



**MOVING FORWARD ON EARLY LEARNING AND CHILD CARE**

**AGREEMENT-IN-PRINCIPLE BETWEEN  
THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA  
AND THE GOVERNMENT OF NEW BRUNSWICK**

**November 24, 2005**

**Canada** 

**New  Nouveau  
Brunswick**

## Introduction

Governments recognize that parents and families have the primary responsibility for supporting and nurturing children. Governments support parents in their choices for caring for their children and balancing their family, work and community responsibilities, through a wide range of initiatives including early learning and child care programs and services.

Governments recognize that the early years of life are critically important for the development and future well-being of children. Research demonstrates that high quality early learning and child care (ELCC) can play an important role in promoting the social, emotional, and cognitive development of young children.

In June 2000, the Federal-Provincial-Territorial Ministerial Council on Social Policy Renewal articulated a shared vision for children in the National Children's Agenda. As part of this vision, governments set goals to help ensure that all children are healthy-physically and emotionally, safe and secure, successful at learning and socially engaged and responsible. Consistent with that vision, Ministers Responsible for Social Services have worked collaboratively to develop and implement a range of initiatives supportive of families with children, including the National Child Benefit, the 2000 Early Childhood Development Agreement, and the 2003 Multilateral Framework on Early Learning and Child Care.

Governments agree to work towards a shared vision for regulated early learning and child care for young children. This agreement-in-principle reflects the Government of Canada's 2004 Throne Speech commitment to enhance early learning and child care across Canada. It builds on governments' commitments under the 2003 Multilateral Framework on Early Learning and Child Care and complements the 2000 Early Childhood Development Agreement.

Consistent with commitments made by First Ministers under the 2000 Early Childhood Development Agreement, the Governments of Canada and New Brunswick will work together in full respect of each other's responsibilities, recognizing that the province has responsibility for early learning and child care. The Government of New Brunswick will have the flexibility to determine its own priorities and address its own particular needs and circumstances in a manner consistent with the spirit and intent of this agreement.

The Governments of Canada and New Brunswick have developed this bilateral agreement to articulate their shared vision for early learning and child care and to describe specific objectives and investments to advance this vision. At the same time, New Brunswick commits to participating with federal, provincial and territorial partners in a multilateral process to create an overarching early learning and child care framework for all Canadians, which meets the unique circumstances and priorities of each jurisdiction.

New Brunswick's vision is to build on its significant investments to date, creating an early learning and child care system that focuses on quality, affordability and accessibility. New Brunswick will continue to make strategic investments through its Quality Improvement Funding Support Program to ensure that child care facilities and their workers are able to provide quality programming.

In 2004, the Government of New Brunswick announced significant investments in affordability: raising maximum subsidy rates by \$3.50 per day; expanding the number of families eligible for financial assistance; and setting the ambitious goal of an additional 1500 new child care spaces by 2008.

The federal budget announced that the Government of Canada will join New Brunswick in its strong commitment to early learning and child care, committing \$5 billion nationally over the next five years. This further investment will complement existing federal and provincial investments in New Brunswick and contribute to the range of options available to parents. By making early investments in support of New Brunswick's early learning and child care system, the Province has made tremendous progress. Child care funding in New Brunswick has increased by 150%, with an additional 2200 regulated child care spaces since 2000.

## **Part 1 – A National Vision for Early Learning and Child Care**

Canada's young children will benefit from high quality early learning and child care that is grounded in the value and respect Canadians give to children and their families. Quality early learning and child care recognizes the unique needs of every child. It provides stimulating enriching experiences and healthy physical environments where children can develop and flourish to their full potential.

Parental choice is a key consideration in the development of any new approaches to early childhood development including early learning and child care. Across Canada, those parents who choose to use regulated early learning and child care in their communities can be confident that their children will experience high quality, inclusive, developmental programs and services that best meet the needs of their young children.

Early learning and child care reflects the value that parents and communities place on qualified and dedicated early childhood educators and child care providers.

Early learning and child care complements the array of supports available for children and families including other early childhood development programs and services.

Achieving this vision will require time, shared commitment, and collaboration, as well as predictable and sustained investments over the long term.

### **1) Principles**

The principles set out below help shape a shared vision for the future, guiding investments and decisions regarding local needs and priorities under this initiative. They are reflective of, and build on, the principles for effective approaches established under the previous *Multilateral Framework on Early Learning and Child Care (2003)*. Although each of the principles is a critical component of effective early learning and child care, they are also related and need to be considered together. The following principles will help advance the shared national vision for early learning and child care.

## **Quality**

High quality early learning and child care supports optimal child development, by demonstrating evidence-based quality practices, including provincial/territorial regulation and monitoring, and an appropriate complement of staff and child care providers qualified in early learning and child care.

## **Universally Inclusive**

Universally inclusive early learning and child care is open and responsive, without discrimination, to young children, including children with special needs, Aboriginal children, and children with various cultural and linguistic circumstances. Diversity is respected and valued.

