



## Toward a Provincial Framework for Early Learning and Care in Alberta

A Record of Participant Discussions

# Red Deer

November 7, 2012

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Fort McMurray • Grande Prairie • Edmonton • Red Deer • Calgary • Medicine Hat • Lethbridge



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## 1. Introduction

In November 2012, The Muttart Foundation, Success By 6 and Calgary UpStart hosted consultations in 7 Alberta cities to consider the design of a new provincial framework for early learning and care. The consultations, funded in part with support from the Government of Alberta Ministries of Human Services and Education, explored how Alberta might, over time, more closely integrate early learning and care and how a potential framework could be structured to guide and support this process of integration.

The stakeholders invited to attend the consultations included senior staff and volunteers from early learning and care organizations, senior staff who oversee or work in school-based early learning programs, academic staff from post-secondary institutions as well as staff from infrastructure organizations that support service delivery.

To support the consultation discussions, the project partners contracted a team of early education and care researchers to prepare background papers that were circulated to the participants in advance of the consultations. The background papers provided an overview of the main idea of integrating early learning and care and considered the potential features or nature of this integration across the key domains of service design, funding and delivery. The papers summarized the research literature on integration, and provided examples of how individual jurisdictions have approached integration (copies of these background reports can be downloaded from the Muttart Foundation website at [www.muttart.org/reports](http://www.muttart.org/reports)).

The consultations followed a similar format. At each meeting, the participants engaged in a series of facilitated discussions that initially explored the main idea of more closely integrating early learning and care followed by a series of more detailed discussions on the main design features or elements of a more integrated approach and their expression in a new provincial framework.

Throughout the discussions, participants recorded their own responses to the various questions they considered on individual feedback sheets. These sheets were then collected at the end of the consultations, transcribed and analyzed to provide a record of the discussions. The participant comments were organized according to the main questions they considered and sorted to reflect the key themes and ideas they expressed. The comments made were not attributed to individual participants.

This report presents the participant comments from the Red Deer consultation held on November 7<sup>th</sup>, 2012 at the Red Deer Sheraton Hotel. Twenty-seven participants took part in the discussions. The project partners greatly appreciate the time and energy the participants contributed to the discussions and thank them all individually for their insights and commitment to this work.

A final consultation summary report prepared by the Muttart Foundation, Success By 6 and Calgary UpStart for the Ministries of Human Services and Education presents the findings from across the seven consultations. Copies of this report can also be requested from the three project partners.

## 2. An Integrated Approach

What key themes, ideas and questions emerge for you when you consider more closely integrating ELC in Alberta?

### Theme: Getting Clarity

#### *Subtheme: Basic Definitions*

- Common “definitions”/understanding of what integration and ELC is. It will be important – to keep us all grounded – on the same journey.

#### *Subtheme: The Case for Integration*

- Integration would free up time that has been spent sourcing out funding.
- Positive outcomes for children and families.
- Responds to the trends – immigration, multicultural character, growth of AB.
- Parent frustrations with existing system creates environment for change
- Support of literature for this concept.

#### *Subtheme: Questions and Support for Integration*

- Increased understanding and appreciation of the importance and value of the field
- Political issues and agendas may be problematic – money, power control
- What is the popular support for the premier’s social policy framework? Without popular support can the financial resources be designated for full or partial integration? Can we step outside our individual mandates to create and commit to integration? Do we want to?
- Is everyone on board?
- Responsibility – family or system?
- Political issues and agendas may be problematic – money, power, control
- I also question “are we pushing” too hard. Is there a way of integrating and providing this higher level of continuity without sending the message that we need our children to be smarter/readier – earlier?

#### *Subtheme: Goals and Purposes*

- Socialization – strong foundation: health, physical, emotional, social – strong society
- Equity Justice – make world better.
- Keeping the early child and development true and not driven by economics (and a push for ready for the “market world”) but rather supporting their foundational years with learning that enhances their citizenship
- Readiness: academic ready; socially/emotional readiness; strong physical foundation.

## Theme: Access to Services

### *Subtheme: Universal Versus Targeted*

- Provide means to support families at risk of neglect, abuse, depression, etc.
- Question: What about all the children who do not require care and just enter kindergarten? Do their families need support?
- Making available quality early learning for all young children.
- Education focus is on children with delays/disabilities (under 5): the focus needs to be on all families and all children.
- Universal access 0-6
- Universal access for 4 and 5 year olds
- At risk families – access and family supports. Choice for parents – full day, half day K programs
- Being able to access more readily screening/assessment of children with emotional/physical/behavioral challenges.
- Accessibility/universal
- Let's fix access to high quality ELCC, remove competition for limited spaces which tends to reward parents who are already gifted/competent.
- Universal programming and accessibility for 4 and 5 year olds with full day every day for 5 year olds as an option to families.
- Supports for stay at home parents.

### *Subtheme: Mandated Versus Choice*

- How do we retain the individual choice component that is so important to parents in Alberta into an integrated ELC system?
- Mandatory Kindergarten
- Providing families choice , which is not based on affordability
- Safeguard choice for families.
- I want mandatory programming for kindergarten for all children age 5
- Accommodate differences – choices.
- Flexible child care options

## Theme: Elements of Integration

### *Subtheme: Governance*

- How do we affect change – for the 2 ministries to work together well?
- Integration will reduce competition between school district and early learning and care programs.
- One or two ministries?
- Integration or partnerships – does everyone operate under school boards?
- We need common-shared values for both ministries or organizations understanding child development.
- It would be nice to be under 1 ministry
- Barriers between ministries will have to come down

### *Subtheme: Financing*

- Funding for parents?
- Financing? Who controls the money?
- We really need greater investment in ELC required for any positive movement to occur.
- Management and financing key

### *Subtheme: Service Delivery*

- Location of services?
- Let's use the existing infrastructure to its full potential i.e. schools, community center.

### *Subtheme: Human Resources*

- The status of the ELC is becoming more professional/acknowledged.
- Work force issues – train, buy-in and equality.
- Educational ELC “training”.
- High quality professional staff (4 yrs. B.Ed. with early childhood focus) is present along with the support of ECD for programming for 4 and 5 year olds.
- Qualified or trained staff are going to be required.
- Sustainability of staff (supportive salaries aligned with expertise and training)
- Would be nice to have more respect for professionals.
- Sustainability of good staff
- Quality child development facilitators
- ELC workforce inequities in the split system will require much work
- Staffing/supervision- teaching staff vs. ECD
- Sustainability of staff is key.
- I like the professional development opportunities.
- Salary discrepancies; staff retention in small rural areas; Community driven
- Provincial pay scales and set fees would need to be taken into consideration
- Rural care setting that are not and cannot always run at capacity
- We need high quality staff
- Staffing/supervision- teaching staff vs. ECD

### *Subtheme: Curriculum Framework*

- Developing a curriculum framework to initiate buy in is important.
- We need a consistency of pedagogy.
- Curriculum – what does that look like?
- How do we ensure that the EL opportunities within the classroom for 3+4 yr. olds stay age appropriate if this system is integrated with the education ministry? Keep the play and socialization component.
- Let's talk the same language and not get bogged down with pedagogical terms.

- Protection of the phase of children. Make schools ready for children.
- How to respect/accommodate different philosophies – Reggio, Montessori etc.
- 0-6 curriculum through the province to ensure best practices within all programs for all families.

## **Theme: Other Considerations**

### *Subtheme: Services or Features*

- Quality/consistent/sustainable.
- Universal access.
- Importance of accessibility – rights of the child.
- Seamless service and accessibility
- When we hold the child and family in mind we must consider systems that promote their abilities and facilitate their strengths – enabling families to be capable and not stretching them to navigate multiple complex systems in their efforts to provide for their child.
- Let's make this easy for parents and children. It is not efficient to move young children through several settings over the course of a day.

### *Subtheme: Regional Variation*

- Salary discrepancies; staff retention in small rural areas; community driven.
- Keeping qualified staff in rural communities without high access to staff.
- Understanding the value of early childhood in communities, families in the province.
- Provincial pay scales and set fees would need to take into consideration rural care setting that are not and cannot always run at capacity.

### *Subtheme: Other Considerations*

- Importance of integration for all ages and in all communities
- Respect between all concerned parties, ex: education institutes, childcare, preschool
- Importance of the people doing the daily work in the lives of children
- Love concept of integration – sector services to children/families
- I think the 6 sections outlined in the putting the pieces together doc have captured the key elements. More may evolve as the process moves forward but I can't think of any missing pieces at this time

## **Theme: Moving Forward**

- How to transition from where we are? How do we prepare/educate for this? How do we accommodate each type of service? Private/non-profit chain/family or individual program/ family childcare/osc/childcare center?
- How do we move from our very diverse system to an integrated system?
- What are the timelines?
- What will the process look like? How will this affect families? Communities?



- Positive impacts? Negative impacts? Who guides/drives the process?
- What will my role be/ advocate and supporter?

## What level or type of integration do you see as valuable in Alberta?

### Theme: Level of Integration

#### *Subtheme: Full Integration*

- Full integration would be great. Don't believe that's possible in this province
- Full integration- equal access for all children especially children with disabilities
- Aim for full integration
- Fully integrated and universal access all year long
- I would like to see full integration so families' needs and interests are met with support that is coordinated.
- I would love to see one that is fully integrated and where each has the respect and value within the system. I liked what (named facilitator) said about ECD/kindergarten as the top of an Early Learning and Care system.
- For our children and families, I believe full integration of ELC services and universal access should be our aim.
- Although fully integrated is optimal, movement to being more closely aligned would be significant.

#### *Subtheme: Partial Integration*

- Minimally – partial integration
- I see partial integration as the closest we could manage at this time but let's aim for the top!
- Daunting talk to go from here (education and children's ministry, for profit businesses, nonprofit) to integrated: staged approached, minimum standards
- Based on current research and existing models, a staged in model: Shared curriculum; gov't ministry; Quasi-public management; Movement towards core funding model; Support to develop common training and career path, i.e. training dollars for those in the field to pursue higher levels.
- I see a hybrid system as the most effective as AB has such a diverse demographic of communities and people.
- We have so much higher chance of success with a hybrid system politically. Must have developmentally appropriate curriculum.
- Partial is most realistic. Even if responsibility for governance was managed under one ministry. Supports are so intertwined and complex that is hard to separate. We have talked about early learning (Education) and childcare (HS) but what about parenting? For example: I would support the governance of being integrated into one ministry but still see a need for cross ministry support due to the complex nature of families

## Theme: Type of Integration

### *Sub-theme: Governance*

- I would like to see early learning and care under one ministry, with funding continuous through the years 0-6 and the months for families who require year round care.
- From an idealistic perspective, I would like to see a single ministry for ELC that truly integrates a holistic system. However, after a long career in the field, I know this is not (or might not be) pragmatic or possible. Therefore, I think we develop a clear vision and a plan of steps to work toward this end – involving and getting buy-in from all stakeholders.
- One ministry

### *Sub-theme: Service Delivery*

- Equal partnership agencies school boards
- Common accreditation/licensing requirements. Could it be simplified? And still be safe/high quality.
- Integrating the whole child.

### *Subtheme: Human Resources*

- Educational common credential

### *Subtheme: Curriculum Framework*

- More attention being paid to play based developmentally appropriate early childhood experience that is research based – this needs to continue to be a priority from 0-6 years of age – don't shift curriculum down
- Kindergarten guiding principles – take what is already good and build them
- 0-6 integrate care and education – focus should be on appropriate play based learning and developmental growth and support for families.
- A “framework” for curriculum – not a prescribed curriculum which may come all over the place.

