

**Ministry of Children
and Youth Services**

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June 23, 2010

Fern Dominelli
Acting Chief Administrative Officer
Manitoulin-Sudbury District Social Services Administration Board
210 Mead Blvd.
Espanola ON P5E 1R9

Dear Fern Dominelli:

In June 2009 our province released *With Our Best Future in Mind: Implementing Early Learning in Ontario*. Building upon our government's *Best Start* vision, the report provides a comprehensive plan for creating a seamless and integrated system to support children and their families. The report was written by Dr. Charles Pascal, the Premier's Special Advisor on Early Learning, and is available at: http://www.ontario.ca/en/initiatives/early_learning/ONT06_018865

The vision, as outlined in Dr. Pascal's report, is an opportunity for Ontario to become a leading jurisdiction in the world through the creation of a system that supports our children to achieve optimal developmental outcomes and to prepare them for success in school and throughout life.

The implementation of the *Best Start* vision is already underway. As you may know, we are rolling out full day kindergarten to 35,000 four and five year old children in nearly 600 schools. This important initiative is further enabled by the transfer of child care to the Ministry of Education in order to ensure more effective and integrated planning and programming under a single system.

The next phase in achieving the *Best Start* vision will focus on developing the *Best Start* Child and Family Centre (*BSCFC*) concept so that Ontario's families are better able to access timely and seamless supports for their children. To this end, we announced recently that we will embark on the process of ensuring that every community has access to an integrated system of services that support children's earliest development. To learn more about the *BSCFCs* concept, please refer to pages 20-23 of Dr. Pascal's report.

To start, Dr. Pascal and I, along with local Members of Provincial Parliament (MPPs), will host a number of community engagement tables across Ontario in order to learn about the current experience of families in accessing children's services. This will include identifying what is working well and how to build on it, as well as ideas on how to create a genuinely integrated and more accessible system for children and their families.

Dr. Pascal and I will also chair a province-wide reference group to advise on key areas related to the development of *BSCFCs*. This will be a multi-disciplinary group with broad representation from across sectors including: early education, health, children's services, special needs, system planners, and others.

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Within government we have started to develop an inventory of all current programs and activities that support healthy early child development, across all Ministries. This will help us to identify the kinds of services that should be offered in the *BSCFCs*.

This first phase of planning will result in a policy framework that will drive the implementation of *BSCFCs*, along with a plan to further implement the *Best Start* vision for Ontario's children.

Significant work lies ahead for us as we take this next step and I want to thank you in advance for your valuable contribution to this planning process. Together we have an exciting opportunity to develop our shared goal of an integrated system of services that supports the early development of our children.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Laurel Broten". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Laurel Broten
Minister of Children and Youth Services and
Minister Responsible for Women's Issues

c: Dr. Charles Pascal