

NEW EARLY LEARNING AND CHILD CARE INVESTMENTS: PEI ACTION PLAN



*The PEI Action Plan focuses on two main areas: **expanding access for under-served populations and for children who are more vulnerable**; and **improving quality**.*

1. MORE SPACES FOR INFANTS AND PRE-SCHOOLERS

\$3.6 MILLION

New investments will grow infant and pre-schooler spaces by 10 percent, enabling more than 200 more children to access licensed early learning and child care.

There are twice as many infants, aged 0-22 months on a waitlist than toddlers or pre-schoolers. Infant care is more expensive to provide because one adult is required for every three infants. Access for toddlers and pre-schoolers, aged 2-4 years, is also a challenge.

This funding includes \$849,129 in year one, \$1.2 million in year two, and \$1.2 million in year three. Another \$400,000 will be made available in capital grants to operators who are adding spaces and need to expand, renovate or purchase equipment.



2. MORE ACCESS FOR CHILDREN WHO ARE MOST VULNERABLE

\$2.5 MILLION

Children may be more vulnerable because of family well-being, employment status, lone parenting and low literacy.

Research shows that high quality early learning and child care can improve children's language and literacy skills, performance in school and overall well-being. Vulnerable children can be identified through existing programs such as Best Start.

New investments will increase access to the Child Care Subsidy Program, enable 100 more children to benefit, and ensure access for children who would not otherwise be able to attend early learning and child care programs. Investments will also be made in the Handle With Care program which helps families support the social and emotional needs of their children.

Funding will include \$770,000 in year one; \$825,000 in year two; and \$905,000 in year three.

3. MORE SUPPORTS FOR CHILDREN WITH UNIQUE NEEDS

\$1.5 MILLION

Early intervention for children with unique abilities can improve their language and literacy skills, intellectual development, and social and emotional development.

New investments will be made in educational resources to support children with unique abilities, including Special Needs Assistants, Autism Specialists and Tutors. This will expand access to programs by 25 percent, reduce wait lists by at least half, and support an additional 30 children.

Funding of \$510,000 will be allocated in year one, \$515,000 in year two; and \$515,000 in year three.

4. MORE SUPPORT FOR PARENTS WHO WORK NON-STANDARD HOURS \$1.5 MILLION

Parents who are seasonally employed, work shift work or sporadic hours find it harder to access programs, regardless of their geographic location. PEI's employment base includes 12 percent seasonal employment and many parents who work non-standard hours in service industries throughout the year.

Staff will work with existing centres to identify flexible early learning and child care needs and increase the number of spaces for parents who work non-standard hours.

New investments will enable more than 100 additional children to access programs.

This work will be supported by funding of \$500,000 each year for the next three years.

5. MORE SUPPORTS FOR THE ACADIAN AND FRANCOPHONE COMMUNITY \$180,000

Children from the Acadian and Francophone community will be eligible for most of the new investments, such as those for children with unique abilities and parents who work non-standard hours. To support the specific needs of the Acadian and Francophone community, new investments will be made in Francization which provides families of primarily English-speaking children with tools and strategies to maintain their French language and culture.

A home visiting program, Des la naissance, will provide critical early learning support to children and families who are more vulnerable. It will enable at least 15 children to access early interventions.

To support this work, funding of \$60,000 will be provided in each of the next three years.



6. MORE SUPPORTS FOR NEWCOMER FAMILIES

\$72,000

Prince Edward Island is experiencing a significant increase in newcomer families.

New investments will equip providers with tools to better support the needs of these children and families. This may include the development of culturally appropriate guidelines for centres, interpretation materials and cultural sensitivity training.

Funding will include \$20,000 in year one, \$26,000 in year two and \$26,000 in year three.



7. TRAINING FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS

\$215,000

Research shows that qualifications of staff is the best predictor of positive outcomes in early childhood settings. In EYCs, all staff must be certified. Non-designated centers are required to have at least two certified early childhood educators.

Incentives will be provided to encourage up to 20 percent, or 20 staff, to seek their certification or further professional development.

Funding will include \$100,000 in year one, \$75,000 in year two and \$40,000 in year three.



8. MONITORING ACCESS AND QUALITY

\$882,000

A project manager and staff will be contracted to oversee the action plan, conduct a feasibility study, collect data and monitor the impact of new initiatives and approaches.

The quality improvement grant for non-designated centres will be increased to improve quality in these programs.

Funding will include \$250,000 in year one, \$340,000 in year two and \$292,000 in year three.

THE PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND EARLY CHILDHOOD SYSTEM

- There are 6,970 children in PEI from birth to age four. Of these, 2,700 are enrolled in licensed programs.
- When kindergarten was brought into the school system in 2010, the province introduced a comprehensive five-year strategy to strengthen the early childhood system.
- Today, PEI is seen as a leader in early learning and child care because of its high quality Early Years Centres, early learning curriculum, regulated parent fees, a wage grid which recognizes the education and experience of early childhood educators, post-secondary education for staff, and sector planning and support to programs.
- Early learning and child care is offered in Early Years Centres, non-designated centres and the unlicensed sector.
- Parents continue to advocate strongly for choice in the type of centre they choose for their child.
- There are 3,045 licensed full-time equivalent spaces in the province. Of these, 10 percent are for infants; 19 percent are for toddlers; 24 percent are for three-year-olds; and 35 percent are for four-year-olds.
- There are 45 Early Years Centres (EYCs). To be designated as an EYC, operators are required to have a minimum number of children (40 in urban areas), to integrate children with special needs, meet higher quality standards including additional educational requirements for staff, use the provincial curriculum, implement parent advisory committees, adhere to a uniform wage grid, and charge standardized fees.
- The early childhood system is publicly managed but delivered through licensed operators.
- EYCs and non-designated licensed centres receive operational funding from government based on enrolment, staff education and parent fees.
- Many parents receive support through the PEI Child Care Subsidy program which is administered by the Department of Family and Human Services.
- Centres are licensed based on community need, which stabilizes the sector and minimizes the number of centres closing.
- A Minister's Early Years Advisory Committee includes parents and stakeholders. The provincial action plan was developed based on input from the committee.