## Theme: Issues to Consider

### *Subtheme: Family Centered, Family Choice*

- We need to empower all families to support their child's development. Right now the model is if there is a problem/delay/condition the best place for that child is away from the parent in an educational program. I would like to see a model that supports the children where the family would normally be. i.e. parent working support in care environment; parent at home – support for home; families – universal supports.
- Need to make it easier or parents to attain high quality programming, from 0 to school age.
- Support for all families
- Increase opportunities for families to raise children in the home environment

- Child has issues, support where families wants them to be
- Services/supports for at risk families
- More choice that meets individual families' needs.
- Increase childcare within the workforce for families.
- Families still have opportunities and choice to parent their children. If they are able/capable, parent/ families who need them should have integrated service.
- Access for families who choose to stay home for programming for their children.
- Integration of the early child 1-6 years with supports of either parent/guardians 1<sup>st</sup> year. (Education begins in culture).

#### *Subtheme: Broad Engagement*

- Bring in business, families, service providers, gov't (provincial/municipal/federal?) all together and respect each other for what they bring.
- Focused messages to the various stakeholders.
- Messages to stakeholders must be focused. Targeted messages regarding education on brain development
- Define "integration" keeping in mind the audience so they are not panicked by the direction we want to move towards

#### *Subtheme: Access*

- Seamless service for families to ensure the trust of their children organizations that can build trust with the families.
- Amalgamation of programming in rural Alberta to ensure families have access to programming.
- Flexibility within spaces for families, not always requiring full or part time spaces. But drop-in or consistent 1 day programming.

#### *Subtheme: Research-Based*

- Seek models where good things are happening i.e.. charter/public schools.

### **How would you characterize the state of readiness in AB for more closely integrating ELC?**

#### **Theme: General Readiness**

- Very ready – but many years of past history of a different mindset in their province may be a huge challenge
- Readiness 1-1- = 6 or 7. Based on political will – ECD priority – Social Policy Framework and the impetus of evidence based response and impetus of movement by other jurisdictions.

## Theme: Readiness by Stakeholder

### *Subtheme: Parents/families*

- A new idea for parents that I believe will be positively accepted
- Perhaps working parents are ready or more than ready.
- I think parents of smaller communities may not be as ready or aware of the idea of close integration of ELC simply because often there are no “choices” per se.
- Larger centers would be more ready (parents as well as caregivers).
- Parents are definitely ready for an integrated system. People are so much more mobile and will choose ELC opportunities based on quality values rather than proximity to their home communities therefore they will move their children if necessary.
- We are ready! Parents have often expressed their frustrations with waiting, not knowing procedures especially with first time parent, not being available - to afford.
- I believe the families in AB would embrace change that provides support and empowers them as the parent. However, Albertans also have strong feeling about choice – daycare, day home, Montessori, etc.

### *Subtheme: Service Providers*

- Child care agencies are ready.
- I feel a lot of work needs to be done to get the stakeholders involved to look at the bigger picture of what’s “best for children” and let go their own attachments to their individual organizations and programs.
- I believe the childcare sectors are open to the idea with a little concern about the philosophy of learning through play being lost.
- Those of us involved with children and families are probably most ready
- Child care will be so excited to be seen as more “credible”.
- Private operators need to be accountable and if standardized benchmarks are met they should feel a part of the ELC system.
- Mixed – I see government being more ready than before – especially human services. I think that the child care community is not as ready as some sectors.
- Some will find this concept threatening – that it might put them out of business. That early childhood will be consumed by education and important aspects of “care” will be lost.

### *Subtheme: Education & Schools*

- Schools are embracing their roles in early learning and are passionate about delivering developmentally appropriate programming where children are engaged in learning through inquiry and play. Schools are a natural gathering place for families – community.

- Schools are starting to have a better understanding about the needs of early learners and are more able to provide young children with enhanced early learning opportunities that meet all children's needs
- Schools will struggle. Change is always difficult and I think "kindergarten" is firmly established so may be difficult at first.
- Early Learning branch in education has brought more attention to early years in education.
- Early childhood is important role in education. All teachers are more aware of the value of early childhood with the onset at Early Learning branch.
- Ministry of education has increased the priority/focus with Early Learning and the development of high quality engaging early learning environments focusing on learning through inquiry and play... this focus has had considerable impact on the child and families outcomes. There is decreased need for later school interventions with schools providing programming for 4 and 5 year olds.
- Pre-k/k being part of education is positively impacting education. Being spoken about, importance of being valued, buying into how it impacts the child in later years.
- Don't see anybody from school board.
- Early Learning Branch 0-8 a good thing!

#### *Subtheme: Levels of Government*

- I am not so confident that local gov't is as ready. Most rural communities still have a very traditional approach to ELC "moms should stay home" is the prevailing opinion.
- The general population and government, I think are less ready
- I think the province is ready – long overdue.
- Anytime there is talk about changing ministries/services that operate in silos, the walls go up quickly to protect what is currently happening. Fear: job loss, quality.
- The state of readiness is significantly impacted by the philosophical difference and wage disparities between the two ministries. These differences are entrenched and I believe that it will take at least 10 years to see change.
- Mixed – I see government being more ready than before – especially human services. I think that the child care community is not as ready as some sectors.

#### *Subtheme: The Public and Government*

- The general population and government, I think are less ready

## **Theme: The Process of Change**

### *Subtheme: Awareness and Education*

- Many interested parties wanting to become more impactful with government support, but not being heard. Groups not knowing how to become a voice.
- Educating the public on ELC and valid profession.
- Parents will require some solid information about ELC concepts and why/how their child benefits, etc.
- Current stakeholders will need to embrace and understand the new world. Some key folks have of course but perhaps not those “on the ground” in each small community.

### *Subtheme: Tension Between ECD and Education Field*

- There are significant cultural barriers between teachers and early childhood development practitioners. Both see their approaches as superior. We need to find the common ground and create a common educational curriculum.

### *Subtheme: Gradual Approach*

- I appreciate this process and the awareness by the leading groups that differing philosophies can be barriers to change.
- We are at the beginning stages – collaboration between ministries has already started. The timing is right – the journey is long but I feel the province needs to begin.
- Appreciate Muttart Foundation for valuing and supporting early learning

## **Theme: General Considerations**

- System feels like it is breaking.
- Stress of young children
- 1 (possibly) playschool. No approved child care. Parents more than likely don't even think about how it could be different (in tiny communities)
- Parents are enrolling children in pre-k/preschools, ECD and playschools are losing enrollment
- The cost of providing a high quality integrated program is costly. I am unsure people will support this.
- With a young premier, it is an imperative time to look at an overhaul to our system. And with employment levels high, it is now that we need to address childcare to ensure young families are able to participate in employment opportunities.

## **What do we need to keep in mind as we consider integrating ELC in AB?**

### **Theme: Vision and Outcomes**

- Children and their families – the future we want for Albertans

## Theme: Principles of Supports & Services

### *Subtheme: Child & Family Focused*

- Families first! Healthy family – healthy child.
- Include children and parents – kids don't live alone, they live in families.
- What's best for the children and families may not be the easiest path but will
- This new paradigm needs to work for families, to reduce stress, cost, complexity, craziness in family life.
- Appropriateness – for the clientele we are serving.

### *Subtheme: Families Providing Care*

- What about families that children do not attend care or learning programs? Homeschooling?
- Families whose children are not in care

### *Subtheme: Accessibility*

- Access for all families in all communities
- Transportation for rural communities qualified staff (early learning) appropriate facilities/access to.
- Children with and without delays and disabilities

### *Subtheme: Affordability*

- Reduce financial barriers
- Just equitable, fair system that does not support “privilege” (white or Alberta citizenship like in the example of needing to put (named individual's) son on the out of school care list 1.5 years in advance.
- Making access affordable to families

### *Subtheme: Continuum & Transitions*

- Child development and stages and ages
- Stress on young children transitioning
- Transitioning between child care, playschools and schools – make more smooth
- Continuum of supports and services for children and their families – accessible

### *Subtheme: Choice*

- Personal choice and local autonomy are very important to Albertans. An integrated system needs to allow for some flexibility to meet the needs of the individual communities.
- Give parents choice about types of programs/hours etc.
- Albertan's love choice and we need to provide options for families and the resources to support and honour the family.

## Theme: Integrative Elements

### *Subtheme: Governance*

- Creating a single ministry for early learning and creating a revolution for our children.

### *Subtheme: Finances*

- Maximize funding currently being used to reach front line services
- Financial barriers
- Market model – how do we move towards a system that is more geared reflective of a (quasi or fully) publicly funded model.
- Financially it is important to invest in child care and early learning however, still important to not put the province into debt for these children to have to get out of down the road.

### *Subtheme: Service Delivery*

- Community infrastructure – transportation
- Schools closing doors at 3:45
- Transportation for rural communities qualified staff (early learning) appropriate facilities/access to
- Infrastructure (schools, daycares, etc.). How do you integrate with current state?
- The high number of privately operated child care programs –should this continue?

### *Subtheme: Curriculum Framework*

- Shared outcomes daycare – K. Shared philosophy
- Common beliefs? Common language?
- Consideration of developing a 4 year old curriculum needs to allow room for different approaches and parental choice – flexible access

### *Subtheme: Human Resources*

- Staff – appropriate training (K teachers need early childhood)
- Other initiatives that have standardized their systems (e.g. big brothers and big sisters) has significantly challenged smaller communities that can't find or retain qualified staff.
- How the workforce can be “grown” to accommodate integration.

## Theme: Other Considerations

### *Subtheme: ECD and Education Paradigms*

- There is a lot of history of disagreement between the early childhood community and the education community. Some of this will need to be dealt



- with and may require some serious work on letting go of turf and ensuring understanding of what is being developed and how each will contribute.
- It will always feel like a loss to someone if responsibility is moved away. “losers” will struggle to embrace and support new system
  - Let’s focus on common values between child care and education
  - Challenges of education pushing schoolification and ECD community fear of power and respect for education.
  - There is room for all of us; we need the energy/ideas/different perspectives to craft a new paradigm in ELCC.

*Subtheme: Regional Variation*

- Rural communities how do we support.
- Rural communities/transportation
- Access for all families in all communities
- When standardizing staff qualification – rural?
- As you are meeting in large centers and including smaller constituents (e.g. Sylvan Lake) you might be missing the real challenges being faced in rural communities.
- Urban-Rural
- Balancing rural, small city, large city needs.
- Big ideas that work well for cities with ample resources to staff and families may not be reflected within rural communities

*Subtheme: Miscellaneous*

- Trends: population growth – Immigration, international, interprovincial
- Canada is a multicultural country – charter of rights – Choice needs to be possible (belief schools, traditions ways of life need to have opportunity to operate).
- Provincial – same age of eligibility date for K not determined by school board (recommend fall date, no Feb).
- The level of demands on the people delivering the programs – the paperwork is mounting.

