

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 – Saskatoon Forum

Saskatoon, November 29, 2013

Sheraton Cavalier Hotel • Saskatoon



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 learning and child care in Saskatchewan, in Saskatoon on November 29, 2013. The following report provides a transcript of these discussions.

The Saskatoon discussion was the first of two similar meetings hosted by the Foundation and the Saskatchewan Population Health and Evaluation Research Unit. The second was held in Regina on December 2nd, 2013.

The main goal of both discussions was two-fold: first, to provide an invited group of early learning and child care stakeholders with an opportunity to share their thoughts and experiences on the current nature of the field 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 of definition, the early learning and child care services participants considered are those for children below the mandatory school age that include both learning and care (for example, regulated child care services and kindergarten).

To 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 provides an overview of the current organization of early learning and child care in the province as well as a synthesis of the comparative research that examines how different jurisdictions approach and support 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.

Fifty-two stakeholders attended the Saskatoon discussions. They included senior staff involved in the planning and delivery of services in community and school settings from the Saskatoon region, as well as staff with similar responsibilities from communities in the north and central regions of the province. The stakeholders participated in a series of facilitated group discussions and recorded their own responses to the various questions they considered. These written records were used to compile the current meeting report.

The primary audience for the current report is the stakeholders who participated in the discussions. The report presents their written responses to the main questions they considered and discussed which are sorted on the basis of the main themes and ideas presented. The stakeholders were not asked to reach consensus, but rather to consider and respond to the questions posed based on their experiences and insights. Their written comments 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 a rich source of ideas for 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 use 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.

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

In the first round of facilitated discussions 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 key 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 explored 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 environmental 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 research put toward Early Years
- more focus has been put on the importance of ELCC
- Ready for changes
- increased awareness of the issues/needs re: ECE
- increase awareness of importance of early years development
- business interest in early childhood - Cameco, Areva etc.
- high level interest in ELCC
- everybody coming together for the discussion
- community leaders building public will
- A longstanding and educated group of early learning and childcare advocates whose work is supported by evidence-based research.
- Strong beliefs/advocates
- Childcare and youth agenda

- Early learning is the top priority of the RICs in SK
- the government is willing to listen
- desire to improve our system
- interest in developing better programs
- all have the same vision
- working towards change in early childhood
- political will
- public health early years strategy - influencing governments
- strong knowledge of the early years
- child & family agenda
- consideration of health equity lens

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

- Dads are more involved in parenting
- dads more interested in taking an active role in parenting
- one year parenting leaves, ability for moms and dads to share leaves
- influx of young families and children in Saskatchewan
- immigrants from all over the world bringing new ideas and new ways
- economic growth
- young population
- caring parents
- Saskaboom

A History and Culture of Working Together

- historical political climates - SK is a social/community based province
- SK's value cooperation and inclusion
- northern - communal family structure
- willingness and acceptance for change/parent engagement
- social democratic province
- embracing culture
- kitchen party approach
- co-operative, community-based traditions which lead to parent co-operative child care traditions and a belief in non-profit child care

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

- EYB part of the Ministry of Education
- childcare centres being a part of the Ministry of Education
- under the Ministry of Education (2 responses)
- Strength of collaboration and communication within the branch-Early Learning and Care

- in the Ministry of Education - maybe we'd like to think of it as a strength but is anything any different now than it would be if were in another Ministry?
- that Early Years comes under the Ministry of Education
- all the areas of early learning are coming together
- education & ECE under one umbrella
- ELC based in Ministry of Education
- early learning & care being within the same branch - amalgamated together
- combo to minister of education -language in the act
- increased respect related to be being under the Ministry of Education and increased focus on importance of learning in the early years
- being part of Ministry of Education
- intersectoral links to ministry of education- early years branch
- strength- being under the ministry of education, programming is strong, play and exploration
- ministry of education - assists in providing support, common direction & focus
- taking it from social services to early education
- strong ministry commitment & school division
- combined ministry of education - early years

Regional Management and Planning

- regional intersectoral committees focusing on early childhood
- RIC's has EY partnerships/coalition
- emerging/ strengthening early childhood coalitions at regional/community level
- these coalitions are intersectoral and passionate about enhancing outcomes for children and families
- early years coalitions in regions
- province divided into regional sectoral committees, who all currently have focus on early childhood development

Collaborations and Partnerships

- some communication between stakeholders and Ministry (collaborative)
- supportive professional organizations and conversations between industry and government in the form of collaboration
- different groups (health region, government, schools, day cares) working together to move forward
- Partnership- Collaboration
- interagency
- all areas of early learning and care working together towards changes
- provincial organization working on early learning collaboration
- resources of SK working together for families within the communities
- collaboration
- workshops bringing people together

2.1.3 Financing of Early Learning and Child Care

Participants identified the following strength in the current financing model.

