



Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care

Bulletin #3: “With Our Best Future in Mind”

“With Our Best Future In Mind” - What Does the Report Say about the Role of Municipalities?
What Does the Report say about funding for infants to four year olds?

In the last provincial election, Dalton McGuinty promised \$200 million in 2010 and \$300 million in 2011 for a new program of full-day learning for 4 and 5 year olds. He appointed Charles Pascal to write a report on how the program could be implemented. “With Our Future in Mind” was released on June 15.

What Does the Report Say About The Role of Municipalities?

The report names two significant organizations called “leaders among leaders” – responsible for the governance of the whole child and family service system from birth to age 12.

The two organizations are the new Early Years Division of the Ministry of Education and Municipal authorities (otherwise known as Consolidated Service Managers or District Social Service Administration Boards (DSSAB's)).

The report states:

“Municipal authorities “leader among leaders” working with school boards & Best Start partners to develop Early Years Service Plans that would include outcomes, benchmarks, timelines & accountability mechanisms” (page 15, chart)

“Municipal authorities provide systems management for a network of Best Start Child and Family Centres:

- Pre/postnatal information, supports & home visiting
- Parent/child programming & parenting information
- Nutrition/nutrition counseling
- Flexible early learning/care to age 4
- Early identification & intervention” (page 15, chart)

Municipalities will be responsible for producing Early Years Service Plans which would be “attached to multi-year, negotiated provincial-regional service contracts to secure the flow of funding to municipalities and school boards” (page 22).

In other words, municipalities will still have a significant role in planning for new services, bringing together existing providers for multi-service hubs and evaluating the progress based on EDI scores (described under Program and System Monitoring, pages 37 to 40).

Another significant change for municipalities is the recommendation to “transfer to municipal authorities funding for Best Start Child and Family Centres in a single envelope that includes all existing transfers for programs / resources that will be consolidated under Best Start Child and Family Centres, resources associated with regulation and oversight, plus all child care savings generated from implementation of the Early Learning Program” (page 42).

The recommendation to simplify and provide a single funding stream as opposed to multiple program envelopes has long been a recommendation of municipalities and child care operators.

What Does the Report say about Funding for Infants to Four Year Olds?

The most common question about the implementation of full-day learning is what will happen to the early learning and care of children from infants to four years old.

A recent questioner asked “What will happen to local child care centres when 4 year olds leave? 3 year olds can certainly fill the spaces but at a much higher staffing ratio which equals more operating costs”.

I am often asked if child care will become even more expensive for younger children than it is today.

Another common question is “who will work in child care? If the schools are paying \$47,000 a year, all the ECE’s will go to work in the schools and there will be no one left to work with younger children”.

These are excellent questions and they go to the core of our ability to continue to provide high quality, affordable child care to families and decent wages for child care staff.

Here is the answer:

“Resources now devoted to child care for children from 4 to 12 years old will be released to Best Start Child and Family Centres as schools assume full responsibility for this age group. As staff working in existing child care with 4 to 12 years olds take on positions with school boards, their wage grants would transfer to programs for younger children. Lower parent fees for the 4 to 12 age group mean fewer families would require subsidies, freeing up funds to expand access to others. Space in child care occupied by programs for 4 to 12 year olds would now be available for younger children, parent/child playgroups, and parent and caregiver supports, or to deliver special needs services” (page 22, shaded text block).

What the report says is that funding currently spent on wage subsidies from children aged 4 to 12 would stay in child care. That funding would be directed at children from infants to four years old.

While it is not specified in the report, that funding could be used for various purposes, such as:

- Cap parent fees, as the costs for children from infants to four years old would grow without the additional funding of 4’s and 5’s.
- Raise salaries of ECE’s in the community to be competitive with salaries paid by school boards.
- Create more child care spaces for children from infants to four years old.

The report leaves open the fact that more money may be required:

“Some additional transition funding may be required to make the journey from service fragmentation to a child and family service system a success. Program reorganization will involve adjustments in labour and resource transfers. Transitional funding should be negotiated as part of Early Years Service Plans and multi-year service agreements. Once implementation targets have been reached, funds would roll into children-related budgets of municipal authorities to support expanded access to Best Start Child and Family Centres. When services are organized to reflect what families want and need, we will also have a better idea about the levels of new investment required for expansion” (page 45).

Questions from the Early Learning and Child Care Sector

- Do all existing child care programs have to link up with a Best Start Child and Family Centre? What happens to our current Board of Directors?
- If space used by 4 and 5 year olds will now be used by younger children, who will pay for capital costs of renovations?
- What will happen to current Day Nurseries Act ratios for younger children? Do things stay the way they are or are there any plans to change the DNA?
- Some things in the report, like expanded parental leave and continuing on-going child care funding, require action by the Federal government.

What Are Your Questions?

The Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care is collecting your questions. Your questions will help us focus on your issues and help us identify areas of concern. Email your questions to andrea@childcareontario.org

Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care Bulletins on “With Our Future in Mind”

Bulletin#1: Background and Context; Information to Get You Started

Bulletin #2: What Does the Early Learning Advisor’s Report say about Early Childhood Educators?

Bulletin #3: What Does the Report Say about the Role of Municipalities? What Does the Early Learning Advisor’s Report say about funding for infants to four year olds?

Upcoming:

What Is a Best Start Child and Family Centre?

How Much Will the Full Implementation of the Report Cost? How Much Funding is Committed today?

The Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care is funded by our members including child care centres, family resource programs, OEYC’s, individuals and provincial groups with a mandate for universal, publicly funded, high quality, not-for-profit early learning and child care programs. For membership information, please visit our website. Thanks!