**Theme: The Process Moving Forward**

*Subtheme: Intentional Approach*

- Get the “vision” out there – big picture is critical and the details and specifics will follow.
- Be practical without losing quality or safety of children.
- A clear pathway to the future with adequate supports to get there (i.e.) 10 in 10
- Leadership to propel the actions setup doable stages of implementation

*Subtheme: Engagement*

- Communication, communication, communication

- Education – remove the fear
- Involve all stakeholders: parents, programs, gov't, local agencies, colleges, school boards, universities. Everyone must feel they have a part to play in creating the plan.
- Getting the right people ' to the table' families – not just “the brains”
- Need for public awareness of the importance.
- Include users of services in discussions and consultation
- The “red neck/ traditional” Albertans may not support . Tax dollars going to this (you have them you raise them)
- Respect for all the humans connected to the services we are dealing with. The children and their best interests, the families and their needs, the staff involved in ELC and the stakeholders (private and public) who operate services

*Subtheme: Build on What Exists*

- Many facets of ELC, all have positives and negatives – lets work with what we have – “If it ain't broke, don't fix it” = build on what is working resources (people, \$, etc.) will be critical.
- That Alberta has a long history of supporting both private and not-for-profit child care services. As we move forward we need to think about how best to consider how this history can be addressed.
- Pre-k curriculum/program statements.
- Look at what's working: private public partnerships in healthcare
- Public and charter schools

### 3. Goals & Purposes

**What key themes, ideas and questions emerge for you when you consider the goals and purposes for ELC in Alberta?**

**Theme: Priority Goals**

*Subtheme: Early Childhood Development/Lifelong Learning*

- Because the first 5 years are the most critical in forming
- Have we considered looking at the integrated framework as birth-8yrs?
- Early childhood development (prevention/intervention)
- Improved societal outcomes; decreases the need for later interventions in school and beyond
- ELC must not be limited to “academics” – that the whole child and their ultimate success be individual and include the idea of being a citizen who can contribute to society with each his/her unique skills and strengths considered as successful.
- Lifelong versus 0-6 years

- Shared ownership of our children: Benefits of early childhood; quality early learning universally offered when the brain is most malleable (3-5) impacts the long-term trajectory/outcome increase; later year interventions do not have the same impact.
- Children well-being
- Placing importance back on children in our society
- Primary purpose is human development – an opportunity for every child to grow into their genetic potential

#### *Subtheme: Child and Family Support*

- Children and families have the right to be supported
- A child’s right to play and grow in a safe, loving and enriched environment
- How do we support marginal families to access this opportunity?
- Supporting children and families wellbeing, supporting working families, single parent families
- Family support and education
- Children and families have the right to be supported
- Supporting families
- That the goals should focus on the child and family
- Would this result in outcomes that show measurable benefits to child, family, community?
- Children’s and families rights
- That the systems should leave the family feeling enabled to foster the capacity of each member (not just the child in care)
- Supporting children and families wellbeing, supporting working families, single parent families
- This supports the human development of the parents to achieve self-actualization
- “Quality” families is as important as quality childcare environments

#### *Subtheme: Community Cohesion & Inclusion*

- Building of community and social cohesion
- Prevention of social breakdown
- Community cohesion
- Level the playing field for low social economic families (vulnerable families)

#### *Subtheme: Other Thoughts*

- The 4 goals/ideas identified are great but it’s a bit of a shift from the current state
- Will Albertans accept a focus on gender equity as driver for public policy and investment?

## Theme: Principles

### *Subtheme: Developmentally Appropriate*

- Reflecting on developmental stages and developmentally appropriate experiences

### *Subtheme: Quality*

- Accessibility, quality, staffing professionalism

### *Subtheme: Universality*

- Universal access/sense of belonging
- Universality
- Supporting all families/all children – universal accessibility
- Universal access of support for families and children
- Shared ownership of our children: Benefits of early childhood; quality early learning universally offered when the brain is most malleable (3-5) impacts the long-term trajectory/outcome increase; later year interventions do not have the same impact.

### *Subtheme: Accessibility and Affordability*

- Accessibility, quality, staffing professionalism
- To provide the children and families of Alberta with opportunity to access quality early education regardless of income, gender and location within the province. Particularly rural Albertans.
- Universal access/sense of belonging
- Simplify accessibility to services.
- Universal access of support for families and children

### *Subtheme: Continuum & Transitions*

- Seamless integration
- Continuum of care/options
- Cafeteria of EL services available within the framework.
- Consistency.

## Theme: Integrative Elements

### *Subtheme: Finances*

- Public and private supported
- Set up systems for financial support.

### *Subtheme: Service Delivery*

- Equal access/opportunity including financial businesses
- Ensuring support for the family not just for the child
- Service delivery in rural communities – huge inequities

- A system to support and not add stress to: families; children; individuals responsible for the delivery.
- Are there opportunities to realign current strategies and investments to achieve the goals (i.e.) PLC and HV... connect them financially and practically to ELC programs
- We will never be able to fully integrate as long as we see child care primarily as a support to working parents.
- There needs to be a menu: safe, appropriate care; support for families

#### *Subtheme: Human Resources*

- Strong, highly trained workforce
- Facilitator education/remuneration/professional development
- More schooling for ELCC staff?

### **Theme: Other Considerations**

#### *Subtheme: General Comments*

- Does education have same goals?
- Some people choose to have a career.
- Strong base – will build strong provincial capacity for down the road
- Keep going to big picture
- Community (keeping kids in their communities)
- More benefits for maternal/paternal caregivers
- Family support (extended family)
- Business community involvement
- Early development impacts.
- That consideration needs to be given to the business sector’s perspective on the importance of ELC – engagement with all sectors (gov’t, voluntary and business) would be critical to success
- Need to think big picture
- Provincially and beyond vs. local
- Human potential and well being
- Bridge/micro and macro; Early literacy where it looks developmentally appropriate e.g. flannel; Tax \$ goes to grade schools, why not a percentage going to early childhood – Child choice programs; Maclean’s Sept college and university students suicide why? Push to be marketable? Early childhood foundation care and education

### **Theme: Moving Forward**

#### *Subtheme: Awareness and Support*

- How do we “impose” or “convince others in society” that these are worthwhile and important values?

- How do we institute these goals and purposes in the ELC system in AB? Cross-ministerial ELC committees?
- How to develop a system that meets the needs of all “stakeholders”?
- How we engage others in the goals – to help them feel they have a role to play?
- Need for public education on risks associated with academic push down:
- Lack of awareness of these four goals – I think we would get “buy-in” if the basic foundational principles were better understood by the public sector (and perhaps even our ELC field)
- Help all stakeholders understand child development and how early learning looks and what school readiness means (social benefits of rich learning experiences).
- How do we help families understand “school readiness”, benefits of early childhood
- Is education on board – will it matter?

## What are the main goals and purposes for ELC that you see as critical to include in a new provincial framework?

### Theme: Priority Goals

#### *Subtheme: Early Childhood Development/Lifelong Learning*

- Good start – reach developmental milestones be ready for “life”
- Supporting families and communities to support young children’s development in a meaningful and developmentally appropriate way.
- To support children in their development and empowering families to support their child’s development (including choosing a care or early education environment)
- Critical brain development period
- Cost savings of early intervention i.e. oral language – vocab at age 5 predicts reading comprehension in later grades predicts future life success (economic value)
- To foster optimal child development in a caring, rich environment that results in children being ready for the learning and social dynamics of the educational system (skills for life)
- To have them fulfill their potential
- Strong foundations for children build strong societies
- The benefits of quality learning and dev. ops for young children

#### *Subtheme: Family Support*

- Supporting families and communities to support young children’s development in a meaningful and developmentally appropriate way.

- To support children in their development and empowering families to support their child's development (including choosing a care or early education environment)
- Empowering families to support their child but maintaining rights of the child to be safe and nurtured.
- To utilize family-centered practices to enhance family capacity to support its members now and into the future.
- Supportive policies that enable parents to maximize their potential i.e. parental leave, learning opportunities
- Focus on family cohesion and social bonds along with citizenship values.
- Helping families support individual children (the whole child) through their formative years
- Foster/safe guarding autonomy and family independence
- To utilize family-centered practices to enhance family capacity to support its members now and into the future.

*Subtheme: Community Cohesion & Inclusion*

- Increase community connectedness
- Building common experiences, children playing with children of different ethnic/religious/socio-economic communities
- Strong, healthy, vibrant communities

*Subtheme: Equity*

- Equity
- Secondary purpose would be a more equal society.

*Subtheme: Other Thoughts*

- All four goals need to be included especially quality.
- All four goals are, to me, totally integrated and must be looked at holistically as part of any systemic development
- New paradigm in which we look at the economic argument as part of the "family support" goals.

**Theme: Principles**

*Subtheme: Child & Family Focused*

- Critical brain development period
- Requires system to focus on individuality so that individual and/or family potential can be achieved.

*Subtheme: Developmentally Appropriate*

- Common understanding of vulnerability not a static term that labels a family at any time. A family could be vulnerable as vulnerability means many things

– economically, emotionally, lack of support. Families could move in and out of this state.

- Protect Childhood

#### *Subtheme: Quality*

- Quality – of people/environments, of the profession/sector
- All four goals need to be included especially quality.
- I see “quality” as the core and understanding the values behind the goals will drive “quality”
- The benefits of quality learning and dev. ops for young children
- When children have been in poor quality care setting once they hit school it impacts

#### *Subtheme: Universal and Accessible*

- Universality
- To ensure universal access to quality programs
- Equal access/opportunity
- Making sure there are equal opportunities for children/families to access services and supports in their own communities (having to drive to an adjacent community is a barrier to access and equity)
- Early learning experiences should be available and accessible for all children.
- Equity versus equal “everyone gets what they need not the same”

#### *Subtheme: Affordability*

- Should not only be for those that can afford to pay.

#### *Subtheme: Continuum & Transitions*

- Continuum of supports and services
- Families have access to continuum of supportive services to enhance and support their ability to provide for meeting children’s needs.
- That the nurturing and care inherent in “care” is valued and embedded
- Others as well as themselves
- All families can be successful regardless of the presence of vulnerability at some point or another
- Respond to the needs of our families

#### *Subtheme: Choice*

- Foster/safe guarding autonomy and family independence
- Giving families choice where they are not compelled to access ELC but can at various levels

#### *Subtheme: Consistency*

- Common guidelines/values/principles for accountability and consistency/accessibility



## **Theme: Integrative Elements**

### *Subtheme: Governance*

- Creating a ministry with early learning and care as a priority in our government
- Creating partnerships with the education system to include ELC, to increase the ease of transition. Seamless education
- Sustainability for rural programs

### *Subtheme: Service Delivery*

- Infrastructure – rooms for childcare spaces
- Family support agencies working together

### *Subtheme: Service Practice/Curriculum Framework*

- That we are careful to realize there needs to still be a childhood.
- A time of comfort and play and discovery within each child's pace. Whole child approach.
- Curriculum

### *Subtheme: Human Resources*

- Training of service providers
- Salaries reflective of skill and training
- Support and value the workforce that cares for our children

## **Theme: Other Considerations**

### *Subtheme: Regional Considerations*

- More community sense – rural included

### *Subtheme: General Considerations*

- All people can be vulnerable at various times in their lives.
- Vulnerability: common understanding, many definitions (economic, health, etc.), can move in and out

### *Subtheme: Awareness and Support*

- Awareness for all stakeholders about the benefits of play based/inquiry based learning and how it impacts later academics
- Educating all the importance of children (men – need to become involved and rally for the rights of children)

## Around which goals and purposes do you anticipate ELC stakeholders are most likely to reach agreement and why?

### Theme: Goals and Purposes

#### *Subtheme: Early Childhood Development*

- Child development
- Child development and life-long learning is a goal that I think could be accepted by all stakeholders
- Early learning and development – if guided by literature
- Supporting the individual child
- Human infrastructure: children are as important as good roads and other societal structures

#### *Subtheme: Families*

- That children and families “belong to us all” we all have ownership/ responsibility
- Family support (both social/emotional and economic) will resonate with parents.
- Supporting all families
- Supporting families
- Family support – if guided by literature
- Family support
- Supporting child and families with challenges (phys. financial, emotional, etc.)

#### *Subtheme: Community & Social Cohesion*

- 1 and 2 and possibly 3, if we consider how to augment parent capacity through early learning services... the community connection and engagement will evolve.
- Supporting community bridging

#### *Subtheme: Equity*

- Need for equity and accessibility for all
- Gender equity

#### *Subtheme: Tailored*

- Each stakeholder group will be different – will need to adjust messaging to focus on what’s close to their hearts.
- All 4 of (named facilitator’s) goals could be philosophically agreed upon these conceptually, however, there would be little agreement on how to operationalize these
- Philosophically – likely to agree on all 4 goals but in development of practice, each goal will be challenging

## **Theme: Principles**

### *Subtheme: Child & Family Focused*

- Parents/families/educators etc. The need for this and the impact of optimal child development as it supports lifelong learning. Research that supports/ demonstrates evidence.
- Children's well-being and healthy development supporting families whether they need services or choose services

### *Subtheme: Developmentally Appropriate*

- Awareness of how children learn

### *Subtheme: Quality*

- Safe, caring environment

### *Subtheme : Accessibility*

- Need for equity and accessibility for all
- Creating equal access

### *Subtheme: Consistency*

- Consistent pedagogy (common guidelines)
- Common philosophy

### *Subtheme: Inclusive*

- Supporting global and cultural differences and inclusion

## **Theme: Integrative Elements**

### *Subtheme: Governance*

- Partnership with education, it's a natural fit, will only require some knowledge and information sharing

### *Subtheme: Finances*

- Financial support

### *Subtheme: Service Delivery*

- Support with delivery of the integration progress

### *Subtheme: Human Resources*

- That early learning and care should be offered by trained staff in a quality environment there is reason to support this.
- Training requirements

## Theme: Other Considerations

- Full day Kindergarten?