- increases in ECS grants and commitment from government to support professional development and improved wages

2.1.4 The Service Delivery Landscape

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

Increase in Services

- Increase of regulated spaces every year, but not enough
- increase in child care spaces over the last decade
- direction and programming for Pre-kindergarten
- Programs- Increases
- The government has prioritized creating more licensed child care spaces
- Expanding pre-kindergarten services

Services for Children or Families Considered Vulnerable

- Taking care of vulnerable children - Low Socio Economic
- KidsFirst developed & used for vulnerable families
- Amount of centres for teen parents
- teen support centre
- a strong interest in caring for vulnerable children (i.e. childcare centres in high schools)
- Aboriginal head start programs/ KidsFirst programs
- KidsFirst
- KidsFirst- specialized in home(home visiting services) services for families of young children deemed vulnerable
- an emphasis on inclusion and funding for inclusion

The Range or Types of Early Learning and Child Care Services

- There are a variety of services not consistently accessible that have developed for children and their families from birth to school age
- available from 6 weeks
- good variety of type of service
- wide variety of services – (preK, kindergarten, centres, homes) -both regulated & unregulated care
- different choices for childcare
- PreK & early learning centres in schools
- integration with K-12
- family support programming
- pilot of family resource centres in the province
- non-profit system/organizations (5 responses)
- Licensed services/system (2 responses)

Connections with Schools, Pre-K and Kindergarten

- We have publicly funded PreK spaces for at-risk children and free kindergarten for all (but only half time)
- connections between early learning, childcare and education
- starting to work more collaboratively with schools - easier access for families
- childcare in schools e.g. Churchill High School
- more childcare in schools
- school division support quality preK and kindergarten programs i.e. qualified teachers and quality programs
- co-location of childcare centres in schools especially new facilities

Approaches to Service Delivery

- Caring for the children
- Family focused support
- Innovative in 0-3 years early childhood education
- Reggio approach
- child-focused

2.1.5 The 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

- very caring staff (not in for the money)
- dedicated staff (2 responses)
- committed front line staff
- grassroots people that care
- caring staff
- caring staff- not in it for the \$
- dedicated and caring staff
- staff are caring, in this field for the children
- caring and committed service providers
- many childcare workers who are dedicated despite bad pay & working conditions
- people involved & relationships

Educational Preparation and Professional Approach

- trained educators
- workshops plus initiatives and PD funding to support educators to practice ‘Play and Exploration’
- created staff qualification
- increased level of professionalism in staff
- more recognition for ECE

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 and Exploration guide/resource (15 responses)
- Early Learning and care has a common program 'Play & Exploration' for children aged 3 and 4
- play & exploration and the supports in place to enable implementation & an increase in PD events
- The early learning program guide and shift to Play & Exploration has been very important in enhancing quality of care
- Play and Exploration - unified vision plus principles for ECE programs
- Pre-kindergarten and childcare both utilize as a base in the Play and Exploration guide
- child focussed positive curriculum development in the form of Play and Exploration

Professional Development, Training and Other Supports

- Many professional development opportunities the Ministry of Education has created
- training opportunities
- access to training for ECE's
- support of therapeutic services- speech and language and behavioral consulting

Professional Infrastructure Organizations

- SECA has a good working relationship with ministry
- SECA presenting opportunities
- working together to support SECA & SACCHI
- professional organizations
- professional development of the play & exploration
- SACCHI
- SECA
- supported field of professional organizations

2.1.7 Research, Data Collection and Reporting

Participants identified the following strengths or assets in the areas of research, data collection and reporting. The identified strengths included reference to the work of specific organizations as well as the use of the Early Development Instrument (EDI).

- kidSKAN
- kidskan - sharing news, research and early years widely
- SPHERU
- research & measurement SPHERU's healthy children program, stab. 2000
- EDI+ IHBQ (Data available)
- EDI data collection
- EDI-measuring outcomes of kindergarten children

- from a public health perspective we have good monitoring systems in place to characterize school readiness via EDI scores
- good research & data available
- the push for current and more research in this area and integrating that into early learning model
- data gathering in province: in hospital birth documentation as babies born
- Universal in-hospital screening
- SK health region - child health studies report 2012
- understanding the early years studies; Saskatoon, Prince Albert, Northern SK, Moose Jaw, Southern SK, Regina
- UEY projects
- very good universities who are responsive to SK concerns -particularly the colleges of Education in Saskatoon & Regina
- Data from Ministry of Education

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 further identified sub-themes within these main drivers.

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

- The understanding of the importance of neuro psycho social development in childcare and supporting the diverse needs of families
- knowledge -about the importance
- groups - SECA & SECCHI
- increase awareness of parents re: education needs/prep
- educators
- directors
- consultants
- politicians
- We are more aware of the importance of early education and quality childcare environments and we are interested in having our children benefit from this
- increased awareness of the importance of quality early learning
- increased awareness
- lots of love-babies little ones
- lots of interagency leadership!!

