

*Tuesday, October 20<sup>th</sup> 2009*

# A Report on: Early Learning in Peel A Visioning Session

*Hosted by*

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## Executive Summary

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The Region of Peel is one of many Ontario regions involved in implementing Early Learning in their communities. The purpose of *Early Learning in Peel – A Visioning Session* was to provide the key leadership and staff of Success By 6 Peel, the Peel Best Start Network and Community Partners (Appendix A) with an opportunity to begin planning and ‘dreaming’ together in preparation for the implementation of the recommendations in Dr. Charles Pascal’s report.

The session was launched with opening remarks by Jim Grieve, Director of Education Peel District School Board and David Szwarc, CAO Region of Peel. Then Dr. Charles Pascal and Zeenat Janmohamed of OISE / Atkinson Foundation provided an overview of *With Our Best Future in Mind; Implementing Early Learning in Ontario* (Appendix B). Following the presentation, table groups of mixed representation were invited to consider Peel Region’s distinctive features and then imagine what full implementation of the Pascal Report would look like in Peel for six stakeholder groups, identifying the potential strengths and challenges to realizing the dream. Following these facilitated discussions, Lorna Reid, Director of Early Learning Services, closed the session with a heartfelt thanks to the participants for their contributions to this initial visioning session.

This report contains the presentation of *With Our Best Future in Mind* and the results of the session’s discussions. Participants’ evaluations indicate that the session was viewed as a well organized start to the planning process. People took away three general outcomes: a sense of hope, excitement and possibility for children; a better understanding of the Early Learning initiative; and, a united commitment to collaboration and making the implementation of Early Learning work. To support the continued planning of implementation in Peel, participants thought they should carry on working together, remaining informed and involved, so that a cohesive system is built for families. (Appendix C)



## **Discussion Results: Peel at Full Implementation of Early Learning**

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Participants were invited to think about Peel Region's distinctive features and then discuss at their tables how they would imagine full implementation for each of the following stakeholder groups:

- Children
- Families
- Staff – ECE's and Teachers
- Regional Early Learning System Leaders/Managers (governance)
- Existing Service Providers
- Early Learning Community Partners.<sup>1</sup>

The distinctive features of Peel that were mentioned included:

- Diverse population, transient families, growing population and immigration
- Diverse family situations whether newly arrived immigrants, parents in economic turmoil, others in parenting roles (grandparent or guardian), or experience with severe trauma, poverty, or isolation.

### **1. Children**

We have a dream that one day, at full implementation of Early Learning in Peel, our **children** will live in a region of Ontario where they **will not be**:

- struggling to succeed in their early development while sitting on a waiting list for programs
- shuffled from centre to centre to centre, with an ever-changing cast of support staff and disjointed learning
- bullied or discriminated against for their language, culture, empty stomachs or housing plight
- falling through the cracks of one universal system that fails to meet their needs

But **will be able to**:

- reach their unique full potential through holistic, high quality learning experiences that put their needs first
- access and thrive in an integrated, seamless system with one access point to a full range of services
- feel safe, included, well-nourished, and loved, regardless of background
- spend more time with their families, with less travel time.

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<sup>1</sup> To structure participants' input into a sentence format, a template was provided based on visionary statements of Pierre Elliot Trudeau and Martin Luther King Jr.

## **2. Families**

We have a dream that one day, at full implementation of Early Learning in Peel, our **families** will live in a region of Ontario where they **will not be**:

- worried about the affordability of early learning services needed for their child and settling for fragments within a complicated maze
- disadvantaged or excluded from essential services by their geographical location, limited language skills, special education needs, cultural heritage, or religion
- on their own, dragging their children from place to place, coordinating various drop-offs and pickups, and desperately trying to navigate a confusing system while plagued with uncertainty
- without options, supported by a full range of tools, to ensure that early learning opportunities are maximized;

But **will be able to**:

- afford child care with learning services, birth to 12 years, that meet their child's needs, whether through equitable, universal funding or subsidies
- easily access a full continuum of services at the one-stop community school hub where a blended model of education and care meets the needs of children at every age and stage of development, whether their needs are significant or minor
- feel connected to the school hub and know where and how to get what they need for their children, at times of the day or night that work for them; be key partners in their child's development and learning
- make choices in a timely way about the best services for their children
- feel comfortable returning to work, confident that their children will be fed and will flourish and thrive in a loving, safe and stimulating environment
- feel welcome in their communities no matter what their situation or background.

