should have the tools to make informed decisions as they choose the type of care that best suits their needs.

Commitment to quality programs for all children

Program quality must be a priority across service settings. Children should benefit from programs that support learning, development and seamlessness between child care and school. Programs should respect diversity, equity and inclusion and should value the language and cultural needs of different communities. Child care settings should also be inclusive of and accessible to children with a range of abilities. In addition, registered early childhood educators and child care providers in the licensed sector should be well trained and supported, while unregulated/informal providers should have access to information and resources to promote program quality.

Efficient funding formula

Funding must be transparent and informed by evidence and experience to support consistency in approach, accessibility for families, and quality for children and child care operators.

Supportive legislation and regulations

A modern legislative framework for early learning and child care is needed to enhance safety and quality and to build connections between services for children before, during and after school. The legislative framework must be based on contemporary evidence regarding safety, quality, compliance and enforcement and should be applicable across diverse communities.

Evidence-based decision-making and reporting

Decision-making must be informed by evidence and experience and should be driven by an enhanced system of data collection and public reporting that involves both system- and child-level data.



Proposed Action Plan for the Medium Term

Transformation takes time, and a measured approach will ensure we build on the strengths of today's child care system. This discussion paper focuses on medium-term actions that the government can take over the next three years. These proposals emphasize maintaining and improving service in the current child care system rather than growing the system through the creation of new child care spaces or additional subsidies.

With the long-term vision for child care in mind, the government has identified five key areas for action over the next three years:

1. Operating funding formula
2. Capital funding priorities
3. Quality programs
4. Modernized legislative and regulatory framework
5. Support for accountability and capacity-building

1) OPERATING FUNDING FORMULA

Current Landscape

In Ontario, child care is supported by provincial, municipal and federal government funding, as well as parent fees. Consolidated Municipal Service Managers (CMSMs)/District Social Services Administration Boards (DSSABs) and First Nations child care administrators manage and/or deliver child care services at the local level.

Currently, the government provides funding to CMSMs/DSSABs and First Nations in a number of areas. These include child care fee subsidies for eligible families, wage subsidies to enhance salaries and benefits of staff to reduce the costs of child care to all families, and special needs resourcing funds to support the inclusion of children with special needs in licensed child care settings. This funding is provided under the Day Nurseries Act and the Ministry of Community and Social Services Act.

The majority of child care funding allocations provided to CMSMs/DSSABs are outdated. This has created inconsistencies resulting in wait lists in some communities and surplus funds in others. Funding among First Nations communities is also outdated, and federal funding to First Nations communities has been capped since 1995.



Objective and Discussion Questions

To modernize the approach to operating funding within the next three years, the government will develop and implement a new, more transparent approach to funding that responds to demand for services, helps stabilize fees and improves reliability of child care, to better support child care operators and parents.

The government's recent investment in operating funding over the next three years, included in the 2012 Budget, will help to mitigate immediate pressure in the sector as child care operators adapt to the implementation of FDK. A new approach to allocating funds will help to maximize the effectiveness of this investment.

Creating a new funding formula will increase transparency and allocate funds based on a current assessment of need. Streamlining funding would provide service system managers and First Nations with greater flexibility and improve efficiency of government resources. Aligning First Nations child care funding under the Day Nurseries Act would create a simpler, more flexible approach.

During the process of revising the approach to funding, the government will work with service system managers and First Nations to increase their ability to respond to short-term pressures (e.g., by providing greater flexibility to manage allocations between funding lines).

To develop a new approach to funding that supports child care operators and families and maximizes current resources, the government seeks your feedback on the following key questions:

- ♦ How can the approach to child care funding be revised to enable more transparent and efficient allocations to municipal service system managers and First Nations?
- ♦ What elements should be considered when developing a new funding formula (e.g., demographics, demand, costs)?
- ♦ How can current funding be streamlined or consolidated to improve flexibility and efficiency?



2) CAPITAL FUNDING PRIORITIES

Current Landscape

As full-day kindergarten is introduced, some child care operators are facing a loss of revenue as four- and five-year-olds move to child care programs located in schools before and after FDK. Many child care operators want to adapt their programs for younger children, but have limited financial capacity to undertake the renovations necessary to meet the licensing requirements for younger age groups.

The evidence is clear that minimizing transitions for young children and providing a single point of access for early childhood services benefits the whole family. Schools are an important public resource from this perspective because they are easy for many families to access.¹

Under Best Start, the government pursued a “schools-first” approach when creating new child care spaces, whereby schools were the preferred location. As a result, almost half of Ontario’s child care spaces are located in schools. Most of these spaces currently serve children over the age of four, but as operators adapt their programs to work with FDK, spaces can be redesigned to serve younger age groups.

Objective and Discussion Questions

To support child care operators as they adapt to FDK over the next three years, the government will pursue a capital funding approach that emphasizes child care spaces in schools in order to increase seamlessness for children and convenience for families.

Moving forward, the government will support a schools-first capital funding approach. This approach will help ensure seamlessness for children and families while maximizing government investment in public infrastructure. A schools-first approach will help child care operators in schools to retrofit and convert existing child care spaces to serve younger age groups. It will also help community-based child care operators relocate to schools.

In communities where community-based child care is important to meet the needs of children and families, capital funding will also be available to support community-based operators.

¹ J.F. Mustard and M. McCain, *Early Years Study: Reversing the Real Brain Drain* (Toronto: Government of Ontario, 1998).

To implement our approach to capital funding, the government seeks your feedback on the following key questions:

- ✦ How can the Ministry of Education facilitate collaboration and joint planning among school boards, service system managers and child care operators so they can plan and manage this approach?
- ✦ What supporting policies are required to ensure the success of a schools-first child care policy (e.g., long-term planning on space for school-based operators, reasonable accommodation costs, facilities, and other shared space issues)?
- ✦ Where school-based space does not meet community needs, are there additional capital tools that could support community-based child care operators?



3) QUALITY PROGRAMS

Current Landscape

Research indicates that quality program elements, such as enriching interactions, experiences and environments, are important to support children's cognitive, physical, social and emotional development. In Ontario, the Day Nurseries Act sets out required health and safety standards, but does not provide substantive direction on quality program elements.

Child care operators use a variety of program approaches, and program quality varies across the province. Some service system managers set program requirements for child care operators that receive financial support or serve subsidized families, but others do not.

Research demonstrates that children with special needs benefit from inclusive child care environments. In Ontario, special needs resourcing funds are provided to help children with special needs access licensed child care settings. Because local practices vary across the province, inconsistencies exist with respect to the supports available, including the types of service, the intensity and duration of service, and the ages of children who are eligible.

Objective and Discussion Questions

Over the next three years, the government will work to enhance program quality and consistency by developing mandatory provincial program guidelines for child care operators. We will also develop an updated framework to support children with special needs and offer new resources and information for parents and providers.