2.2.2 Economic Forces including Parents' Increased Labour Force Participation

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 pressure on young families to find quality early learning and care of children when both are working
- larger workforce (2 responses)
- parents (mom's) in the workforce
- more young parents returning to school or entering the workforce
- more parents entering the work force
- parents needing to have appropriate child care services
- young workforce
- dual income homes required
- cost of living increased dramatically -boom parents need to work
- re-urgency of older mom's going back to school
- more parents that need to go out in the workforce to provide for families
- need to go to work
- single parents who need to work
- parents in the workforce
- both parents having to work
- increased employment resulting in need
- parental need
- more need for both parents to work
- representative workforce initiatives
- flexibility/ inflexibility of employers to implement part-time work
- long work hours for parents
- need flexible hours for longer work schedules

Overall Economic Growth

- economic growth (6 responses)
- business expansion

Changes in the Nature of the Economy

- driver of move from agriculture to provision of resources
- agricultural province to resource province
- increase number of small businesses

Income Inequality or Poverty

- poverty - can the family afford day care? Is there employment available in community?
- widening inequalities of income (middle income families just trying to get by)
- First Nation immigrant populations facing poverty

Related Social Issues or Concerns

- housing
- overcrowded housing
- very expensive housing - both parents must bring in income
- poor maternity/paternity leave programs
- work force - only 1 yr. mat leave
- grandparents raising their grandchildren

2.2.3 Changing 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. Their comments suggested three related types of change facing families.

Family Structure – Including Increased Number of Single-Parent Families

- single-parent families or households (4 responses)
- families -two working or single parent
- Lots of dual working families/single parent families
- increase in teen parents in Saskatchewan (to return to school)
- teen parents requiring education (graduation)
- dads (valuing their parenting knowledge& their children
- changing family dynamics
- MSS facing single mothers with no school or work
- parents
- grandparents looking after grandchildren

Demands on Families and Lack of Resources or Supports

- 'Distracted Parents' who spend time on social media in place of interaction with infant/child
- working parents/parents working away (changes to family environment)
- Social services 'Building Independence' initiative which prompts families to move away from social assistance to work/school placing them need of child care services
- social services 'building independence'
- spousal retention strategies
- extended families not necessarily able to "back fill" childcare, because they are not in that urban community
- Parents have capacity issues- managing tight budgets
- strength of interpersonal relationships
- parenting skills lacking - greater support
- lack of family support in terms of childcare -grandparents are in the labour forces or live far away
- lack of family support -extended families
- demand - increased population, extended family members, not available as in the past

Demands on Children

- children not ready for school (ED1)
- high number of young children with increased needs according to the EDI
- lots of unemployment-kids experiencing toxic stress in home; seeking calm places
- low graduation rates
- K-12 readiness
- high number of children in need
- children at risk

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

- Increase in population/growing population (7 responses)
- Rapidly growing economy and population
- Demographic of growing province
- need for space is growing as population booms

Increasing Number of Families with Young Children (baby boom)

- new "Baby Boom" (increase of children under 5)
- more young children
- New Families
- parents & families
- Big baby boom
- birthrate
- Growing number of children in the province
- lots of single parent families with 3-4 children
- numbers of young children in SK
- we have an increased and young population with mostly working parents
- amount of families moving to SK
- Industry in stress right now and bringing young families to Saskatoon

Increased Immigration to the Province

- Immigration (9 responses)
- amount of families moving to Saskatchewan (immigrants and others from other provinces)
- KidsFirst - higher population of immigrants
- diversity of population -different cultural/ethnic groups may have different requirements for children
- newcomers
- immigrants
- more immigrants moving to SK as well as families coming into SK from other provinces
- our economic growth in SK- immigrants, from other province

- increased number of new immigrants to the province

Growing Northern and Aboriginal Populations

- aboriginal community
- growing northern population
- population growth dramatic for aboriginal peoples - who have extra challenges due to historical context

The Supply of Early Learning and Child Care Services

Participants identified the following factors as shaping, and in many instances serving to limit, the supply of services. They provided less comment on these factors than those shaping the demand for services.

2.2.5 Political Priorities and Support for Early Learning and Child Care

- Government policy and budget
- Child welfare review (2 responses)

2.2.6 The Governance and Management of Early Learning and Child Care

- has the shift in ministry of education trickled down to school divisions?
- Intersectoral planning model Hoisin- Kanri
- AHS directions-local boards

2.2.7 The Organization and Delivery of Services

Participants identified a number of supply challenges that flow from the current organization and delivery of services. They raised concerns about both the shortage of early learning and child care spaces and the challenges in recruiting and retaining qualified staff.

Shortage of Early Learning and Child Care Spaces

- French Services- PreK, Childcare, Kindergarten
- to have a choice for French or English childcare
- quality child care
- Lack of licensed spaces available
- spaces does not meet the demand
- waitlists for childcare - need vs reality
- so few spaces currently
- need for quality care
- great demand for licensed childcare
- long waiting lists- increased participation of women in the workforce in urban setting.
- discontinuing full day kindergarten
- not enough spaces for children
- targeted programs vs. universally targeted programs

Workforce Challenges

- supply - recruitment and retention of trained staff. Enrollment can be affected when spaces are left, empty due to lack of staff to meet provincial requirements.
- Low wages for ECE's which enables it hard to find employees
- interested care givers
- wages
- supply-low wages
- supply-limited educational spaces to supply qualified individuals
- early year educators -huge deficiency
- training surplus of teachers -switch them over to early years (w/ appropriate training)
- northern recruitment & retention - higher turnover & limited education
- remuneration of EC care providers
- need for qualified staff
- lack of spaces to train service providers (post-secondary)
- Recruiting individual ECE and retaining them with low wages
- wages for ELC staff
- lower rates of graduates from the ECE diploma program
- staffing challenges