## **3. Staff – ECE's and Teachers**

We have a dream that one day, at full implementation of Early Learning in Peel, our **Staff (ECE's and Teachers)** will live in a region of Ontario where they **will not be**:

- divided by differences in role, designation, ideology, compensation, qualification, governance, unionization and status in a child's life
- overburdened by unrealistic workloads, overcrowded classrooms
- underpaid, undervalued and disrespected

But **will be able to**:

- understand, respect and complement each other's unique knowledge, skills, strengths and contributions
- collaborate as a team to assist all children and families to reach their full potential
- work in well resourced classrooms that offer a well balanced program of learning through play, inquiry, exploration; have full access to special needs support resources
- educate parents and other professionals that we are equally valuable and significant in the lives of children
- optimize shared professional development, training and learning
- receive fair compensation that will attract and retain talent; be appreciated and valued by employers.

#### **4. Regional Early Learning System Leaders/Managers (governance)**

We have a dream that one day, at full implementation of Early Learning in Peel, our **Early Learning System Leaders/Managers** will live in a region of Ontario where they **will not be:**

- encumbered by a lack of political support, ministerial coordination or stable funding; confused by different messages from different ministries
- frustrated by a patchwork of fragmented, disconnected and siloed agency services where rich resources are lost in a territorial delivery system with needless repetition of services
- restricted by a system lacking in mature integrated programming and in information for new immigrants

But **will be able to:**

- have one governance that will come together with one vision and one common ground; will provide consistency, fairness and will respectfully work together; and, will focus on putting the child first.
- support existing service providers to find their place in the new system; facilitate full collaboration among all partners to improve flexible service delivery formats to support families and children best
- integrate operations and services to eliminate needless repetition and promote better quality
- receive and distribute funding that is more equitable and that will fully optimize an effective early learning system in Peel, including a comprehensive system for our growing region of families with children 0 to 4 years.
- improve families' understanding of the importance of the early years through access to information and support
- rally political support from senior partners
- clarify different messages from different Ministries; share a common language and understanding with common terms of reference
- continue to develop an environment where talented early learning experts will choose to work providing outstanding services and support, where the vision will be implemented across the region and where compensation will be attractive

#### **5. Existing Service Providers**

We have a dream that one day, at full implementation of Early Learning in Peel, our **Existing Service Providers** will live in a region of Ontario where they **will not be:**

- uncertain about their future and therefore unable to make decisions
- excluded in the service plan delivery, unacknowledged, undervalued
- unable to meet the needs of infants if funding is unavailable to provide more expensive care at this age

But **will be able to:**

- share space for running a full-day kindergarten program, whether at local schools or childcare centres
- be a part of the new system and expanding partnerships to deliver high quality, innovative services in a meaningful way to support parents and children

- develop expertise in specific areas such as respite or early childhood services that avoids duplication of services, allows agencies to focus on areas of particular strengths and eliminates waitlists
- be acknowledged, valued and sought out in the service plan delivery
- develop expertise in specific areas such as respite or early childhood services that avoids duplication of services and allows agencies to focus on areas of particular strengths
- eliminate waitlists
- support positive early childhood development from a well coordinated, integrated and holistic approach that meets the physical, emotional, intellectual, financially supportive and overall learning and literacy needs.

## **6. Early Learning Community Partners**

We have a dream that one day, at full implementation of Early Learning in Peel, our **Early Learning Community Partners** will live in a region of Ontario where they **will not be:**

- territorial or working without the full participation and shared response of other service providers, school boards, community partners, business leaders, faith and cultural groups, chambers of commerce, etc.
- excluded from the planning process
- faced with the barriers of under-funding to support inclusion and adequate human resources, competing for resources, lengthy waitlists, transportation costs, increasing numbers of children with special needs, diversity and new immigrants

But **will be able to:**

- focus on the outcomes for families and children rather than inputs, e.g., reduced waitlist times; reduced transportation costs - a range of services that meet the diverse needs of families within a close proximity or within the school better; improved coordinated, seamless and integrated services and supports to families; support for ESL children
- develop creative, responsive, streamlined solutions for seamless service delivery, including children with developmental needs between 18 months to three years. The multidisciplinary, collaborative environment will be well planned and resourced
- act on our collective responsibility as citizens to support the development of our youngest citizens, regardless of the sector from which the community partners come
- take an example from our children and "learn to play fair in the sandbox", eliminating the competitive spirit and maximizing the strengths of each service without duplication
- continue to focus on professional development: early learning practitioners acquire basic grounding in child development principles; new graduates complete child development courses; kindergarten teachers and child care community share best practices regarding nurturing interactions with children, touch or hugs.