## Theme: Moving Forward

### *Subtheme: Awareness and Support*

- Parents will need to drive the process.

## Around which goals and purposes will they find it more difficult to reach agreement? Why?

## Theme: Priority Goals

### *Subtheme: Return on Investment*

- I think social return on investment is much more difficult for people to grasp.

### *Subtheme: Family Support*

- Focus on families would be more difficult to reach because this is not comprehensively done by either human services or education at this time

### *Subtheme: Community Cohesion & Inclusion*

- Stakeholders will not likely agree on community focused goals as Alberta is still a province that values the impact of community on families.
- The concept of community as part of the framework will be a new concept for many and needs elaboration and practical examples. United Way, Healthy Families, Parent Link, UEY, EC mapping project are all working towards this end.
- Community cohesion and social inclusion
- Some childcare providers may argue that the focus should only be on children – not their job to worry about community.
- Social cohesion and inclusion. We tend to seek the company of people who are like us and avoid situations where we would bump into “the other”

### *Subtheme: Equity*

- Gender equity – bottom line, increased costs to system
- Gender equity issues, I believe are less palatable as a reason for increased public investment in ELC
- Gender equality/equity, immigrant families, families with children with special needs

### *Subtheme: Other Thoughts*

- Thought: what happened to our ECS values and philosophy of the 70's 80's? In these programs, the four goals were front and center & key components of ECS, both for non-profits and school boards.
- Children's rights – "Albertans" value children
- Value children vs. value children's rights
- Promoting equity and how they are presented is critical
- Increase importance of early childhood
- The basic purpose – is it for children, or parents, or communities?
- Depends on who is asked.

## **Theme: Principles**

### *Subtheme: Accessibility and Affordability*

- Common access and price. Albertans may have more libertarian view which supports individualism, paying your way to get what you want, when you want it.

## **Theme: Integrative Elements**

### *Subtheme: Governance*

- Who is responsible?
- Partnerships – sharing information about families/children
- Ministries – collaborative aspect
- Creating an ELC ministry due to so many politicians not having enough vested interest in ELC (boy's club)
- Child care community and the Education system- getting 2 sectors together

### *Subtheme: Finances*

- Financial supports
- Gender equity – bottom line, increased costs to system
- Funding/finances
- Where do the \$ come from?
- Government and taxpayers will worry about the cost: we are a conservative province – social policy/change is not a priority; children are not a priority (seniors, business are).
- Funding
- \$ - funding

### *Subtheme: Service Delivery*

- Partnerships – sharing information about families/children
- Integrating Health Services

*Subtheme: Curriculum Framework*

- What early education looks like, as some folks still believe that school readiness means pushing academic goals downward.

*Subtheme: Human Resources*

- NB to frame at more about workforce
- Supporting the front line workers, I suspect some resistance as in Now what? More paperwork? “We are already maxed out!”

**Theme: Other Considerations**

*Subtheme: Regional Considerations*

- Creating sustainability for rural programs, due to higher numbers in urban settings, AKA – voter population

*Subtheme: General Considerations*

- Change fatigue.

**Theme: Moving Forward**

*Subtheme: Outstanding Issues/Considerations*

- Details of collaboration – creating a safe environment and remove the need to “safeguard” turfs.
- Giving up territorial impulses. Recognition of skill, training and experience.
- What does education/readiness look like?
- Ministries – collaborative aspect
- Must convince the good old boys/conservatives’ pro-business in AB that there is long term benefits. Support early child development will support more high school grads – better workforce – more money made in AB.

**4. Integrative Elements**

**4.1 Governance**

**What key themes, ideas and questions emerge when you consider the governance of early learning and care?**

**Theme: General Feedback**

- We need a commitment to common goals, outcomes

## **Theme: Provincial Governance Models**

### *Subtheme 1: One Ministry/Joint Ministry*

- Local – education/school boards, regional – human services, provincial AHS - have conflicting structures. Need to pick one for ELC.
- All facets of ELC should be governed under one ministry.
- I would like to see an ELC ministry in our province.
- A joint ministry is essential where and how as we connect health.
- New ministry for ELC

### *Subtheme: Collaborative Arrangement*

- It is always challenging having multiple ministries, etc. collaborating, particularly if there is a power differential: lead, who owns what, how does it affect each, who's accountable.
- Establishment of the awareness of the common beliefs and how does each ministry align with these common beliefs.
- The disparities between the two key ministries has been a barrier for other cross ministerial initiatives (i.e. offering specialized services in school setting) it will take considerable time to find the shared goal in order to move forward; however, this would be essential to the success of ELC
- Health on board as well.

## **Theme: Features of Governance**

### *Subtheme: Parent/Community Voice*

- Parent and community involvement is key
- Starting, parent advisory committees – include child care centers in new schools
- Engaging families in development of what are really needs for individual communities
- Family and community participation in governance will ensure that specific features of each community are reflected in ELCC
- Broad representation should represent the culture of community
- Similarly in Health Boards? Parent Link community tables

## **Theme: Provincial, Regional management**

- Fragmentation if local, regional
- Pathways to public management are well considering municipal connections
- Provincial management model
- EC Map –child development coalition
- Use FCSS boards – they know local

## **Theme: Other Considerations**

- Accountability to me is the key, however it is implemented
- How we communicate to existing service providers

- Inclusion of various childcare delivery options
- Are public/private interests similar?
- Cost – who pays?
- Vision

## What key guidelines or directions should a provincial framework include in respect to governance?

### Theme: Public Management

- I like public management approach.
- This is a public good and should be managed in similar fashion to other public infrastructure i.e. library, recreation etc.

### Theme: Provincial Leadership

#### *Subtheme: One Ministry*

- The two ministries working closely together may be difficult – may need to be one.
- Move towards super early childhood ministry (Health, Education and Early learning).

#### *Subtheme: Collaborative Arrangement*

- One ministry could be short sighted. The work of 3 ministries focusing on early learning and care as a priority could result in sustainability and informed practices in further work in each ministry

#### *Subtheme: Reporting and Regulations*

- If the #2 model were used it would need centralized reporting system
- Perhaps standardized outcomes
- There should be centralized reporting and regulating

### Theme: Community Voice

- There should be community and stakeholder participation
- Have connection to the community
- Getting citizens on board
- Community engagement and ownership
- Community and stakeholder driven
- Use EC mapping - formation of coalitions is best practice
- Although this may fall under one ministry (whether Education, human services or newly developed ministry); greater public involvement would be beneficial. Perhaps have ELC network of key partners who plan and develop the system to be implemented locally would enable community investment in the future direction
- Local governance through boards composed of parents and elected officials



- Potential addition to school boards
- An EC map data/coalition to further ELCC
- Parents and community involvements

### **Theme: Other Integrative Elements**

#### *Subtheme: Financing*

- How to sustain these common tables? Funding for facilitation?
- Funding supports - appropriate services for children's ages

### **Theme: Principles for Services**

- Provincial framework should be developmentally appropriate
- Notion that quality services need to be available in case you need it
- Supports quality
- Built in resistance to academic push down.

### **Theme: Governance Features**

- Transparency, accountability
- Strong link between policy making, administration and service management
- Unified approach on reporting.
- Accountability
- Less administration please.

### **Theme: Moving Forward**

- Gradual implementation

**Which of these guidelines or directions do you anticipate ELC stakeholders will find most agreement on? Why? Least agreement? Why?**

### **Theme: Most Agreement**

#### *Subtheme: Public Management*

- Greater public management

#### *Subtheme: Governance – Ministry Level*

- Bringing the ministries together – natural linkages to ELC
- Common Ministry. This is farther from service delivery
- System is struggling now and there is perceived and real competition between education systems and Early Learning
- Consistent messaging, expectations

#### *Subtheme: Community Voice*

- Increased family and community participation it would appease all or most.

- Increase family and community participation. Obvious connection to the care and learning of young children – it takes a community to raise a child

*Subtheme: Regional Flexibility*

- Need for accommodations for local community needs

*Subtheme: Funding*

- Public funding
- If it provides stable and improved funding

**Theme: Least Agreement**

*Subtheme: Public Management*

- Public management – perception that there is reduced control by individual entities.
- Public ownership – high % of private operated
- Public management – may not jive with AB conservatism/individualism
- Loss of perceived control over the way they deliver services

*Subtheme: Provincial Leadership*

- See #1 restructure
- Bringing the ministries together – although this is the direction I would most like to see.
- Where ELC should be housed?
- Ministries working together: challenges with ownership. Who leads?
- ELC ministry
- I support the development of a new ministry of ELCC as large ministries such as education may not be amenable to shared governance/ collaboration – not good at sharing power and control.

*Subtheme: Community Voice*

- Parents and community member lack time

*Subtheme: Governance Arrangements*

- Additional reporting would be detrimental
- Being asked to account for the use of funds.

**What do we need to keep in mind as we consider what a proposed provincial framework will include in respect to governance?**

**Theme: Regional Flexibility**

- Some local controls for implementation based on local demographics.

### **Theme: Other Considerations**

- All elements need to be kept in mind equally as we move forward
- EL is not the same as education 6-18 years
- It would require funding for coordination to ensure that collaborative efforts can be implemented.

## **4.2 Financing**

### **What key themes, ideas and questions emerge for you when you consider financing for early learning and care?**

#### **Theme: General**

##### *Subtheme: Political Support*

- I love the fact this was initiated by our premier. It gives me hope to actualize this “dream”.

##### *Subtheme: Public Support*

- One issue is public support, selling the notion of more tax dollars and other dollars put into early learning and care
- Public support/understanding is not there to support
- How to get provincial government and business community to value ELC adequately?

#### **Theme: Level of Funding**

- Access to funding
- There is a need for more money to make improvements
- How much is enough to provide comprehensive, quality services universally?
- If there is to be an ELC framework, it must be appropriately supported financially. Citizens equate dollars with quality

#### **Theme: Public versus Private Funding**

- Auspice issues – private vs. non profit
- What happens to for profit?
- It will largely depend on ongoing government funding and support
- The level and nature of public and private investment is a tricky balance.
- Level and nature of public and private investment
- All working people pay a portion of taxes to ELC as in the educational system. This promotes a broad based responsibility
- ELCC is “public good” which benefits the child, the family, the community, society

#### **Theme: Supply Side Versus Demand Side**

- Need for supply side funding
- Review all forms of current funding and structure. E.g.: child tax credit

- I like the different approaches to supply and demand side funding
- \$ goes to supply side of funding and be held accountable
- Supply side funding would be best

### **Theme: Economic Return**

- Economic returns and investments in ELC

### **Theme: Areas of Investment**

#### *Subtheme: Staffing Costs*

- Staffing costs
- Raise the pay of employers to a respectful, equitable professional wage. E.g. Increase staff attraction; Corporate sponsors of companies where families work; Insurance companies (as part of benefits)

#### *Subtheme: Staffing and/or Infrastructure costs*

- Significant cost would be for staffing but should also spell out expectations and/or allow for infrastructure, resources, etc.
- Reliance on voluntary sector to implement child care with minimal infrastructure support has weakened this system.

#### *Subtheme: Redistribution of Funding*

- Are there opportunities to rework where \$ is currently going
- The disparity between the two systems (Human services and education ) must be addressed for goals to be achieved – as this will probably use it in increase costs to ensure high quality and universal access, then the general public must be engaged and invested or the dollars won't be made available.
- Are there opportunities to review current investments and redistribute, i.e. child care, education, health, FSCD

#### *Subtheme: Nonprofit Focus*

- All ELC must be non-profit in order to protect the child.