Service Supports and Infrastructure

- lack of infrastructure
- subsidy- needs to change
- growing documentation - ministry
- growing documentation trends
- volunteer boards govern licensed childcare corporations
- Board and Directors have a very complex job
- data to action
- School divisions opt out of collecting EDI
- flexible response
- communication isn't streamlined

2.2.8 Changing Nature of Family and Community Life

- higher # of children with developmental delays
- high school drop-out rate creating more demand in quality child care
- build on immigrants experiences to make changes for the province (challenge & opportunity)
- community context huge

2.3 What are the Main Challenges Facing the Early Learning and Child Care Field in Saskatchewan?

Participants identified 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.

Population Growth

- population growth
- population growth in aboriginal population

Immigration and Diversity

- immigrant population
- Cultural issues
- diversity- education
- diversity
- immigration/cultural coupling
- lack of housing for newcomers
- The job has become very complex (working with family, new Canadians and children with diverse needs)

Economic Challenges Facing Families

- increase in the number of vulnerable families
- poverty (2 responses)
- income of families
- overcrowding in homes
- poverty - basic needs not being met
- increase in income split
- business interests

Social and Family Challenges

- parents/social/human service issues
- social issues affecting the services
- growing number of young moms who lack parenting skills & milestones
- complicated families
- complex childhood issues seen in child care such as medical needs, social/emotional needs
- growing number of children by specialized care & educational needs/language delays
- aggressive young children - more & more
- families come to the centre as their support
- toxic, toxic stress in the house/community
- lots of parents work in mines - stressful dynamic
- foster children
- lack of parent support
- SK culture is far more conservative & traditional roles in home may be suppressing demand

Parental Leave Challenges

- EI for small businesses to access maternity leave (affordable/accessible)
- Maternity leave
- high number of self-employed individuals who don't pay into EI and do not have access to maternity benefits
- funding for parental leaves

Geographic or Community Challenges

- split between rural and urban sites
- geography/geographic (2 responses)
- inflow from rural to urban

2.3.2 Public and Political Support for Early Learning and Child Care

- Public and Political will to invest in early learning and childcare that corresponds to economic boom
- Lack of knowledge in society
- Lack of recognition for the importance of ECE
- calling it early learning and child care negates the learning that happens in care. It's not about "ready to learn" it's about early learning.
- promoting of the field - lack
- value (lack of)
- apathy
- lack of respect in field
- lack of understanding by the public and govt about the importance of early years -they aren't advocating for it
- educating others on the importance of child care
- lack of understanding of the importance of the early years
- public understanding

2.3.3 The Governance and Management of Early Learning and Child Care

Participants identified a number of challenges associated with the current governance and management of early learning and child care.

Ministerial Oversight

- Early Child Care Centres are under two ministries (Education & Social Services)
- Childcare under ministry of education and ministry of social services still involved in funding
- still under social services - would love to fall under ministry of education
- early learning centres governed by Ministry of Education and social services

A Provincial Framework or the Closer Integration of Services

- A provincial strategy
- lack of provincial strategy for early years
- comprehensive system/ partners not aligned

- lack of comprehensive provincial strategy with a child centred vision sustained in the long term across all ministries and community with significant resource allocation
- integration of services is lacking one service & another is not connected
- guidelines/policy issues that segregate 0-4, K-12, even with parental leaves there are discrepancies
- develop a framework for those children & families experiencing toxic stress
- transitions from child care into formal school system, collaboration between the agencies
- many organizations doing all the same things
- can't isolate ELCC from early childhood development.
- system for allocating services (especially childcare) is based on community capacity and readiness as opposed to population need
- system capacity

The Organization of Services

- Communities unaware how to start a centre
- child care as a small business
- parent run boards who are not educated in what children needs to learn, grow and develop
- don't know how to fix it - it would be a major overhaul
- early literacy - the house

The Engagement of Stakeholders and Communities

- Involving FNM representation at stakeholder meeting and at the Policy Development level
- lack of government involvement of the sector in making decisions particularly among priorities for funding outdoor (environment grant), increased spaces, child care consultants - how do they support space development?
- system change based on knowledge from community; expertise; knowledge, experience, capacities
- in northern SK, NLSD was 80% first nations population - need an inside out approach - recruitment, trust aboriginal prospective
- many links that don't directly relate to ground level - many supposedly speaking for
- isolation across province

2.3.4 The Financing for Early Learning and Child Care

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

Levels of Investment or Financing

- Funding from Govt.
- Funding (2 responses)
- lack of funding/investment (3 responses)
- dedicated financial plan for follow through
- inequity in funding-increase in spaces but not increase in consultants -work load increases

- lack of investment from government - although some investment, not really keeping up with 2013 needs
- underfunded system
- cost
- less resources directed to ELCC
- Finance
- "what would be the cost of a fully funded early learning & childcare program?"