## **Appendix A: Partners Represented**

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- ❖ ASSOCIATION OF DAYCARE OPERATORS
- ❖ BRAMPTON NEIGHBOURHOOD RESOURCE CENTRE
- ❖ BRAMPTON CALEDON COMMUNITY LIVING
- ❖ BRAMPTON LIBRARY
- ❖ BRIGHT SCHOLARS MONTESSORI
- ❖ CALEDON PARENT-CHILD CENTRE
- ❖ CARING FOR KIDS
- ❖ CHARLES STURT UNIVERSITY
- ❖ CHILD DEVELOPMENT RESOURCE CONNECTION PEEL
- ❖ DIXIE BLOOR NEIGHBOURHOOD RESOURCE CENTRE
- ❖ DUFFERIN-PEEL CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD
- ❖ EARLY LEARNING ADVISOR
- ❖ ERINOAKKIDS
- ❖ FAMILY DAY CARE SERVICES
- ❖ MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
- ❖ MINISTRY OF CHILD AND YOUTH SERVICES
- ❖ INFANT & CHILD DEVELOPMENT SERVICES PEEL
- ❖ MALTON NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES/OEYC
- ❖ TOWN OF CALEDON
- ❖ MULTICULTURAL INTER-AGENCY GROUP OF PEEL
- ❖ MISSISSAUGA PARENT CHILD RESOURCE CENTRE
- ❖ OISE/UT
- ❖ PEEL CHILDREN'S CENTRE
- ❖ PEEL CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETY
- ❖ PEEL DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD
- ❖ PEEL NEWCOMER STRATEGY GROUP
- ❖ PLASP CHILD CARE SERVICES
- ❖ REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF PEEL
- ❖ SUCCESS BY 6 PEEL
- ❖ SUNSHINE CHILDRENS CENTRE
- ❖ YMCA OF GREATER TORONTO

## Appendix B: Presentation by Charles Pascal and Zeenat Janmohamed

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+ With Our Best Future in Mind

A child and family system for Ontario: Prenatal to 12 years

Every opportunity for every child

The slide features a blue header with white text. Below the header are two photographs: one of a child sitting on the floor playing with a toy, and another of a child washing their hands at a sink.

+ The promise\*

- Full day program for 4s and 5s
- Reinvest savings to expand child and family programming for other age groups
- Fee savings for parents
- Build on the Best Start strategy\*

Our Best Future Early Learning in Ontario

The slide features a green and blue footer with the text "Our Best Future Early Learning in Ontario". There is also a small illustration of a cartoon character.

## The process

3

- Charles Pascal was appointed the Early Learning Advisor to the Premier in November 2007\*
- The report was made public in June 2009.
- **With Our Best Future in Mind** includes:
  - The main report
  - The Summary of Evidence – the research rationale
  - Every Child, Every Opportunity - the curriculum for the 4/5 program
  - Available at [www.ontario.ca/earlylearning](http://www.ontario.ca/earlylearning)