#### *Subtheme: Fee Structure*

- The idea of an established fee structure is critical if we are to truly have some standardized supports etc.
- Does this mean 1 fee schedule?

### **Theme: Governance**

- Who administers – ministry? School boards? Regional authority?
- Generally the funding body controls the outcomes and service delivery. For this reason, I think a new cross sector ELCC ministry would be preferable

#### *Subtheme: Administration and Reporting*

- Cost of administration application and reporting

- Would the dollars be tied to outcome measures?

### **What key guidelines or directions should a provincial framework include in respect to financing?**

#### **Theme: Levels of Funding**

- A long term sustainable plan that ensures that we have enough to ensure high quality of service.
- There is no way around it – we need more money in the system if we want to improve quality and access for everyone.

#### **Theme: Public Funding**

- Public funded – as needed as hospitals and roads
- Move forward funding through tax base like education: 0-6 comparable financial rating as 6-21 years.
- Not only user pays, but whole of work force pay
- Reduce reliance on fundraising (parents have no time and are already paying, also cultural values restrict participation).

#### **Theme: Funding Model - Supply Side Versus Demand Side**

- Supply funding models would increase probability that we achieved the goals of full integration, also better ensure that families don't bear the costs of these changes and support universality of access.
- Need base operational supports
- Parents' subsidies are necessary if Playschool (3+4) is not publically funded. Ensure that the thresholds are reasonable and accessible.
- Supply side funding would allow smaller rural programs to continue to provide services despite fluctuating enrolment.
- Absolutely – a supply side financing model
- Parents can benefit from income tax deduction from ELCC costs and/or subsidy.
- Funding for parents
- Funding for special needs children.
- Perhaps # of children and # of employee are given assistance according to a grid
- Fee guidelines – max for parents

#### **Theme: Areas for Investment – staffing/infrastructure**

- Sufficient funding for high quality staff

- Funding for well trained work force
- Funding for quality and well trained workforce
- Possibly need a wage model
- Allocation of funds. Certain percentages to different areas – staffing, program, facility, prof. development.
- New schools – need an ELC wing
- Base criteria for physical structure

## **Theme: Funding Requirements**

### *Subtheme: Meeting Outcomes*

- Outcomes based not numbers based
- Outcomes to be measurable
- It must clearly spell out expectations re: fiscal accountability
- Measureable outcomes to rationalize

### *Subtheme: Government Oversight*

- Suggest a new ministry to oversee this new system
- Need a new ministry

### *Subtheme: Administration of Financing*

- Streamlining of funding to reduce administration costs.

### *Subtheme: Financing Variations*

- Concerned that different delivery styles may not be compatible with maximum parent fee schedules – e.g. Staff working in Unions

## **Theme: Moving Forward**

- I propose a staged model for a new financing strategy:
  - a. working on meeting standards = able to receive “demand” subsidy based on services provided. Training \$ for your staff
  - b. Meeting all standards for staffing. Receive “demand” based supports for staffing and services provided
  - c. Supply grants – Meeting enhanced standards – parent/community governance; connected to PLC and HV
- Bring municipalities back into the fold of ELCC. This would help small villages and towns particularly.

## **Theme: Family Choice**

- However we approach this, families should have a choice.

**Which of these guidelines or directions do you anticipate ELC stakeholders will find most agreement on? Why? Least agreement? Why?**

**Theme: Most Agreement**

*Subtheme: Level of Investment*

- That increase in funding amount and distribution is needed
- Additional public funding need higher levels of reporting

*Subtheme: Accountability*

- Additional public funding need higher levels of reporting

*Subtheme: Supply Versus Demand Side Funding*

- Supply side funding is a familiar model and lends more insurance that the child will benefit directly (with appropriate controls)
- Supply side funding – as it will improve quality and in some cases accessibility
- Subsidies for families not required over time if a max fee schedule is introduced
- The idea of supply funding would be supported by stakeholders/service providers
- Maximum fee schedule; grant system with strings; wage model for staff

*Subtheme: Affordability and Access*

- Management of service costs for families
- Infrastructure – perhaps linked to a school
- Management of costs to families

*Subtheme: Quality*

- Agree on extra support in order to maintain quality staff
- Positive outcomes for children and families
- Funding for training and retaining staff
- Measureable outcomes

*Subtheme: Integration*

- I would hope that most ELC stakeholders would agree that current funding model is spread out to work effectively and that supporting one system would in time become more efficient.

*Subtheme: Sustainability*

- Sustainable funding

## Theme: Least Agreement

### *Subtheme: Increased Level of Public Investment*

- Public funding for early learning for taxpayers without children
- Commitment to increased level public investment over time
- Increasing level of public investment:
- Commitment to increase public investment would not be supported by general public who are not as well informed about the outcomes
- Fully funded (publicly) ELC would be a tough sell in AB. A step by step process that slowly integrates public funds may address this.

### *Subtheme: Supply versus Demand Side*

- Supply side – parents may see this as lacking choice. May need an option for private/and they can pay more like a private school
- Albertans like choice it would be a hard sell if there was only one option for ELCC

### *Subtheme: Distribution of Funding*

- Where money should flow through.
- How the money is distributed

### *Subtheme: Areas of Investment*

- Recognition is necessary (for the public) to value staffing as deserving higher wages in this area. As the general public – we undervalue these persons
- That ELC should have \$ value comparable to school age/education programs.

### *Subtheme: Service Delivery*

- Private providers – is there a place for them?
- For profit vs. non-profit

### *Subtheme: Governance*

- Accountability and transparency
- Should we stay under existing ministry or should we create a new one.

## What do we need to keep in mind as we consider what a proposed provincial framework will include in respect to financing for early learning and care?

### Theme: Level of Investment Required

- There will be a huge cost to creating a new system, while bridging the systems that are in place.

### Theme: The Case

- It will be more costly up front but would hopefully offer some cost savings in other areas over time.



- Investment in society – potential of our human resources.
- Traditionally good care decrease the amount of time parents must work.
- Child and families need/welfare

#### **Theme: Awareness and Support**

- Need to “engage” the public in discussions about the value we place on children – public good notion.
- Need to sell this to tax payers/politicians as having economic impact, increase high school grads, increase skilled workforce. Economic impact.

#### **Theme: Equitable Investment**

- Equitable programs – families with more funding should not get better quality.
- Children in special needs – a lot of money spent on early entrance programs (pre K/PUF) – is this an opportunity to look at this and have that opportunity available for all children?

#### **Theme: Accountability**

- Programs are held accountable (submit a report) on allocations of funds.
- ELC - how it affects outcomes in AB.

#### **Theme: Cautions**

- That the corporations do not invest in ELC with “market” objectives turning children into good – they are human beings.

### **4.3 Organizing Service Delivery**

**What key themes, ideas and questions emerge for you when you consider how to organize early learning and care service delivery?**

#### **Theme: Awareness**

- Recognizing the education around community awareness.

#### **Theme: Governance**

- Breakdown the “silos”.
- Under the ministry of Human Services.
- Breaking down silos.
- Look at what is working well.
- New partnerships are needed to organize service delivery in order to offer more seamless and quality programs to children and families.
- No more silos!
- Have a central organization which umbrellas all regions that report to central body. Centers that can access from central body in region.

### *Subtheme: Oversight and Reporting*

- The criteria for receiving funding should be accountability, quality not just auspice.
- Standard consistent criteria.

### **Theme: Build on What Exists**

- Don't re-create the wheel – some of what exists is good – build capacity and/or linkages in what's already present.
- Need to highlight what is working well.

### **Theme: Integrating Service Delivery Systems**

- Integrate services ELC programs.
- Connecting (integrating) services at a local level.
- Not sure that putting more supports into existing systems will enable an integrated system to develop. Sometimes we have to let go of things to move forwards.
- Need for partnerships/collaborative relationships.
- Partnerships between kindergarten programs and ELC programs and deliver full day programming for the children and for the families.
- Impact of full day kindergarten on childcare services?

### **Theme: Regional Variation**

- Different “programs’ for different communities that have the same outcomes for children and families.
- Respecting local community.
- Managing services at a local level.
- Service options that meet local community needs.

### **Theme: Delivery Arrangements**

- Struggle for me between “how” to deliver because it would be so different depending on governance.
- Nanny care? Should this be part of the system for parents/families who want infants/toddlers at home?
- What buy in challenges might the municipalities present – is this their mandate?
- Is there appetite in municipal government to be a partner in ELC? The funding moved out of municipal government to provincial now moving back?
- How will municipalities be convinced to return to something they gave up?
- Support required for all programs – public (e.g. municipal), private and nonprofit - delivering services.

### **Theme: Access**

- Single point of entry for all children to get into services.
- Child in one space/location with continuum of service.

- Flexible schedules to accommodate parent schedules.
- Year round offering of care and learning services
- Flexibility (365 days, longer hrs., holidays).
- Continuous and seamless services.
- It is important to localize the ELC services, including childcare – OSC – playschool, in one center. This would increase consistency and higher quality opportunities. Rural this would need to be centered in or near the community school.
- (named child care) is a localized program with OSC and Playschool together in the school.
- Parents are assisted through process (one place to go rather than many) and incredible perseverance especially regarding children experiencing challenges.
- Would the support be based on per capita and therefore those communities not well served, remain so?
- Flexibility/hours.

*Subtheme: Developmentally Appropriate*

- Recognizing not all 5 year old children are ready for full day programming.

**Theme: Other**

- Training opportunities for families.
- Will there be an opportunity for front line staff to give input, ideas, and recommendations?

**What key guidelines or directions should a provincial framework include in respect to organizing service delivery?**

**Theme: Scope & Direction**

- Age groups? 0-6.
- All children and families? Childcare, kindergarten children with special needs, stay at home families.

**Theme: Link to Integrative Elements**

*Subtheme : Governance*

- A truly integrated system in early childhood education would require a holistic perspective for all children 0-8 years under an ELC ministry
- Joint planning between human services and education
- The governance structure must be decided upon which begins to set the stage for how to organize service delivery

- Education links need to become more linked to community if service delivery is to come through the schools

*Subtheme : Accountability and Reporting*

- Certainly an evaluative/reflective aspect and reporting
- Accountable to public
- We all play a part in ELC, and we all need to be held accountable as well.

*Subtheme: Human Resources/Workforce*

- Enriched staff to child ratios
- Well trained staff

*Subtheme: Curriculum Framework*

- Give “more meat” to the framework – be more specific

**Theme: Principles**

- There would be many flexible options that allowed choice and accessibility for all. I know these are “motherhood statements”
- UEY results show that there are some early learning challenges for 20% of Kids – need to explore options for universal access to early learning opportunities that meet community diversity
- Service delivery needs to be standardized with some provision for flexibility to meet community needs
- Creative – needs based to some degree

**Theme: Building on What Exists**

- Networks or joining together of services beneficial
- Do with people not to people
- Centralized services in rural community build on strengths
- Networks are great support to families/staff services. Examples such as one above and those in reports give more opportunities for enhancements. If service is sure of funding base, can be more focus on quality – creative solutions.
- Partnerships between programs, municipalities and key social supports in the community.
- Communication between partners.

**Theme: For and Non Profit**

- Awareness of for profit/non-profit differences.

**Theme: Other**

- Too much talking not enough doing
- Clear frameworks
- Promote awareness in Grade school and with corporate sector.

- Assistance to individual centers that assists not only the administration but also the staff, families
- Be creative! A model in Calgary business (“named site”) put public school – KG – grade 3 in downtown office buildings and had non-profit childcare organizations have DSE/KG childcare in place
- Difference in size of programs.
- What can we do with municipalities.