Financing Differences Between Services

- Inequity in Services - Kindergarten not funded full-time for Francophone, PreK- no funding for francophone
- inequities in funding PreK receive \$3000/yr. to implement play & exploration child care centres get a one-time grant in 2008 or get a one-time per space grant now upon initial licensing.

Financing Mechanisms or Tools (including child care space subsidies)

- subsidy navigation
- subsidy funding process - considering small business model
- subsidy system isn't working
- subsidy system is a barrier to children getting the care and support they need
- subsidy not meeting the needs of families
- income thresholds
- inappropriate levels of funding for subsidy, EA grants and professional development grants
- pressure on wages and budgets caused by increased cost of living requires fee increases which puts financial pressure on families
- difficulty of accessing grants for special needs help
- the way funds are allocated

2.3.5 The Organization and Delivery of Services

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

Capacity Issues and Concerns

- Universal 'quality' early learning opportunities
- Keeping up with growth
- increasing demand with limited resources
- increased spaces without a proportionate increase in support services
- Lack of spaces (8 responses)
- not enough childcare spaces available (2 responses)
- not enough child care spaces
- Lack of quality of spaces
- Infant/ Toddler spaces
- access and affordable childcare
- lack of service available

- so few spaces
- lack of services offered to parents
- need more pre-k and full-time kindergarten
- demand for infant spaces
- not enough infant spaces
- high wait lists (2 responses)
- where is business in all this??-onsite daycares -what is their contribution?

Service Inequities and Service Gaps (including between communities)

- Sense of inequity of programs between PreK and Childcare
- doubling prek services
- 0-3 years programs not always considered as important as pre-k and kindergarten
- disparity of services
- need for training spaces to support children and families for special needs
- parenting supports and case management would make a difference for many families
- isolated centres - lack of flexible time
- lack of support for day homes
- a disproportionate support system for rural vs urban communities
- lack of commonality throughout the province
- lack of commonality of services in all areas of province
- We need a continuum of services and/ support till school age
- schools not wanting to include EL

Concerns with the Quality of Services/Unregulated Services

- Quality control of services
- unlicensed child care is @ 80%
- unregulated programs
- high percent of unlicensed care arrangements which provide low quality care
- professional organizations need to work together better
- quality centres
- boards – inconsistency

Infrastructure Challenges (transportation and physical space requirements)

- transportation (lack of)
- lack of transportation
- access to physical space
- space
- lack of infrastructure - buildings designed for childcare (church basements etc.)

2.3.6 The Early Learning and Child Care Workforce

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

Staff Education and Professional Development

- RH(Hr.)- qualification, salary, Professional development opportunities, Recognition of their career
- Education of Early Learning and Care workforce
- qualifications for staff
- Lack of training
- SK is one of the lowest educated provinces in Canada in terms of post-secondary - low supply of actual early years educators - plus lack of academic training for those to be trained as an early educator
- under educated staff- not meeting educational requirements
- workforce training and pay
- early childhood educators are often unprepared to utilize the Play and Exploration guide appropriately
- staff education
- uneducated staff
- educated/dedicated staff
- time available for PD's - presently not allowed for closure to support - must be done on personal time
- pedagogy - professional body
- PD opportunities

Staff Recruitment and Retention

- staff retention (3 responses)
- skilled workers in the positions
- unfortunate that people aren't going into this field due to low wages
- developing the profession of early childhood (societal view)
- not enough qualified staff
- retention & retraining the staff
- retention of staff - heart beat
- recruitment and retention of staff
- high director turnover
- not enough staff to take on the responsibilities - program consultants, behavioural consultations causes stress -too many needs
- shortage of trained workers
- staff retention-possibly due to pay & recognition
- quality child care-recruitment & retention of staff
- lack of qualified staff/ECEs (2 responses)
- Lack of ECE workers
- lack of trained ECEs
- quality staff
- staffing challenges

Staff Remuneration and Professional Status

- Poor wages for ECE
- remuneration of workers
- wages for employees/ workers, retaining/ retention of staff
- wages
- salary of staff
- low wages for ECEs
- lack of early childhood educators/ pay equity
- workers are poorly paid
- low salary pay
- poor working conditions and pay
- wages
- Qualifies professional
- societal view of the profession
- lack of educating the public sector
- level of pay/staff retention
- staff are under-valued and under-appreciated remuneration
- not seen as a profession
- funding - centre staff

2.3.7 Research and Data Collection

- Lack of data collection at key touch points (example age 2) to help provide timely support, age 5 is too late
- universal screening of children for testing

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

In the second round of discussions 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 discussions 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 they saw as beneficial for children and their families.