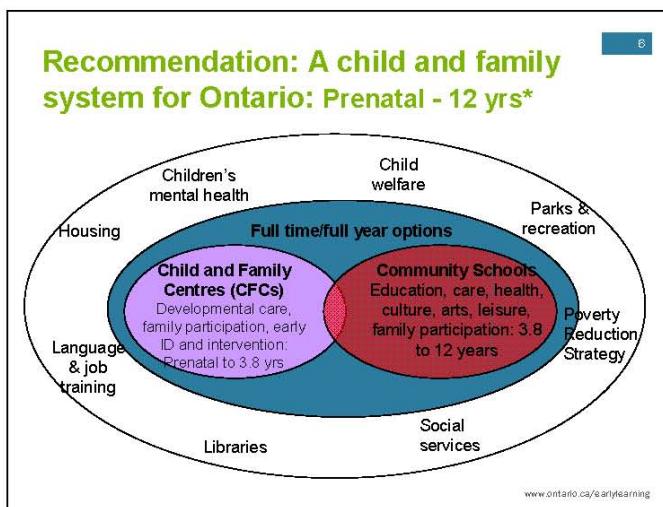
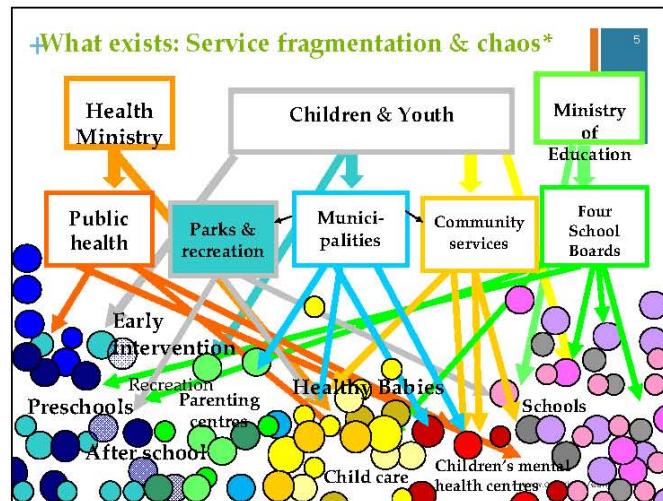
[www.ontario.ca/earlylearning](http://www.ontario.ca/earlylearning)

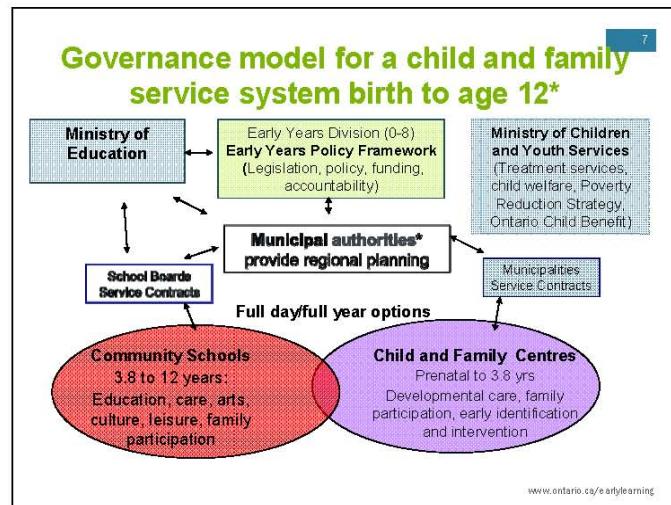
## Starting points: Full day learning\*

4

- Kindergarten: Ministry of Education offers a half day, two years of a non-mandatory preschool (Kindergarten) for children who turn 4 by Dec. 31 of the year
- Full day Kindergarten: All French language boards offer two years of a full day preschool program and 17 English boards offer some full day preschool
- Staffing: Ratios: 1 Certified teacher to 20 children; some French boards employ teaching teams of teachers and ECEs to cover the school day.
- Child Care: Approximately 25% of 4/5 year olds are in licensed child care. 50% of licensed child care is in schools
- Toronto First Duty\* and the province's Best Start policy provides models to address the fragmentation of early childhood programs

[www.ontario.ca/earlylearning](http://www.ontario.ca/earlylearning)





## Staffing is key: Early Learning Program Roles & responsibilities

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Teacher	Teacher & Early Childhood Educator	Early Childhood Educator
Evaluates children's developmental progress within the context of the Early Learning Program Curriculum expectations and provides summative reports to parents.	Plan and implement the Early Learning Program Curriculum.	Implements extended day activities.
Prepares children for transition to Grade 1.	Monitor children's developmental progress.  Communicate regularly with families.	Plans and implements summer programming.  Liaises with community partners.

