

What an Early Childhood Education and Care strategy *could* look like...



**A GREAT PLACE
TO GROW**
PUBLIC CHILD CARE

ELECTION 2011
Newfoundland and
Labrador

What parents say about NL child care...Poll

- Can't find or problems arranging (across incomes) — 33% had had recent problems
- Too costly (esp. single and younger parents)
- Costs going up
- Most use unregulated (65%) or relative care (86%)
- Put-off seeking or taking work/training (25%)
- Barrier to full time work (part-timers) (54%)
- 89% support public system (school system)

Finding child care...

15,000 – Number of children/ mothers in the labour force

6,000 — Number of regulated spaces



Paying for child care...

\$6,000+/year — 65%

\$12,000+/year — 22%

\$53,900 —median
family income/NL



What we know (data) confirms what parents say...

- NL mothers/labour force -73% (3-5s)
- Access - 17.9% of 0-5s ; 17.3% 0-12s (2nd lowest)
Low spending - \$304 on child care/each 0-12 (3rd lowest)
- Quality - low training requirements; many untrained
- Quality – wages - \$18,608 (2006) (2nd lowest)
- Quality – unionization limited
- Quality – very few public; 72% for-profit - (highest)
- No plan, no targets, no entitlements
- Kindergarten – part-day, 5s only, separated
(Summary - Canada last in international studies)

NL *should* do better....Why?

- Build capacity in population – foundation of lifelong learning
- Needs of a 21st century workforce – women's labour force participation, knowledge-based economies
- Revitalize communities — repatriate young families back home
- ECEC a very effective job creator, stimulator of local economies (\$2.54 benefit cost ratio good child care)
- And – it's the right thing to do for children!

How to move forward ...



VISION

- Long-term
- Transformational – not “more of the same”
- Holistic “joined up” integrated *system*
- “Early childhood education and care” for all children 0-5 (6-12 outside school)
- Comprehensive - range of services (full-, part-day, centre-, home-based, parent supports) and complementary family policy (improved parental leave)

This VISION means...

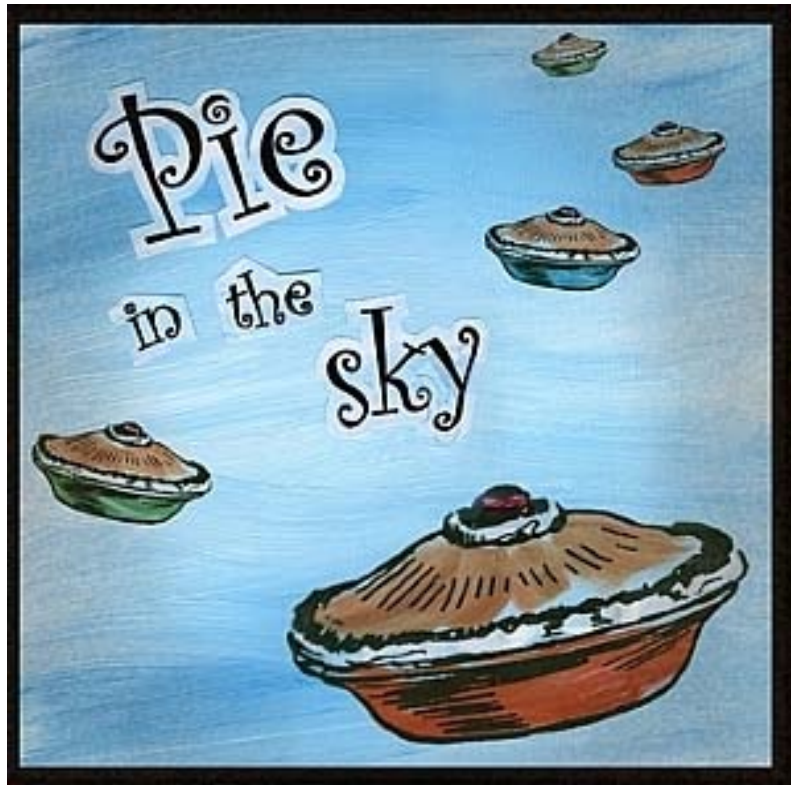
- High quality programs that seamlessly blend “care” and “early childhood education” - child development/children’s well-being *and* meet parents’ needs
- Accessible to all parents and children – affordable (fees likely), in local community, meet employment/training needs, appropriate
- Inclusive, participatory (parents, community)

VISION - ECEC programs would be

- Multifunctional -- care in parents' absence **and** early childhood education **and** family support (same time)
- Broadly educational in the “whole child” sense, not narrow “school readiness” goals
- Reasonable choice -- centre-based or family child care; full-day and part-time; flexible (within reason)
- Planned, publicly-funded, publicly-managed, mostly publicly-delivered, provincially-organized system

Is this....

