

Children and Families in the New Saskatchewan:

A Discussion of Early Learning and Child Care



A Record of
Early Childhood
Education and Care



Stakeholder Discussions – Regina Forum

Regina, December 2, 2013

Delta Regina Hotel • Regina



The Muttart Foundation

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Muttart Foundation, in partnership with the Saskatchewan Population Health and Evaluation Research Unit, hosted a stakeholder discussion on the organization, funding and delivery of early childhood education and care in Saskatchewan, in Regina on December 2, 2013. The following report provides a transcript of these discussions.

The Regina discussion was the second of two similar meetings hosted by the Foundation and the Saskatchewan Population Health and Evaluation Research Unit. The first was held in Saskatoon on November 29th, 2013.

The main goal of both discussions was two-fold: to provide an invited group of early childhood education and care stakeholders with an opportunity to share their thoughts and experiences on the current nature of early childhood education and care in the province; and second, to ask them to look to the future and consider how early learning and child care services might be best organized, funded and delivered to best meet the changing needs and interests of young children and their families. By way for definition, the early childhood education and care services participants considered are those for children below the mandatory school age that include both early learning and care (for example, regulated child care services and kindergarten).

To help support the discussions, the Muttart Foundation prepared a background discussion paper *Children and Families in the New Saskatchewan: A Discussion of Early Learning and Child Care*. The paper provided an overview of the current organization of early childhood education and care in the province as well as a synthesis of the comparative research that examines how different jurisdictions approach the early learning and care of their youngest citizens. The invited stakeholders received the paper in advance of the meeting. A copy of this report is available for download from the Muttart Foundation web-site: www.muttart.org/reports.

Thirty-eight stakeholders attended the Regina discussions. They included senior staff involved in the planning and delivery of services in both community and school settings from both the Regina region, as well as staff with similar responsibilities from committees in central and southern Saskatchewan. The stakeholders participated in a series of facilitated group discussions and recorded their own responses to the various questions they considered. These written records formed the basis for this meeting report.

The primary audience for the current report is the stakeholders who participated in the discussion. The report presents their responses to the main discussion questions they considered, sorted on the basis of common themes and ideas. The stakeholders were not asked to reach consensus, but rather to consider and respond fully to the questions posed based on their knowledge and experiences. The written comments that stakeholders provided were not attributed to individual participants.

The Muttart Foundation and the Saskatchewan Population Health and Evaluation Research Unit greatly appreciate the significant contributions the stakeholders made to the discussions. Their thoughts and insights provide an important assessment of the current nature of early learning and

child care in Saskatchewan as well as rich source of ideas on how best to advance the field given the changing needs and circumstances of Saskatchewan children and their families.

The Foundation and the Saskatchewan Population Health and Evaluation Research Unit will draw on these stakeholder discussions to inform their own work in supporting Saskatchewan's young children and their families and invite the discussion participants to consider how they too can do the same. There are likely many areas of shared interest that can be mutually pursued and developed.

2. EARLY LEARNING AND CHILD CARE IN SASKATCHEWAN – THE HERE AND NOW

In the first series of facilitated discussions the forum participants considered three questions that explore the main features or characteristics of the current organization, funding and delivery of early learning and child care in Saskatchewan.

2.1 What are the strengths or assets that characterize the early learning and child care field in Saskatchewan?

Participant discussions of the key strengths or assets of the early learning and child care field in Saskatchewan considered the larger environmental factors shaping interest in the field as well as the particular features of current services.

2.1.1 Environmental Factors Shaping Investments in Early Learning and Child Care

Participants saw the following environment factors as strengths or assets for the early learning and care field.

Increased Interest in or Awareness of the Importance of the Early Years (including early learning and child care)

- more parents are aware/looking for high quality care
- momentum is picking up in recognizing the importance of brain development in early years
- continued awareness of the need for quality and access for children
- an understanding by the public that the 'whole child' is our greatest resource
- access to best/ unique/experimental practices at home and abroad

Economic and Social Factors – Changing Family Lives and a Strong Economy

- resource rich
- higher aboriginal population
- younger generation has more of a sense of entitlement- may push for better framework of early learning and child care services and universal access
- economic boom- resources to fund programs
- sense of entitlement of current parent generation- create the political will for change
- strong economy and population growth
- economy & the increase of young families & population of children

- perspective of entitlement- young families and views on state provision
- demographic shifts- can we get those baby boomers to volunteer in the community/ give up their wealth/ turn on the mains
- fact that childcare is available to some, even if not to enough (1 in 5)
- government trying to accommodate those needs
- concerned people in higher up areas of government
- lots of children/ families to plan with/ for

Timing and Opportunity

- opportunity for innovation
- current government is innovative and interested in early learning
- political will is growing/ can be influenced
- lots of interest as per this forum; will of the early child community that things must improve
- there is a will to change/ reform
- leadership in EL&C in the community

A History and Culture of Working Together

- history of innovation to build on
- respect for supporting young families' needs

2.1.2 Governance and Management of Early Learning and Child Care

Participants identified the following strengths or assets in the current governance and management of early learning and child care.

Ministerial Responsibility and Oversight

- bringing early learning and care under the aegis of the ministry of education
- higher standards for quality of care
- placed under a ministry
- strong early learning ministry
- move to bring everything under one umbrella
- strong leadership from ministry of Ed
- consolidation of EL&C in ministry of education
- ECE being under education
- having early and care within the ministry of education
- ELCC is under the ministry of Education to aide in a less 'silo' approach to childcare/ prek transitions and understandings
- early learning and childcare under ministry of education
- challenge- unregulated daycares, subsidy under social service and regulation under ministry of education
- under the ministry of education (gives an emphasis on learning instead of babysitting)
- being under the ministry of education
- move for early learning to be under the ministry of education
- strong leadership within the early years branch
- establish government staff/ structure

- strong ministry and school division leadership to develop a research based on strong philosophical and pedagogical approach to early learning
- strong relationships between sectors- childcare, education, health
- moved from social services to Department of Learning- which was a positive change from welfare work to early learning for children

Regional Management and Planning

- RIC-committees across the province work for early learning coalition
- regional intersectoral committees
- reflect on the direct needs pertaining to our province & working on filling gaps to support those needs (breakfast programs, preK, etc.) (at risk)

Collaborations and Partnerships

- committees set up
- partnerships
- partnerships with other agencies/professionals (social services, ministry of Ed, health, Wascana, etc.)
- coordinated approaches- school board- Kids First- Daycare- partnerships
- coalition groups partnership with each other
- RAECN- working collaboratively
- early years coalition to work for our vulnerable children- school system
- committees and coalitions partnering/collaborating/ community to better integrate their services- libraries, YMCA
- community efforts
- I am children's librarian, my experiences with early childcare assets tell me how important it is to have committees and coalitions
- diversity & integration
- community based not system based

2.1.3 Financing of Early Learning and Child Care

Participants identified the following strengths or assets in the current financing model.

Program Funding

- stability
- start-up grant and funding for spaces in the province
- grants for program funding
- subsidies, child care grants, start up grant
- perception from outside the formal childcare system that funding to centres is good- i.e. capital grants, special ends grants, etc.

Funding for Staff Education and Training

- tuition reimbursement
- training grants for staff and networks, coalition
- funding your training
- tuition reimbursement
- support by ministry of Ed for tuition for ECE

2.1.4 The Service Delivery Landscape

Participants identified the following strengths or assets in the current delivery of services.

Increases in Services

- growing preK's with a vision to have them universal
- Increase in PreK spots- offering 3/4 year olds
- increase in preK spots
- many early learning centres being opened in rural Sask.
- more rural centres are becoming more prominent
- increase in spaces but not enough
- growing Pre-K
- the increase of childcare spaces

Services for Children and or Families Considered Vulnerable

- Head start program- Federal and Provincial
- Head start in schools on reserves
- ECIP programs, home visiting programs, breast feeding, autism
- pre-k programs in schools

The Range or Types of Early Learning and Child Care Services and other Supports

- different programs offered amongst facilities (pushing each other to improve/develop programs)
- regulated daycare spots
- Kids First
- family centre pilots in Regina, Yorkton & the North
- In Regina 2 Family Centres
- publicly funded kindergarten
- partnership with other agencies for the well being of all children and their needs

Approaches to Service Delivery

- competition between programs to offer better programs- chances for innovation
- some important service delivery strengths
- competition between school division may result in innovations for ELCC- does this lead to the opportunity for innovation?
- transportation that is provided

Comments on how organizations are governed

- having parent boards
- Parent voice in childcare delivery- centres have parent boards

2.1.5 Early Learning and Child Care Workforce

Participants identified a series of strengths or assets within the early learning and child care workforce.

Personal Qualities and Commitment

- made up of individuals who care strongly about our children's future
- workforce that are engaged and caring

- having people passionate about careers in this field
- having people passionate and devoted to change and improvement
- wealth and knowledge of experience in the field, working towards positive change
- young energized employees getting into the field
- dedicated personnel
- many concerned and dedicated professionals- particularly in leadership positions
- many committed invested people from a variety of sectors within the early learning and child care
- experience
- desire to provide high quality, inclusive, affordable early learning and child care

Educational Preparation and Professional Approach

- push for more of a 'professional' model for education of staff
- educated staff
- community training
- encourage continual learning for people in career of early learning
- access to early learning certificates/ diploma
- the encouragement of staff having this training
- continuation of education
- quality staffing both in the education aspect and the true reason they are in the field, their interest and love of teaching and watching children grow, explore and learn through play
- expectations for licensed child care settings to have certain staff requirements
- continued growth for professional development
- training available in province

2.1.6 Service Resources and Program Supports

Participants identified the following resources and supports as strengths or assets with strong support for the provincial 'Play and Exploration' program guide.

The Provincial Play and Exploration Guide

- the play & exploration guide (9 comments)
- development of the play and learn guide
- development of Play and Exploration
- Play and Exploration document
- workshops and curriculum
- Play and exploration in kindergarten
- The Play and Exploration curriculum/ program
- this is not followed universally, because it is not mandatory
- Play and Exploration Development
- development of "Play and Exploration" guide
- new curriculum
- kindergarten curriculum
- same view under learn and play curriculum

Early Childhood Networks and Other Bodies

- network (Regina area early Childhood Network) exists and promotes discussion and understanding among member from various agencies/ segments
- leadership ECE caucus
- organizations to develop early learning and child care field and strengthen the field
- networks
- local early childhood networks/coalitions and attempts at connecting them provincially

Education, Professional Development, Training and Other Resources and Services

- good quality ECE programs at SIAST
- early learning consultants are a huge asset
- faculty of education has changed programming to ensure pre-teaching students have at least 3 strong courses in early learning (Pre-3)
- Early childhood education available here through SIAST
- structure and manual to follow- establish basics
- continuation of support
- good communication between SIAST ECE and the field
- Daycare consultants and Established Policy make it 'Easy' for childcare centres to navigate the system
- available education and training resources
- have licensing manual and consultants for guidance and help

2.1.7 Research and Data Collection/Reporting

Participants identified the following strengths or assets in the areas of research and data collection and reporting. The identified strengths included reference to the work of specific organizations as well as the use of the Understanding the Early Years (UEY) work and the ECERS-R tool.

- interest & research of SPHERU
- understanding early years
- greater awareness of the importance of early years (ex. UEY project focused in Regina)
- in Regina because of UEY, awareness of the existence of services, and the gaps
- ECERS-R-great tool for evaluation of the program

2.1.8 Other Comments

- consistency of view
- good question- I don't know

2.2 What are the main forces or drivers that currently shape the demand for early learning and child care and the supply of services?

The Demand for Early Learning and Child Care

Participants identified four main drivers shaping the increased demand for early learning and child care. They identified further sub-themes within these four main demand drivers.