Provincial program guidelines would build on the work of the Best Start Expert Panel on Early Learning and the principles outlined in Ontario's Early Learning Framework (<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/childcare/oelf/>). Given that families and communities across Ontario have unique language and cultural needs, the guidelines would be designed to complement a variety of program approaches and would value cultural, linguistic and community diversity. Guidelines would be also be aligned with the draft *Full-Day Early Learning Kindergarten Program* and *Extended Day Program* documents to reflect a developmentally appropriate commitment to play-based and inquiry-based learning, while helping to ensure continuity across early learning settings. In addition, program guidelines could emphasize the importance of physical activity and health and wellness. The government would also develop tools, resources and training opportunities to support child care operators and caregivers as they implement these quality initiatives.

To better meet the needs of children with diverse abilities in licensed child care settings, the government will review and update elements of the special needs resourcing program. These elements could include eligibility criteria, program expectations, administration, scope of practice and qualifications for resource consultants, and supports related to the transition to school.



To strengthen partnerships with parents and families, the government is also interested in building on existing resources and initiatives, such as the Ministry of Education's website on licensed child care, that help parents and families make informed decisions.

To support continued advancement of program quality in child care settings across Ontario, the government seeks your feedback on the following key questions:

- ♦ Based on your experience and knowledge of existing research and evidence, how can provincial program guidelines support program quality?
- ♦ How can program quality be demonstrated and connected to the licensing process?
- ♦ What additional tools or professional development opportunities would be helpful to support ongoing quality improvement?
- ♦ How can we ensure that program guidelines meet the distinct needs of diverse communities?
- ♦ What components of the special needs resourcing program should be reviewed and streamlined (e.g., eligibility criteria, services provided, qualifications for resource consultants)?
- ♦ What resources about program quality could the government develop to help parents make choices about care?



4) MODERNIZED LEGISLATIVE AND REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

Current Landscape

The Day Nurseries Act (DNA) and its regulations comprise the legislative framework governing child care in Ontario. This framework provides for the health and safety of children by setting out provincial standards for licensed centre-based and home-based programs. The DNA was introduced in 1946, and licensing standards have not undergone a thorough review since 1983. A review of the framework is needed to ensure it reflects current research and practices that promote quality, health and safety, while meeting the diverse needs of Ontario families and providers.

Licensed Child Care in Ontario

The current definitions within the DNA are broadly stated and could be improved by clarifying which programs require a licence and which do not (e.g., homework/tutoring clubs, summer camps). There are also differences related to private schools under the DNA, as well as different requirements for regulated home-based care providers and unregulated home-based caregivers in the informal sector.

Standards under the current legislative framework related to procedures, equipment, training and professional development are outdated and not aligned with current research and practice. The framework also lacks provisions recognizing the growing maturity of older children.

Informal Child Care in Ontario

The DNA regulates licensed child care programs, but only a fraction of children receive care in licensed settings. Given that the DNA does not apply to informal care, there are no provincial standards for health and safety in the informal care sector. Because many services in Ontario are regulated to protect consumers, parents may sometimes have inconsistent expectations about the protection of children in unlicensed/unregulated home-based care.

Objective and Discussion Questions

To put the child care sector on the path towards modernization over the next three years, the government will propose legislative and regulatory amendments to reflect up-to-date evidence and experience and to support health, safety and quality for children, parents and providers.

Strengthening Licensed Child Care in Ontario

The government will review the regulatory standards for child care and ensure they support quality and consistency across the province and are harmonized with standards in other legislation. We seek your feedback on how to improve consistency and clarity in the DNA. We also seek feedback on how to modernize the DNA's standards to enhance health, safety and quality in licensed child care programs.

Given the government's recent commitment to provide after-school programs in schools for six-to-12-year-olds once full-day kindergarten is implemented, we are also interested in investigating ways to support child care operators that deliver programs for older children. For example, a specific licensing category could be created for older age groups that builds on the strengths of a recreation program model and recognizes the different needs and interests of older children while maintaining or improving program quality.



Child care operators in some regions, such as northern, rural and remote communities, face challenges related to small and dispersed populations, which can result in low enrolment. We seek your advice on opportunities to support these operators while working to ensure program quality is maintained. Potential actions could include greater flexibility for family groupings or mixed age groupings, as well as different allowances for space configurations.

Similarly, we seek input on opportunities to support licensed home-based child care providers. For example, providers could potentially be permitted to care for more children in one setting where there is more than one provider, provided program quality is maintained.

Improving Safeguards in the Informal Child Care Sector

We recognize that many parents choose informal child care arrangements with family members such as grandparents. These arrangements are personal in nature and the government has no intention of regulating them.

Where programs are delivered in the informal sector, we seek feedback about how to assist unregulated home-based caregivers to deliver quality programs and increase the safety of children. For example, the creation of a registry could help the government to communicate with caregivers in the informal/unregulated sector and to provide them with information about program quality, health and safety.

To support the modernization of the current legislative framework, the government seeks your feedback on the following key questions:

- ♦ How should standards be updated to improve health, safety and overall quality in child care?
- ♦ How can the government reduce duplication and overlap in requirements for licensed child care providers?
- ♦ How can the government more effectively harmonize standards across legislation as well as regulatory requirements in child care (e.g., numbers/ages of children in licensed vs. unlicensed home care, clarification of programs that do and do not require licences)?
- ♦ As the government looks to deliver on the commitment to provide on-site after-school programs for six-to-12-year-olds, should we consider a new licensing category for older children that builds on the strengths of a recreation program model (e.g., different program requirements for older children, participation in recreation-focused programs)?
- ♦ How could new licensing approaches support home- and centre-based care in smaller, rural and remote communities (e.g., permitting home-based providers to care for more children where there is more than one provider, providing greater flexibility for family or mixed age groupings and space configurations)?
- ♦ How can the government foster quality in informal home-based child care?



5) SUPPORT FOR ACCOUNTABILITY AND CAPACITY-BUILDING

Current Landscape

Data collection and monitoring are critical for public accountability and reporting, and can aid in early identification and intervention to support children with a range of abilities. Currently, the government collects data from those child care operators that have funding agreements with service system managers. This data is primarily focused on inputs and outputs, such as the number of children in a program and how much money is spent. This information should be more clearly linked to program goals and outcomes for children to help ensure that programs are reaching their intended objectives and services are meeting demand.



Accountability and enforcement measures are based on prevention-focused strategies or “last resort” measures, such as revoking licences, which can be disruptive to families. Moving forward, licensing procedures should be designed to reinforce quality and recognize high-performance operators.

