



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

**AGREEMENT-IN-PRINCIPLE BETWEEN  
THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA  
AND THE GOVERNMENT OF PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND**

**November 24, 2005**

**Canada** 

*Prince  
Edward  
Island*  
  
CANADA

## **Preamble**

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 social, emotional and cognitive development of young children. Promotion of learning and development in early childhood supports the participation of parents in employment and education.

Parents and families have the primary responsibility for the care and nurturing of their children. Prince Edward Island supports parents in this role through a wide range of family policies and programs, including early learning and child care. Together, these measures provide parents with a range of options and choices for caring with their children and balancing their family, work and community responsibilities.

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 Early Childhood Development Agreement, and the 2003 Multilateral Framework on Early Learning and Child Care.

In its October 2004 Speech from the Throne, the Government of Canada acknowledged that "*the time has come for a truly national system of early learning and child care*". In this Speech, the federal government committed to put the foundations in place with its provincial and territorial partners, charting a national course that focuses on results, builds on best practices and reports on progress to Canadians.

At their February 2005 meeting, Ministers Responsible for Social Services recognized the urgent need to accelerate development of quality early learning and child care across the country. To address that need, Quality, Universally Inclusive, Accessible and Developmental (QUAD) principles were developed for early learning and child care, building on the 2003 Early Learning and Child Care Agreement.

Governments have acknowledged that some jurisdictions have already made significant investments and are recognized as leaders in establishing quality regulated early learning and child care programs. New arrangements between governments must have the flexibility to acknowledge these successes, while ensuring that concrete, incremental results are achieved and reported to Canadians.

Guided by these principles, Prince Edward Island and Canada agree to work over time to achieve broad long term goals that move towards a shared national vision for early learning and child care.

The Governments of Prince Edward Island and Canada agree that a national vision and significant new federal investments can complement existing federal and Prince Edward Island investments, and would support the development of Prince Edward Island's system of regulated early learning and child care as a key element of a comprehensive approach to supporting children and families.

Consistent with commitments made by First Ministers under the 2000 Early Childhood Development Agreement, governments will work together in full respect of each other's responsibilities, recognizing that Prince Edward Island has the primary responsibility for early learning and child care. The Government of Prince Edward Island will have the flexibility to determine its priorities within this initiative.

The Government of Canada and the Government of Prince Edward Island have developed this Agreement to articulate their shared vision for early learning and child care and to describe specific objectives and investments to achieve this vision. At the same time, Prince Edward Island commits to participating with its 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.

Prince Edward Island's vision is to ensure all children are safe and secure, have good health, are successful at learning and have social belonging and responsibility.

Prince Edward Island has agreed to adopt the principles negotiated by the federal, provincial and territorial governments to guide new federal investments: Quality, Universally Inclusive, Accessible and Developmental.

The province's goals for its early learning and child care system are that:

- Prince Edward Island has an integrated continuum of early learning and child care programs from infancy to school entry;
- Early learning and child care programs in Prince Edward Island will follow a developmentally appropriate curriculum;
- Early childhood educators and child care providers will be recognized as professionals; and
- Children and families on Prince Edward Island will have improved access to early learning and child care programs.

This Agreement will help the province achieve these goals.

The federal budget announced that the Government of Canada is committing \$5 billion nationally over five years for investment in regulated early learning and child care for children under 6.

Prince Edward Island will be committing all additional federal money for regulated early learning and child care to the fulfillment of the five year plan. This further investment will complement existing federal and provincial investments in Prince Edward Island and will support the development of regulated early learning and child care in both private and non-profit settings as a key element in developing a supportive social fabric for children and families in Prince Edward Island.

This initiative builds on early learning and child care investments made in Prince Edward Island by the Governments of Prince Edward Island and Canada and recognizes that flexibility is needed to address provincial priorities and circumstances.

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

The Governments of Canada and Prince Edward Island believe 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.

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 incremental, 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. In keeping with these principles, the Government of Prince Edward Island agrees to work over time to achieve broad long term goals. Prince Edward Island will establish its own targets.

### **Quality**

Improve the quality of early learning and child care 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 regulation and monitoring of early learning and child care; and,
- Promote community engagement and partnerships.

### **Universally Inclusive**

Increase the responsiveness of early learning and child care 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.

