

**CUPE Ontario  
Discussion Paper  
Full-Day Early Learning and Care**

**Presentation to:  
Dr. Charles Pascal  
Ontario Early Learning Advisor**



**November 21, 2008**



## **SUBMISSION TO DR. CHARLES PASCAL, ONTARIO’S SPECIAL ADVISOR ON FULL-DAY LEARNING AND CARE FOR 3.8- to 5-YEAR-OLDS**

The Canadian Union of Public Employees, Ontario (CUPE Ontario) welcomes this opportunity to provide some suggestions and recommendations on how best to implement a system of early learning and care. CUPE Ontario agrees with Dr. Charles Pascal, Ontario’s Early Learning Advisor that implementing a Full-Day Learning and Care program for 3.8- to 5-year-olds is complex. Careful consideration must be given to how the program can best serve children, families, communities, and those working in the field today and into the future.

CUPE Ontario is well-positioned to understand the issues that affect working families and their children and the child care workforce.

In Ontario, CUPE represents over 230,000 members employed in health care, education, municipalities, libraries, universities, social services, public utilities, transportation, emergency services and airlines. Among our membership are 6,000 early childhood educators, and 25,000 educational assistants\* employed in community-based, education and municipal settings. In addition, many of our members are parents with young children who need access to quality, affordable child care so they can work. CUPE members understand the value of quality public education and child care systems to their children’s development.

CUPE Ontario is well aware that despite decades of research showing the benefits of quality-licensed early learning and care on children’s development, access to quality programs is inadequate, waiting lists are long. In addition, the cost of fees is increasingly a barrier to access for families earning modest wages.

CUPE Ontario and CUPE National have comprehensive policy positions on Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC). Our policies are premised on a number of assumptions about the needs of children and families, workers, and the important role of government; specifically, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Children and Youth in developing a progressive vision for early learning and care. That vision must include long-term funding for planning and implementing a fully public and non-profit integrated and comprehensive early learning and child care system for all children 0 – 12 years.

CUPE Ontario wishes to highlight the importance of investments in early learning and public child care as a key plank of:

- a sound labour market strategy for Ontario
- better education outcomes for future students
- increased supports for working families
- a comprehensive provincial anti-poverty strategy.

*\*Educational assistants are also referred to as program assistants or teaching assistants.*

# CUPE ONTARIO – DISCUSSION PAPER ON FULL-DAY LEARNING

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CUPE Ontario takes the following positions:

- The need for all levels of governments, along with parents, labour, and communities, to work together to develop a funding and policy/legislative framework to build a public, non-profit, universally-inclusive, accessible, early learning and care system. This cannot happen without substantial government investment<sup>1</sup>.
- <sup>2</sup>CUPE supports the recommendations of the Best Start Expert Panel on Early Learning which sets out a framework to guide program curriculum that support young children's learning and development. Research shows that care and learning are inseparable. Therefore, early childhood settings must provide both care and education to best support a nurturing learning and development environment.
- CUPE believes that governments at all levels have an obligation to support parents in their parenting roles, and as workers, students, and active contributing members of communities. Parents with young children need access to high-quality, affordable early learning to support them as they work and study, and contribute to their communities. The labour force participation rate of mothers continues to rise. In 2007, 69% of mothers with children 0 – 3 years were in the paid workforce. This increases to 76% of mothers with children 3 – 5 and 83% of mothers with children 6 – 15 years.<sup>3</sup>
- Substantial investments are needed to improve wages and benefits, working conditions, and to support on-going training and improved qualifications that will ensure a highly-skilled, future workforce. The child care workforce is the lynchpin of high-quality early learning and care. The daily interactions between them and children, and the knowledge and skill staff bring to their work, is ultimately what makes the difference between poor-quality and high-quality care<sup>4</sup>.
- A transparent and accountable process to ensure all funding accrued from moving 3.8- to 5-year-olds into education are kept in early learning and child care.
- That the province takes every measure to cover funding shortfalls created when moving 3.8- to 5-year-olds into education. Community-based programs must be provided additional funding to cover the higher cost of delivering services to children 0 – 3 years.

CUPE Ontario submits that the goals and objectives that have been set for Full-Day Learning cannot be realized without ensuring that programs and services for children 0 – 3 remain in the public and non-profit sector. The province must act to protect community-based public and not-for-profit programs from for-profit child care corporations interested in establishing themselves in Ontario. Recent research establishes that large corporate or chain child care operators are on the rise and pose a real threat to non-profit child care programs unable to access capital funding to expand to meet the pressing need for child care services for young children 0 – 3.8 years.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> A Compelling Case for Investing in Child Care OMSSA, 2005; Campaign 47 Demonstrating the Value of Social Investment, OMSSA 2005; Cleveland and Krashinsky, 2003; Lynch. R. Exceptional Return: Social Fiscal and Social Benefits of Investment in Early Childhood Development, 2004; Hertzman, Clyde, Making Early Childhood Development a Priority, 2004.

<sup>2</sup> McCain & Mustard, 1999; Ontario Premier's Council on Health, Social Justice & Well-being, 1993; Royal Commission on Learning, 1994; Ontario Ministry of Community & Social Services, 1990; First Duty: Early Learning for Every Child Research Questions and Answers, 2005.