Not-for-profit child care centres, which comprise a large portion of centres in Ontario, are governed by volunteer and parent boards. These boards are committed to the best interests of children and families, but may not be well supported in their roles and may have differing levels of expertise. In addition, registered early childhood educators (RECEs) do not have consistent opportunities to expand their educational qualifications or enhance their leadership capacity.

Objective and Discussion Questions

As the government modernizes child care over the next three years, we will improve data collection, enhance licensing procedures and develop supports for parents and operators to help us better evaluate outcomes, support sector capacity, reduce duplication and improve accountability.

Data Collection, Evaluation and Reporting

To better evaluate outcomes and support planning and decision-making, the government is pursuing new methods for collecting information. For instance, the government is interested in collecting information directly from child care operators in order to have information on the entire licensed sector. The government is also considering the introduction of a common provincial child

care registration form and a tool for developmental screening. Similarly, the extension of the Ontario Education Number (OEN) to include children in licensed child care settings could support the government's objectives to set targets for program improvements and measure progress using child-level data.

Licensing Compliance

A move towards risk-based licensing could enable a licensing and monitoring system based on objective criteria such as licensing history. This approach aligns with the government's Open for Business initiative and could encourage compliance by recognizing high-performing child care operators with consistent compliance records. It would also allow for more effective resource allocation to support the health and safety of children in licensed child care.

Sector Leadership

The government is interested in developing a strategy that promotes informed decision-making by supervisors and not-for-profit boards. Supervisors and board members could be supported by training and resources to strengthen their administrative and leadership skills.

To support accountability and capacity-building in the child care system, the government seeks your feedback on the following key questions:

- ♦ How can risk assessments help the government use licensing resources more effectively, encourage compliance and reward high-performing child care operators?
- ♦ How can the government encourage quality and licensing compliance (e.g., administrative orders, administrative monetary penalties)?
- ♦ What tools can support program and administrative leadership in child care (e.g., for centre directors and staff, volunteer not-for-profit boards)?
- ♦ How can the government support the use of evaluative tools in licensed child care, including common registration and screening tools, as well as the Ontario Education Number?
- ♦ What information should be collected from operators annually in order to provide a regular cycle of public reporting on the child care system in Ontario (e.g., hours of operators, parent fees, staff compensation)?



Continuing the Conversation

The key questions in this paper will begin our conversation with the early learning and child care community of Ontario so that together we can improve and modernize our child care system.

Thank you for taking the time to reflect on these questions and share your feedback and advice. We appreciate the work that you do every day in the best interests of children and families. We look forward to continued collaboration as we work towards a high-quality, accessible and coordinated early learning and care system for all children in Ontario.





Modernizing Child Care in Ontario

Sharing Conversations, Strengthening Partnerships, Working Together Discussion Paper

Response from The Regional Municipality of York

September 2012

YORK REGION'S RESPONSE TO SPECIFIC QUESTIONS WITH REGARD TO THE FIVE KEY AREAS FOR ACTION

Discussion Topic #1 Operating Funding Formula

1.1 Government of Ontario Three Year Objective

- Develop and implement a new, more transparent approach to funding that responds to demand for services, helps stabilize fees and improve reliability of child care

1.2 Analysis – Participant Feedback

Participants showed strong support for a more transparent approach to funding and proposed a range of demographic data/elements to include when developing a new funding model. They made several suggestions to enable the streamlining and consolidation of funding. Concern was expressed that a change in allocation should not result in any child being terminated from child care services.

1.3 York Region's Recommendations Regarding Operating Funding Formula

Taking into consideration the feedback from participants and York Region's perspective as the service system manager the following recommendations are made:

- The new approach to funding should be flexible and responsive to local needs and capacity and respect the CMSM/DSSAB role as service system manager to determine local needs and the most appropriate mix of services at the local level
- The development of the new approach to funding needs to be built on current partnerships between levels of government and support the vision of a unified early years' system
- The new approach to funding will maintain the overall capacity of the existing system and maximize the use of existing resources
- The new funding approach will not incur a cost to the Consolidated Municipal Service Manager (CMSM)/District Social Services Administration Board (DSSAD) greater than the current cost share i.e. any increase in allocation will be cost shared 100% by the province
- Any decrease in allocation will not occur without the implementation of a mitigation strategy to address the outcome of any potential decline in service levels and limit the transfer of financial risk.

1.4 Specific Feedback to Individual Questions on the Operating Funding Formula

The comments made most consistently by participants concerning the three key questions about the Operating Funding Formula are summarized in the following table:

Key Questions Posed by the Government of Ontario	Summary of Participants' Comments
How can the approach to child care funding be revised to enable more transparent and efficient allocations to municipal service system managers and First Nations?	- Publish a. the allocations by CMSM/DSSAB/First Nations; b. the overall provincial allotment ; c. the evidence-based formula used to calculate allocations . - Support equitable distribution of funding based on community need as identified through demographics and population growth. - Consolidate and streamline funding lines (detail codes), and reporting requirements. - Streamline and rationalize wage subsidy funding. - Provide clarity and direction concerning the funding and role of commercial operators.
What elements should be considered when developing a new funding formula (e.g., demographics, demand, costs)?	- The funding formula should reflect demographics and be flexible enough to allow for changes as demographics change. - When developing the new funding formula the following demographic elements should be considered; a. child population birth to five and six to 12 b. income levels of families with children (income tax data) c. proportion of low income families with children d. proportion of one-parent working families e. proportion of families in which neither English nor French is spoken f. proportion of children with special needs g. availability of licensed child care spaces h. child care rates charged to the public i. urban and rural differences (geographic dispersion) - A formula that results in equitable and consistent distribution. An associated policy that enables redistribution of funding where the allocation is not spent in one CMSM/DSSAB and there are service-pressures in another. - Indexed to reflect increases to the cost of living. - Consolidated funding lines (detail codes) and a formula that enables the maximum utilization

	of funds through financial flexibility. • A mitigation strategy to address the outcome of any subsequent decline in service levels. • Use the provincial income testing thresholds to set fee subsidy wait list priorities so that funding goes to those in most need.
• <i>How can current funding be streamlined or consolidated to improve flexibility and efficiency?</i>	• Decrease funding types, detail codes and associated administrative reporting requirements while maintaining accountability. • Align funding by program type (e.g. operating fee subsidy) versus by funding type (Day Nurseries Act (DNA), ELCC, etc.) and consolidate funding lines (detail codes) in order to maximize the utilization of funds. • Identify and harmonize opportunities for the use of other funding sources to support the system (e.g. Ontario Works (OW), STEP, Advanced Child Care, Learning Earning and Parenting (LEAP), Child Welfare, Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP) etc.). • Increase financial flexibility across funding lines and legislation (e.g. DNA, MCSS Act). • Increase funding flexibility to enable support for training to support quality and to address health and safety concerns etc.