3.1.1 The Potential Value of a Provincial Framework

- It's a good idea
- very high interest for professionals
- value universal framework with addition of attention to supporting toxic children and their families -continuation of services & valuing parents/community
- Very timely and requires not only Ministry of Education, also include Ministry of Social and Economic Development, Immigration etc.
- Large value in good/ effective framework
- Value for business
- it is important to have a quality framework
- framework/action plan/strategy - just do something!
- of course there would be great value of a provincial early learning and childcare framework for SK
- critically important
- I think the value is immense
- very high value
- valuable - for sure! If??
- move forward
- I feel the present system is not working so we have to start over
- need for action -tired of talk
- urgency - kids cannot wait

3.1.2 Benefits for Children and Families

- The benefits will be seen in the children which will in turn benefit society in the future
- whole community would benefit
- raising a healthy, responsible citizen who will contribute to our economy and pay our retirement pension
- huge impact for families and children
- young children can't wait - brain research has told us how critical the early years are in laying the foundation for our life path
- potential for addressing parenting through ease of accessing care for one's children
- potential for increasing the number of children who are assessed as 'ready to learn' on EDI
- potential for more quickly responding to exceptional needs in some families
- more parent involvement & information

3.1.3 Raising the Profile for Early Learning and Child Care

- whole community would understand the importance
- priority to support young children and families learning in Saskatchewan communities
- perception: public good with public benefits
- legitimate early learning in province
- public awareness
- public awareness would increase which would ultimately lead to public support
- this may be a valuable tool for advocating for change.

- Moving towards a vision of entitlement for children vs. service for families would move early learning into being perceived as a fundamental public good versus a service for individual families

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

- everyone is on the same page and the same understanding (increased consistency)
- it will bring everybody on the same page
- universal acceptance of one system
- Everyone working towards same goal enables it more achievable
- When you have a goal in mind, it is easier to take steps towards it instead of walking blindly
- would be great to get human services on the same track
- provide potential pathway to work from and common goals to work towards
- provide a road map, direction to achieve goal
- maps our direction for how we build supports for families
- shared vision would decrease duplicated discussions and services- all the small passionate groups would come together
- Ministry would have a guideline for how to improve services
- some way to ground & guide emerging ELCC
- value of policy - intentions understood
- define the needs
- identify the resources
- identify the gap in resources
- provide structures to build the resources to meet early learning and care needs
- people could work together instead of competing for survival of their part of early learning & childcare
- break down the "silos"
- a collective vision
- If we had a framework we could move forward with purpose- everyone on the same page
- roadmap for achieving the goals
- unified vision & goal
- shared understanding
- working together for the same goal

3.1.5 Possible Principles to Shape a Provincial Framework

As part of their discussions participants identified some possible principles for inclusion in a provincial framework.

Universal Access or Entitlements to Early Learning and Child Care

- entitlement and requirement
- we should be entitled to quality child care
- entitled- for children to be cared for
- universal acceptance & entitlement for all ages
- a framework for all residents of SK

- focuses on ELCC as a public good, same as health & school-aged education
- entitlement
- universal system
- supporting all children & families regardless of needs
- addressing diversity of communities -strength importance of EL (0-3)
- Have to be inclusive (not just for vulnerable, for everybody. A place for French community)

Considerations of Equity

- equity
- equity among children
- equity for all children

Other Principles

- active utilization of Jordan's principle
- education
- parent driving force - responsible
- value social/competencies
- cultural strength utilized
- emotions tied to effort - competent children
- building on existing strengths
- Medicare framework - set up standards
- commitment
- flexibility
- early learning begins at the beginning of life - whether home or away from home
- responsible government
- Quality
- adapt to community context
- staying current

3.1.6 A Continuum of Services – Service Integration

- streamline policies & procedures
- all the stakeholders will follow the same guidelines
- more consistency across the province
- continuum prorated grade 12 (all players will have to change the way things are currently done)
- 0-grade 12 = continuum
- Inter- ministry approach will be fostered
- Common strategy/aim inter-ministerially can be developed
- social services & early learning programs need to be integrated & improve the system
- provide more consistency -wages empower the community
- could ensure a continuum
- improved relationship/collaboration/resource sharing especially if human services are housed together

- important in regulation of child care even out discrepancies between subsidy/non-subsidized
- continuum
- 0-12 continuing- every phase goes into next phase
- the value is the continuum of one system to provide from 0-12
- a continuum through ages
- there is potential to unite the field and empower communities to create services that meet their needs with a broad system
- provide more consistency -quality, wages, education of staff
- unite people across the field
- a provincial framework would provide consistency of quality, wages and services for children
- develop a strong system - a stronger uniformity through province
- universality -presently working locally

3.1.7 Engaging Stakeholders

- sense of urgency - led by people in the field
- starting point for discussions and policy
- community involvement for child care
- needs to be led by people in the business
- any provincial framework must include real & meaningful contributions from First Nations orgs
- community involvement
- It may allow for conversation with government when change happens
- legitimacy to the process
- who are the stakeholders?