**Which of these guidelines or directions do you anticipate ELC stakeholders will find most agreement on? Why? Least agreement? Why?**

**Theme: Most Agreement**

- Most agreement #3, #4; from outside the field and from education  
Less disruptive #3 to existing delivery method
- #4 – less direct cost to parents

*Subtheme: Principles*

- Accessibility to preschools for all children
- Supporting families

*Subtheme: Networking & Collaboration*

- Family centers that are truly an integral part of the community
- Connect and integrate services
- Multipurpose providers
- ELC service networks
- Need to work together
- A network – where key players worked together as equals to make decisions about ELC in local communities – without funding this network would have difficulty sustaining any initiatives
- The development of local early learning and care service networks as it remains community driven but also has more of a standardized set of goals
- Provides more cohesive services
- Single point of entry

*Subtheme: Other*

- Push quality more in forefront which will appeal
- Stability and support for services
- Additional supports for local public or non-profit multi-site, multi-service providers

## Theme: Least Agreement

### *Subtheme: Curriculum*

- Issues around “what” should be taught and “how” it should be taught in a variety of program types

### *Subtheme: Financing*

- Some of the “players” do not believe that childcare/ELC is their responsibility
- Use of public \$’s to support private business

### *Subtheme: Service Providers*

- #2 Private business will not benefit or have ability to participate
- Eliminate competition between services
- Need collaboration between parties and funding
- In a province with # of privately owned services funding only going to non-profit will be limiting and create resistance.

### *Subtheme: Municipal Involvement*

- #1 – municipalities seem to have or want to have arms length or no involvement in ELC
- Municipal involvements – especially in rural AB there is little appetite for involvement. They don’t see it as their role
- Municipalities do not like having full control

### *Subtheme: Scope*

- Providing day/evening;
- 7 days/week
- year round services

### *Subtheme: Other*

- Volunteer hours
- Service options that meet local needs because it can be so vast and required to be so flexible
- Not sure of the rationale for full day Kindergarten program

**What do we need to keep in mind as we consider what a proposed provincial framework will include in respect to organizing services for early learning and care?**

## Theme: The Big Picture

- Solid framework – but recognize local autonomy
- The child – what benefits the child

### **Theme: Regional Variation**

- Different needs in rural and urban

### **Theme: Integrative Elements**

- Funding models are critical to how this is structured.

### **Theme: Principles**

- Accessibility
- One stop shop

### **Theme: Partnerships**

- Partnerships need clear direction and outcomes, getting people together and having them figure it out allows for local autonomy but not always the best outcomes
- We already have lots of existing partnerships – can we build on these?
- We don't need full day K if we have good/strong child care options and community support
- Increase collaboration – decrease competition.

### **Theme: Funding**

- Attaching dollars to children – must stop
- Sustainable funding to continue services
- \$ competent, credibly consistent players to make this move forward.

### **Theme: Other Considerations**

- We need to get “buy-in” into a provincial framework that promotes equity and equality for all.
- The framework needs some “meat” this is very high level, vague – this just isn't about children in childcare or K, it should be about all children and families

## **4.4 Human Resources**

**What key themes, ideas and questions emerge for you when you consider human resources for early learning and care?**

### **Theme: Affirming the Profession**

- Respect (self and external) for the field
- Raising the professional profile of ECE's: training and remuneration
- ELC staff seen as professionals

### **Theme: Education, Training & Professional Development**

- Childhood education for K teachers
- Minimum education for EL educators \$ for prof development

- Early childhood education and ELC experience is the best for staff who'd be implementing this framework
- Kindergarten teachers are not always "trained" for ELC – world of difference between college ELCC and university elementary education
- Training for kindergarten teachers for new graduates.
- Supporting schools and kindergarten teachers with professional development in the specific area of early childhood
- Bachelor of education with an early childhood focus
- Common credential for ELC - province wide salary scales
- Ongoing professional development affordability for early childhood teachers
- Collaborating with education teachings
- Common credentials
- Articulation of education systems so existing qualifications of ECE's can be considered/given credit when they go for more – degree
- Partnership b/w ELC programs and kindergarten programs
- ECE training requirements are minimal and in some cases "exempted"
- Important to remember that retaining good staff beneficial to children's well-being "attachment" sense of security/confidence
- Integrating the ELC profession
- Awareness of "school communities" kindergarten importance
- We must have specific early childhood education for Kindergarten

#### **Theme: Recruitment, Pay/Benefits & Retention**

- Remuneration scales dependent upon structure (union?)
- Increase the attractiveness of the profession of ELCC: training and salaries
- Provincial – wide salary scales would help to integrate the field
- Retention
- Increase remuneration/salary scales (start now...)
- Equal salaries – province-wide appropriate training specific to ELC
- Salary scale for ELC practitioners
- Province-wide salary scales for staff in ELC programs

#### **Theme: Regional Variation**

- Greater educational opportunities for ECE's is important but how could a smaller rural program attract these people without public support?

#### **Theme: Transitions**

- Grandfathering is reasonable for existing service providers but does nothing to further the cause if there is no end to the grandfathering

#### **Theme: Other Considerations**

- Need to consider roadmap for how to attain those goals
- Recognizing early childhood education 0-8 years
- Important to remember that human resources are key to quality delivery



- School principals to be included.

### What key guidelines or directions should a provincial framework include in respect to human resources?

#### Theme: Education, Training & Professional Development

- Minimum education
- Levels of training do not always directly correlate to ability to do.
- Resources have to “follow” the requirements - if we enhance the requirements – we need to ensure the requirements – we need to ensure it is accessible. Don’t “soften” the edges for those requirements because its childcare – and anyone can do child care – that’s not so. A rehab certificate does not an early learning professional make
- Specialized training
- Ideal would be for a common “early learning and care” post-secondary credential.
- Kindergarten teachers should be required to have FIRST AIDE certification, as do child care professionals. (we need consistency.)
- Work with colleges and universities to make training available
- There are existing guiding principles in place for pre-k and K teachers along with teacher quality standards and perhaps these should expand to other centers
- Current practice – Pre-K and K teachers have a minimum of a 4 yr. Education degree plus additional professional development, this should be maintained.
- Teacher quality standards are in place.
- Working with both B.Ed and ECD trained I believe that we need to honour and acknowledge the work of both as being valued – but it is important to recognize that the B.Ed provides a further level of programming and they adhere to quality standards within their profession and accountability within school divisions – they are not working without accountability and pay reflects.
- Support for existing personnel to attain required education levels
- Education of early childhood for education teachers
- We need to provide educational opportunities that are accessible for all
- We need to upgrade the caliber of training staff in ECE.
- While in transition we need to fully support staff to upgrade qualifications. Financial, time off
- KG teachers must have ECE training.
- Whoever is working in the ECE field – child care or Kg need appropriate training.
- Importance of relevant education for teachers and practitioners

### **Theme: Remuneration & Benefits**

- Salary comparable to equivalencies
- Equal pay and supports
- Benefits should be provided for all professionals
- Consistent remuneration
- Increase the pay for the workers

### **Theme: Link to Other Integrative Elements**

- Resources and materials available to all center locations

### **Theme: Transition**

- In regard to transitions – evening sessions/courses may be needed for working staff.
- Perhaps the ATA (Alberta teachers' Association – Early Childhood Council) should be present and involved
- Support for existing personnel to attain required education levels
- Comprehensive strategy for increasing qualification standards over the next 10 years or however long we project implementation of full integration will take
- Increase the supports to have staff upgrade their schooling - transportation covered, satellite classrooms.

### **Theme: Positions**

- Re: ELC professionals – change the title of the child care workers to more professional titles.
- Child development assistant – child development? (more professional)
- Child Development worker – Child development? (more professional)
- Child development supervisors – child development professional.

### **Theme: Other**

- Workforce strategy
- Ensure that we always come from a perspective of “child 1<sup>st</sup>”
- Ensure all who are impacted are invited to share/take part
- Test quality
- Labeling the work – titles more descriptive but also uniform.

**Which of these guidelines or directions do you anticipate ELC stakeholders will find most agreement on? Why?**

### **Theme: Most Agreement**

#### *Subtheme: ELC as a Profession*

- Common belief that early learning/care are important.

### *Subtheme: Education, Training & Profession Development*

- Minimum education and wages.
- Early childhood education for kindergarten teachers (I think we should look back in time and see why this credential was removed. Can we learn from the past?)
- Minimum education requirements. However... we could flip it, perhaps a way to raise the status and profile of Early childhood is to increase the education requirements. Should it be a 4 yr. bachelor degree?
- Minimum Ed requirements.
- Minimum requirements of education.
- Minimum educational requirements for Kindergarten.
- ECE training for kg teachers. This is critical.

### *Subtheme: Remuneration & Benefits*

- Salaries and benefits.
- Minimum education and wages.
- Salary Scales.
- Standardized pay scale for standardized work.
- They will like salary scale – professionalization of their field.

### *Subtheme: Other Issues*

- Comprehensive workforce strategy.
- Partnerships b/w/ ELC and kindergarten programs because of the grouping of being “top” of the ELC programming.

## **Theme: Least Agreement**

### *Subtheme: ELC Emphasis*

- How to truly integrate early learning and care? Right now the public (and often professionals) see them as separate entities.

### *Subtheme: Salary*

- Salary/wages.
- Salary / benefit reimbursements / allocations this based on responsibilities/tasks will be difficult to attain common standards.
- Salary scales if implemented before system has public funding to support.
- Salary standardizations for ELE.

### *Subtheme: Education, Training & Professional Development*

- Classification – understanding is difficult.
- Certification of “different degrees”.
- ELC training for AB Ed staff.
- Common credential.

- Retaining staff.
- Kindergarten teachers have 4 yrs degrees .
- 3 – if ‘new’ professionals require the minimum level – existing staff should also be required to attempt upgrading.
- The increased education requirements if their experience is not acknowledged/considered.

## **What do we need to keep in mind as we consider what a proposed provincial framework will include in respect to human resources for early learning and care?**

### **Theme: Goals for Early Learning and Care System**

- Diversity, culturally, how to assist families.
- Increasing/building capacity of family – parents having universal access – reduce barriers for access.
- Provide more learning opportunities for parents after baby is born (Pre-natal/birthing; Classes – maybe we need; Post-natal classes).

### **Theme: Education, Training & Professional Development**

- Areas of specialization for increased credentials, i.e. infant, specialized services, possibly administration.
- Do not compromise education and profession if you are an ELC.
- Training must be reduced or reimbursed.
- Training requirements are minimal and in some cases exempted.
- Honouring and valuing current kindergarten teachers – avoid generalized statements that they are not trained or aware.

### **Theme: Education Infrastructure**

- Post-secondary institutions would need the support (financial and time) to make changes an ELC degree would necessitate.
- University/colleges offering on-line learning.
- Networking with colleges/universities to offer early childhood courses.

### **Theme: Financial**

- Financial sustainability for programs.
- Resourced/funded training.
- The pay should be equal – in ELCC program with a teaching degree will not stay in the ELCC program when that same staff can go and work for school board working with same group of children making 2x as much and in recognized profession.
- Will the funding be there to educate students and appropriately reimburse professionals in the field?

### **Theme: Early Childhood Profession**

- Increase value and acknowledgement.
- Non-professionals doesn't mean unprofessional.
- Raise the profile/professionalism of individuals (many of them women).
- The early learning educators need to be recognized as professionals however if they have more training we need public support to retain staff in smaller centers.

### **Theme: Transitions**

- It will take time.
- Current state has taken 20 years to evolve in ECE community. If we don't push harder and further, movement will take forever.
- Continuity of services for children and families.

## **4.5 Curriculum Framework**

**What key themes, ideas and questions emerge for you when you consider a curriculum framework for early learning and care?**

### **Theme: Scope**

- Who (what age of children) are we considering developing this for? Is it a strictly kindergarten or pre-kindergarten.

### **Theme: Awareness and Support**

- There is a need for curriculum.
- A common framework is familiar to people (general public) so may get better/more understood buy-in from all.
- Education of stakeholders on how curriculum framework differs from pre-conceived notions of familiar use of the term.