1.5 Other

In the longer term, there was some support for a universal system where early childhood educators (ECEs) are paid on the same scale, established by The Ministry of Education (EDU). In this scenario salaries/pay rates would be standardized and government funded, eliminating the need for a wage subsidy system while ensuring consistency and equality across all providers.

Discussion Topic #2 Capital Funding Priorities

2.1 Government of Ontario Three Year Objective

Pursue a capital funding approach that emphasizes child care spaces in schools in order to increase seamlessness for children and convenience for families-a schools-first capital funding approach.

2.2 Analysis – Participant Feedback

Participants identified several supporting policies to ensure success of a schools first policy including secure and permanent space in schools, access to the same professional development opportunities as elementary school teachers, and streamlined and common approvals across a school site including child care.

Several participants also noted that municipalities are uniquely positioned to bring a variety of stakeholders together to engage in objective, system focussed collaborative planning.

2.3 York Region’s Recommendations Regarding Capital Funding Priorities

Taking into consideration the feedback from participants and York Region’s perspective as the service system manager the following recommendations are made:

- Without a committed public policy concerning fully funded child care, commercial operators will continue to exist. They play a critical role in the child care sector (in York Region approximately 40% of licensed spaces are in commercial centres) therefore the capital funding approach must determine and support the role of the commercial operator with regard to spaces in schools.
- Encouraging more seamless integration by developing policies that allow child care centres and their staff to benefit from the same key supports as schools and examining school boundaries in relation to where centres are will be crucial to success.
- It is critical that the leadership role of the CMSM/DSSAB in the implementation of a streamlined planning approach for the entire child care system, including components that support Full Day Kindergarten (FDK), be clearly identified and acknowledged through policy direction. This leadership role will support local communities and facilitate focussed access to services for local residents.
- This collaborative planning process at the local level is recommended to support a variety of early learning options that recognize local realities such as communities where in school options are not available.
- Development of services at the community level is critical in responding to the needs of communities. The development of community hubs, which include access to a variety of services for children and families, can be effectively managed by Service System Managers and in many cases bridge services that are school based and community based.

2.4 Specific Feedback to individual questions on Capital Funding Priorities

Summary of comments made most consistently by participants concerning the 3 key questions related to Capital Funding Priorities are summarized in the following table:

Key Questions Posed by the Government of Ontario	Summary of a Participants' Responses
a) <i>How can the Ministry of Education facilitate collaboration and joint planning among school boards, service system managers and child care operators so they can plan and manage this approach?</i>	• Identify current models of best practice in the area of collaboration and joint planning. Share and build on these best practices. • Streamline Ministry of Education requirements for child care planning documents to require one collaborative community plan for the sector 0 to 12 rather than multiple plans. • Implement a resource sharing model so that resources and expertise can be shared across schools and the licensed child care sector, especially in areas such as diversity, children with special needs, curriculum, etc. • Align and harmonize legislation to facilitate collaboration between schools and child care programs. Eliminate duplication of paperwork (e.g. one child registration into the system; one fire approval per site versus two different registrations/approvals based on function (school and child care)). • Determine the role of the commercial child care operator with regard to child care spaces in schools.
b) <i>What supporting policies are required to ensure the success of a schools-first child care policy (e.g., long-term planning on space for school-based operators, reasonable accommodation costs, facilities and other shared space issues)?</i>	• Develop and implement a provincial policy to ensure school boards designate allocated, secure and permanent space in schools to licensed child care centres, with flexibility built in to enable school boards to respond to specific community needs. • Develop and implement a policy to provide child care operators with the same learning opportunities as teachers, with non-instructional days year round. • Implement a policy to support common approvals across a site, versus across functions (e.g., one fire approval, health approval etc. per address versus multiple approvals based on location and function). • Examine the policies regarding school boundaries to assess their impact on child care operators and families. • Develop and implement policies that enable child care centres in schools to be treated as an equal education partner – no lease cost, share custodian, same by-law standard, shared resources etc. • Enable access for child care operators on non-instructional days year round.

c) <i>Where school-based space does not meet community needs, are there additional capital tools that could support community-based child care operators?</i>	• Study the feasibility of teachers travelling rather than children with respect to providing the FDK program in an established community child care location. • Establish community hubs to support community-based child care operators in the delivery of school-based programs where space is not available to meet the community needs. • Provide funded transportation services between child care centres and schools. • Develop a community capital funding strategy to support community-based child care operators in meeting the needs of communities where school-based space is not available.
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Discussion Topic #3 Quality Programs

3.1 Government of Ontario Three Year Objectives

- Develop mandatory provincial program guidelines for child care operators
- Develop an updated framework to support children with special needs
- Offer new resources for parents and providers

3.2 Analysis – Participant Feedback

Many participants identified the need for quality to be defined by the Ministry and for the mandatory program guidelines to reflect this definition in a way that is measurable and quantifiable. They emphasized that the program guidelines be part of a continuum including Early Learning for Every Child Today (ELECT) and dovetail with FDK curriculum and guidelines. There was strong support for the establishment of an expert advisory panel to guide the development and implementation of the mandatory provincial program guidelines as well as an accreditation process through the College of ECEs.

Child care operators in particular, identified that the assessment of quality needs to be consistent and linked to a measurable standard, supported by evidence-based research and best practices. Concern was expressed with perceived inconsistencies in the current licensing process and several recommendations were made to address this. In addition several participants recognized the need to align the Day Nurseries Act with the Education Act where possible to address the current disconnect and overlapping/conflicting requirements.

Participants articulated strong support for an approach that is inclusive and respectful of diverse communities and identified current resources that could be utilized to address the distinct needs of these communities. In addition participants recommended options to address current concerns about assessment, eligibility and placement as well as province wide variation in resources and service models of the child care special needs resourcing model.

Participants across the board identified that many aspects of the Special Needs Resourcing Program need to be reviewed and revised including, assessment, eligibility, placement and services provided. There was strong support for the implementation of standardized eligibility criteria and assessment province-wide.

- Parents of children enrolled in the Special Needs Resourcing program endorsed an eligibility criteria broader than being limited to a diagnosed developmental condition, ensuring access to intervention earlier.
- Participants proposed an expansion of services provided to families in addition to support to child care.
- Many participants expressed concern about the additional pressures placed on the special needs/early intervention programs as the result of a significant increase in early identification and the resulting waitlists for service.