3.1.8 Areas for Consideration or Inclusion in a Possible Framework

The Allocation of Resources

- a framework would have resources attached to it
- very valuable if adequately sustainably resourced if the government has bought in - not just the targets
- resources would be attached to framework (we hope!)
- resources tied to the framework
- resources attached

Remuneration for staff

- wage parity
- wage scale
- regulate across the province (wages)

Measurement and Reporting

- indication of access/measuring outcomes
- measuring and monitoring system
- measuring & monitoring a system & children that move thru the system - so we can better respond to identified needs
- provides a landmark for evaluation, measurement of existing and of progress
- measuring & maintaining the children who needs to respond to these needs

3.1.9 Questions for Consideration or Concerns

- depends what it would look like
- definition re: quality
- what are the reasons that childcare is actually needed? Custodial care
- proactive vs. reactive?
- worried that they are all talk and no action
- if the framework facilitates growth
- federal funding?
- may limit regional ideas and best fit solutions for individual regions and cultures

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 comments 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

- We need more awareness on the general public on the importance of early learning
- general public - 66% not in favour of national program, 31% in favour, 3% neutral. This is from a poll conducted by the CCCF through its publication Interaction
- Need buy-in from public to remember here for everyone here who favours a provincial framework there are voters out there who don't agree - and politicians are politicians.
- depends if they have invested interest and how invested they are
- educate the population about our need
- don't think there is high interest in the general population, which means not high interest for politicians
- baby boomers, seniors, male, state government, politicians- no; business - not on radar
- need community understanding -every man on the street must be a stakeholder
- Perception/ Public Devaluation of children- liabilities (childcare= custodial care for school or work), education K-12= custodial care- school closures, parent visits etc.)
- shift needed to value for children

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

- Government have to put their mind on family/child
- agree that social policy drives public policy and will focus on building awareness of social policy
- child and family agenda
- The interest is there, but possibly for other different reason
- early learning and care has to be an investment
- increasing interest in recognition at a higher level but still with limited awareness and acknowledgement of early learning importance
- childcare/ early learning cannot be perceived as an extra amongst competing priorities
- Invest in First Nations
- multiple competing priorities in government
- focussed on growing the population rather than growing it well
- barriers - complexity of issue - provincial level resources & commitment
- the organization and leadership at a provincial level are often a frustration
- lowest business tax
- corporations Cameco, for example not paying taxes

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

Participants provided the most input on early learning and child care professionals' interests in a possible provincial framework to guide the field. They categorized these levels of interest from high through to low with an emphasis on higher levels of interest and support.

High Levels of Interest

- high level of interest (5 responses)
- I believe it is very high (2 responses)
- very high amongst people employed in the sector
- a universal yes
- Human service organizations- Yes
- very high for the professionals
- I think we are ready since about 3-5 years
- I believe that the folks doing the work are very interested and have been for years
- I feel it is high to go into the future, we need to fix the system
- someone has to start it - decision makers need to push forward
- high-starting to gain importance in healthcare
- need to see change
- Yes, get it done
- I guess we have been asking this for a long time
- stop talking and start writing a provincial framework
- government and childcare stakeholders are the only ones interested
- in our community there is abundant passion and commitment to early childhood
- local stakeholders are eager for provincial partnership
- the moon is full, the tide is high, interest is high!

- strong interest
- I think members of ECE field are very interested in a provincial framework
- to be supported under a provincial framework would assist our program in terms of moving forward
- strong- years of frustration coming to realization that forces are present
- change needs to happen with early learning and care
- vision- we need a cohesive vision that value everyone's beliefs & values
- The director's association in Saskatoon has worked for some time now to try to get some convergence in terms of wages, curriculum, approach etc.

Interest with Some Cautions or Concerns

- We need more data
- interest with hesitation from policy makers
- Large interest but need to get it all together
- There is a large group of educated stakeholders, they just don't know where to start
- I think there is a lot of information. It's what we do with it that is important
- interest would be high but among service providers there may be fear of change and how this may affect them personally
- the interest is there, the knowledge of how to engage and the skills & resources (time,\$) are not yet available
- our job is to raise awareness of public
- we all are stakeholders, high interest among certain stakeholders- women perhaps
- I feel resistance from government towards the development of such a framework, but my interest & passion is very high
- levels of interest but lack of vision that is cohesive while valuing beliefs/ culture

Lower Levels of Interest Questions, or Cautions

- skeptical- especially around actionable items
- skeptical- lack of consultation? Or how do they chose champions
- varying - not everyone on the same page
- Who will 'champion' the initiatives/ framework?
- stakeholders - not talking/including parents
- stakeholders are the people at this forum
- centres have been struggling for years just at the basic level - felt that everyone is on their own
- time to consolidate

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

- more of the parents who will use childcare
- very high for those directly involved in accessing services, particularly those who have forced challenges
- young men with families, there is an interest at a level 9 or 10 to embrace the development of provincial framework
- parents – should be high

3.2.5 Questions or General Comments on Stakeholder Interest

- stakeholders - who are you defining as stakeholders?
- depends what is defined as stakeholder
- define stakeholder
- depends on who you are
- large corporations -not even here today -are they a stakeholder
- sharing the discussion - open for business
- elephant & mouse!

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 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 and Principles

Overarching Considerations or Questions

- this is a moral imperative
- should we be trying to adapt our Sector to 'fit' economic goals or have a strong value based message?
- what rationale is the framework developed from, does this lead to type/style of framework and its level of importance?
- Getting clear on what this is for
- Is this a Motherhood and apple pie exercise or an idea that may create policy and change?
- is it provincial or not?
- who are the stakeholders?

