

June 6, 2017

Dear Municipal Partners,

I am pleased to share with you [Ontario's Renewed Early Years and Child Care Policy Framework \(2017\)](#), which is an important step forward in continuing our transformation of the early years and child care system in the province.

As you are aware, the ministry held engagement with the public and early years and child care partners in Fall 2016 and Winter 2017. We developed the framework based on feedback we heard in engagement with 20 communities across the province, 15 roundtables with the early years sector, and in over 6,000 responses to our online survey and 45 stakeholder submissions. In each of these forums, participants told us the issues that matter to them and gave us their advice about how we can make early years and child care experiences even better for children and families.

The framework would not have been possible without the knowledge, expertise, and passionate commitment of people across the province, including Consolidated Municipal Service Managers (CMSMs) and District Social Services Administration Boards (DSSABs). We recognize the essential role you have played in helping us transform the system over the past few years, and we look forward to continuing this partnership as we move forward together.

### *Ontario's Renewed Early Years and Child Care Policy Framework (2017)*

*Ontario's Renewed Early Years and Child Care Policy Framework (2017)* contains a groundbreaking set of initiatives to help build an accessible, affordable, and high quality early years and child care system that is responsive to the needs of children aged 0-12 and their families.

These initiatives build on the significant progress we have made in the last few years and complement the government's historic expansion plan commitment, announced in September 2016, to help 100,000 more children aged 0-4 access licensed child care. Taken together, these initiatives will support children, parents, early childhood educators, and communities – and ensure early years experiences are available to more children across the province than ever before.

The framework sets a renewed vision and seven key priority areas of action, including:

1. Increasing access to early years and child care programs and services
2. Ensuring a more affordable early years and child care system
3. Establishing an Early Years Workforce Strategy
4. Determining a provincial definition of quality in the early years
5. Developing an approach to promoting inclusion in early years and child care settings
6. Creating an outcomes and measurement strategy
7. Increasing public awareness of Ontario's early years and child care system.

The framework reinforces the government's commitment to the important work already underway across the province, including:

- Increasing access through the expansion plan commitment to help 100,000 more children aged 0-4 access licensed child care. To move forward immediately, the 2017 Budget announced a \$200 million investment in 2017-18 to support access to licensed child care for 24,000 more children under age four. We will also work with First Nations and federal partners to ensure more children and families can benefit from this expansion plan by enhancing access to licensed child care in First Nation communities on reserve
- Working with partners under the *Journey Together* initiative, we will help expand access to child and family programs on reserve, and increase the number of licensed child care spaces and culturally relevant programs for First Nations, Metis and Inuit families off reserve
- Increasing access through the expanded duty for school boards to provide before- and after-school programs for 6-12 year olds where there is sufficient demand, beginning September 2017
- Increasing access and improving public awareness by transforming Ontario's child and family programs into a cohesive system of services and supports for children and their families as Ontario Early Years Child and Family Centres
- Supporting ongoing compensation through wage enhancement and the home child care enhancement grant and continuing to help people upgrade qualifications through the ECE Qualifications Upgrade program

In the last few months, the ministry has provided CMSMs and DSSABs with information to support this important work and we will continue to partner with you on these initiatives.

In addition, the province continues to work with the Federal government on the National Early Learning and Child Care Framework (ELCC). More information will be shared as it becomes available.

We know that our partnerships with CMSMs and DSSABs are crucial as we move forward on the renewed framework commitments. To that end, we would like to draw your attention to elements in the framework that may have an immediate impact on local service system planning for 2017-2018.

#### *Highlights from the Renewed Early Years and Child Care Policy Framework*

In addition to the ongoing commitments mentioned previously, the framework also includes exciting new initiatives to support early years and child care in Ontario. The ministry will continue to keep CMSMs and DSSABs informed about these initiatives, including providing information about timelines as we move forward.

#### *Affordability Strategy*

The province plans to work with families and experts in the coming months to develop a child care affordability strategy that will identify further measures that could lower costs and support parents, including an increase in funding for fee subsidies to help families who need them. As part of this affordability strategy, the government will focus on reviewing components of the current child care funding formula (CCFF) and framework used to distribute funding from the province to CMSMs and DSSABs. Included in this strategy will be a focus on the rural and remote component of the CCFF. The province will also engage rural and remote CMSMs and DSSABs to provide advice on this important work.

### *Strengthening Home Child Care*

In addition, the ministry will introduce various measures to strengthen the home child care sector, including introducing base funding for Licensed Home Child Care agencies, which will flow through municipalities and First Nations. The ministry will also conduct formal consultations on an approach for a two-provider model for licensed home child care, which would allow two child care providers to work together in the same space to care for a larger number of children. The ministry will be establishing a Licensed Home Child Care working group to provide advice as we move forward with this important work.

### *Workforce Strategy*

To support early childhood educators, the province will launch a workforce strategy using expert advice to develop recommendations to support a longer-term plan for growing the profession. Beginning in 2018, the government will also support ongoing professional learning opportunities for educators, including two provincially-funded professional learning and leadership events a year for child care and early years staff.

### *Focus on Quality and Outcomes*

To build on our shared views of the child, family and educator, the ministry will engage with our early years and child care partners to develop a provincial definition of quality by 2019. We will also develop and release an annual data report, in the fall of 2017, and develop a five-year outcomes and measurement strategy.

### *Approach to Inclusion*

To ensure that all of Ontario's children are supported in inclusive environments, the ministry is undertaking a comprehensive review of current approaches to supporting all children in early years settings, including continuing to work with the Ministry of Children and Youth Services on Ontario's Autism Program and the new Special Needs Strategy. We will also engage with stakeholders to develop a renewed approach for children with special needs in the early years.

### *Awareness*

Finally, to increase awareness of the range of early years and child care services, the province will develop a public awareness campaign, create a one-stop online hub for the early years and child care system, and create a new visual identity for Ontario's child and family programs. Combined, these initiatives will help to ensure that parents and caregivers are aware of the child care and early years options that are available, and have the information they need to make important decisions for their family.

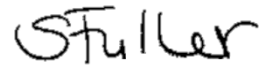
The ministry will continue to keep CMSMs and DSSABs informed about these upcoming new initiatives. For more information on these priority areas of action, please find attached *Ontario's Renewed Early Years and Child Care Policy Framework (2017)*.

### *Next Steps*

*Ontario's Renewed Early Years and Child Care Policy Framework (2017)* is an important step forward, and we recognize that your ongoing partnership is critical to helping us achieve these commitments. We will keep you informed on further details as we move forward and will

continue to work closely with you to implement our vision for an accessible, affordable, high-quality and responsive early years and child care system.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "S Fuller". The letters are cursive and slightly slanted to the right.

Shannon Fuller  
Assistant Deputy Minister  
Early Years and Child Care Division