## **Accessible**

Accessible early learning and child care is broadly available to children and parents. It is also affordable to all parents who choose to use it.

## **Developmental**

Developmental early learning and child care demonstrates quality and contributes to improved lifetime outcomes for children by supporting social, emotional, physical and cognitive development and parents' knowledge and involvement. Developmental early learning and child care is child centred, reflects family and community contexts and encourages meaningful partnerships between parents and child care providers.

## **2) Goals**

The following goals will help advance the shared national vision for early learning and child care. The Government of New Brunswick will establish its own targets related to these goals.

### **Quality**

Improve the quality of early learning and child care across Canada by investing in evidence-based quality practices that could include<sup>1</sup>:

- Support developmentally appropriate programs for children;
- Develop training, education and supports for early childhood educators and child care providers;
- Support recruitment and retention strategies for qualified early childhood educators and child care providers;
- Strengthen and enhance provincial/territorial regulation and monitoring of early learning and child care; and
- Promote community engagement and partnerships.

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<sup>1</sup> Actions could address more than one goal.

## **Universally Inclusive**

Increase the responsiveness of early learning and child care across Canada to respond to the diverse needs of children by investing in evidence-based practices that could include:

- Develop and strengthen programming and supports for children’s cultural, linguistic and/or special needs; and
- Support the development of education, supports and resources for early childhood educators and child care providers which recognize children’s cultural, linguistic and/or special needs.

## **Accessible**

Increase the availability and affordability of early learning and child care across Canada, reflecting the needs of each region, which could include:

- Develop innovative approaches to service provision in rural and underserved areas;
- Enable flexible approaches that address a range of family and employment circumstances;
- Enhance operational funds and/or fee subsidies; and
- Increase early learning and child care opportunities.

## **Developmental**

Strengthen the learning and developmental component of early learning and child care across Canada to meet more fully the cognitive, physical, emotional and social development needs of children by investing in evidence-based practices which could include:

- Support developmentally appropriate early learning and child care for children;
- Support the development of appropriate child-centred activities;
- Support the engagement of parents in their children’s early learning and child care; and
- Strengthen safe, secure, nurturing and stimulating early learning and child care environments.

## **Part 2 – Objectives and Investments**

### **1) Objectives**

Through its Action Plan, New Brunswick, subject to the availability of federal funding under this initiative, will develop and enhance its regulated early learning and child care system towards achieving the following objectives:

- Measurable and demonstrable improvements in the *quality and developmental component* of early learning and child care programs by:

- increasing developmental experiences at home and in early learning and child care settings;
- enhancing family supports to foster positive, nurturing relationships;
- promoting safe, healthy nurturing and secure environments for children;
- strengthening training opportunities for early learning and child care providers; and
- increasing public awareness on the benefits of early learning and quality child care.
- Better access to early learning and child care, which is *universally inclusive*, by:
  - increasing the availability of regulated early learning and child care spaces;
  - increasing inclusive and supportive early learning and child care opportunities;
  - increasing choice of early learning and child care opportunities that are responsive to family needs, preferences, and circumstances;
  - enhancing access to early learning and child care opportunities that enable parents to pursue employment or education while supporting them in the care and nurturing of their children;
  - working with the Government of Canada and Aboriginal people to find practical solutions to address the early learning and child care needs of Aboriginal children; and
  - in accordance with the *New Brunswick Official Languages Act*, continuing to address the needs of francophone children, through initiatives such as the development of early learning and child care curriculum and programs in French.

In recognition of the existing structure of the province’s early learning and child care sector, New Brunswick will achieve these objectives by making investments in regulated community-based early learning and child care facilities.

## 2) Areas for Investment

New Brunswick agrees that funds provided by the Government of Canada under this initiative will be invested in provincially regulated early learning and care programs and services, including public and private providers, for children under age six.

- Regulated programs and services are defined as those that meet quality standards that are established and monitored by the Government of New Brunswick.
- Early learning and child care programs and services are defined as those supporting direct care and early learning for children in settings such as child care centres, family child care homes, preschools and nursery schools.

Types of investments could include: capital and operating funding, fee subsidies, wage enhancements, training, professional development and support, quality assurance, and parent information and referral. Programs and services that are part of the formal school system will not be included in this initiative.

### **3) New Brunswick's Action Plan**

Consistent with principles and goals set out above, and subject to availability of new federal funding, New Brunswick agrees to develop and release by December 2005, an Action Plan on early learning and child care related to the multi-year funding agreement. The Action Plan will:

- Identify specific priorities for investment, based on an assessment of progress to date in establishing quality, universally inclusive, accessible and developmental (QUAD) early learning and child care;
- Identify measurable targets for tracking progress in relation to the objectives of this Agreement;
- Identify baseline expenditures for early learning and child care and areas for incremental investment;
- Identify how New Brunswick plans to address the early learning and child care needs of children in official language minority communities and more generally, those with cultural, linguistic and other special needs; and
- Describe how programs for francophone children will be developed.

