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## *Quick Connect*

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*To the attention of OMSSA Members*

April 27, 2010

Today, Ministers Laurel Broten of Children and Youth Services and Leona Dombrowsky of Education jointly announced a new direction for child care in Ontario that includes:

- Complete alignment within the Ministry of Education of all child care policy and program responsibilities for children from birth up to age 12, with licensing responsibilities to follow
- Funding investments for the readjustment and stabilization of the existing child care system, capital funding for child care centres, and for fee subsidies for the Early Learning Program
- The appointment of Charles Pascal as an Advisor to Minister Laurel Broten in the design and development of Best Start Child and Family Centres, which would serve as an access point for programs and services that promote healthy child development and school readiness.
- Passage of Bill 242, which amends the Education Act to allow implementation of the Early Learning Program to proceed

This Quick Connect provides the details and analysis organized in each of these four areas below.

### **Early learning and child care aligned with Ministry of Education**

Today's announcement outlines the plan for the transfer to the Ministry of Education of all responsibility for child care for children age 0 through 12. The main components of this transition include:

- CMSMs and DSSABs remain as the service system managers.
- Funding arrangements in terms of the 80/20 cost sharing, where currently in place, will remain unchanged.
- Funding allocations to municipal service managers will now flow from the Ministry of Education, rather than from the Ministry of Children and Youth Services. The start date for this transfer is yet to be determined.
- Over time, MCYS staff in the areas of child care will move over to EDU, pending discussions at both ministries
- Given the changes that will occur over the next year, the province has indicated that the first year of this transition will be a "hybrid year" as the new structure is implemented. A phased-in approach for these changes is as follows:

**Phase 1:** As of today, EDU will be responsible for policy, legislation, and funding for child care; the transfer of MCYS staff to EDU will begin.

**Phase 2:** By the end of June, the contract process will be clarified; EDU and MCYS will work with OMSSA and municipal officials to clarify and inform the process.

**Phase 3:** By the fall, the transfer of contract management will be negotiated in full.

Effective immediately, EDU will have policy and program responsibility for child care, and both ministries will have authority under the DNA. In the end, the DNA will move to EDU as well.

## Analysis

OMSSA is pleased that the government is proceeding with the recommendations of the Early Learning Advisor's report. The consolidation of early learning and child care within the Ministry of Education represents an important step toward a seamless service system for children and their families, from the early years into the school years.

This transfer of all child care responsibility to EDU also adheres to a vision of ensuring that children receive the best opportunities for learning, as well as care, throughout their early years. It positions child care as a social program integral to childhood learning and development, with clear social policy outcomes attached (for example measurable benchmarks such as childhood development and school readiness).

## Questions for further discussion

Today's announcement raises a number of questions about the roles and responsibilities under the new framework. OMSSA will be following up on with the government for clarity on a number of items, including:

- More information on what government means when they say that the role of CMSMs and DSSABs as service system managers is critical to the success of the development and implementation of this new framework. OMSSA will seek to ensure that the CMSM and DSSAB roles as leaders at the local level continue, so as to ensure a sense of local stability and continuity and expertise.
- OMSSA will seek clarity as to timing and structure of staff transfers from MCYS to EDU so that members understand the changing responsibilities between ministries.
- The role of school boards. What will be the role of school boards and how will the government work to clearly define the relationship between services managers and school boards?