2.2.1 Increased Interest in and Awareness of the Early Years (including early learning and child care)

- starting to understand value of early learning experience- for some it is the desire to give their child all the experience they can afford to do
- climate ready for change
- goals and outcomes changes
- increase in quality early years
- parents are becoming more educated on the importance of early learning and early intervention
- facilities modelling the positive results of providing early learning
- UEY work and data from EDI (understanding the early years studies in various communities)
- more knowledge about the importance of the early years
- importance of early years- formative years, brain development, determinants of health
- greater awareness- pressure to develop culturally appropriate services
- greater awareness of importance of early years and relevance of quality care
- to make a better world for our children
- Parents want more for their children
- coalitions are being formed to inform people of the importance of early years
- the push to see early learning to be recognized as a part of the education system
- growing recognition of importance of EC programming
- recognition of the importance of early learning in rural- remote- parents utilizing early learning opportunities for children
- want for early years "formal" experiences for young children (socialization, academics)
- role of the state- service provision, guiding ideology
- shifting the perception of EL&C
- growing understanding of the value of early years

2.2.2 Economic Forces Including Parents Increased Participation in the Labour Market

Participants identified the province's strong economy as a significant force in driving the demand for early learning and child care. They saw this economic growth as working in a number of different ways to increase the demand for early learning and child care.

Parents/Families Increased Participation in the Workforce

- increased demand for childcare- more parents in workforce
- economy- more working parents need childcare
- parents in the workforce
- increase in women in workforce (2 responses)
- more homes are two income families
- women in the workforce either by choice or need to participate in the workforce
- demand- can't work because no child care
- women in the workforce, both parents working and requiring childcare
- increased cost of raising families economic -service for parents convenience rather than for the good of children
- more working parents

- strong economy- more working parents
- demand- more families with two parents in the workforce
- parents- whether 2 parent family or lone parent needing support for children 0-5 due to childcare demands while at work
- higher education (need for post-secondary)
- young families and students
- parents having to work to survive
- families where both parents are in the work force

Overall Economic Growth

- growing economy
- strong economy, employment opportunities
- the economy (2 responses)
- Economics- work force participation, stagnant wage increases, debt deflation
- economic boom
- wonderful growing economy
- economic boom - pushed more into the work force

2.2.3 Changing Nature of Families and Family Life

Participants identified the changing nature of Saskatchewan families, and changes in their daily lives, as also driving changes in the demand for early learning and child care.

- working parents/changing family dynamics
- Different/ diverse families
- single parent families with pre-school children
- change in family structure (smaller families, both parents in workforce)
- families both are working, single mom
- diverse families- single parent, etc.
- environmental and abuse factor
- goals and outcomes of families changed
- goals of families have changed- need for education
- building of social skill (smaller families don't provide this environment as they did in the past)

2.2.4 The Growing Size and Diversity of the Provincial Population

Participants also saw the demographic changes taking place across the Province as important forces in shaping the demand for early learning and child care.

Population Increase

- population demand
- more population growing
- Demand- booming economy, growing population
- population and economic growth
- increase in population (2 responses)
- growth in population
- growing population, industry, economy

- growing economy- increased population
- growth
- Demand- Increased population, need for both parents to work

Increasing Number of Families with Young Children (baby boom)

- growing population which includes young families that have pre-school children
- number of young children
- more young parents
- growing population and demands for care growing
- the need for quality ELCC for our growing population
- increased early years population
- young families (2 responses)
- increase in number of families with young children
- increase in number of children from young parent families
- economy and the increase of young families and population of children

Increased Immigration to the Province

- immigrants
- population – immigration
- more multiculturalism
- increased immigration
- immigration (2 responses)
- increase in number of immigrant/refugee families needing services
- immigrants/ diverse families
- new Canadians families- drawn to province because of employment opportunities
- large immigrant population (and ever increasing)

Growing Northern and Aboriginal Populations

- aboriginal population
- increasing number of aboriginal children under the age of 4
- growing population in aboriginal
- Demographics- younger families, First Nations population (although no provincial jurisdiction on-reserve)
- growing young aboriginal population
- population - aboriginal
- increase in number of aboriginal families needing services

General Comments

- increasing partnerships with ministry of Ed & RPS
- what the child needs vs. what the parent needs

The Supply of Early Learning and Child Care

Participants saw the following factors as shaping, and in most cases limiting, the supply of services. They provided less comment on these factors than those shaping the demand for services.

2.2.5 Political Support for Early Learning and Child Care

- Ideology of government on the connection between economy, workforce, investing in early childhood learning, care and health
- Prek AND Kindergarten
- regulations from the 'Ministry of Education'
- government funding limits what we can do

2.2.6 The Organization and Delivery of Services

Participants identified challenges with both the supply of services and the current nature of the workforce.

Shortage of Early Childhood Education and Care Spaces

- spaces in licensed care not keeping pace with demand
- increase in number of children from 0-4 years- not enough spaces in PreK, childcare
- province's own economic boom in some ways is a hindrance to provide spaces for child care - where do we find the facilities to accommodate the need?
- long waitlists
- waiting list
- inability to serve the needs of families
- poor access, parent frustration, inadequate support for families
- lack of approved services for some children with problems
- supply- ease of entry for new suppliers
- the need for quality childcare
- needs for childcare and early learning
- such a range of fees and quality among existing suppliers

Workforce Challenges

- low wages
- Supply- educated staff- wages
- ELCC- wages, retention, quality
- Supply- lack of trained staff, increased spaces=less qualified staff, Wages
- the desire to make a difference
- people that are excited to implement what their understanding & education in early learning (passion)

Other Comments

- increase cost
- inclusion

2.3 What are the main challenges facing the early learning and child care field in Saskatchewan?

Participants identified larger structural challenges facing the early learning and child care field as well as more local ones. A number of the challenges participants identified built on their earlier discussions of the supply side factors that limit the availability and capacity of services.

2.3.1 The Changing Social and Economic Characteristics of the Province

Participants identified the significant social and economic changes taking place in the province as key factors that present challenges for the early learning and child care field.

Economic or Social Concerns

- transportation for low income families
- social service model keeps people from trying to access services for their vulnerable children- focus of being apprehended
- Income, transportation, social supports and stability
- people are forced to resort to unregulated childcare
- challenges families face
- economic boom - demand for service
- we scare families into not accessing services (fear of child protection)
- impact on other social determinants (increased cost of housing)
- challenge of responding to different types of needs of children and families
- challenges families face
- meeting needs of all children/special needs, behaviour

Geographic or Community Challenges

- not enough buildings to find to open new daycare programs to increase child spaces
- housing in rural Saskatchewan for new members to the community and housing for future employees into rural Saskatchewan communities

2.3.2 Public and Political Support for Early Learning and Child Care

- getting rid of 'DAYCARE' terminology- appreciation and understanding of the need for quality services
- Parental involvement, not enough parents/ families understanding of ECE
- still stuck in care model rather than early learning
- people not understanding what we are trying to do
- fundamental paradigm shift in the perception and attitude toward early learning and care by the "adult" population; from an attitude/perception that it is a service for adults so they can work to one that sees EL&C as a fundamental right and good/benefit for children
- building partnerships between ministry to talk about benefit of child
- getting the message of early learning out to the community- knowledge of 0-6 brain development
- more emphasis on pre- natal, i.e. parents could take better care of themselves

2.3.3 The Governance and Management of Early Learning and Child Care

Participant discussions identified a number of challenges that arise from how early learning and child care services are currently governed and managed.

Ministerial Oversight and Regulation

- is ministry of education supporting the early years branch enough?
- regulation on quality- where is it?
- Political will- 500 new spaces in throne speech, have the workers to fill, commitment to investigate complaints on unlicensed, possible legislative charges
- Legislation on number of childcare up to 8 unlicensed
- regulate Play and Learn
- how do unlicensed facilities become regulated?
- high quality of care (facilities not being regulated)
- lack of consistent regulations
- lack of monitoring to ensure high quality care
- unlicensed homes are not monitored or supported

An Absence of Integrated Approaches to Service Delivery

- tunnel vision of each agencies -don't focus on the needs of the children and partner for the success. Staying within their own scope and not building partnerships
- coordination of services
- Differing perspective on what ELCC is?

The Engagement of Stakeholders and Communities

- lack of input (who was or wasn't invited to this forum? It is very white?)
- lack of aboriginal input/ feedback/ participation at policy and planning levels

2.3.4 The Financing of Early Learning and Child Care

Participants identified and discussed challenges linked both to the level and nature of financing for early learning and child care.

Levels of Investment or Financing

- investment and funding
- economic resources
- Economic possibilities- wages, funding, capital, capacity
- costs! ELCC training
- lack of funding
- main challenges is financial support
- funding to provide high quality centres

Financing Differences Between Services

- social services approach - only funding EL&C minimally and largely only when there is demonstrated vulnerability
- lack of funding for day homes
- financial assistance- we all receive the same funding but the needs are very different
- capital start up for a non-school based program

Financing Mechanisms or Tools (including child care space subsidies)

- families on their own for early years childcare
- cost of families (subsidy inadequate)
- The 3 TIER system for subsidy. Rural communities have their own struggles to overcome above housing costs- such as access to programs being up to 3 hours away
- high costs prevents access
- childcare costs which are too great for parents/ families
- high cost comparative to salaries

2.3.5 The Organization and Delivery of Services

Participants discussed a number of related challenges linked to the organization and delivery of services.

Overall Capacity Issues and Concerns

- availability of spaces
- lack of available spaces
- limiting- opening of new spaces
- not enough spaces to fill the demand
- not enough licensed spaces to meet demand
- not enough space childcare/ early learning for increasing population
- not enough accessible spots for low income families
- lack of spaces and lack of First Nations metis perspective
- long waiting lists
- insufficient childcare spaces
- not enough spaces, quality programs
- availability
- wait list
- all children having access to quality care
- the need for more spaces
- space
- not enough childcare spaces
- inequitable access to early learning and care
- parents pulling children from preschool to go to prek
- families cannot access programs- long wait lists
- not enough licensed and regulated childcare spaces
- urban- waiting lists and qualified staff

Service Inequities and Service Gaps (including between communities)

- lack of consistency between organizations
- inconsistency
- lack of partnerships among facilities (coincides/consistency)
- struggles between the school and daycare partnerships & recognition of the educators & what they do to prepare children for the next ages & stages leading up to school (having everyone on the same page/breaking barriers)
- relative lack of integration of services
- not seamless for parents- daycare, prek, pre school

- the gap in developmental development ed and screening between 0-6- services like SLP and OT at early age
- fragmentation of delivery- family support, childcare, PreK and some programs fit nowhere
- overlap of programming/ services
- home daycares isolated? At library, I see them chatting during my programs and less engaged
- coordination of services
- geography- rural- city, Regionalization
- geography
- on/ off reserves between school divisions urban/ rural
- big challenges in geography
- regionalized needs
- rural- no waiting lists, few qualified staff, subsidies (not qualifying), form safety for young children
- appropriateness of services for different children-kids getting expelled, unwillingness to work with these children, lack of knowledge of what to do with them
- services needs to be based on children's needs and parent need
- need for culturally responsive programming
- lack of resources in multiple languages- want to purchase books for multilingual but not much there
- recreational programs

Quality of Services

- quality of programming
- lack of quality control
- quality
- quality of programs

Governance of Organizations

- Board- not invested in "Big Picture"
- parent Boards are over burdened- too much responsibility, few resources
- lack of education to Board members (especially when they want to know)

Curriculum and Other Program Supports

- play & exploration can be interpreted and implemented different between facilities
- did parents have input into the Play AND Exploration curriculum
- Play and Exploration not mandated so not used consistently across province- no measure of success
- Hiring and retention of ELCC consultants.
- We are currently without a consultant and those that have been hired in recent years tend to be younger and less experienced
- starting wages for consultants who come to the job with lots of experience need to be paid wages that are competitive to what an experience daycare Director would make

2.3.6 The Early Learning and Child Care Workforce

Participants identified three areas of challenge relating to the early learning and child care workforce. They observed that these challenges are interrelated.