3.3 York Region's Recommendations Regarding Quality Programs

Taking into consideration the feedback from participants and York Region's perspective as the service system manager the following recommendations are made:

- The government has established the College of ECEs – the first self-regulatory body in Canada overseeing a professional membership of ECEs – which has developed a code of ethics and standards of practice. The College should now develop and implement significant and meaningful measures of quality including an accreditation program for licensed child care programs and support access to professional development.
- Support from the Ministry directly or through CMSMs in the form of training, professional development and advice that includes consistent standards and parts of the curriculum designed to meet local realities would help improve quality.
- York Region has an increasing diverse population and many communities that would benefit from resource materials provided for both parents and professionals, in multiple languages and available in a variety of formats i.e. Websites, paper copy etc. In addition to the provision of resource materials, services providers require access to current data sets such as census data, Early Development Instrument (EDI) data etc. that will identify trends and provide an understanding of the needs of individual communities so as to be able to effectively plan for the delivery of services that meet the needs of diverse communities.
- Many Service System Managers have developed a variety of child care resources related to quality programs, choosing child care programs etc. Moving forward, these resources should reflect a consistent message related to what quality means both in child care and in education. Clear and consistent messaging of a high level provincial quality expectation must be undertaken as a first step in the implementation of supporting program quality.
- Quality standards for child care programs must include specific standards for inclusion of diverse cultural groups as well as children with special needs.
- A framework for special needs services should provide for an unbroken continuum of care from birth through school entry. The framework should provide for functional integration of a variety of services to maximize efficiency, promote consistency, and enhance child and family outcomes.
- York Region has integrated the Infant and Child Development program with the Special Needs Resource program and works with health partners to provide a holistic, seamless and continuous service for children birth through six years of age and their families, the Early Intervention Services (EIS). It is recommended that this model, which is acknowledged as a best practice, continue to be supported and as appropriate, shared across the Province.

3.4 Specific Feedback to Quality Programs

Summary of comments made most consistently by participants concerning the six key questions related to Quality Programs are summarized in the following table:

Discussion Questions Posed by the Government of Ontario	Summary of Participants' Responses
a) <i>Based on your experience and knowledge of existing research and evidence, how can provincial program guidelines support program quality?</i>	• The ministry must define what is meant by “quality”. The mandatory program guidelines must reflect this definition in a manner that is both quantifiable and measurable. • Provide a consistent and standard evidence-based common curriculum to support the achievement of identified measurable milestones of child development. • Provide clear standards for what quality programs entail along with definitions and examples. • Include a requirement for professional development component. • Include clearly articulated expectations and milestones. • Include a common curriculum that is harmonized with ELECT and aligned with FDK. • Provide assessment and evaluation tools that are Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, Timely (S.M.A.R.T.) to objectively measure achievements. • Establish an expert advisory to inform and support the development and implementation of the Program Guidelines. • Enable ongoing expert community consultations with representatives from Health, Special Needs Resourcing and ethnic minorities etc. • Foster an approach which is respectful of different pedagogical approaches and program philosophies e.g. Montessori, Froebel. • Emphasis of curriculum and assessment on play-based and activity-based learning, and staff-child interactions. • Ensure that the Program Guidelines are mandatory, standard and consistently implemented province-wide. • Identify a group within the Ministry responsible for training, implementing and overseeing the quality standards outlined in Program Guidelines to ensure consistency with implementation and application of the standards and guidelines across the province, in turn ensuring consistency in quality. • As soon as possible require Community Colleges to implement ECE training that includes the Provincial Program Guidelines.
b) <i>How can program quality be demonstrated and connected to the licensing process?</i>	<u>Promote successful and consistent assessment through:</u> • The development and implementation of program guidelines that enable objective assessment and focus on evidence-based teaching methods and curriculum.

	• Requiring that Program Advisors/Licensing Specialists have an ECE and two years experience in child care as a minimum qualification. • The development of a standardized assessment tool to measure quality with clearly articulated and realistic learning outcomes. • Transparency in the licensing and inspection process, including the documentation used and assessment results. • More frequent visits to licensed child care sites by Program Advisors/Licensing Specialists in order to provide ongoing support and mentoring to operators/staff. • Mandatory attendance by child care operators, at community consultations, training and information sessions. • Establish an accreditation process through the College of ECEs. <u>Provide Support and Mentoring to Child Care Operators:</u> • Resources to support effective training of both ECEs and Program Advisors/Licensing Specialists. • Curriculum consultants/specialists/child development experts to provide support and direction concerning curriculum development and implementation. • Program Advisors/Licensing Specialists to provide ongoing support and mentoring to operators to ensure achievement of standards and milestones, working with child care operators in a more supportive and objective manner. • EDU staff to be more accessible to child care operators, and spend more time observing child care in person rather than from reports.
c) <i>What additional tools or professional development opportunities would be helpful to support ongoing quality improvement?</i>	• Implement mandatory and standard child care operator and ECE training province-wide, as well as enabling local training based on local community needs e.g.(ELECT, Red Flags (York Region), Nipissing, Early Referral Identification Kit (ERIK) (York Region), Triple P, etc.). • Implement province-wide professional development days for child care staff (same as elementary school teachers). • Training at community colleges needs to be consistent province-wide. • Implement behaviour management and special needs training for ECEs province-wide. • Update training methods to include technology, web-based, video examples of ECEs modelling best practices. • Create lending libraries of resource materials and provide joint training where reasonable across the early learning sector – for staff in schools and child care centres. • Promote collaboration and a shared vision by providing consistent joint training across the early learning sector, e.g. for staff in full-day kindergarten, extended day and child care centres.

	• Enable training in the development of communication skills, e.g. meaningful communication with parents.
d) <i>How can we ensure that program guidelines meet the distinct needs of diverse communities?</i>	• Establish an Advisory which is representative of diverse communities to assist in the development of the Program Guidelines. • The guidelines should reflect cultural diversity, including classroom design, program plans, equipment, materials, etc., that reflect cultural diversity. • Where possible, and as a longer-term goal, program guidelines recommend that child care operators hire staff who reflect the diversity of the community in which they operate. • Translate the Program Guidelines into many languages, reflective of the diverse communities and families using child care services. • Establish a pool of resource staff that can be utilized at the community level, e.g. EDU/school board staff who have already developed expertise and provide supports to diverse communities in elementary schools. • Share data resources between CMSMs/DSSABs, EDU, school boards, schools and child care to more fully understand and plan for diverse communities e.g. knowledge of number of families where neither English nor French is spoken at home, languages spoken in the community. • Implement a cultural competency tool.
e) <i>What components of the special needs resourcing program should be reviewed and streamlined (e.g., eligibility criteria, services provided, qualifications for resource consultants)?</i>	<u>Assessment, Eligibility, and Placement</u> • Standardized province-wide criteria are needed to enable children to receive a standard assessment. • Modernize, standardize and streamline eligibility criteria, and provide consistent service province-wide. • Parents agreed that the Day Nurseries Act eligibility criteria should not be limited to diagnosed conditions but include biologically “at risk” children for early identification and intervention. • Service models should provide a single point of access to be assessed and referred to services, including help navigating the service system. • Provide a more responsive assessment tool to assist with determination of eligibility and placement in a timely manner. • Ensure equity of access to services and placement. • Promote partnerships and collaboration with other potential sources of support e.g. Community Care Access Centres, health, and mental health services. • Need more timely assessment and eligibility determination. Child care selection, in this case, must be a parental choice not a matter of placement. • The current system is experiencing significant pressure as a result of a substantial increase in