<sup>3</sup> *Early Childhood Education and Care in Canada 2006*. Martha Friendly, Jane Beach, Carolyn Ferns, Michelle Turiano. October 2007. 264pp.

<sup>4</sup> Working for Change: Canada's Child Care Workforce; Labour Market Update Study Child Care Human Resources Sector Council

<sup>5</sup> <http://privatization.crru.ca/> - Early Childhood Education and Care – Private Commodity or Public Good

## *How to make quality early learning and care programs happen...*

*We must think of early care and education as a single seamless system, not as a set of disparate, categorical and idiosyncratic programs, and we must think of early care and education as encompassing family support and health, not only educational services for children (Kagan and Cohen, 1997: 10)*

**Our children deserve it...** Our youngest children are citizens with rights to live and learn in a society that provides the resources and social infrastructure to support their healthy development. As a society, we have an ethical responsibility to provide programs and services that support, nurture, protect and provide learning opportunities that allow children to thrive and grow. A publicly-funded integrated system of early learning and child care is the most effective way to ensure that all children have opportunities to reach their full potential<sup>6</sup>.

**Ontario families need it...** In Ontario, over 70% of mothers with young children participate in the workforce, yet public programs have not matched this dramatic change in labour force participation of women. Women's earnings, whether sole support parent or dual income family, are an important part of the family budget and keep many families from falling into poverty<sup>7</sup>. Lack of affordable, accessible early learning and child care is a barrier to employment.

### **CUPE recommends that:**

- The provincial government work collaboratively with early learning and care staff, parents, unions, advocates, schools and communities to build the capacity to expand the early learning and care system for all children and their families.
- An early learning and care system is adequately funded to provide high-quality, accessible, affordable, inclusive and integrated services for children 0 – 12 years.
- Early learning and care be delivered publicly, and not-for-profit, and operate year-round and full-day.
- Transparent and accountable funding and reporting processes be put in place that ensure Full-Day Learning is introduced in such a way that strengthens (not weakens) early learning and care programs for children in other age groups<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> McCain, Hon. M. & F. Mustard. *Reversing the Real Brain Drain: Early Years Study Final Report, 1999, The Early Years Study – Three Years Later*, 2002.

<sup>7</sup> *Bargaining for Work and Life*, OCBCC et al, 2004.

<sup>8</sup> Cleveland, Gordon et al. *An Economic Perspective on the Current and Future Role of Nonprofit Provision of Early Learning and Child Care Services in Canada*. 2007

### **CUPE recommends a child-focused curriculum and a team-teaching approach under the Ministry of Education:**

Full-Day Learning should provide a coherent learning framework, curricula and programs that bring together the best of early childhood education (child-centred, play-based, emergent curriculum) through the ELECT Framework and the revised *Kindergarten Program*. This will require substantial provincial investment to support flexible training approaches to improve training to support a team-teaching approach.

CUPE Ontario recommends:

- delivering Full-Day Early Learning and Care programs under the Ministry of Education
- using a team-teaching approach with early childhood educators and teachers working together to develop and deliver an early learning curriculum
- that staffing ratios prescribed under the Day Nurseries guide staffing levels in the new all-day learning model be adopted.

This is the best approach to provide children with the education and care continuity they need throughout their day. The approach will minimize difficult transitions, duplication, fragmentation, and inconsistencies that are part of the current system where care and education are treated as separate and distinct.

Schools provide a community hub for children and families to access programs and services and offer a way to provide truly integrated and seamless services for children through collaboration and coordination between the Ministry of Education (school boards), the Ministry of Children and Youth (municipalities), and the community-based sector.

Providing Full-Day Learning in one location delivered by a team of child care staff and certified teachers offers children many advantages including:

- A greater sense of security, belonging and “place,”
- Improved conditions for learning in a comfortable, familiar and safe environment.

Positive change through a system of early learning and care that:

- Takes a holistic approach to child development for all children (0 – 12 years).
- Fosters development for children as they age, including beyond the age of 12.
- Responds to the needs of children, parents and the community. This includes opportunities for community and parent involvement in the development of the system and its governance.
- Results in investments in public infrastructure so that programs for children can be located in a physical space that is age and developmentally appropriate.
- Fosters increased access for special needs children of all ages and their families.
- Enforces the ratios and regulations (including regulated maximum group sizes) set out in the *Day Nurseries Act* regardless of where the program is located or who governs it.
- Guarantees that no user fees be introduced into the public education system.
- Ensures that the transportation needs of young children are properly and appropriately addressed.

### **Workforce strategy, skills and training recommendations:**

**CUPE recommends investments in a skilled, knowledgeable workforce.** Research clearly establishes the link between quality early learning and child care and knowledge and skill/wages and benefits paid to early childhood educators (ECEs). Recruitment and retention of a skilled, trained and knowledgeable ECE workforce has been a pressing issue affecting quality in early learning and child care for over a decade. Moving forward on Best Start and Full-Day Learning will require the province to develop processes for integrating the two distinct workforces. It will also need to include staffing options, affordable training opportunities that will strengthen and create stability within the community and municipal child care.

