




To boldly go...

towards a  
comprehensive child  
care system in Ontario



# Who We Are

- ◆ **The OCBCCC was founded in 1981 to advocate for universally accessible, high quality, non-profit regulated child care in Ontario.**
- ◆ **a non-partisan advocacy organization**
- ◆ **Over 500 member organizations and individuals**

# Who We Are

- ◆ **Representing sectors: education, health care, labour, child-welfare, injury prevention, rural communities, First Nations, francophone, social policy, anti-poverty, professional, student and women's organizations**
- ◆ **as well as community-based child care programs**

# Child Care Action Networks

◆ Windsor

◆ Hamilton

◆ Ottawa

◆ Peterborough

◆ Thunder Bay

◆ Sudbury

◆ Niagara  
Region

◆ Waterloo  
Region

# IT'S TIME FOR ACTION

- ◆ No coherent child care system in Ontario
- ◆ Long-established child care centres, including community college lab schools, have been forced to close
- ◆ Municipal support is wavering
- ◆ Parents are having a tough time affording quality child care—if they can find it to begin with
- ◆ Difficulties attracting and retaining qualified staff since wages in the sector are low and benefits and working conditions poor

# 1995-2003:

## Decline in Ontario child care

- ◆ Decades of ad hoc, piecemeal government policies
- ◆ a market-driven approach based on parents' ability to pay
- ◆ declining provincial child care budgets
- ◆ downloading onto cash-strapped municipalities

# 2004: child care back on provincial and federal agenda

## ◆ Are opportunities to maximize

- F/P/T negotiations on a national child care system
- Growing public support for national child care
- Friendly government in Ontario committed to child care and the early years

## ◆ Ontario's role

- To raise the bar and lead by example
- To create a plan that finally articulates and puts in place the building blocks of a high quality accessible system

# 10 Year Strategy

- ◆ Ontario must develop a strategy – a policy framework and an action plan - that articulates what our child care system will look like in 10 years and how we will get there

# 10 Year Strategy – Recommendations for Ontario

- ◆ **For a system to be concurrently phased in, with services for children aged 0-3 and school-age children up to age 12 being expanded at the same time that 4- and 5-year-olds make the transition to a full kindergarten program.**
- ◆ **By Year 10, all children aged 0-12 will have universal access to high quality early learning and care.**

# 10 Year Strategy – Recommendations for Ontario

1 - put in place a single comprehensive early learning and care system of services for all children 0-12 that is:

- Publicly funded
- Not-for-profit
- A universal entitlement
- Inclusive
- High Quality

## 2 - New legislation

- ◆ Establish framework legislation to develop a comprehensive system of high quality early learning and care services, initially for children aged 3 and gradually moving to children of younger ages.
- ◆ Mandate school boards to provide full-day senior and junior kindergarten, with lunchtime supervision included. Staff-to-child ratios will be 1:10 for junior kindergarten, and 1:12 for kindergarten.

# 3 – Introduce a direct program funding model

## RATIONALE

- ◆ Ontario's current subsidy system and market (user-pay) model has erected barriers to affordability and accessibility and caused fragility of programs
- ◆ Only direct public funding can ensure predictability and stability for program planning, service delivery and quality
- ◆ A coherent early learning and care system must be base funded to directly operate services

### 3 - A direct program funding model

- ◆ Directly fund child care services, phasing in universal access over a 10-year period. Use available federal dollars – ECDI and MFA and increase provincial investments to support implementation of the targets and objectives of the strategic plan.
- ◆ Move to 100% provincial funding of child care.

## 4 - Set Roles and responsibilities for management and funding of system

◆ Establish and fund an independent task force/commission to hold and publicly report on province wide consultations in partnership with key stakeholders to determine government jurisdiction and the authority responsible for delivery of services, and the content and scope of legislation.

## 5 - Improve quality standards and develop strategies for meeting them

- ◆ Bring provincial regulations, curriculum guidelines and teaching standards into line with the best available knowledge about quality in early learning and care.
- ◆ Improving teacher qualifications and wages to reflect the value of the service provided.
- ◆ Maintain or improve current staff-to-child ratios.

## 6 - Develop a 10-year plan that includes goals and objectives, timelines and targets and review and evaluation strategies.

- ◆ Put in place a plan to monitor progress on the development of the early learning and care system:
  - Set up a facility for data collection.
  - Regularly collect data using specified criteria to evaluate progress in reaching the targets and timelines of implementing the early learning and care system.
  - Report annually on progress and make annual report available to the public.
- ◆ Establish a mechanism for consultation with the research community and stakeholder constituency that gives these groups an obligatory and legal status in development, planning and evaluation of the early learning and care system.

## 7 – Develop an Ontario timetable with service targets and plans for meeting them

- ◆ Set targets and timetables to phase in new, integrated services for all ages 0-12 over a period of 10 years. Expand services for children 0-3, and before- and after-school care. Achieve access for all 4- and 5-year olds to the new full-day junior and senior kindergarten program, building on the education system.

# Conclusion

- ◆ First bold step is to develop the plan
  - And to develop it in partnership with child care users, providers and other stakeholders in Ontario
- ◆ The second is to muster the political will and guts to put the plan into action
  - We all have a role to play here
  - But we also need some heroes
- ◆ The result will be an integrated, responsive child care system that meets the educational and developmental needs of children and the parenting and work/training needs of families.