## Play-based learning\*

10

- *Early Learning for Every Child Today (ELECT)* is now being tested in early childhood settings across the province. It provides a consistent approach to early learning for children from infancy to age 8.
- *Every Child: Every Opportunity* is the guide for educators (teachers and ECEs) in the Early Learning Program (4/5s)
- *Every Child: Every Opportunity* builds on ELECT, the Kindergarten Program Revised and Summary of Evidence

[www.ontario.ca/earlylearning](http://www.ontario.ca/earlylearning)

## + Recommendations: Funding sources

The report recommends new funding:

- \$ 1-billion for staffing and operations
- \$1.7-billion for capital
- Transitional funding – not specified

Committed and existing sources:

- The government's base commitment as announced in Nov. 2007 (\$200M in 2010 & \$300M in 2011)
- \$1-billion in reallocated children's service spending (MCYS + municipal share)
- Restructured parent fees

[www.ontario.ca/earlylearning](http://www.ontario.ca/earlylearning)

## + What does the new \$1-billion buy?\*

Full school day/year for 227,000 4/5 year olds

- 6 hours a day/188 days a year
- Staffing, operating and occupancy costs
- Mandatory for school boards to provide

Extended day/year costs 4-12 yr olds

- Occupancy costs for extended day/yr (253 days)
- Administration, supervision, program and professional development
- At the request of 15+ families in a school

Our Best Future  
Early Learning  
in Ontario



## + What happens to existing funding?

- Child care and family support funding: About \$1-billion (MCYS & municipalities) remains with municipalities to:
  - Provide subsidies for 0 – 12 years - approx. \$700M (Flexible, not tied to parent workforce participation)\*
  - Wage and other grants now supporting 4-12 year olds – approx. \$300M - would remain with municipalities to support programming for the under 4s\*
- Funding for family support programs to move under municipal management (OELYC, PFLC, HBHC, PSSL, FRP) and become part of CFCs.
- Provincial funding for planning and monitoring would move to municipalities and municipalities would assume this responsibility

Our Best Future  
Early Learning  
in Ontario



In Spring we play baseball  
In Spring we have fun  
In Spring we go outside  
In Spring we play soccer  
In Spring we go to the park  
In Spring we fly kites. In Spring we...

## + Recommendations: 4-12 yr old programming

- School board operated
- Staffing teaching teams of registered ECEs, certified teachers & assistants
- Annualized ECE salaries \$47K + 24% benefits
- Restructured parent fees: \$27/day for 4/5s; \$20 for 6-8s; report does not suggest fees for 9-12

Our Best Future  
Early Learning  
in Ontario



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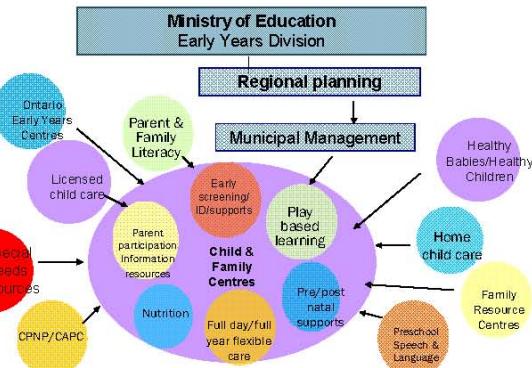
## + Recommendations: Under 4 age group\*

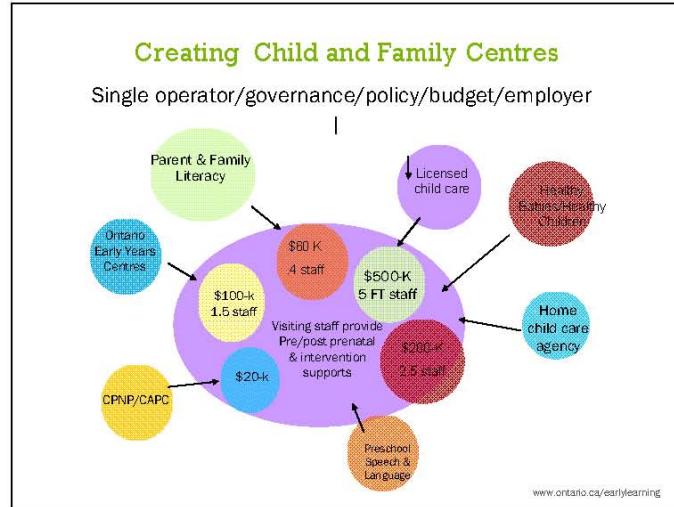
- Child and Family Centres may be operated by municipalities, school boards, post secondary institutions, community agencies
- Preferred location in schools
- Systems management provided by municipalities
- Staffed by ECEs and related professionals
- Space in schools now occupied by child care and family support programs is protected to develop CFCs

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Early Learning  
in Ontario



### Municipal management of Child and Family Centres





**+ Management of CFCs**

- Municipalities receive transition funding to manage service rationalization under CFCs; these funds would remain post-rationalization to expand the CFCs
- Report is not directive about:
  - Parent fees or staff salaries in CFCs
  - Parent entitlement to service
  - Regional variations in fees or salaries

