



Honourable Dalton McGuinty
Premier of Ontario
Legislative Building, Room 281
Queen's Park
Toronto, Ontario M7A 1A1

December 8, 2010

Dear Premier:

Re: Child Care and Early Childhood Education

As you know, members of the Northern Ontario Service Deliverers Association (NOSDA) are responsible for the local planning, coordination and delivery of a range of community health and social services, including the creation, maintenance and provision of affordable Child Care in Northern Ontario through District Social Services Administration Boards. As such, we are urging the Provincial Government to move forward on all the recommendations in the report of your Early Learning Advisor.

Over the course of the past year, our organization and many of our members have been fortunate enough to hear presentations and have meaningful dialogue with Ministry of Education leads – Jim Greive and Jill Vienneau - on the transfer of four and five year olds from child care into the education system.

When you announced the phased-in implementation of full day learning for four and five year olds, you indicated that the Province was committed to the comprehensive recommendations outlined in the Pascal Report. This included a fully integrated system of early learning and child care for all children from birth to age twelve. Indeed, since the onset of the Best Start initiative in 2004 it has been the Ontario Government's expectation that all new child care spaces created in the province will be opened in Ontario's publicly funded schools. The Early Learning Plan encompassed the transformation of schools into a seamless learning and care program for children ages four and five that integrated the traditional school day with extended day learning programs, year round child and family centres and after school programs for older children. Your Government had indicated that it would re-focus programs such as child care to serve children 0-4 years, as it moved forward with the transition of four and five year olds into full-day learning.

In January 2010, Minister Laurel Broten reiterated the Province's commitment to stabilizing and enhancing licensed child care services for children from birth to age four. Further, as of April 2010, Minister Laurel Broten with the Ministry of Children & Youth Services (MCYS), and Minister Leona Dombrowsky with the Ministry of Education jointly announced the transfer of child care from MCYS to the Ministry of Education. This transfer of all child care responsibility to the Ministry of Education also adheres to a vision of ensuring that children receive the best opportunities for learning, as well as care throughout their early years.

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Despite these intentions, there is little activity on the implementation of the Early Learning Plan that will ensure the sustainability of child care services for children under the age of four. The sustainability of the current licensed child care system is threatened as a result of a flawed and already outdated funding methodology. It is expected that migration of the children who are four and five to full day learning will further impact the ongoing viability of child care operators in the communities. The absence of moving ahead with the full early learning plan further threatens the viability of licensed child care centres and will result in a precarious system for sustaining licensed child care centres across Northern Ontario. Further, with an increasingly obvious shortage of qualified Early Childhood Educators (ECE's) seeking careers in child care, the quality of child care in the community for children under four years of age will become increasingly problematic. This issue is a matter of some concern and will require the efforts of all parties: the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Children and Youth Services and the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities as well as our members – to address in a cogent and meaningful way. We will provide further input on this particular matter as it becomes available.

We would therefore recommend the following. First, adequately fund the already fragile child care system in Ontario so it can adjust to the mass movement of four and five year olds into kindergarten and refocus on expanding much-needed services for younger children. Secondly, direct and resource school boards to open their doors and start meeting the needs of modern families. This request can be accomplished through a review and revision of the Ministry of Education's capital funding policy regarding alterations and renovations of existing schools and construction of new schools. This will ensure that school boards' capital planning and implementation is consistent with the province's vision that Child Care Centres and Best Start Child and Family Centres should be located in the province's publicly funded schools. Finally, transfer the full management of children's programs to DSSAB's and CMSM's as well as adequate resources so they can create appropriately staffed and funded child and family centres.

Premier, these requests merely urge our provincial government to be consistent with our shared vision of a fully integrated system of early learning and child care for all children from birth to age twelve. We welcome further dialogue with you and your representatives and would appreciate being kept informed concerning provincial government action in this regard.

Yours sincerely,

Gary W. Scipnick!

Gary Scipnick, Chair

cc: Leona Dombrowsky, Minister of Education
Laurel Broten, Minister of Children and Youth Services
Ontario Municipal Social Services Association
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