Staff Education and Professional Development

- ECE's are not required to do prof development to retain their certification (need to keep learning and being involved in the development of the program) -who regulates this?
- investing training dollars onto staff who don't stay and move on and can't close for PD days so not all staff can get trained at once
- need for education- education that focuses on the development of early years teachers
- teachers in PreK may not have training in the early years
- struggles around discouraged educators not being able to implement their education in the field (observational tools/techniques)
- consistent training
- limited training for prek workers
- high quality, sustained PD opportunities for individuals in the fields
- indeterminate standards of education for the profession
- educated staff to provide high quality learning
- not able to have the educated staff
- key issues relating to the early years not taught/ addressed in Teacher prep programs at the university level
- education- formal/ informal
- lack of education for remote locations
- lack of access to quality Professional Development and the costs associated to send staff when you live away from Regina and Saskatoon
- remote locations having access to workshops and conferences

Staff Recruitment & Retention

- staff retention and recruitment
- not enough ECEs
- retaining ECEs
- qualified staff
- maintaining trained quality ECEs
- staff recruitment and retention
- staffing space
- a sense of ownership - passion for working in early childhood is waning -we cant let that happen.
- difficulty in recruiting & retaining staff
- recruiting staff and retaining them
- few qualified staff
- trained staff, retaining staff
- retention of staff
- recruitment and retention of trained staff
- attraction and retention of staff (quality)
- low number of ELEs entering the workforce
- keeping staff- fewer staff qualified teaching 3 and 4 year olds

Staff Remuneration and Professional Status

- rate of pay
- staff retention and wages
- childcare workers not recognized as trained professionals and wages that reflect this
- jobs description/ expectation- wage inconsistency
- lack of pay for qualified educators -people leaving the field because of it
- transportation, low wages even with education level III
- low wages that do not reflect and importance of work
- education and wages
- raising wages while keeping fees at a reasonable/ affordable level for parents
- lower wages to compete with to keep staff
- salaries and training
- low wages or differences between centres
- equitable wages
- recruitment/ retention- wages/ training
- poor pay/ low retention and attraction

2.3.7 Research and Data Collection

- lack of population data
- no (or relatively little) data about the population of children and their development and of the quality of services
- move away from population level data

3. REIMAGINING EARLY LEARNING AND CHILD CARE IN SASKATCHEWAN – LOOKING INTO THE FUTURE

In the second round of discussions the participants looked to the future for early learning and child care in Saskatchewan. They discussed three questions relating to the possible development of a new provincial framework for early learning and child care.

3.1 What are your thoughts on the potential value of a provincial early learning and child care framework for Saskatchewan?

Participant discussion explored the potential value of a provincial framework for early learning and child care from a number of different perspectives. They considered the nature and types of benefit that might be anticipated, as well as the key aspects or features of a framework that they saw as beneficial for children and their families.

3.1.1 The Potential Value of a Provincial Framework

- I think our province is in need of it. We invest so many \$ on improving early learning but what for? If we don't have a framework to work towards everything gets lost in translation and delivery.
- extremely valuable- need to put supports in place, especially for families who are vulnerable
- critical step

- at first-FEAR- from not totally understanding - Now excitement and importance to move forward with a provincial ECEC framework for all children.
- if we continue doing the same thing- then we will get same results
- we all need to be on the same page and develop a provincial framework for early learning
- much needed. Our current "path" is based on an old model that is not accurate (one parent home and responsible for care of child & family)
- very valuable cohesive framework that would take into account the variables of all decisions on each part of the sector
- motivated to develop an action plan for programming from the framework
- good to have some unity
- more support for an idea, better chance of realization
- current path based on old reality
- I love the idea and have said throughout my experience that the lack of such a framework in itself causes us to struggle in areas that could be easier. If there is more guidance through knowledge, we have to guess less
- very valuable as a guidance to establish work, goals, direction
- important to have
- expectations would be higher, given a sense of value
- could provide a comprehensive, thoughtful approach vs. patchwork services
- resources could be complementary rather than competing
- allows change to be more intentional
- identifying and articulating complexities useful in itself- for better understanding

3.1.2 Benefits for Children and Families

- could lead parents into a different frame of mind of parenting
- improved readiness for learning
- Why? Rights of Child- value of children provincially
- decreases stress and risk for families that fall into that high-risk population- decreases stress for all working families
- this will value not only our children but our future
- all children would be receiving the same high quality care
- valuable for parents and families, knowing support is available in these areas- care and education
- help to address accessibility issues
- implement more opportunities for the younger humans
- ultimately children and families are better served

3.1.3 A Common Vision and Shared Goals for Early Learning and Child Care

- Kids/ families/ programs would "belong" to a goal of a greater good
- I think it will be critical to be explicit on the goals for EL&CC in the province as part of the framework and systems will need to be adapted so the framework is mandatory for those providing (and funding) EL&CC services.
- professionals/parents/community on same "playing field" -better understanding through the differing disciplines of professionals working collaboratively towards the same goal & support to get there
- need to have a common understandings of big picture

- common understanding
- great idea - would put guidelines in place to develop uniform policy for all
- having same goals for children across the province
- it sets the direction for which all sectors will be focusing on as opposed to being fragmented with different focuses.
- too much passive language in this division, someone has to set the goal so all can go for it!
- same/ similar potential outcomes

3.1.4 Possible Principles to Shape a Provincial Framework

As part of their discussions on the potential value of a provincial early learning and child care framework, participants identified some possible principles for inclusion in the framework.

Universal Access or Entitlements to Early Learning

- framework needs to benefit the children of the province
- valuable for children- all children entitled to quality education and care prenatal one

Inclusion of Parent Voices

- critical that it honours parent voice input
- critical that it begins from assumptions that parents hold knowledge and have strengths and capacity

Other Principles

- could provide guidelines so diversity could be addressed at community level
- not to make education system- keep the core a strong guide: family support
- framework should be mandatory
- non partisan framework
- critical that it remains flexible and does not become unionized (e.g. as has happened with the public school system)

3.1.5 A Continuum of Services – Service Integration

- continuum into pre-kindergarten should be logical- seamless
- good to have coordinated approach
- enhanced understanding of what others do, where they fit?
- possibilities for greater collaboration, less isolation
- offers attention to children and families in wholistic ways
- bringing together multiple interests to a board
- seamless provision of services
- stronger communication and collaboration
- less unnecessary duplication of services
- consistent approach= would enrich quality of care and enhance early learning opportunities
- potential for consistency with expectations through all areas
- intersectoral, working together for a better future
- consistency throughout the province in delivery of services
- regulations that are consistent

- provide consistency of service delivery
- would integrate sector services
- step toward a more comprehensive, integrated, effective system
- consistent
- standardize- structure
- more structured reinforcement/ communication of daycare standards and of other recreation programs
- consistency between centres
- having clear expectations as to what best practices are for centres helps them to work toward a united child care focus
- more knowledge of what services are on offer and more coordination/ communication

3.1.6 Engaging Stakeholders

- deep discussion needed
- deep discussions
- parent involvement
- I think having people in power listening and being a part of the change is key

3.1.7 Areas for Consideration or Inclusion in a Possible Framework

Allocation of Resources

- streamline funding
- funding streamlined
- setting of standards and funding model

Remuneration for Staff

- recognition of it being a profession and paying staff accordingly
- education and training of service providers
- wage fairly low

Measurement and Reporting on Services

- same outcomes, measureable
- measurable outcomes in framework
- more regulation throughout the province as a whole

3.1.8 Questions for Consideration, Concerns and General Comments

- only with provincial agreement
- has to have commitment to follow through
- there has to be a good, strong group to follow it through
- would love to start with a blank canvas- seems exhausting to even consider the effort to convince many levels to see the potential value
- only if there is a provincial government commitment to take it up and begin to create and implement an EL&C provincial program
- it will depend if all key stakeholders could be involved- especially aboriginal input
- systems do not historically/ statistically meet the needs of certain groups of people
- Is it child/ parent based?

- good question, what is your definition of a framework?
- who is going to lead?
- what are the challenges we face?
- we spend time on the agenda items of value- is this an agenda item of value in SK?
- parents are part of system, doing something that hurts another part
- increase high quality centres
- addressing gaps
- organizational structure
- very complex

3.2 How would you characterize the level of interest among early learning and child care stakeholders for the development of a provincial framework?

Participants discussed early learning and child care stakeholders' interest in the development of a provincial framework from a number of different perspectives. Their written comments on these discussed are presented below on the basis of stakeholder groups (e.g. the general public) and, where appropriate, the level of interest.

3.2.1 Public Interest in a Provincial Framework for Early Learning and Child Care

- I do believe that there is a general feeling that changes need to happen
- certainly interest at the community level
- aboriginal participation extremely low- not adequately represented as per the current and anticipated population growth in this area
- spread the word in SK
- has to be more knowledge and interest in general public in order to make a framework work
- Public awareness
- Aboriginals? Interest maybe low if they are not included
- low to medium to high. It really depends on what you ask.
- buy in from non-traditional sectors is helpful to the cause
- I do not have a sense that this same understanding exists outside of early learning and care stakeholders, e.g. community, government, general public etc.

3.2.2 Government Interest in a Provincial Framework for Early Learning and Child Care

- different levels of government would need to be involved- fragmentation needs to be addressed
- I think it is high but government needs to be more aware of all the fine details in ELCC
- not sure about the level of interest from government (maybe fearful of funds needed)
- government needs to list and reallocate resources
- the interest is there- but concerns for not introducing a system
- I think one is being developed, Ministry of Education- consultation process determined?
- other sectors also interested- government- problem in coordinating among players

3.2.3 Community Level Interest (including Regional Intersectoral Committee work)

- there are various coalitions across the province, thanks to RIC. However, this is not enough!
- most of their (RICs) work is to bring the importance of early childhood development to the EC worker's attention, however the public is not being reached, it still has not brought the sectors together to develop a framework
- intersectoral interest evident
- community involvement
- has been some significant work at community and regional levels that may be a good starting point
- needs to be mechanisms to allow meaningful participation
- expectations would be higher from communities/parents

3.2.4 Early Learning and Child Care Professionals' Interest in a Provincial Framework for Early Learning and Child Care

High Levels of Interest

- high level of interest (2 responses)
- high level of interest for framework that maintains a community base
- there is a will for framework
- strong
- ready for change
- I think the interest is there, it's a matter of someone initiating the discussion and having/getting the results
- high level of interest from the leader from all professional
- the time is now, interest is high
- many stakeholders ready to pursue positive change
- there is a strong interest
- high
- around today- take very keen
- high interest and motivation
- I believe people who work within early learning and care recognize the value of a coordinated, integrated, comprehensive system with a range of offerings to young children and families
- at the management level- very high!