## Stabilization funding

The government has committed to assist municipalities with addressing the challenges in child care that result from the implementation of full-day learning. Details of this commitment include:

- \$51 million in operating costs and fee subsidies over 5 years, to support those children up to age 4 who are moving into the child care system as 4- and 5-year-old children leave the system for Early Learning. After year 5, this funding will remain at \$51 million annually.
- \$12 million for capital related to the stabilization of the child care system. This is time-limited funding and will expire after five years.
- Funding allocations have been based on risk assessment surveys already submitted to MCYS by service system managers. Each CMSM and DSSAB will receive a base funding amount, with additional resources based on the proportional rate of their risk to the province as a whole. Each of the 47 service manager allotments were announced today. MCYS is committed to providing OMSSA the allocation amounts as soon as possible and we will share this with members.
- Funding guidelines will be released shortly, though OMSSA has learned that how funds are used in each CMSM or DSSAB will be largely at the discretion of service managers to support stabilization of their system as a whole.
- Programs for the children age 0 to 3.8 years will continue to be cost-shared by municipalities at 80/20, while the fee-subsidies for the Early Learning Program (children ages 4 to 12) will be 100 percent provincial dollars.

- EDU is investing additional money over five years for extended day fee subsidies for 4- and 5-year olds in the Early Learning Program, to be combined with other fee-subsidy funding that will be transferred from MCYS to EDU.
- Fee subsidy dollars will follow those 4- and 5-year-old children who will move out of child care and into Early Learning programs. Fee subsidies will remain within the child care system for those 4- and 5-year-olds who do not move over.
- Finally, funding for OW child care (approximately \$33 million) will be transferred from MCYS to EDU.

### Analysis

Although the funding component of this announcement is not enough to address all transition concerns that municipalities are facing, the five-year allocation is significant in light of the fiscal restraint that was evident in the province's 2010 budget. Both ministries are committed to working with OMSSA and its members toward a long-term, sustainable framework for all of Ontario's child care programs.

While it is disappointing that the funds currently in the child care system for 4- and 5-year olds will move with them as they enter the new ELP program, it is not surprising. It is also reasonable to expect that there will be some, albeit small, cost savings for municipalities which no longer need to contribute the 20 percent in this area, but it is too soon to say what these savings will be.

It has yet to be officially announced who will administer the fee subsidies for the extended day part of Early Learning. Nevertheless, we are confident that municipal service managers will be given this responsibility, based on our conversations with EDU, the work of the various Early Learning Working Groups, and the language of Bill 242 regarding fee-subsidy administration.

Finally, the transfer of OW funding from MCYS to EDU is helpful in that it allows a single ministry to be able to look at an integrated and seamless outcomes-oriented approach to policy development and service delivery.

### Questions for further discussion

OMSSA will follow up with the government to find out more about the roll out of the funding:

- Though we know it will flow shortly, when will Year 1 funding flow and what will the process be for flowing money from EDU?
- What will be the timing and levels of service manager allocations for Year 2 funding?

### New mandate for Ministry of Children and Youth Services

Dr. Charles Pascal has been named as the special advisor to Minister Broten. Together, they will be responsible for developing a plan for seamless, integrated service delivery of early years programs related to children from prenatal to 4 years of age.

- The new plan will build on promising practices, tools, and plans already in place as well as on the hub vision of Best Start Child and Family Centres as articulated in the Dr. Pascal's Early Learning Advisor's report.
- Their mandate includes looking at all related services across ministries, which will include child care in its new home in EDU.
- Preliminary discussions with OMSSA indicate a community community-driven approach to integration with extensive stakeholder consultation.
- Minister Broten sees OMSSA playing a leadership role in all aspects of this process.

## Analysis

OMSSA is pleased that Dr. Pascal will advise Minister Broten on integrated service delivery. This will help to bring to reality the broader vision of a fuller Prenatal-to-12 Child and Family Service System, with community-based centres providing integrated services to children and families.

OMSSA is excited about the opportunities to work with MCYS on this project and to help municipal service managers serve as the bridge between the provincial government and local communities. We are well positioned to play this role, with our forthcoming paper on Community Human Services Planning and our Early Years Service Planning Templates. As well, we can draw on our growing partnership with public health, most recently evidenced by the January 19 Forum on Best Start Child and Family Centres co-hosted by OMSSA and the Association for Local Public Health Agencies (alpha). OMSSA is holding a briefing for MCYS and EDU on our service planning template and our report from the January Forum in the near future.

