

## Working Together For Ontario's Children

April 27, 2010

Ontario is one step closer to implementing full-day learning for four- and five-year-olds across the province, including the integrated before- and after-school program.

The province will also provide support to the child care sector as it works through the transition and takes a key step to improve the delivery of children's services.

### **The Full-Day Early Learning Statute Law Amendment Act, 2010**

Amendments to the Education Act – passed by the legislature today – will give school boards a clear framework to move forward to implement full-day learning.

The Full-Day Early Learning Statute Law Amendment Act, 2010, gives school boards the legal responsibility and authority to implement full-day learning for four- and five-year-olds, including the integrated extended day programs available before and after regular school hours. The legislation will help ensure the entire full-day learning program and staff operate under to the same high quality and safety standards as any other component of the education system.

The government proposed several amendments to the Full-Day Early Learning Statute Law Amendment Act, 2010. The bill passed today incorporated those amendments, which address the concerns of education and early learning stakeholders. For example, some amendments clarify that school boards retain the right to enter into agreements with third-party providers to provide care and offer before- and after-school programs for children ages six to 12. Such agreements could also permit third parties to operate programs at elementary schools for children of all ages beyond the regular school year.

In addition, the government intends to introduce regulations that would provide a transition period to allow, in special circumstances, third-party providers currently providing programs in schools to continue to offer before- and after-school programs for four- and five-year-olds during the regular school year.

Other amendments responded to a broad range of stakeholder requests to clarify the roles of teachers and early childhood educators during the regular school day and the extended-day programs.

Full-day learning will be available in nearly 600 schools in September 2010. The program will be expanded in phases, with a goal of having it available to all four- and five-year-olds by 2015-16.

### **Transfer of child care and stabilization funding**

Full responsibility for child care will transition to the Ministry of Education, starting with the transfer of program and policy responsibilities from the Ministry of Children and Youth Services. The Ministry of Education will take on responsibilities for funding and contract management in the fall. Doing so will help make the transition between child care and education easier for young children and their families. Eliminating the artificial divide between child care and

education will facilitate improved policy and program development in supporting the needs of Ontario's young children and their families.

Child care funding – including funds provided specifically to help stabilize child care due to the impact of full-day learning – will be transferred from the Ministry of Children and Youth Services to the Ministry of Education.

The stabilization funding will be phased in over the period of implementation, growing to \$51 million annually at full implementation to help stabilize child care centres as four- and five-year-olds move into the full-day learning program. The government has also committed \$12 million over five years in new capital funding to help non-profit child care centres make retrofits and renovations to serve younger children.

### **Best Start Child and Family Centres**

In his report, Dr. Charles Pascal recommended creating *Best Start* Child and Family Centres as a key vehicle for developing a children's service system. These centres would serve families as clear access points for integrated programs and services that support healthy child development, provide more timely identification and intervention services, and ensure more successful transitions throughout childhood. Dr. Pascal will work as an advisor to Minister Broten to identify how best to move forward on this key recommendation to improve the well-being of Ontario's children and families.

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