Interest with Some Cautions or Concerns

- I think it is significant however, it is hesitant
- very high among lots of the service providers (although whether groups could invest the time needed is not certain)
- everyone wants to improve the level of childcare and set higher standards, but no one knows what those standards are
- those that are at the policy or management levels that understand this need see it as huge and we all anxiously await the arrival of a framework proposal
- I feel there is interest amongst stakeholders, upon their own individual training surrounding it

- I feel there is a gap of understanding towards what other professionals are doing to reach the same goals. Everyone seems to have same desires but are taking different directions to achieve those goals.
- needs collaboration in direction of producing collective framework
- Everyone seems to have same desires but are taking different directions to achieve those goals instead of uniting to create a framework based off all the little fragments necessary to become holistic.
- leadership and innovation is there- could be more coordinated
- I am not sure that we understood there was no framework so as this becomes more common knowledge, I believe it will be seen as a need
- that is out there but there is hesitation to make that move

Lower levels of Interest with Concerns or Cautions

- there is so much on our plates already that some feel this is just another "idea" that will never come to completion
- the passion has to be there
- some parts of the sector have more of a capacity to participate than others- many childcare centres for example are in survival mode
- level of interest is low at this time- from lack of funds and understanding
- lots of frustration with the present system- more so with service providers

3.2.5 Parent Interest in a Provincial Framework for Early Learning and Child Care

- parents would need education around what that means- implications

3.2.6 Questions or General Comments on Stakeholder Interest

- everyone is aware of the fragmentation and lack of services. Can a framework ensure this will happen? Not necessarily.
- need to be on the same page
- great people in this field
- what will be unique to programs?
- among those not present?
- taking risk
- inclusive
- uncertain
- unsure
- early childhood educators are in it for the children not the money

3.3 What key considerations would need to be taken into account in developing a provincial early learning and child care framework for Saskatchewan?

Participants discussed the different considerations that would need to be taken into account in developing a provincial framework for early learning and child care in Saskatchewan. Their discussions considered the process for developing a framework, the values and principles that

might inform it, as well as the directions or guidelines it might establish for the organization, funding and delivery of services.

3.3.1 Considerations of Values, Goals and Principles

Overarching Considerations or Questions

- what are the key components of the framework? (that can serve everyone)
- how would we organize provincial framework for early learning?
- will need to resolve some of the outstanding issues between government and some of the research and advocacy experts
- long term commitment from all
- direction
- such a framework will likely impact some current stakeholders negatively and others positively
- appropriate medium- community, private, municipal
- do we have the political will to not change course- change from national framework to useless
- its recent growth
- what are the barriers?

Vision and Goals

- what is the goal of the framework?
- prioritize the goals we plan to accomplish throughout the province
- clear up front on the goals as well as why we are building a framework -economic, rights
- what type of society we want to try and build?
- looking to find common start point
- establish- principles we believe in/ goals of the early learning framework
- base on "value of children" or "service for economy"?
- framework should not be tied to governments
- goal collaboration from everyone, i.e. health care, education, ministry
- targeted vs universal?
- a right, not a privilege
- Priorities of focus
- framework for all
- the population it is serving
- goals
- who is it benefitting?

The Interests of Children and Families

- for the children-about the children
- care for school age children
- universal with targeted support
- inclusivity of all children
- value children for their inherent worth
- the children- what are the needs
- learning styles, ages
- special needs

- inclusion
- the best way the children learn
- inclusion and support for all children
- after framework structure in place- set up for success- framework, each child
- to be careful that framework is inclusive and can be flexible to community/ parents
- respect for families and communities
- creating universal care for all families
- the family dynamic- social status and high risk
- accommodation of the diversity of needs

Responsive to Community Differences and Diversity

- community needs
- community based
- geographic, cultural, economy
- the rural communities and how to reach them
- the rural and urban needs that are different
- variation between needs throughout province- rural, urban, new conditions/ aboriginal
- allowing flexibility/ understanding that same needs vary amongst cities and towns
- cultural responsiveness
- respectful of culture
- how do we manage varying backgrounds -aboriginal, immigrant families?
- Aboriginal inclusion. On reserve? Off reserve?
- Diversity
- how do we manage varying demographics?
- growing diverse population
- the province diversity; culturally responsive, broad beliefs
- attention to context
- room for flexibility to address multiple perspectives/ complexity

Building on Existing Community and Services Capacities

- build on community work that has begun
- capacity of the sector
- bringing up some of the hubs

Practical and Sustainable

- flexibility in framework
- to work slowly
- long term
- needs to provide flexibility and needs to be united
- think long term but also allow flexibility as we grow and change as a province

Learning from Experience and Using Data

- why are our children falling behind?
- look at the Headstart model- it is already working, just as trend is to base on existing-(not failure for the aboriginal parents and supporters of this)
- review what exists- what has proven successful and including these in framework

- use the lifespan model starting at preconception, conception, birth, 0-3, 3-6, 6-12, 12-24, 24-36 months
- based on research and promising practices

3.3.2 The Engagement of Different Stakeholders in Developing the Framework

Participants discussed the importance of engaging different stakeholders in developing a provincial framework for early learning and child care.

Communications and Transparency and Commitment to Action

- this can be very complicated, the communication piece will be very important
- should be mandatory, not a question of whether you want to implement the framework, but how will that be done

Board Stakeholder Engagement

- engaging stakeholders
- involve all stakeholders
- municipal government has to be on board
- don't forget the training and education institutions
- who is going to be part of the discussions?
- where is the input for the framework coming from?
- motivators
- all stakeholders involved in the formulation of the framework- coordinated, intersectorals government & community forming the framework together (and other sectors)
- drawing quality people into the field for better understanding of policy and procedure change - included in that draw, there must be people from all levels
- allow childcare providers- licensed and unlicensed a way to participate that does not stress on already overtaxed system
- assist participants to really take a broad view vs getting caught in messy details
- development, cultural
- dealing with problem 'territorial', including many different sector

Engaging with First Nations

- how to include first nations (more than just jurisdiction issues)
- First Nations/ Metis issues and concerns (not just culture but also self government and jurisdictional issues)

Ensuring Parent Input

- parental input
- honour parent voice
- develop to a parent base, their strength and capacity
- voice input from parents as well as service providers/ educators
- parents have a lack of understanding
- the key considerations are what is best for children and families- where is the voice- who decides what is the best?
- information to parents and communities in SK

3.3.3 Building Public Awareness and Support for a Framework

- raise awareness of the importance of supporting families/early years
- advocacy
- educating all persons involved
- In home "frame of mind" needs to change

3.3.4 The Governance and Management of Early Learning and Child Care

Ministerial Oversight

- who will lead (who's in charge?)
- who will monitor it?
- willingness of all the ministries to work together and adapt what is already in place
- an inter- ministerial approach- health, education, social services and justice
- not becoming a system
- ensure it does not change with political ideology, flexible system and framework for all
- appropriate policy tools- authority, treasury, organizational
- intersectoral/ interdepartmental communication/ agreement

Decision-Making at a Local Level

- decision at a local level
- decision making at local level
- vision at a big level, discussion at community level
- framework at a broad level but autonomy at a community level
- local decision- making

Data Collection and Accountability

- build in accountability and data
- need for evaluation
- building in evaluation and measures
- measurable outcomes
- needs assessment, vulnerable population
- accountability, measures, data
- following up on professional development of staff

3.3.5 The Financing for Early Learning and Child Care

- funding, community support
- funding (public vs family)
- funding
- cost- money, unfortunately..
- key considerations- government on board with funding and support
- allocation of resources
- funding for staff at daycares and at any group that promotes early childcare
- not all daycare organizations are funded to the same degree
- financial resources

3.3.6 A Comprehensive Approach– the Integration of Services

- full continuum included prenatal
- partnerships
- consistent delivery of services
- participation as mandatory for those providing & funding services (with flexibility so services are not
- where do we develop spaces?
- unlicensed vs. licensed facilities? How do we bridge this gap?

3.3.7 The Early Learning and Child Care Workforce

- policies and min of education
- knowledge & education & training surrounding other professionals & their roles of support within.
- increased spaces with consideration given to how educators would be retained
- training- from child care infant room to grade 1, making learning consistent but gradual, complex, inclusive, flexible

4. THINKING ABOUT THE KEY DIMENSIONS OF EARLY LEARNING AND CHILD CARE

As part of a third round of discussions, participants considered the key dimensions of early learning and child care and how these dimensions might be best structured and approached to meet the needs of young children and their families. Participants selected three of five areas for group discussion, but had the opportunity to record their thoughts and ideas on each of the five areas.

4.1 The Vision and Goals for Early Learning and Child Care

4.1.1 What key ideas, concerns or questions emerge for you when you think about the vision and goals for early learning and child care?

Participant discussions on the vision and goals for early learning and child care considered the ideas or values that might inform the field, the process for developing a provincial vision and goals, and how a provincial vision and goals might be expressed in the governance, management, financing and delivery of services.

i) Ideas or Values Underlying a Vision and Goals

Universal Access for Children and Families

- allow all children to access early education
- how do we promote a place of acceptance for every child & make it easily accessible?
- universal childcare
- inclusive and universal (2 responses)
- concerned about the universal and targeted
- inclusive- but with targeted help
- accessible- financial, language, cultural

- how do we make it universal
- affordable and inclusion for all children
- a right?

The Accommodation of Diversity - Inclusion

- inclusive
- diversity- representing all of the children, how does this
- reflecting local needs so community based
- will rural and urban be addressed with their unique issues being addressed
- all early learning and care offerings are culturally responsive and contextual

A Child and/or Family Focus

- children first thought
- making sure the children are our first thought before making any decisions about the early learning centre
- can help a family and a child when a family is at risk
- very holistic vision of the Rights of Children
- clear focus of the child- recognize children within context of family and community

ii) Developing a Vision and Goals for Early Learning and Child Care

- how can we guarantee the outcome is about quality Early Learning not just childcare?
- what are the goals of ECD/ childcare?
- what are the goals?
- what are the vision and goals?
- Goal- children thrive both moral argument and recognition of the economic benefits
- children's rights, social justice, universal affordable access & parents & family context kept in centre are important concepts for me
- Key Ideas: vision and goals- support rather than restrict parents and childcare needs
- build a civil society
- worried about passive language- just need to lay a vision/ Framework down and go for it, From the sector -not dependent on top down prescription

iii) Engaging the Public – Raising the Profile of Early Learning and Child Care

Questions for Consideration

- will it be the right groups at the table to fairly represent?
- who represents the vulnerable families?
- who will have input into this new setup?
- will the right groups be at the table?
- who decides?
- who will speak for children, how will we hear their voice?
- will we be able to agree? How many people need to contribute and how can we make that happen?

Community Inputs

- Aboriginal input. Head Start component is already in existence but is not recognized
- make 0-3 years important to society- get families involved
- families, parents, aboriginal voices

- promoting parent education about what we do and why we do it
- parents have a voice and place in their children's learning and care experiences

iv) The Organization of Services – A Continuum of Services

- partner with other organizations to create a holistic model of care to families
- how do we move from our fragmented system with historical goals different than the current context to what we want?
- how will we make sure we include all areas of Early Learning in our vision as it is so broad?
- situating children's learning in the contexts of family and community- everyone has to benefit, all spots of life need to be considered, e.g. food security, housing security, adult education etc.

v) The Approach for Supporting Children’s Early Learning

- growth and development in children
- optimal growth development
- quality of relationships
- play based learning
- gradual transition to non-play based
- how will it be able to diverse enough to encompass all children in the province
- will it model any existing systems that have failed so many
- will it address the vulnerable group of children and parents
- prevent potential crisis (obesity, mental illness)

vi) The Early Learning and Child Care Workforce

- more training & education on all levels
- having more training available for staff
- how can we meet the demand for qualified staff, space, programming?

vii) Questions or Concerns

- how is it possible to create a seamless delivery of wholistic service?
- high quality definition can look different in each setting -how do we merge?
- does the sector stand on its own, or should it be brought into line with other human services- schools, health etc.
- competing interests- stated up front?
- who is going to lead?
- where is funding coming from?
- how do we measure & evaluate?

4.1.2 On which aspects or feature of the vision and goals for early learning and child care do you think stakeholders would find most agreement?