	the number of children being identified with special needs through other government initiatives, e.g. 18-month well baby visit, Healthy Babies, Healthy Children, etc. • Parents agreed that placement in licensed child care should not be a requirement in order to receive special needs resourcing. • Parents expressed they were grateful we do not restrict placement of children with special needs to licensed care. <u>Qualifications for Resource Consultants</u> • Standardize minimum staff qualifications, to an ECE diploma or degree with an resource teacher certificate, but balance that with the need to promote a breadth and range of qualifications that enrich the service provided. • Effective transition to school (York Region's model has been identified by peers as a model of best practice). • Need more support and access to consultation re: child Mental Health concerns. • Greater team approach through partnerships between Early Intervention and child care program staff. • Address the significant dissonance between school board ratios (1 staff: 2 children) and special needs resourcing where an Early Interventionist Working with children in child care centres could have as many as 20 children on caseload. • One ECE with special needs training on staff at each child care. • On-site supports by trained specialized staff. • Community colleges need to include more Special Needs courses for ECEs, with an emphasis on behaviour modification. (Participants reported that ECEs are nervous to work with children with special needs due to a lack of knowledge, experience and training.) • Itinerant special needs specialist to provide more timely consultation. <u>Services provided</u> • There is a need for the special needs resourcing program to deliver services beyond support in child care including: assessment, developmental programming, parent and extended family coaching on developmental programming, service coordination, family support for emotional adjustment to having a child with special needs, information, referral and access to other services. • Supports need to follow the children with special needs into Before and After/Extended Day programs. • Regular information should be provided to parents regarding expected milestones and the child's progress toward meeting them. • Access to services should be consistent province-wide so that parents, moving within province,
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	do not see a reduction in special needs resourcing services for their child. • A strong team approach should be fostered through partnerships between the Early Interventionist/Resource Teacher and child care program staff. • A strategy for ensuring a smooth and successful transition into school should be developed. The transition to school in York Region was described as a best practice.
f) <i>What resources about program quality could the government develop to help parents make choices about care?</i>	<u>Information Resources</u> • A communication strategy that uses multiple media types and is presented in multiple languages (web sites, TV, infomercials, brochures, videos of best practices, posters, fliers, etc.). • Provide parents with a definition of quality and a quality statement, with an explanation and description of the Program Guidelines. • Provide research-based evidence of the value of play-based and activity-based learning. • Provide at least the same level of information about components of quality child care as is currently provided re: FDK. • Provide a quality child care checklist for parents choosing child care. • Seek customer/family satisfaction feedback. <u>Training Resources</u> • Involve other partners e.g. libraries, parenting centres, Public Health, Ontario Early Years Centres (OEYCs), Welcome Centres, etc. in training so they too can assist parents in navigating the system to determine the best care for their child. • Make all materials available on EDU web site and encourage CMSMs/DSSABs, school boards, and child care centres to post a link to this material on their own web site.

Discussion Topic #4 Modernized Legislative and Regulatory Framework

4.1 Government of Ontario Three Year Objective

Propose legislative and regulatory amendments to reflect up-to-date evidence and experience and to support health, safety and quality for children, parents and providers

4.2 Analysis – Participant Feedback

- Participants identified the need to harmonize/align the *Day Nurseries Act* and *Education Act* and proposed several amendments. Concern was expressed about current duplication of paperwork and approvals and recommendations were made to streamline these Acts
- There was strong support for a new licensing category for older children 8 to 12 years. This was seen as an opportunity to develop a more developmentally appropriate framework, guideline and curriculum for these children
- Participants proposed fostering quality in informal home-based child care through training, workshops, a child care provider registry, mandated standards and increased parent knowledge in choosing quality care

4.3 York Region's Recommendations Regarding Modernized Legislative and Regulatory Framework

Taking into consideration the feedback from participants and York Region's perspective as the service system manager the following recommendations are made:

Overall it is recommended that greater clarity and consistency within program guidelines and alignment between the Day Nurseries and Education Acts, with input from CMSMs and the child care community be pursued. The DNA must also be overhauled to support the modern realities that CMSMs, parents and operators face.

CMSMs/DSSABs should be given full flexibility to assign funding to support the provision of resources/information for parents and training for caregivers to increase understanding of choosing and providing quality early learning programs.

4.4 Specific Feedback to Modernized Legislative and Regulatory Framework

Summary of comments made most consistently by participants concerning the key questions are summarized in the following table:

Key Questions Posed by the Government of Ontario	Summary of Participants' Responses
a) <i>How should standards be updated to improve health, safety and overall quality in child care?</i>	<u>Standards and Program Guidelines</u> • Implementation of mandatory Program Guidelines. • Standards should be updated to provide greater clarity and consistency concerning which programs require a licence e.g. summer camp, private schools. • Harmonize and align the Day Nurseries Act with the Education Act with regards to the

	expectations and regulations governing FDK and extended day program. • Standardize the number of children that can be cared for in either a licensed or unlicensed home to five. • Enable more family groupings e.g. 8 PS and 5 toddlers with two staff. • Update supervision requirements for school age children. • Standardize expectations/regulations across FDK and extended day programs. • Review qualifications required for staff in camp programs. <u>Monitoring, Licensing and Accreditation</u> • Increase the number of child care visits and drop-ins by EDU staff. • Establish a tiered system for licensing e.g. fully licence every two to three years so that more time can be spent with non-compliant operators. • Take a firmer approach to non-compliant operators – make it easier to revoke or refuse to renew a licence and act in a more timely manner. • Work with the College of ECEs to develop and implement a mandatory accreditation process for licensed child care programs. <u>Training and Development</u> • Establish mandatory annual training requirements for child care staff and require them to complete a professional development component annually. • Require mandatory training for child care staff who are not ECEs working with children. • Standardize qualifications for Assistant Supervisors. • Train Program Advisors/Licensing Specialists to promote consistency in the application of standards province-wide.
b) <i>How can the government reduce duplication and overlap in requirements for licensed child care providers?</i>	• One set of approvals on-site at the school e.g. health, fire, building, etc. and accessible to the Program Advisor/Licensing Officer in order to reduce paperwork duplication. • Eliminate the requirement for second set of approvals for school based child care by establishing one umbrella approval for each school and school-based child care site rather than multiple approvals for health, fire, zoning, parking, etc. • Have one standard harmonized program guideline for each location for FDK and Extended Day. • Assign one Program Advisor/Licensing Officer as the lead with each multi-site operator to annually review all agency policies and procedures on file at the main site and eliminate the need to review these at each other site separately. • Enable child care operators to provide all licensing, renewal, Director Approval, etc. documentation electronically. • Eliminate paperwork where possible and enable the use of electronic documents and e-filing.