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in Ontario

## + The Benefits: Lessons from Quebec's childhood system\*

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- Child poverty has steadily declined over 50% since 1997
- School test scores have gone from among the lowest to the highest in Canada
- Maternal workforce participation went from the lowest in Canada to the highest.
- The fertility rate has surpassed the Canadian average
- The tax income from working mothers now pays for 40% of the child care program\*

[www.ontario.ca/earlylearning](http://www.ontario.ca/earlylearning)

## + Appendix 1 Ontario's Child Care System

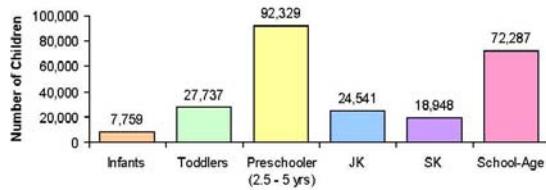
20

- There are 816,851 children ages 0-6 in Ontario. (based on Statistic Canada Estimates (2007) and the Ontario Ministry of Finance Spring 2008 Population Projections (2008-2031). The age breakdowns are as follows:
  - 269,036 under the age of 2;
  - 272,665 between 2 and 4 years old;
  - 138,500 4 year olds; and
  - 136,650 5 year olds.
- Over the 2007-2017 period, 0-5 year olds are expected to experience a population growth rate of 10.8%.
- As of March 31, 2008:
  - There were 4,582 licensed child care centres and 140 private-home child care agencies;
  - The total licensed capacity of the child care system was 256,748 spaces;
  - Total enrolment in child care centres and private-home child care was 263,361 children, 243,601 of whom were in child care centres; and,
  - There are approximately 96,600 children in licensed child care who are 4 and 5 years old.
  - Approximately 4400 rooms are occupied by 4s & 5s
  - 982 child care centres servicing 4s and 5s are in schools
  - 1,769 programs offering school age care are in schools

## +Children in Licensed Child Care by Age

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**Chart 1: Number of Children in Licensed Child Care by Age Group**  
(Based on Child Care Enrolment as of March 31, 2008)



- The preschool age group is the largest as it accommodates children between the ages 2.5 and 5. The number of children attending child care and JK/SK is an estimated at 53,089 - approximately 57.5% of the preschool group.
- Based on SMIS child care licence data as of March 31, 2008.

## Fee Subsidies by Age Group

- In 2007/08 the total cumulative number of children that received child care fee subsidies was 133,625.
- Municipalities vary widely in the number of children they serve and the average daily rate for subsidies. The charts below provide the range of children served and average subsidy daily rate as reported by municipalities for December 2008.
- Fees vary widely Toronto infant fees are \$62.90 per day, average infant fees in Sault Ste. Marie are only \$32.76 per day. Preschool spaces are \$53 a day in Toronto, \$26 in Timiskaming

Average Monthly Number of Children Receiving Subsidy Province Wide by Age Group					
Statistics	Infants	Toddlers	Age 2.5-3.8	JK/SK	School Age
Total Number of Children Receiving Subsidy	4,994	10,019	19,579	19,668	22,930

Average Daily Rate by Age Group (estimated)					
Statistics	Infants	Toddlers	Age 2.5-3.8	JK/SK	School Age
Provincial Weighted Average Daily Rate	\$52.37	\$43.67	\$35.14	\$34.42	\$26.24
Minimum Average Daily Rate Reported by a CMSM/DSSAB	\$29.53	\$27.14	\$22.38	\$17.35	\$8.00
Maximum Average Daily Rate Reported by a CMSM/DSSAB	\$62.90	\$52.34	\$53.00	\$53.00	\$42.67

## **Appendix C: Feedback on the Peel Early Learning Visioning Session**

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*A total of 57 evaluations were completed. Numbers in brackets, e.g., (4), indicate the number of times a similar response was noted. Responses to the same question may represent different points of view.*

- 1. The purpose of the session was to provide the key leadership and staff of Success By 6 Peel, the Peel Best Start Network and Community Partners with an opportunity to begin planning and ‘dreaming’ together about the implementation in Peel of the recommendations in Dr. Charles Pascal’s report.**