??????



What to do...?

- VISION is achievable (look outside borders)
- But—long-term proposition
- Means a fundamental shift from market to planned, publicly-managed approach
- This means government action – multiple level; province is key
- Use best EVIDENCE
- Need a plan with clear GOALS, OBJECTIVES, targets and timetables

Best EVIDENCE about quality...

- ECEC is not developmental/educational if programs are not high quality
- ECEC cannot be high quality unless staff are: educated in child development, wages and working conditions good – these lead to high morale, low turnover
- Ratios sufficient for good interaction
- High quality accessible ECEC not possible without substantial public funds
- Quality more likely in public and non profit programs (Cleveland et al – “the non profit advantage”)

Best EVIDENCE about access

- Disadvantaged children may benefit more but **all** benefit from high quality ECEC
- Affordable ECEC not possible without substantial public funds
- Few parents can afford user fees sufficient to keep programs high quality (wages = 80+%)
- Equitable distribution of ECEC programs requires a plan, not a market (ages, income, hours, location)

Best EVIDENCE about funding: Who pays, and how?

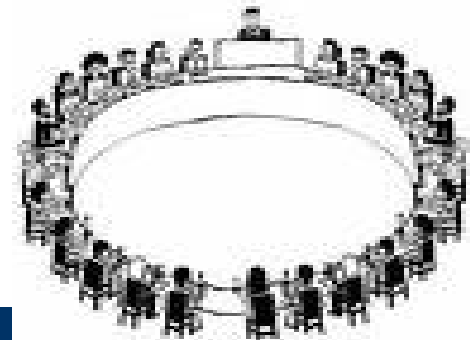
Public funding (government), not reliance on parent user fees

Core program funding, not funding parents (vouchers, subsidies)

Why? Public management –
“steering”



Best EVIDENCE about operation: Who owns it?



- Public-managed systems, public/non-profit ownership much better for:
 - High quality, good access, decent wages and working conditions
 - Blending kindergarten and child care into “seamless day”
 - Delivering best value for public spending

Why?

- All \$\$ go to programs
- Less need to squeeze ECEs to gain profit
- No motive to lobby against improvements
- Equity - Services where, for whom needed (not private decision)

Best EVIDENCE about care and education

- ‘Care’ and ‘education’ inseparable concepts”
- OECD to Canada (2004) – “conceptualise, deliver care and education as one seamless program; integration of kindergarten/ child care would bring real advantages in Canada”
- Trends outside Canada Integrated under one ministry (education); 2/3 years early childhood/kindergarten before compulsory schooling; usually full-day, often free
- Trend in Canada – Six provs - full-day kindergarten; not integrated; provs interested

GOALS – long-term (2020) and OBJECTIVES

- **GOAL:** High quality ECEC system - accessible to all children and families

OBJECTIVES

- develop transition plan to a public system blending care/education
 - transform public funding arrangements
 - set up ongoing system of quality targets, improvement
 - design a comprehensive human resources strategy
 - formulate a strategy for expanding ECEC services

strat•e•gy

(strāt' ə-jē) n.

1. Plan of action
designed to achieve
a particular goal.

NOW Commit: to the VISION,
to using EVIDENCE and to
the long-term GOALS (and a
timetable)

POST-ELECTION (the hard work)

Develop policy for system:

- predictable multi-year
planning and funding
- clear objectives, roles
and responsibilities,
targets, timetables;
- quality improvement;
- public/non-profit
expansion;
- collaboration, public
accountability

Finally – three bits of advice on ECEC for the next government of Newfoundland and Labrador

- *You've got to be careful if you don't know where you're going, because you might not get there – Berra)*
- Remember – you can't get there from here
(Don't stand behind a failing system – Squires)
- Get it right from the start!