	• Streamline the process to address operator requests for a change in licensed capacity within the terms of the current licence. • Harmonize/align the day Nurseries Act with the Education Act where possible.
c) <i>How can the government more effectively harmonize standards across legislation as well as regulatory requirements in child care (e.g., numbers/ages of children in licensed vs. unlicensed home care, clarification of programs that do and do not require licenses)?</i>	• Standardize the number and ages of children that can be cared for in either a licensed or unlicensed home to five. • Align the Education Act and the DNA regarding fire approvals in schools, health approvals, supervision of children, use of playground, curriculum. • Align regulatory requirements for schools and school-based child care e.g. playground use, exemptions from health inspections, fire approval, building occupancy approval, zoning, parking access, disinfectant levels, etc. • Publicize regulatory requirements and inspection results online. • Provide more developmentally appropriate options e.g. recreation, sports clubs, etc., to children aged 9 – 12 years, and make such programs eligible for subsidy. • Provide greater clarity and province-wide consistency concerning which programs require a licence. • Enable child care operators to operate child care for 10 months and summer camp for two months to provide increased flexibility and viability in response to community needs.
d) <i>As the government looks to deliver on the commitment to provide on-site after-school programs for six-to-twelve-year-olds, should we consider a new licensing category for older children that builds on the strengths of a recreation program model (e.g., different program requirements for older children, participation in recreation-focused programs)?</i>	• Participants strongly supported a new licensing category for older children and recommended the following: ○ Develop a recreation framework using a community planning approach and in partnership with community partners e.g. recreation providers, sports clubs, libraries, etc. ○ Develop a more integrated approach between school, child care and recreation. ○ CMSMs/DSSABs need to establish partnerships with local municipalities who are recreation providers. ○ Curriculum/program requirements for older children 8-12 should not be the same as those for younger children – program guidelines need to reflect this. ○ Training, qualifications and professional development standards for staff need to be established for programs for older children – could be recreation leader, child and youth worker, etc. ○ Continue to use High Five as a minimum standard. ○ Review recreation programs that have been successfully implemented e.g. York Region, Community Development and Investment Fund.

e) <i>How could new licensing approaches support home- and centre-based care in smaller, rural and remote communities (e.g., permitting home-based providers to care for more children where there is more than one provider, providing greater flexibility for family or mixed age groupings and space configurations)?</i>	• Enable family groupings and mixed age groupings with Director's Approval so that rural and remote solutions do not become generalized across Ontario. • Ensure province-wide consistency in implementation through training of Program Advisors/Licensing Specialists and transparent communication. • Enable more flexible hours of operators e.g. shift, overnight. • Permit two providers in the same home to provide care for more than a total of five children. • Review current regulation that limits care to two children under two years, and three children under three years, etc.
f) <i>How can the government foster quality in informal home-based child care?</i>	<u>Training</u> • Through financial flexibility enable the CMSM/DSSAB to fund agencies to provide free training for informal, home based child care providers. Participants recognised York Region currently has a model for providing informal child care providers with training which has worked well. • Provide home child care providers with training at no cost to participants. • Provide training and mentoring outreach (through workshops, formal training, web-based training, etc.) to informal providers through Ontario Early Years Centres (OEYC), All Our Kids (AOK), Family Resource Programs (FRP), Parenting Literacy programs etc. • Increase outreach to places of worship where parents congregate. <u>Registry</u> • Establish a registration process that would allow home-based child care providers to register their serviced with the CSMS or EDU and in return would receive training materials, program guidelines, newsletters, etc. • Implement a registry to enable communication with operators about programs, workshops, safety hazards (toys), health risks, and networking opportunities. • Provide a 'how to' set up your home for care document and arrange for a mentor to visit the home-based child care to provide support in setting up the home. <u>Standardization</u> • Mandate standards for informal providers and move to formalize the sector. • Provide incentives to encourage informal providers to move toward the regulated sector. • Establish and implement a mentoring program for informal caregivers who require support and tools to provide quality child care, as well as consequences for those operators who are deemed to provide a poor quality of care. • Be more proactive in implementing legislation that provides consequences for those informal providers not in compliance.

	<u>Parent Knowledge</u> • Create a parent hotline to report issues/concerns about child care. • Provide parents with access to information/check list about choosing child care. • Provide parents with access to information about quality measurements/indicators used in child care.
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Discussion Topic #5 Support for Accountability and Capacity-Building

5.1 Government of Ontario Three Year Objectives

- Improve data collection
- Enhanced Licensing procedures
- Develop supports for parents and operators to enable evaluation of outcomes

5.2 Specific Feedback to Accountability and Capacity Building

- Participants supported a risk assessment approach that would result in longer term licenses of 2 to 3 years duration being issued to child care operators with a strong history of compliance
- Participants were not in favour of pecuniary penalties but were supportive of rewards for high performing child care centres
- There was strong support for efforts to achieve a consistent approach to licensing through the use of well qualified and well trained Program Advisors/Licensing Specialists

5.3 York Region's Recommendations for Accountability and Capacity-Building

Taking into consideration the feedback from participants and York Region's perspective as the service system manager the following recommendations are made:

It will be critical that municipalities continue to provide support and information to local child care operators through regular meetings and training sessions. Increased use of electronic processes in the contract management and information collection process will streamline workload pressures for operators.

Municipalities are in the unique position to gather data on behalf of the child care community but also be able to provide recommendations on data trends and analysis at the local community level. The expectation should be that local data collection and reporting be done in consultation with stakeholders to ensure that the identification of outcomes and service gaps supports the ongoing development of the planning of local services.

5.4 Specific Feedback to Accountability and Capacity-Building

Summary of comments made most consistently by participants concerning the key questions are summarized in the following table:

Key Questions Posed by the Government of Ontario	Summary of Participants' Responses
a) <i>How can risk assessments help the government use licensing resources more effectively, encourage compliance and reward high-performing child care operators?</i>	- Issue licences for a longer term e.g. 2 to 3 years to those operators with a strong history of compliance. - Longer term licences would enable the Program Advisor/Licensing Specialist to invest more time in centres that have difficulty attaining and maintaining compliance, in order to support them in providing a quality program.