Participants saw stakeholders as most likely to reach an agreement on five main areas relating to the vision and goals for early learning and child care. They further raised some additional questions for consideration.

- i) **Universal Services and/or Services that are Accessible for all Families**
 - universal availability to all children
 - accessible
 - inclusive with targeted help
 - public or private responsibility? e.g. should parents provide this for their own children?
 - universal or targeted delivering? e.g. Should it only be provided to those who have special requirements?
 - is it available to all or most of the children population in Sask?

- ii) **The Affordability of Services for Families**
 - ensuring that services are affordable for all families

- iii) **A Focus on the Interests of the Child and/or Families**
 - all children have a right to the 'best start' in life
 - children need to be valued, as future generation
 - all children have the right to the best start in life
 - the early years are critical time at life
 - children need to be valued
 - items that are part of the Regina Children's Charter (probably can gain agreement on philosophy)
 - need to use the mind frame of "children's rights"
 - best start
 - I think they would agree it costs money and the kids deserve a good start
 - families need support/ childcare
 - most agreement- support for parents and children
 - parents role now? Both are working and are exhausted at the end of the day or have no education on how to do early intervention

- iv) **The Need for Quality Early Learning and Child Care Services**
 - there is a need for quality and consistency
 - that in order to find employees there must be quality ELCC environments
 - times are changing, family dynamics we need to work towards meeting the demands & challenges faced around early learning

- v) **Supporting Children's Early Learning**
 - the need for change in our childcare/ education system - they need to work together
 - that the children are more appreciated for being capable and competent
 - early intervention to get the child to learn
 - support optimal growth
 - optimal growth development
 - our goals need to be based on the children's ability and goals and experiences

- vi) **Key questions, concerns or factors to consider**
 - monitoring and consultation
 - that the need has grown
 - there may be high risk families and who monitors the child from 0-5?

- who are the stakeholders, there are some fundamental questioning to be answered
- should funding go to parents or system?
- that it is a strong investment in our human capital
- importance of early years- understanding of the stakeholders not necessarily by the general public
- However when there are opportunities for the public discussion about the needs of young children- people get it
- early learning and childcare is important on many levels and outcomes are apparent in many ways
- I do not understand this question, it begs opinion when we are advised for perspective- what point is the answer to this question going to feed into?

4.1.3 On which aspects or feature of vision & goals for early learning and child care do you think early learning and child care stakeholders would find least agreement?

Participants identified a number of areas on which stakeholders would find it more difficult to reach agreement. This question generated less discussion than the consideration of areas of most agreement.

- whether it can be accessible
- Least Agreement - all children -parents not in agreement, different cultures and values
- community based
- addressing the vulnerable group but not imposing values/cultural aspects
- finances & commitment
- that is 100% funded
- too many in public see this as the responsibility of the family
- need to know that children are responsibility of all the community- not my child but our children
- health/ social service/ justice and education
- holistic approach

Outstanding Questions

- what ELCC is?
- what is early learning? Ages, stages etc.
- what is early learning? No clear definitions
- what does optimal growth and development mean?
- what do we need to do to obtain optimal growth and development?
- who should deliver it?
- who will provide the services?
- who should benefit from it?
- who will benefit from it?
- what should it look like?
- whose responsibility is healthy children?
- what is the best way to finance it?
- who will they be funding?
- what is the commitment from stakeholders including funding and sustainability.

- aboriginal has largest population growth but are not at the table, even at this level. How come?

4.1.4 How important are changes in the vision & goals for early learning and child care to improve the services available for children and families?

Participants recorded the following comments on the importance of changes in respect to the vision and goals for early learning and child care.

i) Level of Importance

- as population grows, it is critical
- critical to address the safety and learning needs of children
- critically important
- extremely important
- foundational- the road map
- crucial: higher quality- raising the bar for early learning not just for 4 and 5 years olds
- critically important

ii) Observations around the Importance of Change

- very important to move and adapt to an ever changing society & variety of diverse children & behaviours.
- Very, as long as parents have input
- very important as they set the stage for what we are trying to achieve in EL&CC. We tend to accomplish what we have set goals around and what we measure.
- its important for our children's future to have this change
- Status- Quo- though changes have happened, data shows that it is modest at best. This is not Ok and not Ok for our children and the future of our province
- we need to know where we are headed
- we need to know 'our ask'- what do we want and why do we want it?
- if these pieces are not in place, the other pieces will not flow in a cohesive direction towards the vision/ goal
- we need to share a vision and be working toward common outcomes

iii) Comments on Support for Early Learning and Child Care

- a holistic approach- social, emotional, spiritual
- high risk families- mandatory access to early education
- regulated body for ECE's, licensed body
- regulated wages and fees
- more education for directors (admin/ business classes)
- possible different subsidy for families, all children and parents have access to early education
- there is a gap between what we know (research) and what we do/ our practices

4.2 The Governance and Management of Early Learning and Child Care

4.2.1 What key ideas, concerns or questions emerge for you when you consider the governance and management of early learning and child care?

Participant discussions of the governance and management of early learning and child care considered numerous aspects of governance including the Ministry level oversight of services, the decision-making process, the governance and community organizations as well as the preparation and support of senior early learning and child care staff.

- i) **A Provincial Framework and System-Wide Planning**
 - provincial goals and framework would help guide all levels
 - "system wide planning forms a key, it features of public management- one that helps to ensure that families have equitable access

- ii) **Ministerial/Government Oversight**
 - all government should be involved
 - can early learning, which may not be able to stand on its own, be reintegrated into the education sector with other human services?
 - extreme concern about too much government led- bureaucracy- led
 - Co-chairs- Intersectoral (Health and Education)
 - Justice/ social services/ Municipalities

- iii) **Governance Challenges**
 - information sharing has to be consistent
 - there is little governance- patchwork
 - there is little governance and management
 - business model for EL and CC
 - aboriginals are not equally represented

- iv) **Governance Questions**
 - how involved will the stakeholders be?
 - how do you decide who takes on what role?
 - who makes decision regarding what qualifies as education and what not?
 - is there room/ opportunity for innovation when decision making is delegated or even given up?
 - who does what?

- v) **The Governance of Non-profit Organizations**
 - boards are comprised of consumers. Conflict of interest
 - if director didn't have to think about money, we could think about quality childcare
 - current licensed center structure (community boards) don't always have early learning knowledge
 - balancing organizational, parent and staff concerns
 - having 51% parents on the board
 - the demand on a volunteer board and it makes it hard to get/keep board members

- Board driven
- Board turnover- every 2-4 years
- Board is to make decision based on what is the best for the centre, but often struggle with them
- volunteer parent board- conflict

vi) Preparation and Support for Senior Leaders and Staff

- wages of childcare consultants
- Role of consultant- need for wage increase and qualification
- challenge of giving appropriate wages with what can be managed within a budget
- professional organization
- min of education and lack of regulations around fees/ wages
- consistency between consultants and min of education
- support for the administrative roles
- support for Directors in administrative roles
- lack of management/ business training
- succession planning in daycare
- where to cut costs when needed. Always seems to be training which hurts PD for the staff, then staff retention.
- balance of staff retention
- too large of gap in wages between centres. Centres are competing over qualified people.
- ECE's not regulated

vii) Observations on Services and Their Delivery

- why aren't more \$ being spent in our province on our children?
- allocation of spaces based on quality programs already being run to provide programs to more families
- finding additional funding options/resources for families to access that you do not provide
- there is no requirement for spaces per child in our province
- how do you encourage teamwork within the groups?
- administering change in the delivery of programs (apprehension by staff)
- bridging the gap/getting services to first nations population
- as many agencies could be involved
- what about self regulation, how can the sector itself?
- needs to be more regulated

viii) General comments/concerns/questions

- where does gender fit in? I look around the room and see that most ECD must be females?
- How does this reflect wage inequalities? (Issue of gender)
- promoting families and children

4.2.2 On which aspects or feature of the governance & management of early learning and child care do you think stakeholders would find most agreement?

Participants provided limited comments on the areas on which stakeholders might reach agreement in respect to the governance and management of early learning and child care. They further included additional comments on the financing challenges facing service providers.

- i) Ministerial Oversight – Service Goals**
 - shift to ministry of education has been positive
 - are we focused on meeting the goals set out?

- ii) Organization Boards and Their Development**
 - Board training- responsibilities authority
 - mandatory training prior to licensing
 - succession plan

- iii) Service Delivery Considerations**
 - SECA- educate directors
 - SIAST- level III directors
 - training directors and management

- iv) Financing Considerations**
 - funding is the biggest road block
 - lack of funding or funding being distributed differently, area funding (reserve, rural, urban)
 - creating a group responsible for disbursement of funding for support in a variety of programs
 - start up \$

- v) General Comments**
 - Importance, need
 - I don't know

4.2.3 On which aspects or feature of the governance & management of early learning and child care do you think early learning and child care stakeholders would find least agreement?

A smaller number of participants provided comment on the possible areas of least agreement in respect to the governance and management of early learning and child care.

- who decides
- where the dollars flow
- how to..
- guidelines that reflect diversity or respect a different 'world view'
- how much education does an educator require in order to deliver high quality programming
- that more training solves the issue of high quality (I disagree-it's what you do with it)

4.2.4 How important are changes in the governance & management of early learning and child care to improve the services available for children and families?

Participants provided brief comments on the importance of changes in the governance and management of early learning and child care.

- extremely important
- aboriginal child care- governance
- potential to be transformative
- needs to be a political process
- must have strong leadership to run quality program
- strong leadership and management creates strong business model and leader

4.3 Financing Early Learning and Child Care

4.3.1 What key ideas, concerns or questions emerge for you when you consider the financing of early learning and child care?

Participants provided a significant volume and range of comments on the key area of financing for early learning and child care. They considered a range of topics including the level and source of financing, as well as financing strategies.

i) The Vision and Goals for Early Learning and Child Care

- what are our priorities when it comes to funding- education of staff, affordability to children and families
- It boils down to what kind of society we vision and value.
- lets value our children for the rights they have; how we treat children reflects our own community
- children are not a commodity (rights)
- early childhood as a social good and social investment

ii) Sustainable Funding

- consistent funding and sustainability
- sustainability over the long term
- sustainable funds

iii) Public Support for Investments in Early Learning and Child Care

- how do we get more people on board to support funding universally for early learning?
- a babysitting mentality makes me think that the investment in early learning and care is still regarded as a luxury and not a necessity
- funds for educating general population on the importance of early years
- change in mindset- community to raise a child/ focus on children's right and our communities
- shared responsibility
- why have we as a society decided that K-12 should be publically funded and not EL&C. How would we change such a system?

iv) The Cost of Early Learning and Child Care for Families

- in order to offer a quality program with flexible stimulating environments, it is expensive. How do we make it affordable?
- affordable for all parents
- enough funding to ensure all families have access to the early learning/ care they need for their family
- affordable for all families, meeting the needs of all children.
- don't forget about the cost of living for families as well
- based on family income?
- sharing costs- the burden is too heavy on parents, especially with rising food and housing costs
- cost of living for families- meet basic needs
- how to make it equitable for families
- parent accessibility to quality care
- affordability for all
- equal opportunity

v) Public Investment in Early Learning and Child Care

- need public funded, too much power on board
- universal access- increase subsidies or lowered costs
- public needs to be responsible for paying
- public funding- high quality funding in a full continuum of services
- public financing
- Provincial and Federal governments need to do a better job of investing in young children
- what are the priority of the funding
- OECD- investments in early learning pay off economically for countries
- viability

vi) Funding Models Similar to Those of Education/Public Schooling

- be more like a school funding model than current model
- funded 0-18; public education care

vii) Private Investment in Early Learning and Child Care

- place for employer sponsored childcare services- who can accommodate?- keeping in mind many employers in Sask are school/ health divisions and crown corporations!