What still remains unclear is exactly how child care, with its move to EDU, will fit into the new mandate of Minister Broten and Dr. Pascal, notwithstanding that the Early Learning Advisor's report had recommended that Best Start Child and Family Centres be closely linked to child care. With EDU now responsible for child care and MCYS responsible for the rest of the system, there is potential for a policy and programmatic disconnect between child care and other children's services—a trend that would directly counter the integrated services approach. This is an issue that OMSSA will monitor closely. This issue also reinforces the municipal service manager role in the development of these Centres, given CMSM and DSSAB familiarity with the entire children's services sector and their ability to work across ministries.

## Questions for further discussion

OMSSA will follow up with government regarding the following questions:

- Where do children with special needs fit into this new system? (This continues to be a central point of discussion at the various Early Learning Implementation Working Groups—how to ensure that services for children in the new Early Learning Program continue to receive special needs services in the school setting.)
- How will links between child care and the Best Start Centres for Family and Children's Services be formalized, given the context of different ministry responsibilities?

## Passage of Bill 242

The last part of today's announcement is that the Ontario Legislative Assembly voted to approve Bill 242, which amends the Education Act to allow the implementation of the Early Learning Program to proceed.

- The Bill mandates school boards to provide early learning for 4- and 5-year-old children and to provide the before- and after-school programming.
- School boards have permissive authority to provide programming on non-school days (PD days, March break, winter and summer vacation), but are not formally mandated to do so.
- The Bill also gives the provincial government extensive authority to issue regulations that will direct school boards in the particulars of Early Learning implementation, especially regarding third-party provision of the extended day program, the setting of fees for the extended day program, and the process of fee subsidy management.
- Bill 242 allows the Ministry of Education to enter into contractual agreements with municipal

service managers, thus paving the way to allow CMSMs and DSSABs to manage the fee subsidy system for Early Learning and for all other child care programs (now to be flowed through EDU, rather than MCYS, as noted above.)

### Analysis

The passage of Bill 242 is one more important piece of this entire Prenatal-to-12 Child and Family Service system puzzle. It is a legislative milestone that needed to be passed to provide the Ministry of Education with the authority to work with school boards and municipal service managers on the implementation of this Early Learning Program. OMSSA is deeply involved in many aspects of the implementation, with representation on the Early Learning Implementation Advisory Group and the several working groups (fee subsidy, extended day, special needs, and a soon-to-be created rural and northern group). EDU has looked to OMSSA and our members as a valuable resource in this process, and we are confident that we will continue this role as implementation proceeds.

With the question of third-party providers remaining to be clarified through ministry regulations, OMSSA will work to make sure that the vision of seamless delivery and an integrated day for children is met as closely as possible. This again highlights the importance of municipal service system management, which gives CMSMs and DSSABs a perspective of “neutrality” to oversee a system and work with a variety of service providers from child care centres to community service providers to school boards.

OMSSA will also continue to work with EDU on the issue of non-school-day programming, so as to ensure that children and families have access to services for the entire year rather than just during the school year.

### Links

For more information on today’s announcement, see the Ministry of Education’s website at <http://www.news.ontario.ca/edu/en/2010/04/ontario-passes-full-day-learning-act.html>.

For more information on Bill 242, see the Ontario Legislative Assembly’s website at [http://www.ontla.on.ca/web/bills/bills\\_detail.do?locale=en&Intranet=&BillID=2269](http://www.ontla.on.ca/web/bills/bills_detail.do?locale=en&Intranet=&BillID=2269).

***For further information, please contact:***

*Patti Moore, President*  
*Ontario Municipal Social Services Association*  
*(519) 426-6170 ext. 3120*  
[patti.moore@haldimand-norfolk.org](mailto:patti.moore@haldimand-norfolk.org)

*Kira Heineck, Executive Director*  
*OMSSA*  
*(416) 646-0518*  
[kheineck@omssa.com](mailto:kheineck@omssa.com)