	• Create a transparent history of compliance and standards that must be met in order to permit an extended licensing term. • Provide a list of items that can be approved without a visit as well as a list of items that require collaborative efforts with other partners (e.g., child care operating centres based in schools). • Review and streamline serious occurrence reporting requirements as they are time consuming for the child care centre and Program Advisor/Licensing Specialist. • Develop an appeal process for child care operators. • Establish a mentoring process through the College of ECEs so that operators who have problems with the licensing process can seek out advice and assistance from their peers in the sector.
b) <i>How can the government encourage quality and licensing compliance (e.g., administrative orders, administrative monetary penalties)?</i>	<u>Licensing and Compliance Consistency</u> • Implement standardized Program Advisor/Licensing Specialist training to ensure the approach to licensing is consistent province-wide with appropriate training and supports. • Keep the Program Advisor/Licensing Specialist caseload consistent for 2-3 years to foster ongoing positive relationships and consistency. • Licensing and compliance process to be more about consultation, problem solving and mentoring versus policing and penalties. • Establish clear consequences for ongoing non-compliance and act on them e.g. close programs. • Implement a licensing registration and renewal fee. • Post all licensing results including ‘above and beyond’ on line and at the centre. • Decrease paperwork by completing all applications, renewals, status updates, compliance orders, etc., electronically. • Educate parents regarding licensing procedures and compliance requirements <u>Encourage Compliance through Mentoring and Feedback</u> • Promote a supportive rather than adversarial approach to licensing, with Program Advisors/Licensing Specialists providing ongoing support to operators. • Program Advisor/Licensing Specialists complete regular drop-in visits. • Implement a mentoring system – low risk programs support high risk programs – encourage/model best practices. • Implement a mid-year check list to reduce the stress and administrative workload associated with an annual compliance and accreditation inspection. • Use operating criteria that are standardized, transparent and available online. • Explore opportunities to gather feedback from parents through a customer satisfaction tool or risk assessment tool.

	<u>Reward High Performing Child Care</u> • Recognize programs that remain in compliance year over year e.g. certificate of merit, star rating, etc., to show number of years in compliance. • Provide standardized comments in the 'Above and Beyond' category on the licensing checklist when completing licensing visits. • Work with the College of ECEs to develop an accreditation process monitored by the College. • Provide operators with certificates that they can post for parents and visitors to see e.g. Raising The Bar.
c) <i>What tools can support program and administrative leadership in child care (e.g., for centre directors and staff, volunteer not-for-profit boards)?</i>	• Establish an expert advisory panel to identify and support the development of the required standardized tools. • Establish a mandatory volunteer board training program including: 1. Orientation; 2. Succession planning; 3. Membership 4. Ongoing professional development; 5. Rights and responsibilities 6. Accountability • Provide access to resources e.g. central repository of information re: best practices, benefits, budgets, insurance, Board responsibilities/accountability. • Link with other agencies and small business operators in the community. • Alignment of ECE salaries with those working in FDK to ensure consistency and fairness across the sector. • Establish College of ECEs mentoring program for administrative leaders/supervisors. • Leader-in-training programs for child care staff. • College of ECE needs to show leadership and work with the Ministry in developing leadership training and the tools needed. • Ongoing training by CMSM/DSSAB in business practices (e.g. completing invoices, attendance reports, etc.) to reduce administrative burden on child care operators.
d) <i>How can the government support the use of evaluative tools in licensed child care, including common registration and screening tools, as well as the Ontario Education number?</i>	• Implement a common standardized child care registration form across Ontario that can be used by centre and home-based child care operators, recognizing that requirements may differ between the two types of operators. • Implement common standardized assessment tools across Ontario, providing consistent training and ensuring clarity with respect to the intent and use of the tools. • The province should implement the Ontario Education Number for children in licensed care

	ensuring that the information is used in a meaningful way and that the privacy of each child is protected.
e) <i>What information should be collected by operators annually in order to provide a regular cycle of public reporting on the child care system in Ontario (e.g., hours of operators, parent fees, staff compensation)?</i>	• Participants agreed on the provision of the following information and determined that it should be collected once annually by one level of government (Ministry of Education or CMSM/DSSAB) to avoid duplication of data and effort. ○ Hours of operation; ○ Enrolment; ○ Rates – fees to the public; ○ Number of children in receipt of subsidy; ○ Number of children with special needs enrolled; ○ Remuneration; ○ Number of hours of professional development; ○ Staff qualifications; and ○ Number of staff. Some participants believed that most of this information except for remuneration, rates and staff qualifications was already available through D.N.I.S.

Bill Fisch, B.Com., LLB, J.D.
Chairman and CEO



COUNCIL ATTACHMENT 3

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September 20, 2012

Honourable Laurel Broten
Child Care Modernization
c/o Early Learning Division
Minister of Education
24th Floor, Mowat Block
900 Bay Street
Toronto, ON M7A 1L2

Dear Minister Broten:

Re: Modernizing Child Care in Ontario

On behalf of The Regional Municipality of York, I welcome the opportunity to respond to your Ministry's discussion paper "*Modernizing Child Care in Ontario*."

York Region has a diverse population of which 43 per cent were born outside of Canada and a unique makeup of urban, suburban and rural communities.

As a large Service System Manager, York Region administers and provides a range of human services and programs that address the needs of children and families in our community. Over the years it has become increasingly evident that key aspects of the child care system, including the current funding system, outdated legislation, variations in programs and quality, and the need for current data to inform decision-making, need to be addressed. We are therefore pleased that the government is committed to working with partners to modernize the childcare system and believe we can make a strong contribution to this effort.

York Region held consultations and focus group meetings with close to 300 participants in August and early September 2012 to obtain community input and feedback to the questions posed in your Ministry's discussion paper. Participants included parents, York Region staff, child care operators (centre and home-based), representatives from the boards of education, members of the Best Start Network and representatives from recreation departments, parenting programs, special needs agencies, libraries and public health.

Based on an analysis of this community input and on York Region's own perspective as a Service System Manager, we are pleased to provide feedback and our recommendations concerning "*Modernizing Child Care in Ontario*." The Region's recommendations, analysis and a summary table of participant comments are presented in the attached document.

Central to all of our recommendations is the recognition that approaches to modernizing the childcare system must be flexible and responsive to local needs, and respectful of the role of Municipal Service System Managers to determine local needs and the most appropriate mix of services at the local level.

Also as Service System Manager, in York Region we are proud of our integrated model of service for special needs children. This model provides single point access and co-location of a range of services for children with special needs and has been cited as a best practice in Ontario. We are most concerned therefore that any change to funding or service models should not have the unintended consequence of breaking apart York Region's highly integrated special needs resourcing program, or reducing current service levels for children with special needs.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback to the discussion paper "*Modernizing Child Care in Ontario*." We look forward to a high quality and coordinated early learning and child care system that supports strong outcomes for children, employment and social inclusiveness and growth in the future.

Should you have any questions concerning York Region's submission, please contact York Region's Commissioner of Community and Health Services, Adelina Urbanski, at 905-830-4444, Extension 2023.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Bill Fisch".

Bill Fisch
Chairman and CEO

Attachment

Copy to: Adelina Urbanski, Commissioner of Community and Health Services