viii) Organization Financial Challenges

- as non-profit staff fundraising to make up for costs.
- fundraising
- collecting fees when parent don't make lots of money
- who is in charge of finance? Are they qualified? Is it feasible to manage finance amongst other job requirements (strain on)
- having a board of parents and raise fee

ix) Remuneration for Early Learning and Child Care Staff

- funds to recruit/ retain quality staff
- unregulated wages- less quality care due to this
- funding injection re wages- where from?
- compensation for education/ professional level of care providers
- in order to retain employees who are qualified, salaries need to be subsidized to avoid having to raise fees for families
- Wages- meet needs of parents, children (lower ratios), trained staff hired and retained
- the push for wages- how can the sector help
- how to retain quality staff
- how do we provide personality development for staff when we have to travel 3-5 hours to get there, pay for hotels, food, travel and staff wages on top of the cost of the workshop?
- quality of staff

x) Questions or Proposed Changes to Current Funding Models and Practices

Subsidies for Low-Income Families

- subsidy is tiered why?
- government not budgeting for subsidized spaces in reality
- subsidy- not high enough daycares get the short end if the parent doesn't follow through
- market model (demand- side funding) doesn't work- its what we have now and the model should be replaced with supply side funding
- don't mess around trying to tweak or fix the antiquated subsidy system; eliminate it and replace it with supply side (operational) funding
- supply side- operational? Yes
- re- evaluating the subsidy qualifications
- need higher percent to come from subsidy in order for families to afford it
- affordable childcare- means no subsidies, no stigmatization, no bad debts based on benefits to children
- current funding for childcare centres- fee subsidy cut offs have not increased in 12+ years
- get rid of subsidy- it creates gaps and failures
- subsidy issues
- we need to change daycare subsidy!
- how do we stay affordable for low income families when subsidies are lower in rural areas
- subsidy increases for lower income families

The Effectiveness of Current Funding Approaches

- not funded equally
- childcare homes licensed ratio vs unlicensed
- flexible funding- flexible framework
- now- historical funding- various sectors
- integrated approach to funding
- regulated salaries- impact retention, regulated fee

Service Monitoring and/or Outcomes

- funds for sites that reflect play and exploration
- real incentives for unlicensed to become part of licensed system
- funding should hold a certain amount of accountability to it in order to ensure proper usage

Funding Partnerships and Resource Sharing

- partnership can be beneficial
- public, private or a combination?
- integrated with other services...savings, not to diminish the importance of ELCC but is it needed as a part of a whole?

Individual Funding Questions or Observations

- will the structure be reviewed/updated/ maintained?
- challenges in providing infant spaces, centres don't provide as funding doesn't cover cost
- who is responsible and why is it not universal?
- we as a society pay for lack of EL&CC (just not directly seen as financial costs)
- where does financing come from?
- where would the money come from?
- who is responsible?
- whoever pays we should keep family at the centre as having a voice in what works for them

Additional Comments

- self regulation- service agreement- lobbying
- plus targeted services- in form of consultative supports to childcare settings; lower ratios; relationship based interventions
- options for stay-at-home parents
- investing is not a fix
- library and other institutions funding freeze a more public system

4.3.2 On which aspects or features of the financing of early learning and child care do you think early learning and child care stakeholders would find most agreement?

Participants identified a series financing areas of concern on which they considered early learning and child care stakeholders were most likely to reach agreement. These included families' access to affordable early learning and child care services, the benefits of public funding and the need to address the recruitment and retention of staff.

i) Family Access to Early Learning and Child Care

- universal
- universal childcare
- there needs to be change and improvement for delivery of universal provision of quality care - how do we get there?
- accessible
- we get CBO based on spaces, when we don't get looked at EA funding then the inclusion decreases as it is unaffordable

- agreement: children need services parents at work
 - subsidy is prohibitive instead of making it more accessible
 - Subsidy
- ii) **Affordable Early Learning and Child Care for Families**
- Affordable should be affordable for all families
 - cost for early learning are high at this point
 - affordable, accessible
 - having early learning centres affordable for all children
 - standardization and reduction of fees
 - affordability
 - cost of living (e.g.. Costs of milk vary from \$5- \$20)
 - quality child care is expensive
 - lack of general awareness on how parenting has changed from generation to generation
 - Subsidy
- iii) **Public Engagement and Discussion of Early Learning and Child Care**
- public knowledge of the importance of quality early learning and childcare is not a level where public funding would be seen as a great investment
 - business should be a part of the solution- on site programs
 - who pays for the cost of a childcare
- iv) **Public Funding for Early Learning and Child Care**
- dependability
 - more funds in general
 - if the public is going to fund more of the share of EL&C, we probably need to have a better way to determine quality of services.
 - everyone agrees- need more money
 - flexible funding
 - more public funding needed to cover the cost
 - current system underperforms in many respects because of underfunding- i.e. 1% GDP as goal - this probably isn't the public perception
 - viability
 - funding is an initiative
- v) **The Early Learning and Child Care Workforce**
- staff fund
 - funding to provide centres with ample opportunities for learning- resources, supplies
 - quality staff
 - competitive salaries to keep staff
 - recruitment and retention is key of quality staff
 - quality through trained staff, through wage subsidy
 - employers to have incentives for employees

vi) Additional Financing Observations

- most agreement: that children are our greatest gift and our future and they have rights
- children are important and deserve high quality care and early learning opportunities
- support for children is important
- education- waste of money
- having agency to collect fees and make sure home will have their money
- share responsibility (financing)
- that it is costly?
- expensive to get good quality facility
- Standardization

4.3.3 On which aspects or features of the financing of learning and child care do you think early learning and child care stakeholders would find least agreement?

Participants identified fewer areas on which they thought stakeholders would find least agreement than those on which they thought they would find most agreement.

i) Level of Financing

- moving to fully publically funded EL&C, priorities for where funding should go
- least agreement: universal vs targeted funding
- what does the cost of early learning look like? (consistent level)
- universal vs targeted programming

ii) Source of Financing

- where should funding & finance come from?
- responsibility
- private vs public
- who is responsible? Which ministry, public, private, municipal, parents
- who shall pay? (3 responses)
- where funding will come from? (2 responses)
- can the business community be utilized as partners differently?
- who should be responsible?

iii) Financing Strategies

- education vs service
- onsite childcare tax or profit to be directed towards childcare
- feasibility and partnerships
- least agreement: whether funding goes to parents or to care/ learning providers
- how much should be allotted to which 'services' (education on 0-3)
- how funds are allocated?

4.3.4 How important are changes in the financing of early learning and child care to improve the services available for children and families?

Participants saw changes in the financing of early learning and child care as critical or very important to improving the services available for children and families. They further identified some key changes to strengthen the field and highlighted the current financial challenges.

i) Level of Importance

- Critical (4 responses)
- extremely important as centres are failing mainly due to funding
- critical and fundamental and without stable funding early learning programs and those using them and working in them, will continue to be vulnerable and at risk
- very important
- highly important to get our children into early learning environments (first five years count)
- very- the subsidy needs to change!
- without funds it is hard to move forward
- key element for discussion/ decision in improving services for children and family

ii) Possible Financing Changes

- spend an ounce on prevention save a pound on rehabilitation
- spend money in early learning and care and save money on fewer group homes, remand centres, jail and prison
- change subsidies
- reassess the way the existing structures work and perhaps they need to be scrapped instead of revamped
- sustainable funding model
- funding public programs!
- from government

iii) Current Financing Challenges

- if our children are our future investing before birth and preparing for those children are key
- ability to address needs of sub-populations i.e. children with particular needs or families who are vulnerable
- all children/families should have opportunity to access early learning without the financial strain that may come along with it.

iv) Other Concerns or Comments

- quality staff
- wage
- accountability to funders
- measure quality
- quality is critical
- One of the concerns I have with universality is that it can't be a lowest common denominator approach

4.4 The Organization and Delivery of Early Learning and Child Care Services

4.4.1 What key ideas, concerns or questions emerge for you when you consider the organization and delivery of early learning and child care?

Participants provided a large number of comments on the organization and delivery of services. They highlighted the importance of services being accessible for parents and families, and made suggestions as to how services might be reorganized to address current challenges. They further outlined some alternate models of delivery.

i) Services that Meet Parents and Families' Needs

Affordable Services

- low income families struggling to pay for childcare and may not qualify for subsidy (so they stay at home)
- affordability and spaces availability for families
- affordability
- how do you balance with high quality without adding any cost to families?
- parents have to pay for full-time even if they are only part-time, is a concern I have now
- creating tiers of services based on income

Accessible and or Responsive Services

- accessibility
- equality for children accessing early learning to build for the future of our economy
- accessible, affordable, quality, universal etc.
- family advocacy
- culturally sensitive
- how do we ensure that services are contextual and culturally responsive?

ii) Governance, Management and Planning

- ministry of education considering the child from birth to ? As under their umbrella
- Early childhood department/ secretariat.
- I believe that education is the best fit in regards to organization and delivery of ELCC. However, there are biased and uneducated people in our school divisions that do not understand the early years and will not put the effort in that is needed.
- Inter- ministerial approach to care for children
- I like the school division model for help to transition into school and school readiness, help kids to be more on equal level when they start

iii) Financing Early Learning and Child Care

- Is there a way to better allocate funding for the various models?
- funding, sustainability
- lack of funding and dedication by government

iv) Regional or Local Organization and Service Delivery

- should be arising from local needs, values
- municipalities taking on a role both financially and through governance
- I do not like the idea of RIC'S in the delivery of service framework. They too are only volunteers and change too often.
- municipalities taking more responsibility

v) **Current Organization and Delivery Challenges**

- children leaving to go to 1/2day preK programs (inconsistency of program's a child attends)
- every centre may deliver and implement things differently
- PreK children are moved from ELC to the PreK school , how is this beneficial?
- missing developmental screenings
- different businesses play different roles on service delivery (for profit on average lower quality of services than public non-profit)
- variations province wide of the delivery could cause divisions on how early learning is delivered (consistency)
- no centralized wait lists

vi) **Alternate Organizational Approaches and Models of Delivery**

A Framework, Common Vision, Service Continuum

- needs to be agreed upon framework- should be part of the continuum of the educational system rather than separate entity
- everyone has a unified vision
- how do we provide common messaging in importance of early learning
- support all families, clear vision
- uniform framework
- clearly defined goals are an important requirement
- providing common messaging about early childhood needs
- Not to make ELCC seem less important
- part of a longer continuum service

Multi-Service Centres or Hub Models

- Hub- community interdisciplinary care for children
- use of schools as facilities for child care- more seamless, schools as hub for services
- more integration between service providers or larger programs with multiple sites
- as a service provider, I like the multi service model as it is client focused, one service touch point and can help to provide stability to marginalized families
- daycare attached to schools

Partnerships and Collaboration

- better networking amongst stakeholders
- partnership in service delivery- key to success
- partnerships with other outside professionals is important to offer wider programming
- working with community based programs would increase community awareness of both programs
- bringing in libraries and museums are important
- partners- shared services
- daycare network- central agency to assist families in finding appropriate daycare for their needs
- viable partnerships to deliver the quality services and needs of a diverse and scattered population

- partnerships- school systems- partnerships with daycare/ before/after school programs
- we need to collaborate with multiple organizations, i.e.- ministry of education, ministry of social issues, public health, early learning centres, families and community
- Public Health- in centres, schools, not only immigration but developmental screens and follow- up
- involving all agencies into ELC
- Community agencies- to create opportunities and viability
- being able to open up and get agencies to come into centres and work with numerous children at one time
- public health nurses
- development screening
- oral health
- family home visiting services
- how do we create an intersectoral, interdisciplinary approach?