- Integrating the two workforces (educational support workers employed by school boards and child care staff employed by municipal and community-based programs) under the *Ontario Labour Relations Act* and its provisions regarding the **Sale of a Business** to ensure an orderly transition of community-based and municipal staff into the public school system.
- Workforce integration would be premised on the principle of ‘dovetailed seniority’ (CUPE can provide additional information about how to operationalize dovetailed seniority).

- The *Ontario Education Act* to be amended to identify that the current terminology for Teaching Assistants (TAs) includes all related classifications (i.e. Education Assistant, Educational Assistant, Classroom Assistant, ECE, Child Care Assistant, Teaching Assistant, and so on.) It should be codified that Early Childhood Educators would be included in this grouping of non-teacher classifications.
- A transition or phase-in period that would grand-parent those currently working without an ECE diploma in the community-based and municipal child care sectors. This would provide opportunities to allow those individuals to become ECE-certified, and for those working without a diploma in the community-based sector, to become qualified and allow access to affordable and flexible training opportunities.
- Additional training needs for Educational Support Workers currently employed in school boards and municipal and community-based programs to be identified and a training plan established which is fully funded by the Ontario Ministry of Education.
- Government should take an active leadership role to provide financial support to child care staff currently employed in both the education and community-based sectors to earn/up-grade their credentials.
- Ensure college and apprenticeship programs that support opportunities for upgrading, training and professional development for the child care workforce are publicly funded and delivered.
- To develop a system of early learning and care based on an equal partnership between all early learning and care workers using a team-teaching approach. This partnership should recognize and value the roles and responsibilities of all staff in the program.
- To ensure all employees working in early learning and care receive wages, benefits, pensions, and other forms of compensation that reflect the real value of their work. Developing a long-term labour force strategy for the sector in consultation with unions representing workers is essential to ensuring the programs are high-quality and labour force stability through enhanced recruitment and retention of qualified workers in community-based programs and in Full-Day Learning.

**CUPE Ontario would want to ensure that the following protections are in place:**

- Enhanced provisions for job security, job mobility and job protection for all workers in early learning and child care, particularly as the system is reorganized and expanded to provide Full- Day Learning for four- and five-year-olds.
- Early learning and care staff are protected under Ontario legislation and regulations such as health and safety, violence in the workplace, and WSIB.
- Jobs for early learning and care staff are full-time, full-day and regularly-scheduled work employment, not precarious part-time and split-shift work.
- A system of early learning and care that allows for, and recognizes the benefits of, widespread unionization for the sector. Studies show that a unionized workforce can result in high-quality programs, improved staff recruitment and retention, and improved working conditions including better wages and benefits for staff.
- Seniority of the workers being integrated into the workplace will be dovetailed.

**Building Full-Day Early Learning for four- and five-year-olds right from the start using the findings and recommendations of the Best Start Expert Panels and the goals and principles set out in Ontario’s Best Start Plan, with government, school board, union and community cooperation, had the potential to facilitate transformational change for Ontario’s children and families.**

**Building it right means a fully public early learning and care system, strengthening policies, making adequate funding investments for system and physical infrastructure, and improvements for wages and working conditions for early childhood educators. Substantial provincial investments are needed to implement an early learning framework and curriculum that reflects young children’s learning needs and ensures low staff-to-children ratios, and to provide practical, concrete support to the early learning workforce to take part in flexible training programs. The challenge of government and the Ministry of Education will be to use this framework to also improve educational approaches for older children.**



### **Summary of Recommendations:**

- Substantial new investments and policy advances to support an integrated, comprehensive public/non-profit care and education system for children 0 – 12 years including formal mechanisms to allow collaboration and coordination between the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Children and Youth Services (local school boards and municipalities) with no user fees.
- All monies currently allocated for 4 – 12 year olds will remain in ELCC to sustain, enhance and improve the current community-based system for children 0 – 3.8 years. Transparent and accountable reporting for how dollars are used to support community-based ELCC programs to make the operational and workforce adjustments resulting from implementation of Full-Day Learning.
- Program curriculum for Full-Day Learning for 4- and 5-year-olds is based on the ELECT Framework to guide a play-based, child-centred program delivered by a team of early childhood educators, certified teachers and educational assistants employed by school boards.
- Full-Day Early Learning for four- and five-year-olds must ensure that parents continue to play a central role in the decisions that affect the care and education of their children. Parents must be seen as part of the Full-Day Learning “team.”
- The province must provide public funding to address low wages in the ELCC sector while keeping parent fees low. An immediate step is to resume funding for ongoing pay equity adjustments and to fully fund Wage Enhancement Grants.
- The more complex requirements being considered for the ECE workforce through the ECE College, introduction of Full-Day Learning, and a new credential and implementation of the recommendations of the Best Start Expert Panels will require the province to invest in the ECE workforce to meet these expectations.
- Full-Day Learning and care for four- and five-year-olds must guarantee the creation of full-time, well-paid jobs that offer an attractive and viable career to the ECE workforce.