

Modernizing Child Care in Ontario – Responses to Discussion Paper

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:

1. 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?
2. What elements should be considered when developing a new funding formula (e.g. demographics, demand, and costs)?
 - Funding should support non-profit child care and fully fund costs as specified in centre budgets. (i.e. Subsidy reimbursements should reflect full cost of care.)
 - Funding must reflect costs required to comply with regulatory bodies (DNA, Public Health, City Criteria, etc.)
3. How can current funding be streamlined or consolidated to improve flexibility and efficiency?
 - Equalize wage subsidy grants (increase so that it is fair across the board) to stabilize child care of existing non-profit child care centres. Funding should not be limited to age of group as it is now. Subsidies should be based on need and demographics, not age of children in groups.
 - New funding to new child care operations to meet present staff wage standards and new funding for expansion/reconfiguration to preschool age groups

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

1. 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?
 - Child care operators must be included as equal partners with an equal voice.
2. 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 accommodations costs, facilities, and other shared space issues)?
 - Long term leases will ensure system-wide planning can happen. Childcare centres often have money to pay for tenant improvements but have no long-term guarantee to continue to utilize the space so are reluctant to make tenant improvements.

Modernizing Child Care in Ontario – Responses to Discussion Paper

3. Where school-based space does not meet community needs, are there additional capital tools that could support community-based child care operators?
 - YES! Access to funding to reconfigure space to accommodate another age group. Existing non-profit child care centres currently not in schools must have access to capital funding, as well as those centres located in schools.

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

1. Based on your experience and knowledge of existing research and evidence, how can provincial program guidelines support program quality?
 - Allow existing City department (Health & Safety) to administer capital grants since they are already set up to distribute and monitor H & S funding and minor capital funding projects.
 - Provincial guidelines (DNA and licensing) must be merged with municipal and school board regulations and guidelines into one comprehensive document.
 - Before licensing/criteria scores are posted child care operators must have appeal process.
 - Acknowledge that non-profit child care is a quality indicator. Non-profit centres have higher consistency of staff, higher salaries and less turn-over compared to for-profit centres.
 - Moratorium of wage funding and new licenses to for-profit child care centres.
2. How can program quality be demonstrated and connected to the licensing process?
 - Should strive for 1 system i.e., City of Toronto Criteria - merged into 1 level of government/regulatory body. 1 document and 1 measuring stick.
 - Licensing process should be “evidence based.”
3. What additional tools or professional development opportunities would be helpful to support ongoing quality improvement?
 - Province must provide funding of all required training.
 - Templates and copies of regulations and policies to be available on web.
 - Centres need access to information immediately. We need to learn from others. Information should be shared among centres. If many centres aren’t meeting requirements, then all centres should be notified of shortfalls so that they can improve on things immediately and not be surprised at inspection time. The goal should be a learning opportunity and striving for quality and not punitive.
 - On-going information to be posted on website – indexed for easier access.
 - Centres shouldn’t have to reinvent the wheel when creating policies and protocols. There should be standards that all centres use with minor changes.

Modernizing Child Care in Ontario – Responses to Discussion Paper

4. How can we ensure that program guidelines meet the distinct needs of diverse communities?
 - Child care must be accessible to all children. We need a nationalized child care program.
5. What components of the special needs resourcing program should be reviewed and streamlined (e.g. eligibility criteria, services provided, qualifications for resource consultants)?
 - Need better training for Resource Teachers.
 - Consistent long-term funding for every child that needs it.
 - All partners who serve a child to meet in advance to create a plan. Information should be shared with all caregivers.
 - Resources & resource staff should be based on the child (and follow the child) not be restricted to a catchment area. It should be seamless.
 - Resources should be freely accessible and inexpensive.
6. What resources about program quality could the government develop to help parents make choices about care?
 - On-line or paper brochure spelling out the plan and components of quality care with an emphasis on non-profit centres. The City of London produced a fabulous brochure that should be replicated throughout all jurisdictions.
 - Explaining to all kindergarten parents (or soon to be kindergarten parents) Pascal's vision of high quality child care in a coordinated seamless day with one teacher and two full time RECEs within one program. It is a choppy version with a child care operator filling in before and after care with a morning staff and possibly a different afternoon staff with a different program, IPP, etc.

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

1. How should standards be updated to improve health, safety and overall quality in child care?
 - All regulatory bodies effecting child care to coordinate regulations to meet overall quality and health & safety concerns.
2. How can the government reduce duplication and overlap in requirements for licensed child care providers?
 - Consolidate regulations and Licensing inspectors. If room is already used by same age group in school, then it should be automatically licensed for child care.

Modernizing Child Care in Ontario – Responses to Discussion Paper

If it's the same room being used by the same aged children then it should be governed by the same rules.

3. 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)?
 - Same room = same kids = same rules.
 - More flexibility with age groupings to allow for short-term overlap in age groups. Should be able to retain children in younger groups or move up children earlier if needed. Anything less than 20% overlap should be allowed without permission.
4. 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 recreation program model (e.g., different program requirements for older children, participation in recreation-focused programs)?
 - YES. 1:15 ratio still but more flexible curriculum and environmental requirements.
 - Still require ECEs to staff programs.
 - All programs, even summer camps, should be licensed.
5. 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)?
 - Provide greater flexibility of age groupings.
6. How can the government foster quality in informal home-based child care?
 - Require a registry and licence for all home-based child care.
 - License to be required if any unrelated children are being cared for and money changes hands.

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

1. How can risk assessments help the government use licensing resources more effectively, encourage compliance and reward high-performing child care operators?
 - Training accessible and free for all staff, not just available to centres that can afford training.

Modernizing Child Care in Ontario – Responses to Discussion Paper

- Consider a short-form relicense for centres that have performed well during the last 2 years.
 - Standardized expectations/guidelines of all regulatory bodies (streamline) to reduce bureaucracy and paperwork.
2. How can the government encourage quality and licensing compliance (e.g., administrative orders, administrative monetary penalties)?
- Train and provide information that is necessary to succeed. Centres want to succeed but struggle with jumping through all the hoops while trying to care for the children. There is too much paperwork.
 - On-going information (incidences of non compliance in other centres) should be available to all centres to learn and get up to date immediately. If the goal is quality, we need to have the information to succeed immediately and not have to wait a year making similar mistakes. The goal posts keep changing so make sure child care centres are kept up to date about the changing goal posts.
3. What tools can support program and administrative leadership in child care (e.g., for centre directors and staff, volunteer not-for-profit boards)?
- Web based training for all. On-going information and training.
 - Coordinate with colleges to ensure college curriculum reflects ministry and municipal regulations. Colleges and regulatory bodies must agree on curriculum and expectations.
4. 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?
- Provide resources to access tools. Where can we find resources we need?
5. 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, parents fees, staff compensation)?
- Post on website the following information:
 - Parent fees
 - Staff salaries by category
 - Benefits
 - Union/non-union
 - School or not
 - Non-profit or for profit
 - # of children in centre and ages
 - Annual budget