Regulation, Monitoring and Standards

- no set standard of what "high quality" care is
- no way to monitor that programs are developed and delivered appropriately
- accountability and reporting
- measuring tool for accountability
- standardization of delivery
- measuring tool for quality and accountability
- a way of measuring quality needs to be developed
- measuring tools, accreditation
- consistency yet flexibility (2 responses)
- consistency
- accreditation- partnerships

vii) Early Learning and Child Care Workforce

- training and support for staff to enhance skills and standard level of skill
- qualifications and training
- recruitment and retention of staff
- training, education and wage
- staffing- education and retention
- communication amongst professionals is important for understanding the child as a whole
- supports for the front line staff
- improved education/ training
- attended to the needs of children- so training also in developing relationships
- no centralized making of credentials
- adequate education
- few realizes how much time is spent educating library staff in pre-k literacy

viii) Questions and Uncertainties in Making Change

- how can we best use the public facilities in which we as a province have already invested so heavily?
- too many variables- rent/ no rent, small/ large, in schools/ not in schools

- who oversees this?
- other providers should be stable organization

4.4.2 On which aspects or features of the organization and delivery of services do you think stakeholders would find most agreement?

Participants commented on a number of broad areas on which they considered stakeholders most likely to reach agreement in respect to the organization and delivery of early learning and child care services. These main areas included the need for services to be accessible to families, to meet the developmental needs of children. They also commented on the need for supports for staff and sustainable funding.

i) Families' Access to Services

- childcare is very difficult to access in Regina and causes a great deal of anxiety for families
- should be consistent affordable delivery system
- families want the best quality care for their children regardless of their income
- having one location is convenient for parents and comforting with kids
- parents need a lot of options to make sure that there are qualities
- agreement of need for service (lobby for parent to be home?)

ii) Support for Children's Development

- providing services that enhance optimal health and development in children 0-3 years of age
- culturally sensitive
- enhancing the environment the children are in
- agreement in helping our 0-3 years
- beware of effect of implementing compulsory PreK for 3 and 4 years on ELC
- community care for children
- takes a village to raise a child
- early intervention
- teaching social skills

iii) A Common Vision and Goals for Early Learning and Child Care

- need for common vision/ goal/ outcome
- there is a need for change
- goals are needed

iv) Partnerships and Integration

- It's important to stabilize
- early learning is a true fit with education.
- need for collaboration with community programs
- integrating needs throughout the centres - support for administration, staffing
- partnerships fundamental

v) High Quality Services

- need accountability for quality
- everyone talks about quality, is this lip service?

- vi) **Supporting the Early Learning and Child Care Workforce**
 - ECE trained team
 - training- relevant to the needs, developmental level of children
 - shared services/ contracted
 - admin
 - how do we educate early learning educators to work in intersectoral and interdisciplinary ways?
 - how do we continue to support and mentor ECEs in the field to continue to grow and develop in their profession?

- vii) **Funding of an Early Learning and Child Care System**
 - not for profit, publicly funded model
 - sustainable funds
 - what is publically funded. Needs to be quality
 - the problem being there have been too many cuts to this area and I hate to see more cuts to ELCC
 - shared responsibility/ shared funding

- viii) **General Comments**
 - how do we give parents voice and decision- making input into organization and delivery?
 - the importance of grandparents and grandparent information nights
 - will there be tired system?- concern
 - how do we deliver that change?

4.4.3 On which aspects or features of the organization & delivery of early learning and child care do you think early learning and child care stakeholders would find least agreement?

Participants recorded a smaller number of comments on those aspects or features of the organization and delivery of services on which they considered stakeholders would find it difficult to reach agreement.

- i) **Supporting Children's Development**
 - PreK still need childcare
 - relationship based
 - attended to children's feelings, needs
 - early learning and care as a right, as a social responsibility (rather than a parent's responsibility)

- ii) **Provincial Diversity**
 - diversity around the province (urban, rural, north, south) also makes it difficult or challenging to provide a framework
 - going to be a struggle to have a province wide mandate that can meet diverse needs of all areas

iii) Financing Service Delivery

- before after school funded in school only
- the amount of funding it would take to provide these services
- funding

iv) Regional Management

- In my discussion prior to this meeting with our early childhood action coalition the consensus is that RICS are not a good fit

v) General Comment

- not sure whether there would be agreement with this
- how to do it! Lol
- fairness in shared responsibility

4.4.4 How important are changes in the organization & delivery of early learning and child care for improving the services available for children and families?

Participants considered changes in how services are organized and delivered as important for improving early learning and child care services for children and families.

i) Level of Importance

- very- if we want to have common understanding and to build a sense of urgency and continued support
- municipal involvement is huge as it encourages the community to take both pride and responsibility for the families it provides other resources to
- huge (2 responses)
- very important if the changes are directed toward improving the quality of life of all children
- Very important that changes happen quickly
- critical to address gaps for which services are not available
- critical to ensure families can access the services and supports they need
- critical to stop redundancy of services and expenditures
- very important, educate parents

ii) Comments on Changes

- If more \$ is to be spent on ELCC- it must be spent effectively
- multi-services impacts viability and quality care for the better
- consistently learning from infants to school age
- partnership in community care
- Let's work from care principles beliefs as a province

4.5 The Provision of High-Quality Early Learning and Child Care

4.5.1 What key ideas, concerns or questions emerge for you when you consider the provision of high-quality early learning and child care?

Participants provided a range of comments on the importance of high quality early learning and child care for children and their families. They provided specific comments on those aspects of program infrastructure and resources that support quality while also commenting on the assessment of measurement of quality at the program and organizational levels. Participants provided significant comment on the relationships between the early learning and child care workforce and service quality.

i) Public Understanding of Quality and Support for Quality Services

- parents may have a very different view on understanding of high quality
- building capacity in all stakeholders- do all know the value of high quality care and learning?
- recognition, respect for value of the early years
- Do we have the community (especially our businesses buy in and believe that children are capable and competent)
- Public awareness- society expectations

ii) General Comments on Quality

- the quality discussion was heavily based on equitable access to resources
- equality of funds distributed
- how would the different government agencies work together- currently work in silos

iii) The Approach to Early Learning

- holistic
- quality as a whole child, not just school readiness
- need holistic view of families, multi- services
- holistic, flexible
- keeping children engaged
- holistic vs literacy and numeracy focus
- holistic approach
- developmentally appropriate
- responsive to individual needs

iv) Program Structure and Supports

Staff: Child Ratios/Group Sizes

- low group numbers is important to allow for appropriate time with each child
- making sure that each child gets fair and equitable time/child to staff ratio being able to plan for individual needs
- making sure each child is getting fair quality time and experiences
- enough spaces for all needs- appropriate ratio
- reasonable child ratio/ environment as 3rd teacher
- keeping ratios low
- keeping ratios
- low ratios

Parental Engagement/Involvement

- high involvement of parents and communities and contact on-going
- parent boards vs. parent advisory committees

Program Environments/Physical Space

- rich environments- literacy, language
- environment as third teacher
- importance of environment as it contributes to quality of care and staff satisfaction
- the quality of the physical space
- environment- varied- needs to be clean and beautiful spaces allowing children to learn beyond their potential and be the best they can be
- time built in to support documentation of developmental growth and learning, creating invitations and stimulating environments

Program Supports

- mentoring for centres
- creating a consistency in EL centres so transitions are easier on children and parents
- provisions in place to access materials, facilities, staffing to create high-quality learning environments

v) **Program Resources (Curricular resources)**

- is everyone on the same page, i.e. Play and Exploration is not mandatory (2 responses)
- ensuring quality early learning curriculum is being delivered
- play based learning- ensuring all stakeholders on the same page
- flexibility, play and exploration
- Play and Exploration
- free online collaborative discussion groups
- programming- teacher and child negotiated

vi) **The Measurement and/or Assessment of Quality**

- ECERS and P&E- have a positive impact but the quality of the facilitators is key
- need to be follow up after a training session (i.e. are things being delivered and taught appropriately)
- how would standards be enforced, by what agency or arm of government
- clear goals and who is measuring quality
- defining high quality
- evaluation - how do you know it is high quality?
- what does "high quality" mean and who enforces it?
- how do we make it fair?
- how do we assess it?
- when building a framework we need or consider what criteria are important (goals), and then determine how we will measure them
 - quality form of assessing progress
 - standard measuring tools
 - monitoring

vii) The Early Learning and Child Care Workforce

Educational Preparation and/or Continuing Education

- educational opportunities -not always easy due to lack of funding, extra staffing required and retention of staff who do get trained
- questions around agreement of educational standards for childcare staff
- importance of training and professional development
- the quality of the staff and by the extension of the quality of their education
- on-going professional development
- working with educational facilities to make classes easily accessible, encourage participation in being a part of the child care community
- how can we get people that truly love the idea of teaching through play into the training they need to become ECEs
- a review of teacher licensing and certification is important, eg teachers are licensed to teach in Kindergarten in SK
- educating is important
- train staff and quality
- universal degree teacher and ECE for young children
- not paper training
- no access or funding to training
- how to maintain quality trained ECEs
- looking at fair needs and education
- creating accessible P.D. opportunities for staff of centres
- well trained supervised staff
- well trained staff
- providing appropriate educational preparation initially upon entry to the sector, sustaining and enhancing on-going education once in the sector
- ECE training- before and ongoing
- we need specific teacher education in the area of ECE- undergraduate offerings
- education for both pre-service and in-service early learning educators is required
- consideration of offerings that are intersectoral, in-depth and continuous over an extended period of time. e.g. courses at U of S for childcare educators

Recruitment and Retention of Early Childhood Educators

- recruitment and retention of staff is key- wages/ respect
- how do you recruit and retain staff?
- revolving door of workers, so consistency is hard
- need to focus on staff retention and recruitment
- once they are trained and hired , why do we keep them at \$10.40- \$15/ hour
- should not have to fundraise to meet payroll
- funding for staff and environment- sustainable

Remuneration for Early Childhood Educators and Links to Quality

- quality and wage
- wages are one of the biggest influences on quality

- funding quality care and educators wages
- retention of quality staff and wages to retain

Links Between Staff and Quality

- keep quality ECE in the field
- importance of staff in contributing to quality
- quality of staff
- staffing- difficult at this time, anyone in early learning long term is in it for dedication to helping children
- too much pressure on staff- needs better equivalency
- incentives for daycare staff to compete

viii) General Comments

- care for 1 year olds to 18 months is very limited
- how can we meet the changing diversity of our province?

4.5.2 On which aspects or features of the provision of high quality early learning and child care do you think stakeholders would find most agreement?

Participants identified a series of features or aspects of high quality early learning and child care on which they thought stakeholders would find most agreement. They commented most often on the links between staffing and quality and the importance of program characteristics and resources. They further raised questions on the nature of quality in early learning and child care and how it is best defined and assessed.

i) Financing and Quality

- funding is a leading factor in all concerns (environment, staffing, training, etc.)
- should be sustainable and predictable- not have to worry where next money comes from
- equitable funding between centres, PreK etc.- reallocate funding
- sustainable funds
- all want access, affordability to child care

ii) Program Characteristics and Resources

- Play AND Exploration- used in all ELC in the same way
- play and exploration - great guide
- that a rich and engaging environment is critical to meeting the needs of the whole child- mental, physical, spiritual, emotional etc.
- high quality doesn't rest on a deficit or remedial or readiness approach to growth and development
- Rich documentation of child learning and development
- encouraging environment
- quality matters and that is routed in elements beyond custodial care- primarily the interactions and relationship the ELE has with the child and family
- You bet I care- responsiveness is the determining factor
- benefits are linked to quality however often parents have to settle for what is available to them

iii) Assessing Quality, Data Collection and Research

- standards of care, outcomes or the need for the same
- all working with same goal in mind using same criteria
- standard way of assessing quality
- creating consistency in programs
- environments- easy to evaluate
- assessment needed that provides data but does not introduce developmentally-inappropriate pedagogy in practices
- not sure that all stakeholders have the required information regarding quality

iv) The Early Learning and Child Care Workforce

Education and preparation

- training staff is a key element but acknowledge it's difficulty at the same time
- train front line ECE and Director
- encouraging enrolment in ECE programs
- need to sustain the workforce trained ECE
- p. development
- that training is essential and should be remunerated accordingly
- pedagogical instruction needed that is based on sound research in the early learning field
- importance of getting training- having a hub of early child educators

General Comments on Workforce

- recruitment and retention of staff
- there is strong link between remuneration and quality of care
- all want quality ECE's and quality childcare

v) General Comments on Quality

- not enough spaces available
- Quality early learning from infant- high school
- its for the children
- lip service but real commitment?