**The extent to which participants thought the purpose of the session was achieved:**

1 Poor	2	3	4	5 Excellent	No Response	Average
0	0	10	32	13	2	4.0

### **2. What participants took away from this session:**

- Hope, excitement and a sense of possibility for children in Ontario (20)
  - Sense of optimism (3)
  - This is really going to happen; on the path to a successful implementation and full day learning, partnering and sharing expertise (3)
  - Today's group of partners are thoughtful of families needs; can and will make the future for our children better (2)
  - The future of service in the childcare field will improve for parents, staff, and children
  - Remain positive about the fact that challenges are really opportunities
  - There is a great future for Peel!
- Better understanding of the EL initiative: (14)
  - The report, upcoming recommendations, changes and potential opportunities (4)
  - Concerns and key issues for all involved (3)
  - The vision (3)
  - Status of the ministry; funding issues (2)
  - How to structure a similar session in my own community
- United commitment to collaboration and making this work (11)
  - Feeling that all community expertise will be recognized and valued in the upcoming changes; appreciate open dialogue and opportunity to work together (2)
  - Peel leaders have the knowledge to contribute to the implementation of the vision; importance of the right leadership to support required collaboration (2)
  - Believe in principle that all need to do things differently even if don't know how
- Questions and concerns (5)

- Families may have less choices based on FDL
- It is difficult to look beyond one's own circumstances within the overall vision

### **3. What participants thought should be done in the future to support the continued planning**

- Continue to work together, collaborate, commit, engage (28)
  - Meet to discuss concerns, plans, provide valuable input (10)
    - Have more topics on childcare, teachers, subsidy effects
  - More planning and networking tables (2)
  - Keep education, childcare, OEYC's together
  - OEYC's and FRP's have efficiency, expertise plus collaborative relationships that are critical to success
- Keep people informed/involved (11)
  - Become more specific, e.g., how will this be implemented (2)
  - Broad distribution of newsletter updates; inform more people (2)
  - Follow up with embracing statements, share a collective vision
  - Keep the enthusiasm, remind people what they said
- Ensure that EL is well funded to ensure the best possible outcomes (4)
- Optimize representation from all sectors and levels (4)
  - Involve frontline staff (ECE's and teachers) and provide them with an understanding of their futures
- Keep dreaming and focusing on the vision (4)
  - Learn with an open mind and a positive attitude
  - Never stop! We need to be leaders!

### **4. What participants wanted to say but didn't:**

- Work together to build a cohesive system for families (16)
  - Relationships are key (7)
    - Need bridge building between ECE/teacher; understand each others' roles
    - OEYCs play a very important role because they put emphasis on the family
    - Bring the long-term leads together to share wisdom
    - Focus on job orientation not reduction
    - Great to be part of the Peel region and community
  - Dialogue and consultation are critical; how people are really going to be affected (5)
    - Consult frontline levels, community
    - Shame we didn't hear from the premier before today
    - When will we know more about this matter?
    - How will this impact PLASP and other childcare/ECE?
  - Hope implementation will include the existing service providers
  - Everyone has the same fears and concerns, and that is comforting

- How will we make ECE and teachers equal partners? (5)
  - Concerned about the teacher unions and potential mistake of having a full day teacher-led kindergarten rather than a more developmentally appropriate program with ECE and play based days
  - Must be a way for ECE's to become B.Ed and for B.Ed's to become ECEs
- Ultimately the goal is for the child (4)
  - On a transformative journey and must keep eyes on the target and not get too overwhelmed by bumps on the road – there will be many bumps
  - Four and five years olds need options available for different ways of learning

## **5. Other comments:**

- Great start; well organized/planned (13)
  - The overview was excellent/informative; good to get a broader perspective (3)
  - We are moving in the right direction; beginning an exciting new journey; can't wait to see it rolled out in Peel!
  - There are many visionaries in the region that are open to change
  - Having teachers from the board to come to existing childcare facilities is a great idea; also cuts down on concerns with space restrictions
  - Updates with programs are very motivating
  - Hopeful that this is a positive move for the ECE field
- Logistics (3)
  - Good acoustics; liked central location
  - Poor lighting on flip charts
- Thank you (3)
- Other comments (3)
  - Would have appreciated asking Charles and Zeenat some questions; hearing more from Jim Grieve regarding implementation
  - What other programs exist in Peel to assist newcomers and current families?
  - Allow parents to make the ultimate choice