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

## **Accessible**

Increase the availability and affordability of early learning and child care across Canada, reflecting the needs of each jurisdiction such as:

- 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 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**

Over the next five years, Prince Edward Island, subject to the availability of new federal funding, 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 through:
  - Increasing developmental experiences in early learning and child care settings;
  - Enhancing family supports to foster positive, nurturing relationships;
  - Promoting safe, healthy, nurturing and secure environments for children in the early learning and child care setting;
  - Promoting community involvement in supporting early learning and child care opportunities and community networks; and
  - Strengthening training opportunities for early learning and child care providers.

- Better *access* to early learning and child care, which is *universally inclusive*, by:
  - Increasing the availability of regulated 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 the affordability of regulated early learning and child care spaces;
  - Meeting the special needs of children with disabilities by improving the accessibility and availability of appropriate early learning and child care opportunities; and
  - Continuing to address the needs of francophone communities in Prince Edward Island by enhancing early learning and child care programs available to them in French, consistent with Prince Edward Island’s French language services policy.

## 2) Areas for Investment

Prince Edward Island agrees that funds provided by the Government of Canada under this initiative will be invested in regulated early learning and child care programs and services 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 Prince Edward Island.
- 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.

Each government agrees to publicly recognize and explain the respective roles, responsibilities and contributions of governments to this initiative.

## 3) Action Plan

Consistent with principles and goals set out above, and subject to availability of new federal funding, Prince Edward Island agrees to develop and release by January 31, 2006, an Action Plan on early learning and child care covering the five years of federal funding including its spending plan for the period 2005-2006 to 2009-2010. 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; and
- Identify how Prince Edward Island plans to address the ELCC needs of Aboriginal children, children in official language minority communities and, more generally, those with cultural, linguistic or other special needs.

Prince Edward Island will continue to consult with parents, early learning and child care stakeholders, the education sector, experts and official language minority 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) Public Reporting**

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

Under the existing 2003 Multilateral Agreement on ELCC, the Government of Prince Edward Island 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, Prince Edward Island 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 and age group, and number of children with special needs participating in local child care settings.
- **Affordability:** the number of families and children receiving subsidies, and fee and subsidy levels.
- **Quality:** training requirements, child to staff ratios and group size in regulated programs.

Prince Edward Island may also include additional indicators as appropriate and as governments develop other comparable indicators, Prince Edward Island will incorporate these indicators in its annual reports, to the extent data is available.

#### **5) Funding**

Prince Edward Island and Canada agree that further investments in early learning and child care should be incremental, predictable and sustained over the long term.

Prince Edward Island and Canada recognize that achieving the national vision for early learning and child care will require additional funding in the future. New federal funding provided under this initiative is in addition to funds already committed under the previous Multilateral Framework on Early Learning and Child Care. The Government of Canada will transfer the following per capita amounts, to the Government of Prince Edward Island, for the purpose of implementing its Action Plan:



	Funding under existing ELCC Agreement (CST) (\$ million)	New ELCC Funding (\$ million)	Total (\$ million)
2005-2006	1.0	3.0	4.0
2006-2007	1.3	2.8	4.1
2007-2008	1.5	4.9	6.4
2008-2009	1.5	4.9	6.4
2009-2010	1.5	4.9	6.4

The \$3.0 million indicated for 2005-2006 is in recognition of amounts put in trust for Prince Edward Island, which the province may draw in either 2004-2005 or 2005-2006. Prince Edward Island will have the flexibility to draw down funds as they require up to the end of March 31, 2006.

All disbursements made under this agreement will be separate and distinct from the Canada Social Transfer funding provided for under the 2003 Multilateral Framework on Early Learning and Child Care.

Following completion of an Action Plan, Prince Edward Island and Canada will work together to conclude a detailed multi-year funding agreement for the period 2006-2007 to 2009-2010. 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) Working Together on Knowledge and Information**

Research, knowledge and information are the foundations of evidence-based decision-making and are critical to informed policy development, strong accountability and program planning. In this context, and to support the development of strong systems of early learning and child care, the Government of Prince Edward Island will work over time with the Government of Canada and other interested provincial and territorial governments to:

- Develop a National Quality Framework, which 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 Prince Edward Island and other interested provincial and territorial governments. With respect to each of the above activities, the Governments of Canada and Prince Edward Island will move forward in consultation with experts and other interested parties as mutually agreed.

## **7) Legislative Environment**

Prince Edward Island 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.

## **8) Fair Treatment**

Amendments to this Agreement-in-Principle may be made if the Government of Canada and the Government of Prince Edward Island mutually agree that changes are required to ensure fair treatment of participating provinces and territories.

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

For Canada,

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The Honourable Ken Dryden  
Minister of Social Development

For Prince Edward Island,

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The Honourable Chester Gillan  
Minister of Health and Social Services