4.5.3 On which aspects or features of the provision of high quality early learning and child care do you think stakeholders would find least agreement?

Participants identified a smaller number of areas around quality in early learning and child care on which they saw stakeholders finding it more difficult to reach agreement.

i) Financing Quality Early Learning and Child Care

- funding
- where the funding comes from?
- actual costs of doing quality programming

ii) The Definition of Quality

- what quality looks like?
- what is quality exactly

iii) The Measurement of Quality

- how to monitor and assess it

iv) Service Delivery or Program Aspects

- responding to children with particular needs
- who is best positioned to deliver the high quality programs that are the ideal
- staff to child ratios
- not only faculty/ supplies, quality of relationships interaction of equal importance

4.5.4 How important are changes in the provision of high quality early learning and child care to improve the services available for children and families?

Participants identified a focus on quality as very important in efforts to improve early learning and child care services for children and their families. They commented on the importance of families having access to high quality services.

i) Level of Importance

- Critical (4 responses)
- it is extremely important that our children are being cared for equally and to the highest standard we can provide. There are gaps in care which mean some families and children are not supported. This supports the need for change!
- highly important -if we are not providing quality programs we should not be in the field
- Huge
- how important are our children?
- very important
- huge evidence
- crucial for change
- critical- quality early learning and care is the foundation on which a civil society is formed.
- critically important- without quality, our programs do not make an educative difference to children and families

ii) Children and Families' Access to Quality Programs

- if we cannot provide the best we shouldn't be taking the responsibility of others children
- more quality space available
- there should be no fee issues and income issue that stop a child from receiving early learning
- with high quality childcare children slip through their entire lives
- quality is key to achieving optimal development for children.
- The early years impact a persons life forward
- perhaps we have to acknowledge multiple approaches to care and learning and real choices for all parents regardless of income level or geographical location
- every child should have the same access to early learning

iii) General Comments

- quality service will require investment

- we come up with all changes we want, but if there is no one to implement our programs then we have wasted our time
- consistency, transparency, collaboration are needed
- need for monitoring
- gap between maternity leave- 12 months
- childcare starts at 18 months, ratio 1/3, 6 infants in one room

5. PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

5.1 What are the key ideas, themes or questions that stand out for you as you leave the discussions today?

i) **Engaging Parents/Stakeholders/Public and Building Support for Early Learning and Child Care**

Raising Awareness, Building Support

- public awareness- sense of urgency and importance of the early years
- idea of a model that could work to put early learning and child care in the fore front as it should be for everyone in the province
- appreciate how important the early years are- get the policy makers
- knowledge into the prices of daycares
- this sector needs leadership, lobbying and a push
- need a push, lack of leadership
- sector needs to be seen as a pivotal piece of whole human service sector
- How?? So many organizations, so many groups that support children and all must be included
- Is there a critical mass of children that can/ will move this forward?
- ask families what they want and how they wish to be a part of it

Engaging Other Stakeholders

- no one here from First Nation
- daycares are here, but not health
- these people are passionate, but I see some institutional inertia. Can transformative change happen with the same players?
- how many different sectors see the importance of the issue?

ii) **The Importance of Change and a Time for Change**

- need for change
- bubble has been burst
- it will take time- but hopefully not too much
- we need to remember our strengths; we have lots going for us already - RICs. SPHERU, senior interministerial group, booming economy and demand. UEY, EDI got people talking. In a state of readiness.
- there are intelligent, caring people to work together to make positive change

- we are more close to a state of readiness- mainly due to parental demand and economic boom
- people in this field are passionate about children
- there is positive energy! We are here today and know we can do much better
- right people here want to move forward
- we need to continue to talk but there needs to be a sense of urgency- lets move in a direction

iii) **The Complexity of Making Change**

- complex
- slow process to do things properly and carefully
- overwhelming- disturbed about the patchwork availability of services, not consistent/ accessible
- complexity of issues, no easy answer, all levels of government and society need to come together to move forward with positive change
- there is so much more that could be done and that would play a role in all of the issues we discussed today.
- how big the issues are?
- there are more possibilities than I thought
- I learned something from being part of discussions that address all complexities
- was good to stand back from my role and get insight into everyone else's
- feel stuck
- conversations have been going on for 20 years and we are still having them.

iv) **A Provincial Framework for Early Learning and Child Care**

Development of a Framework

- passion that the facilitators have in developing a framework
- how does the framework for the new SK look?
- it will take a long time to figure out a framework and really important that government support it
- do like the "framework" idea
- unified voice and strategy in a business model

Shared Vision and Goals

- need for provincial vision and shared outcomes
- important for everyone to start with what we want to achieve, agree on goals and decide how are we going to get there
- same vision
- all have common goals

v) **Governance and Management of Early Learning and Child Care**

System Building and Development

- need to collaborate- ministry of health, health professionals, parents and government
- policy tools lacking at the level of government- needs to be more proactive

Regulation of Services

- standard of excellence
- licensing and regulation, standards

vi) Financing Early Learning and Child Care

- finances
- Age difference 0-3: 4-5 for funding
- Finance- wage, fee, grant
- solution needs public funding, wages linked to quality, we need wages to attract and retain skilled workers
- financing and stress
- how to find funding
- can't do anything without government funding- significant
- making early learning affordable.

vii) Organization of Services

Service Integration, Networking and Partnerships

- collaborative approach, wholistic, having a nurse on staff, monitor children
- need for connection between disciplines and sectors who provide support for children and families
- partnerships are vital to success in the sector
- networking of different facilities between libraries, early learning centres
- lots of talk about networking and collaborating
- there needs to be a more universal collaborative approach taken when it comes to early learning
- integrated approach
- 0-5 is critical from a holistic perspective

Approaches to Service Delivery

- how different the centres are in terms of philosophy and curriculum
- for as many programs there are that many variable

viii) The Next Steps

- We will try to advance the discussions forward regionally and provincially
- having a facility or association for exchanging ideas
- when do we get together again? (2 responses)
- how can we move forward on developing a framework in Saskatchewan?
- who is going to be in charge of the framework? Create it?
- How? And when?
- Lots of discussion but what's the plan?
- we need traction, we need unification, we are currently fractioned

ix) Comments and Questions on Quality

- what is quality childcare?
- what is quality childcare/ how to measure it

- what defines quality?
- consistent approach to ELC childcare will enhance quality
- quality, affordable childcare is what we are striving for
- making it a quality centre and what defines quality?
- well setup environment
- working on high quality childcare

x) Families Access to Early Learning and Child Care

- number of spaces per children in province is not adequate
- aggressive recruiting of newcomers and other provinces have not included provisions for their children/ families
- where do parents find quality, affordable daycare for their children with 2-4 years waiting lists
- parents are so desperate to have childcare that they close their eyes or don't even recognize these issues (licensing, regulation, standards)
- For today- understand more that it will be for all children
- making early learning universal and affordable
- child care is for every child not just targeted childcare

xi) The Early Learning and Child Care Workforce

- as a member of the sector, there is a gap between knowledge and action
- retain qualified Early Learning Educators. This is difficult due to low wage increases
- How can caregivers be accountable (some are job hopping)
- need for high quality education for our learning and care providers

xii) General Comments

- this inhibits our ability towards lobby? Discuss? Network? Support the sector? Service agreements? Unify
- facilitators have all the information which we shared today
- duplication of services

5.2 What do you see as the next most important steps to advance early learning and child care in Saskatchewan?

Participants identified a series of possible next steps to advance early learning and child care in Saskatchewan. These steps included further engagements with stakeholders including the provincial government as well as the further exploration of ideas to advance the field.

i) Engagement with the Provincial Government

- helping government create some comfort in talking about this.
- A safe environment for discussion
- meet with the minister and initiate discussion
- make sure this is not a parallel process to government decision making but intersect with the formed process
- need good government representation to carry through
- wholistic approach and gather ministries

- talking to Human Services Caucus Policy Committee
- policy and decision makers become aware of the ideas
- to weave this work together with (political) the discussions happening at government level and within Ministries
- How do we ensure this is a woven process rather than a parallel process (which may not intersect)?

ii) Public Education on Early Learning and Child Care

- informing public
- education
- we are all implicated in the importance of early childhood
- making people realize that children are not a commodity
- advertising and promotions
- informing the public and getting decision makers and the right people to make the decision

iii) Future Action Steps

- Pick most common themes, work on something, start on what is most important
- utilization of Muttart document to motivate the stakeholders with cautious optimism
- form a committee representing the cross section 10/100 that attended to form a committee to have stakeholder meetings
- what can we each do that would move things up?
- push agenda forward- streamlined, cohesive, what is our plan?

iv) Further Stakeholder Discussions and Engagement

- advocacy for & with families/communities
- who needs to be in the future conversations
- stakeholders are part of the change
- having the right people on board
- continue conversation
- build capacity- conversations
- keep the conversations going, but how do we bring/ advocate/ educate others
- don't lose momentum now. Somehow this needs to move ahead, this conversation cannot end here.
- looking forward to the Muttart document, it will aid in furthering the discussion
- the round table meetings then happen
- after the report, start a shared vision and goals discussion

v) Financing for Early Learning and Child Care

- sustainability
- invest in early years and your economic growth/ prosperity is amazing
- considerable investment in 0-3 , universal prek at 4
- finding a funding model
- stabilize funding to create viability and high standard of care

- vi) **Regional Planning and Service Delivery**
 - more planning at regional level
 - work in regional networks
 - need to see some back in community

- vii) **Further Work on a Provincial Framework**
 - need a plan for the future. Set goals. plan for future set goal
 - need a framework- principles and goals that will create that framework
 - all stakeholders, including government need to be in agreement with and willingly support it
 - develop a framework that includes measurable outcomes
 - a framework needs to be developed using all stakeholders voices and supported/ sustained by government
 - developing framework for positive change in early child care and education
 - come with a framework to present to government
 - a frank discussions on our values and roles as we move toward a framework
 - our system is so fragmented, the partners need to come together with a common vision and goal
 - collaborate set of ideals/ vision statement for the province- something to guide people, to start the process

- viii) **Focus on Children and Child Development**
 - better prepare children- develop
 - honouring the rights of children
 - kids are always first
 - placing children first when making decisions
 - need to see it as a right

- ix) **The Evaluation of Programs**
 - a way to evaluate the programming
 - evaluate programming

- x) **Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce**
 - accreditation for educators
 - incentive for workers
 - promotion of child care as a truly important and invaluable profession
 - having more incentives
 - professionalize early learning child care sector
 - more incentives for workers and well trained ones

- xi) **Questions and Areas for Further Clarification**
 - How to balance feelings of people now when whats have been spinning
 - unclear as to how we pull this together
 - too much power to our parent board
 - board needs to be more business oriented, like Hope's Home
 - Accreditation, recognized early learning childcare and development is very important