



THE DISTRICT OF THUNDER BAY
SOCIAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION BOARD

Child Care Workforce Development

POSITION PAPER

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Prepared by:

The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board

Prepared for:

Hon. Stephen Lecce, Minister of Education

Brief

The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board (TBDSSAB) requests that the Ministry of Education provide Service Managers with ongoing funding for the recruitment, retention and workforce development of child care staff, and establish a provincial panel to strategize on the long-term future of child care.

Summary

The TBDSSAB applauds the Ontario government for working toward a child care funding agreement with the federal government. Once that agreement is in place it is expected that with a reduction in fees that there will be increased demand for licensed child care. Given that there is already a waitlist in our service area that cannot be satisfied due in part to the need for more qualified child care staff, there will be a need for ongoing funding for recruitment, retention and workforce development.

Background

Currently the TBDSSAB has a total child care wait list of 2,490. Of this total, 1,640 (66%) are currently seeking care meaning that their need for child care is immediate.

This wait list is due, in part, to the inability to expand the system as there is lack of qualified child care workers available.

The TBDSSAB has established an interim strategy to address this situation (Appendix #1 - Child Care and Early Years Workforce Strategy Plan, The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board, November 2021), based on the

short-term funding provided through the one-time federal investment in the Child Care and Early Years Workforce Funding.

Additionally, the TBDSSAB suggests that the Ministry of Education explore how School Boards are currently utilizing Registered Early Childhood Educators (RECE). Through the use of a school board's internal complement of RECE for the provision of before and after school programs, some of the workforce shortages within the child care sector could be addressed and more programs for the Birth to 4 years of age developed.

It is only through the successful implementation of the Workforce Strategy that the TBDSSAB will start to be able to meet the growing demand for child care services in the District of Thunder Bay. However, long-term investment and a provincial strategy are required to make meaningful impacts in the child care sector.

Therefore, TBDSSAB requests that the Ministry of Education provide Service Managers with ongoing funding for the recruitment, retention and workforce development of child care staff and establish a provincial plan to strategize on the long-term future of child care.

Appendix #1

Child Care and Early Years Workforce Strategy Plan

It is recognized that “a professional, skilled and engaged early childhood workforce is critical to economic and social productivity and positive life trajectories for children” (McDonald et al., 2018, p. 647).

The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board (TBDSSAB) believes that supporting both the leadership team and the program staff in the District of Thunder Bay is essential to developing positive working conditions and overall satisfaction within the field. Through the development and implementation of the strategies below, TBDSSAB aims to build and enhance capacity within the overall Child Care and Early Years system.

Child Care Programs

As of September 2021, the District of Thunder Bay has the following number of program staff in Child Care programs:

Program	Number of RECE (FTE)	Number of Director Approved (FTE) (non-RECE staff)	Number of Other Program Staff (FTE)	Overall Total Number of Program Staff
Child Care	186.51	33.21	47.37	267.09

*FTE (Full Time Equivalent)

Administration has determined that the child care system would require an additional 110 RECE to be fully operational based on the current licensed spaces in the service system.

EarlyON Programs

As of September 2021, the District of Thunder Bay has the following number of program staff in EarlyON Programs:

Program	Number of Current Program Staff	Number of RECE
EarlyON Child & Family Centre	43	20

EarlyON Child and Family Centres require only one RECE in a given program, these are not licensed under the Child Care Early Years Act. Within the current EarlyON programs of the 43 Programs Staff there are 20 RECE.

Child Care and Early Years Workforce Funding

With the Ministry of Education's announcement of a one-time federal investment in Child Care and Early Years Workforce Funding, two key strategies have been identified:

1. Professional Learning Strategy for 2022
2. Recruitment and Retention Strategy

Professional Learning Strategy for 2022

The first component of this strategy will focus on sustaining and engaging the field through ongoing support and development. With a focus on mental health and inclusion, TBDSSAB will organize two professional learning days and grow a network of pedagogical leads.

Surveying the Early Years Sector in January 2022

TBDSSAB needs to look at where the early years workforce is in their journey and how they may be best supported. Through engaging with early years programs, TBDSSAB will gauge current capacity for staffing, determine costs, identify professional learning needs, and determine scheduling that best suits the needs of both the operators and the families. A wholesome understanding of the educator experience and a commitment to supporting the leadership teams will encourage transparent plans going forward.

Offer a two-day professional learning opportunity by the end of 2022

In 2021, TBDSSAB partnered with Rainy River District Social Services Administration Board and Kenora District Services Board to offer a Speaker Series to the early years' communities. This series emphasized education about anti-racism, environmental sustainability, gender inclusion, and mental health. By building on this partnership and the 2021 series, TBDSSAB can capitalize on workforce funding to maximize opportunities for programs in Northwestern Ontario and support continuous professional learning. Feedback from this series will be used to influence ongoing professional learning opportunities that support the four identified key objectives (sustain, enhance, grow, attract) as well as encompass principles from Ontario's Pedagogy, "*How Does Learning Happen?*"

Recruitment and Retention Strategy

A key component of the TBDSSAB Workforce Strategy Plan will be focusing on workforce capacity and innovation to support innovative recruitment and retention strategies. This strategy will focus on mentorship, leadership, and partnerships.

Support mentorship opportunities

TBDSSAB recognizes the value each program offers within our community and are interested in empowering their voices through *mentorship* opportunities. This would include the continued development of a Pedagogical Network where programs may participate and contribute to the building of a collaborative system. Pedagogical Leads within a centre will come together, with TBDSSAB's support, to consider pedagogical concepts and build capacity within their centres.

Fostering healthy organizational culture

As TBDSAAB supports educators within this network, TBDSSAB will weave in concepts of *leadership* and the importance of instilling a healthy *organizational culture*. Through this initiative, TBDSSAB will be supporting administrative staff with opportunities to sustain, enhance and grow through the eyes of the educator.

Partnering with Community

Our beliefs surrounding recruitment strategies require strong *partnerships* within the community. TBDSSAB will continue to work with post-secondary education opportunities may be considered in other capacities when partnering with adult education centers, distance learning programs and recruitment opportunities. Working with school boards to raise awareness around the field of Early Childhood Education will promote the growth of intentional entry into post-secondary programming. These efforts will be supported by intentional promotional campaigns which will highlight the work of Early Childhood Educators and raise awareness around the critical impact the early years has on learning and growth.

Through this workforce strategy, TBDSSAB will develop a more fulsome plan that outlines our priorities for the year and our next steps (i.e., a logic model). These strategies align with the four provincial objectives and support alignment with HDLH by nurturing a sense of community among the early years system and cultivating a sense of appreciation, well-being, and collaboration.

References

- McDonald, S., Thorpe, K., & Irvine, S. (2018). Low pay but still we stay: Retention in early childhood education and care. *Journal of Industrial Relations*, 60(5), 647-668.
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- Ontario Ministry of Education. (2021). *Child Care and Early Years Workforce Funding: Ministry of Education*.