New Brunswick will continue to consult with parents and early learning and child care stakeholders, including official language communities. As committed in Budget 2005, the Government of Canada will work with First Nations organizations and communities to meet the early learning and child care needs of First Nations people living on reserve.

### **4) Accountability and Reporting**

Canada and New Brunswick agree that the purpose of public reporting is to be accountable to their publics, not to each other.

New Brunswick is committed to being accountable to its citizens for the provision of early learning and child care programs and services.

Clear public reporting will enhance accountability and will allow New Brunswickers to track progress in early learning and child care and the impact of early learning and child care on outcomes for children. It will also allow New Brunswickers to monitor their government's progress.

Under the existing 2003 Multilateral Agreement on Early Learning and Child Care, the Government of New Brunswick releases an annual public report that includes descriptive and expenditure information on all early learning and child care programs and services, as well as broad indicators of availability, affordability and quality. Building upon that commitment, beginning with the 2005-2006 Annual Report, to be released by November 2006, New Brunswick will incorporate the following specific comparable indicators in its annual reports:

- Availability: the number of regulated early learning and child care spaces by type of setting, language of delivery, age group and changes in the number of children with disabilities accessing regulated early learning and child care.
- Affordability: the number of families and children receiving subsidies and changes in fee and subsidy levels, including maximum fees and subsidies
- Quality: salary levels, training requirements and investments, and child to caregiver ratios and group size in regulated programs.

New Brunswick may also include additional indicators as appropriate and as governments develop other comparable indicators, New Brunswick will incorporate these indicators into its annual reports to the extent to which data are available.

## 5) Funding

New Brunswick and Canada agree that further investments in early learning and child care should be incremental, predictable and sustained over the long term. New federal funding provided under this initiative is in addition to funds already committed under the existing Multilateral Framework on Early Learning and Child Care.

The Government of Canada will transfer the following amounts to the Government of New Brunswick, for the purpose of implementing its Action Plan:

	Funding under existing ELCC Agreement (CST) (\$ million)**	New ELCC Funding (\$ million)	Total (\$ million)
2005-2006	5.3	16.4*	21.7
2006-2007	6.9	15.0	21.9
2007-2008	8.0	26.4	34.4
2008-2009	8.0	26.2	34.2
2009-2010	7.9	25.9	33.8

\* To be flowed through a Trust Fund.

\*\* Federal funding under the 2003 Multilateral Framework on Early Learning and Child Care will continue to flow through the Canada Social Transfer.

The \$16.4 million indicated for 2005/06 includes New Brunswick's trust fund allocation for 2004/05 and 2005/06. New Brunswick will have the flexibility to draw down these funds as it requires up to March 31, 2006.



Following completion of an Action Plan, New Brunswick and Canada will work together to conclude a detailed multi-year funding agreement, by February, 2006 for the period 2006/07 to 2009/10. Exact per capita amounts are to be more fully defined in a detailed multi-year funding agreement.

Parliament of Canada approval is required before federal funding is available and may be disbursed.

## **6) Knowledge, Information and Effective Practices**

New Brunswick recognizes the importance of evaluation in determining its effectiveness and outcomes of initiatives in early learning and child care and agrees to pursue evaluations, where appropriate, in order to assess the impact of investments made under this agreement.

Canada and New Brunswick agree to work together to share knowledge, research and information on effective practices in early learning and child care. The Government of New Brunswick will work over time with the Government of Canada and other interested provincial and territorial governments to collaborate to:

- Develop a National Quality Framework, which governments would hope will identify best practices in quality, developmental early learning and child care, and provide the basis for research and development of guidelines and forward-looking, evidence-based benchmarks to guide future programming.
- Adapt and finalize the Evaluation Framework initiated under the previous Multilateral Framework on Early Learning and Child Care, to serve as a tool and guide to assess program effectiveness.
- Develop and implement an enhanced knowledge, information and data strategy, including data to support comparable program indicators.
- Develop additional comparable program and child outcome indicators.
- Undertake a review of this initiative, to be completed by March 31, 2009, to take stock of progress towards the realization of the national vision, consider any adjustments, and establish next steps.

A process for moving forward with these activities will be developed jointly by the Government of Canada, the Government of New Brunswick and other interested provincial and territorial governments. With respect to each of the above activities, the Governments of Canada and New Brunswick will move forward in consultation with experts and other interested parties.

## **7) Legislative Environment**

New Brunswick may wish to reconsider the agreement-in-principle in the event of federal legislation that substantially alters respective roles and responsibilities as they relate to early learning and child care.

Signed on \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_

For Canada,

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The Honourable Ken Dryden  
Minister of Social Development

For New Brunswick,

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The Honourable Joan M<sup>ac</sup>Alpine-Stiles  
Minister of Family and Community Services