

# EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

## REPORT ON PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND'S BASELINE EXPENDITURES 2000 - 2001 AND INCREMENTAL INVESTMENTS

### INTRODUCTION

In September 2000, First Ministers, with the exception of Quebec, announced the Early Childhood Development Agreement. In doing so, First Ministers affirmed their commitment to the well being of children by setting out their vision of early childhood development as an investment in the future of Canada.

The Agreement establishes early childhood development as a priority for governments. First Ministers have agreed to work together so that young children can fulfill their potential to be healthy, safe and secure, ready to learn, and socially engaged and responsible.

In support of this common goal, governments have committed to improving and expanding early childhood development programs and services over time. The Government of Canada has agreed to transfer funding to provinces and territories to support this work. Prince Edward Island will receive approximately \$9.9 million over the five year term of the agreement. In Fiscal Year 2001 / 2002, Prince Edward Island received \$1.3 million for investments in early childhood development.

As part of the Agreement, First Ministers committed their governments to "report annually to Canadians on their investments and their progress in enhancing programs and services... beginning with establishing a baseline of current early childhood development expenditures and activities. Governments will begin reporting within one year, and will strive to continue to improve the quality of reporting over time." (*First Ministers' Meeting Communiqué, September 11, 2000*).

## **AREAS OF INVESTMENT**

In Prince Edward Island, early childhood development investments were integrated with our Healthy Child Development Strategy. In 2001 - 2002, specific investments were focused on:

### **Key Component: Strengthen Early Childhood Development, Learning, and Care**

#### **1. Publicly-funded Community-based Kindergarten Program**

PEI introduced a unique Kindergarten program in September 2000. The program builds on the community based Kindergarten system that has been in place since the mid-1970s. The Department of Education provides funding for a half day core kindergarten program, develops curriculum, and provides in-service training and curriculum support to early childhood educators. The Department of Health and Social Services continues to license kindergartens as early childhood centres, certifies staff, and provides funding for supports for children with special needs.

In our community-based kindergarten system, parents have flexibility to select the program of their choice: for example, parents may opt to register children in full day early childhood centres that offer the core kindergarten program as part of the day. As part of the early childhood system, kindergarten programs continue to provide small classes with a ratio of one teacher for every twelve children. The participate rate of five-year-olds in kindergarten programs has increased from 85 per cent in 1999 to 97 per cent in 2000.

#### **2. Early Intervention Services**

In the past several years, there has been a good deal of progress in PEI in developing appropriate early intervention services for children with autism. While there is still work to be done, the ongoing collaboration of parents and professionals on this issue is an encouraging sign that work will continue to move forward.

The primary focus of investments in this area have focused on children with autism. However, some of the investments have also focused on children with other types of developmental disabilities. Investments were made in a number of areas related to early intervention, including:

- Home based programming consultation for children with autism: child assessments, program design, parent training
- Professional program support for home based early intervention
- Grants to early childhood centres to support children with special needs
- Program support, training, and development to early childhood centres with children with special needs
- Disability supports - children from birth to age six

## **Key Component: Strengthen Community Supports**

### **3. Healthy Child Development Strategy**

One of the basic principles of the Healthy Child Development Strategy is the importance of community involvement and ownership in any initiatives for children. The Premier's Council on Healthy Child Development provides an opportunity for community representatives to monitor the effectiveness of the Strategy by measuring progress on meeting the goals and objectives, and in improving outcomes for children.

The Children's Working Group also provides an opportunity for community representatives to work closely with government staff of the Children's Secretariat. The Children's Working Group actively participates in identifying priorities, goals and next steps in the implementation of the Strategy.

The Children's Secretariat will also be working in close partnership with the Early Childhood Development Association's *Understanding the Early Years* Project. Staff of both organizations are working jointly to support community action plans for healthy child development. Investments in this area are supporting this ongoing community development initiative.

<b>Key Component: Strengthen Early Childhood Development, Learning, and Care</b>			
<b>Activity</b>	<b>Baseline 2000 - 2001</b>	<b>Incremental Investment (ECDI) 2001 - 2002</b>	<b>Total Investment / Allocation 2001 - 2002</b>
<b>Investment Area: Early Intervention</b>			
Home based programming consultation for children with autism: child assessments, program design, parent training	(previous expenditures had been funded through one time only grant from Health Canada)	\$21,000	\$21,000
Professional program support for home based early intervention	\$22,500	\$28,000	\$50,500
Grants to early childhood centres to support children with special needs	\$580,200	\$300,000	\$880,200
Program support, training, and development to early childhood centres with children with special needs	-	\$50,000	\$50,000
Disability supports - children from birth to age six	-	\$300,000	\$300,000
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$699,000</b>	

<b>Key Component: Strengthen Early Childhood Development, Learning, and Care</b>			
<b>Activity</b>	<b>Baseline 2000 - 2001</b>	<b>Incremental Investment 2001 - 2002</b>	<b>Total Investment / Allocation 2001 - 2002</b>
Investment Area: Publicly Funded / Community Based Kindergarten	\$2.7 M	\$500,000	\$3.2 M
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$500,000</b>	

<b>Key Component: Strengthen Community Supports</b>			
<b>Activity</b>	<b>Baseline 2000 - 2001</b>	<b>Incremental Investment 2001 - 2002</b>	<b>Total Investment / Allocation 2001 - 2002</b>
Investment Area: Healthy Child Development Strategy - Community Collaboration / Community Development	-	\$110,000	\$110,000
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$110,000</b>	