### **Theme: Play-Based Versus Traditional Education**

- Educating parents on the importance of children learning through play
- Broad learning goals, socio-cultural contexts
- Importance of play
- Issues around parent/public perspectives of the "meaning" of learning vs. schoolification – different expectations.
- Learning leads development" – all levels of programming would have to buy into this philosophy (not a canned curriculum).
- Play based
- Awareness of developmentally appropriate practices delivered through a learning through inquiry and play based approach nurturing exploration and discovery.
- Categories of Play (play based): social/emotional development; physical; cognitive; multiple intelligences; structured and unstructured;

- Curriculum: What? How? Conformist reforming transformative, what – makes a world a better place.
- Emphasis on quality interactions and relationships
- I am concerned about schoolification. I believe that these discussions have moved the course forward and there is greater understanding with developers but there will need to be a lot of work to bring the service providers up to speed.
- Importance of play
- Play based/child discovered
- Based more on the ELCC input
- Emergent curriculum included into “schoolification”

## **Theme: Principles**

### *Sub-theme: Holistic*

- Social emotional.
- Holistic. Encompass all developmental domains. Relationships/social. Balance between child initiated and teacher guidance
- Holistic: it should be designed to support “normal” development in many areas: social, gross and fine motor, language, self-help, social justice

### *Sub-theme: Developmentally Appropriate*

- A curriculum that allows the emergence of the individual child rather than a curriculum that is put onto the child that the child must fit into.
- Awareness of developmentally appropriate practices delivered through a learning through inquiry and play based approach nurturing exploration and discovery.
- Developmentally Appropriate.

### *Sub-theme: Diverse*

- Diversity
- Cultural identities
- Cultural sensitivity

### *Sub-theme: Strength-Based*

- Based on asset model vs. deficit
- Focus on children and family assets

### *Sub-theme: Clear Outcomes*

- Clear outcomes.
- Learning outcomes and measures

## **Theme: Family Involvement**

- Community and family role

- Involvement of families responding
- Strong family involvement (or opportunities for involvement).

### **Theme: Flexibility**

- Common principles being applied in various contexts to meet the need of the child and family – allow room for flexibility of recognizing all children do not learn the same way. Some may require more experiences and repetition
- An open-ended guideline that attends to all curriculum areas that are appropriate to individual child’s development and not a prescribed curriculum

### **Theme: Links to Other Elements**

#### *Subtheme: Financing*

- Key integrative element: public funding would require common curriculum

#### *Subtheme: Service Delivery*

- More closely align community – based and school based services.
- All regulated ELC services would be supported by a curriculum

### **Theme: Collaboration**

- Sharing resources from post-secondary professions, front line workers, education
- Alberta Health Services involvement

### **Theme: Other**

- Challenges around implementation: schoolification; focused on broad literacies; capacity for implementation.
- Evidence – research based, new knowledge about early brain development
- Who will be willing to “bend” on issues

### **What key guidelines or directions should a provincial framework include in respect to a curriculum framework?**

#### **Theme: Goals and Outcomes**

- Broad based goals similar to other jurisdictions that have gone before us, i.e. NB, PEI. Professional development resource to support implementation
- I would like to say it should be based on outcomes more than activities for I am cautious that it would become a tick box system.

#### **Theme: ECD and Education Paradigm**

- Curriculum: Relationship to self; Relationship to others; relationship to community; relationship to global; relationship to natural world.
- Play for early childhood is paramount in learning: movement, nature (Daily).

- Little to no screen (they receive enough at home etc.). Reason – child develops from inside out and a capacity for imagination and creativity
- Curriculum that embraces the “whole child”
- Curriculum that encourages citizenship (virtues of gratitude, respect)
- Curriculum must include/allow for active learning, creation, holistic experiences

## Theme: Principles

### *Subtheme: Developmentally Appropriate*

- Age appropriateness – connected to well trained and supported staff.
- Key directions should be developmentally appropriate and built in resistance to academic push down.
- Kindergarten needs to be more focused on development than being ready for grade 1 (the grade 1 teacher wants them to) i.e. phonological awareness – hierarchy of skill – need these to read – stop focusing on reading, not developmentally appropriate
- Room for flexible programming, not all children will learn in 475 hours and may require further supports and services and there should be a continuum
- To keep in mind developmentally appropriate learning and ways in which to support staff, families and communities in introducing and addressing a curriculum

### *Subtheme: Child Centered*

- Rights of the child regarding equity and accessibility are critical. I love the ideas presented in the New Brunswick framework

### *Subtheme: Family Involvement*

- Family involvement is so important

### *Subtheme: Inclusion*

- Inclusion: families, immigrants – cultural diversity
- Focus - Children with needs

### *Subtheme: Quality*

- Quality adult/child ratio

### *Subtheme: Strength-Based*

- Focus on child’s strengths, interest – rather than ticking boxes to indicate achievement of milestones. Not a say f=developments/ milestones (not to say but there is such a range of “normal” that is easy to get caught up in achieving and pushing to accomplish the next thing).



## **Theme: Integrative Elements**

### *Subtheme: Finances*

- Resources to support the work that needs to be done – to create the curriculum, as well to implement same.

### *Subtheme: Curriculum*

- Pre-K – needs curriculum

### *Subtheme: Service Delivery*

- Kindergartens, Preschools, Child care all need to be on the same page and will have the same principles upon which to move forwards in a balanced way.
- Recognizing that schools have existing supports and services to meet needs of learner in a diverse/ flexible approach – funding should align to support

### *Subtheme: Human Resources*

- Professional teachers (B.Ed.) respond to the diverse needs in the early learning environments and have access to other professionals and para-professionals to support.
- Education. Basic level of training – combo of teachers and early childhood

## **Theme: Regional Flexibility**

- To consider individuality of programs and communities but set a standard for programming within the programs

## **Theme: Other Considerations**

- Warmth from the teachers/caregivers in the delivery
- Explore those countries with exemplary curriculum – a starting point could be reviewing the Kindergarten – Program Statement Guiding Principles.

**Which of these guidelines or directions do you anticipate ELC stakeholders will find most agreement on? Why? Least agreement? Why?**

## **Theme: Most Agreement**

### *Subtheme: Educational Preparation*

- The need to have a grounding in ELC training and knowledgebase – NB to have it be age appropriate and comprehensive based in quality early childhood philosophy and practices.

*Subtheme: Public Knowledge*

- Inform the general public of appropriate ELC curriculum.

*Subtheme: Integrating Approach to Service*

- Integrating approaches to ELC in school and community settings.
- Children learn best through inquiry and play.

*Subtheme: Governance*

- Curriculum framework may naturally provide opportunities to bring in accountability for supply side funding.

*Subtheme: Quality*

- A concrete foundation will provide front line staff with the underlying principles upon which to develop “best practices”.

*Subtheme: Goals*

- Common guidelines/vision.

*Subtheme: Developmentally Appropriate*

- Ages and stages and appropriate experiences.
- Everyone will be on the same page.

*Subtheme: General*

- All of it...
- Motivating staff.

**Least agreement? Why?**

*Subtheme: Common Understandings about Early Learning and Approach*

- We may see some resistance to aligning kindergarten with ELC curriculum framework from school districts.
- Trusting that the child can initiate and actively explore their own learning... (that is, there will not necessarily be a specific topic planned for all children on Monday AM).
- Early learning is vital – common beliefs around benefits not understood.
- Families feel they are more critically impacted by care as there is a belief that the school will look after the learning when they get there.
- ELC influencing K – I wonder how educators would feel.
- Children learning within their own agenda and interests.
- Parent education and involvement to guide and develop the child as a whole
- Development through play – we need to change the public’s view – play develops all – foundation.
- Self-discipline, self-control, social competency, emotional intelligence.
- Play based philosophy.

*Subtheme: Governance*

- Accountability/monitoring.

*Subtheme: Human Resources*

- PD for staff – not highly valued (should be).
- Common credential.

*Subtheme: Financing*

- Cost.

*Subtheme: Other*

- Little screening.
- Learning outcomes.
- Appropriate practice.

**What do we need to keep in mind as we consider what a proposed provincial framework will include in respect to a curriculum framework for early learning and care?**

**Theme: The Case**

- Learning leads to development
- We are preparing the foundation for the future

**Theme: Human Resources**

- Staff will need to be well prepared (training vs. education? Training plus education?)
- Colleges and universities will need to ensure their programs adjust to the new.

**Theme: Awareness and Support**

- Training of parents on what early learning curricula should/should not include

**Theme: Engagement**

- Involve all identities
- Having a wide range of voices together to set priorities as a province

**Theme: Early Learning & Care Paradigm**

- Phase of childhood is honored and respected
- Pre-K – hope that this is in ELC environments more and less in school environments. Seems to me a more appropriate place.
- That both sides may or do see things very differently need to meet in the middle
- Asset focused rather than deficit

- Different developmental needs

**Theme: Financing**

- There will be a cost to the development of the curriculum but there we have ongoing cost of implementation and delivery as well as training to the curriculum.
- Financial sustainability to implement a curriculum into an ELC setting.

**Theme: Other**

- Balance, focus, continuity are essential realities.
- Needs to ensure to not bog facilitators down with paperwork and documentation

**5. Moving Forward: Reflections**

**What is your level of support for trying to advance change that more closely integrates ELC in Alberta?**

a. Goals and purpose for early learning and care.

| <b>1</b>  | <b>2</b>  | <b>3</b>  | <b>4</b>  | <b>5</b>   |
|---|---|---|---|--|
| Strongly support trying to make change in this area | Support trying to make change, but some concerns about the proposed changes | Don't know more discussion needed of the proposed changes | Do not currently support change, but willing to continue to discuss the possibility of making changes | Strongly oppose trying to make change in this area |
| 15  | 7   | 1   |   |  |

**Theme: Overall**

*Subtheme: Increased Public Awareness and Understanding of ELC*

- Getting away from the opinion that child care is a support to the workforce.
- It's about changing attitude of ELCC as it is reorganized and valued as important – as important as “teacher”.
- Why are we doing this? Unified understanding to move our profession forward in community to the public.

*Subtheme: The Case*

- Helps create guiding vision. Defines the framework so we can move into it.
- Helps to guide the profession and delivery.
- Your values drive your goals – key to making it work.

*Subtheme: General*

- The discussion papers helped to define the process needed and addressed some concerns I had.
- Concerned about it – may derail the whole thing.

**Theme: Specific Goals**

- Important goals agreed upon and easily understood.
- Concerned about perception of gender equity – suggest child equity be focus.

**Theme: Link to Other Integrative Elements**

*Subtheme: Governance*

- Both ministries need to collaborate and work together to move to make changes.

**Theme: Moving Forward**

- It's a huge task – as long as we remain flexible it will be successful because its going to change.
- This process takes patience and help define baby steps in process
- Timing. If ECD is truly a priority for the province and the premier – the time is now!!

**Theme: Other Considerations**

- Always more questions. Concern that voices of childcare would be lost to the bigger. A formalized of childcare would be lost to that bigger more formalized education world.

b) Governance – management, planning, participation and ownership

| <b>1</b>  | <b>2</b>  | <b>3</b>  | <b>4</b>  | <b>5</b>   |
|---|---|---|---|--|
| Strongly support trying to make change in this area | Support trying to make change, but some concerns about the proposed changes | Don't know more discussion needed of the proposed changes | Do not currently support change, but willing to continue to discuss the possibility of making changes | Strongly oppose trying to make change in this area |
| 15  | 3   | 4   |   |  |

**Theme: Overall**

*Subtheme: Goals & Scope*

- Until a vision is created it would be difficult to determine appropriate governance.
- Are we doing this to impact children currently using care or all children?

### *Subtheme: The Case*

- Currently so fragmented and this fragmentation creates inequities.

### *Subtheme: Governance*

- Governance is important – a driver of the model.
- Work immediately on new ministry.
- We need one governance system with similar outcomes.
- Need one governance system for ELC. This needs to be a priority of our province.
- Needs to be reviewed and look for efficiencies – change to a new ministry may not be necessary but certainly the 3 ministries working more closely should provide some of the experiences.
- Did not get to this table – but agree with a new “super ministry for ELC”.
- Ideal world – separate ministry.
- Very important – there is too much difference between human services and AB Learning – need a new ministry “ideal”.

### *Subtheme: Concerns*

- We have a history of flavor of the month initiatives and hope this isn't one of them.
- Because province is so “choices” focused, I see this may be something that may prevent this from happening.

## **Theme: Links to Other Integrative Elements**

### *Subtheme: Organizing Services*

- Early childhood care should not be a commodity. Should be delivered through non-profit.
- Recognition of family diversity and work together with existing parties.

## **Theme: Participants**

- All levels of gov't need to be involved at some level.
- Lacking health participants.

## **Theme: Moving Forward**

- Consider existing infrastructure. The school boards or municipal boards.
- Move in steps in the stages more with what is working towards what we want – accountable with public funds – responsibility.
- We need to start as soon as possible.

### c) Financing early learning and care

| 1   | 2   | 3   | 4   | 5  |
|---|---|---|---|--|
| Strongly support trying to make change in this area | Support trying to make change, but some concerns about the proposed changes | Don't know more discussion needed of the proposed changes | Do not currently support change, but willing to continue to discuss the possibility of making changes | Strongly oppose trying to make change in this area |
| 12  | 7   | 3   |   |  |

#### Theme: Overall

##### *Subtheme: Public Support*

- Will there be support from tax payers to pay for it?
- Public support needs to be there.

##### *Subtheme: The Case*

- Better access to all families – provincial.
- Current funding model for children is not working – if you are looking to provide true quality care and recognizing quality staff with fair wages. Monies for inclusion and special needs could be combined to allow for more effective support in child care settings.
- Strong infrastructure guides security and doesn't usurp the creative quality of delivery.

#### Theme: Financing

- Financing attached to enhanced quality; Enhanced education; spending – accountable. Stable funding so programs can focus on people and programming
- Funding is the lever, it will come, but not yet.
- Put your money where your mouth is. We all have responsibility for quality early learning and care.
- Large based community funding through tax base. #2 needs to support infrastructure.
- Consider ways to reinvest current dollars spent. Max parent fees. Provincial wage model.
- Sustainable.
- A grid attached to accountable funding. Tax base so “all” are responsible.

#### Theme: Accountability

- The integrated system is necessary with built in accountability.
- Accountability on services.

## Theme: Human Resources

- Governments need to provide funding to gain wage parity.
- Wage parity: “value on how much \$ we “make”.

## Theme: Links to Other Integrative Elements

### *Subtheme: Private & Public Delivery*

- Concerned about the auspices of how finances are delivered both private and non-profit.
- Concerns around profit vs. no-profit.

### *Subtheme: Governance*

- Needs to come from one integrated system with built in accountabilities.
- I think it should be like education/health – universal access and no barriers

## Theme: General

- Lots of implications if it is universally available.

### e) Organizing early learning and care service delivery

| <b>1</b>  | <b>2</b>  | <b>3</b>  | <b>4</b>  | <b>5</b>   |
|---|---|---|---|--|
| Strongly support trying to make change in this area | Support trying to make change, but some concerns about the proposed changes | Don't know more discussion needed of the proposed changes | Do not currently support change, but willing to continue to discuss the possibility of making changes | Strongly oppose trying to make change in this area |
| 14  | 4   | 5   |   |  |

## Theme: Overall

### *Subtheme: The Case*

- Current system doesn't work.
- Has to change.
- It's about quality – outcomes of quality for children in NB. I don't care how you get there.

### *Subtheme: General*

- So much to consider.
- Not there yet.



## Theme: Models

### *Subtheme: Integration of Services*

- Families and agencies can go to a central body to access services.
- One common site for delivery base.
- Centralized – hub to create choice, availability networks.
- Take away fragmentation; make more streamlined for families.

### *Subtheme: Networks*

- Networking.

### *Subtheme: General*

- Prefer some more than others but all good.
- Bashaw has a great model of this!

## Theme: Public & Private Delivery

- Differences between non-profit and private will be challenging. Full day kg? what will the day look like, snack, lunch,, rest etc. Not a bad thing just have lots of logistical questions

## Theme: Governance

- Centralized organizing body or ministry spreading out cohesive services
- Dependent on governance – “not piece meal”
- Need collaboration between parties and funding
- Prefer an early childhood focused Ministry.

### e) Human resources in early learning and care

| <b>1</b>  | <b>2</b>  | <b>3</b>  | <b>4</b>  | <b>5</b>   |
|---|---|---|---|--|
| Strongly support trying to make change in this area | Support trying to make change, but some concerns about the proposed changes | Don't know more discussion needed of the proposed changes | Do not currently support change, but willing to continue to discuss the possibility of making changes | Strongly oppose trying to make change in this area |
| 19  | 2   | 2   |   |  |

## Theme: Overall

### *Subtheme: The Case*

- Can't run it without the people.

*Subtheme: General*

- What would it look like and early childhood is important.

**Theme: Proposed Directions**

*Subtheme: Education and Training for Staff*

- Areas of specialization for increase credentials, i.e. infants.
- ECS teachers need training in ELCC
- Common credentials.
- Concerned about requiring so much education/certification that rural programs will have an increasingly difficult time finding and maintaining staff that keep programming open.
- Province wide scale. Common credential.
- Training – “consistent” from administration downwards.
- Need to get colleges and universities to talk about common credentials which could take 10 years.

*Subtheme: Remuneration*

- Address how ELC staff are viewed as professionals and how these staff view themselves.
- Put money where mouth is! Equity and wage.

**Theme: Process of Development**

- Critical to have EC folk’s involvement in development of curriculum.
- How will successes be measured etc.?

f) An early learning and care curriculum framework

| <b>1</b>  | <b>2</b>  | <b>3</b>  | <b>4</b>  | <b>5</b>   |
|---|---|---|---|--|
| Strongly support trying to make change in this area | Support trying to make change, but some concerns about the proposed changes | Don’t know more discussion needed of the proposed changes | Do not currently support change, but willing to continue to discuss the possibility of making changes | Strongly oppose trying to make change in this area |
| 16  | 6   |   |   |  |

**Theme: General**

- Long overdue – focus on broad based goals. Inclusion and diversity
- Sharing resources.

## **Theme: Principles**

### *Subtheme: Child Centered*

- Must be child centered

### *Subtheme: Consistency & Flexibility*

- Standardized expectations: the development would be “easy” implementing would be hard.
- Don’t have shared sense of what we need to do and how to do it. One size doesn’t fit all. No one stop shop.
- Common values are important based on community.
- Standardized.
- Need same values.

### *Subtheme: Developmentally Appropriate*

- We need one that is for childhood – honours this phase.
- Developmental and age appropriate.

## **Theme: Links to Other Integrative Elements**

### *Subtheme: Governance and Oversight*

- Create opportunities for cross pollination between ministries
- Who would monitor?

### *Subtheme: Human Resources*

- Good models out there. Various levels of education could impact quality of services.
- Colleges and universities should work together to plan education model for staff that supports ELCC and Early Ed working together. Colleges and Universities need to share their concerns with human services re: equivalencies for child care certification – no point in being certified if specialized training is not required.

## **Theme: Administration**

- Concerns about creating a bog down of documentation for ELC staff and programs.

## **What do you see as the next critical steps to move the development of provincial ELC framework forward?**

### **Theme: Awareness, Buy-in, Support**

- Educate general public regarding importance of ELC

### **Theme: Expanded Consultation**

- Working with Alberta Teachers' Association and Alberta Education for Pre-k and K teachers: quality standards, accountability pillars.
- Gathering info and meeting with ministries.
- Continued discussion and engagement of community facilitated by Muttart and partners.
- Collect all the information.
- Support for cross ministry conversations.
- Continued discussion with stakeholders
- Inform and engage community and political representatives to continue moving the agenda forward.
- Continue with all interested parties – keep conversation going. Involve ministries and validate the importance and profession of ELC.
- Continued involvement of Muttart Foundation with Ministries in community consultation.
- Keeping consistent, competent and credible players at the table.

### **Theme: Support and Buy In**

- Gov't is a player – there has to be a formal buy-in to this.
- Grassroots community buy-in.
- Community buy-in.
- What about long term “blessing” of this notion.

### **Theme: Start with Tangible**

- To establish a step by step framework with goals, that are not insurmountable and daunting, where we are putting more onto the agencies when they already are incredibly busy!

### **Theme: Governance**

- New ministry and commitment to sustainable funding
- New ministry of ELC and commitment to sustainable

### **Theme: Other Considerations**

- Recognizing existing structures and work with each on early learning and care alignment
- Curriculum framework – is a great start.
- Lead position, organization champion
- Don't let this drop!
- Documentation on the importance of play based curriculum. Not a paper to read, but a DVD to watch or a program to participate in.

## What key ideas, themes or questions stand out for you as you leave the forum today?

### Theme: The Vision

- We need to ensure we have a collective vision of where we want to go – then collaborate about how to get there.
- Having a vision of a seamless delivery of ELC services - this is more public knowledge rather than just ELC professional community
- Accessibility/flexibility for all children/families – universal
- Create the vision we want and then collaborate on ideas and work together

### Theme: The Window

- Political climate is open to it
- Research is supporting it
- School Board seeing the value
- Potential and possibility for developing a truly integrated system
- Premier supports – political climate is right
- Research supports it
- The door has opened. Thank you for your work

### Theme: Integrative Delivery

- One standardized point of entry is needed for delivery, accountability
- We need one standardized point of entry for children and families

### Theme: Collaboration

- Let's work with these natural common structures to enhance
- How do we bring all the sectors together to get this done.
- Love the discussion regarding organizations working together, and creating partnerships with kindergartens

### Theme: Case & Urgency

- The sector has to move – has to be more considerate of how child care operates
- The importance of this and the challenge ahead. Seems daunting but so worth it.
- Challenges ahead, but don't diminish the importance of moving forward

### Theme: General

- There are Canadian models.
- Hope it happens! Important work. It will change Alberta.
- They all were so important – they will keep me thinking for weeks.

### **Theme: Integrative Elements**

- The number of times early learning and care was discussed and recognized as a profession.
- Schools are seen as a common community gathering places regardless of income and cultural backgrounds.
- ELC government body with a priority to Alberta's early group 0-8

### **What do you most want to say to your ELC colleagues about a potential new provincial framework for ELC?**

#### **Theme: The Case**

- Trust it's for your own good.
- We need it
- We need to come together
- We need unified voice.
- I believe there is a common vision we all want to enhance the value and importance of early learning and care.
- We need to come together.

#### **Theme: Key Elements**

- We could be leaders in developing an ELC degree program. Are you (we) ready for this challenge?

#### **Theme: Back to the Future**

- I see us going back to the "old" ECS programs of the 70's and 80's. What goes around comes around? Maybe the younger professionals can make it happen....
- We have a chance to recapture some of the things that have been lost over the years: i.e. supply funding; aligning some things that have been fragmented, i.e. monitoring/enforcement with supporters

#### **Theme: Feeling Hopeful**

- Let's do it!
- Hurray! How wonderful this day has been. Could we have a list of participants and their contact info? It was a wonderful networking opportunity too.
- It's exciting, it's possible, be patient and stick with it.
- Thank you! I have much more confidence in the future of ELC having met and listened to the incredible facilitators that are leading this initiative.
- This is the first time in 20 years of my involvement in ELC in Alberta that I am excited and optimistic about the direction we are headed!
- Don't be afraid

- Very excited to hear the passion behind where the Muttart Foundation is providing – the education, resources and research – all elements of early learning and education working together to achieve a common goal.
- Keep going, we will get there!

**Theme: Other Conversations**

- I think it is critical to have representation of the ATA professional associate. For example, the Early Childhood Education Council.
- Question/Observation: As there was discussion about kindergarten and pre-k teachers – why were they not present in this group for their insights and perspectives?
- There is going to be more opportunities for your “voice” to be heard!

**Theme: Other**

- Please keep in mind rural communities that struggle to keep qualified staff and difficulty getting certified staff.