The Interests of Children and Families

- begin with a vision that puts children first
- decisions are made through the lens of what is the best interest of the child - now and in future
- care and growth for children
- quality care for children
- quality child care for all children
- child and family
- offering services to all families
- child/family considered
- emphasis on family & child

- making sure that there is choice for parents - home childcare, centre, private (non-licensed homes)
- Balance- needs of child, needs of families and needs of workers must all be considered
- Hoshin Kanri - children get a good start in life

Responsive to Community Differences and Diversity

- Every center/ organization is different
- Every community has different needs
- some opinions are conflicting- how do we integrate?
- rural/urban issues (2 responses)
- on reserve/off reserve
- flexibility of the framework (5 responses)
- community context in western settings - demand for flexibility
- geographical inclusiveness
- geographical conditions
- strength based and flexible
- addressing diversities (First Nations and immigrant populations)
- diversity of populations and to be inclusive
- culturally supportive of all families
- special needs children
- addressing other cultures
- equity, addressing the diverse cultures
- values and beliefs (3 responses)
- inclusiveness (2 responses)
- levels of family needs and community specificity
- embracing strength & traditional
- Clear focus and vision and equity of service provided throughout the province
- needs to be for everyone
- demographics

Building on Existing Community and Services Capacities

- building on community capacity rather than always creating new
- capacity building (support existing capacity in the communities)
- capacity building

Practical and Sustainable

- be practical on what we want
- practicality
- supporting sustainability with measurable outcomes for growth and development
- self-sustaining
- it is going to take time

Learning from Research and Accessing Data

- Find an organizational structure that is working and explore if this structure can be expanded to incorporate early learning and care
- look at what has been done - accessibility- look at good working framework changes in government
- look at what's already been done
- data EDI & IHBO etc.

Complex Work that Must be Done Well

- has to be done well
- that it is very carefully constructed if it is badly done it will limit future possibilities
- no silver bullet- silver buckshot
- The complex issues

3.3.2 The Engagement of Different Stakeholders

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

Communications, Transparency and Commitment to Action

- transparency
- communication
- not just communication but actual listening & follow through -to actually see physical changes not just head nodding's
- better job of communication

Broad Stakeholder Engagement

- making sure all stakeholders are included and have input
- inclusion of the entire province
- all the aspects of ECE should be equally represented and considered
- listening to the voices of stakeholders - broad inclusion of voices in the development
- connect with all key players
- include diverse voices (immigrants, rural, urban, aboriginals etc.)
- ensure communities give input
- consultation and engagement
- Toyota Industrial model - all groups will have to have a part
- need a critical mass of individuals that are capable of talking about needs/policy - governance, delivery etc.
- engage MLA's

Engaging the Business Community

- corporations should be represented
- involve corporations - need to facilitate this, "google" model (I believe provides child care for employees)
- include business stakeholders/corporation responsibility

- what role does the business/workforce community have in the delivery of ELCC?
- supports and services given that they require workers

Engaging with First Nations

- First Nation groups must be included (PAGC, FSIN, NITHA, etc.)
- stakeholders
- more first nations representation - need to ask them
- blessing of elders

Engaging Parents

- parents a voice
- parent ensuring early childhood speaks
- parent summits

3.3.3 Building Public Awareness and Support for a Framework

- the research may speak clearly. The problem is people don't know the research or aren't convinced by it.
- huge public education is critical (i.e. participation) sector education is important - why what we do is critical. This is a non-partisan issue.
- Clear message defining early learning & child care - the general public doesn't understand that. They do see it as separate. Care is custodial (keep them safe and fed), learning is important.
- create public will including messaging - education for businesses
- Buy-in from politicians
- wall walk
- public has to have more understanding of early learning
- Public education - what children need to learn, grow and develop
- everybody on the same level of understanding the needs
- broad based awareness campaign needed - moral imperative
- do we have political leaders courageous enough to really make this a priority in SK?
- how do we create a framework that endures change of government?
- broad based awareness campaign
- public education/awareness
- public level of understanding of ELCC - provides a means for government to get behind increase in \$ needed

3.3.4 The Governance and Management of Early Learning and Child Care

- Ministry of Human Capital
- where should the responsibility of early learning fit within the government
- A process for intersectoral collaboration
- inter-agency, departmental and ministry partnerships
- jurisdictions must be put aside (Fed/Prov)
- support for Boards- what is their role?
- Development of a shared strategic aim

- demonstrate long term goals
- who would oversee to ensure quality? Would it look like a school framework?
- who is going to lead it?
- someone needs to assume a leadership role?
- who helps to develop?

3.3.5 Financing Early Learning and Child Care

- funding (2 responses)
- funding- how? Where from?
- economics - how to pay for it, quantifying its benefits
- cost/benefit analysis
- self-sustaining
- the absolutely huge increase needed in resources (staff-training & compensation), physical space, subsidy program, coordination with other service providers (e.g. schools)
- looking at all the different current care environments and trying to achieve similarities in budget and compensation levels
- \$3000/month in rent - charged by the school board

3.3.6 A Comprehensive Approach – the Integration of Services

Comprehensive/Systemic Approach

- Comprehensive (3 responses)
- Required a well-coordinated, levelled delivery structure
- it is not enough to look at pieces separately i.e. child care advancements, we all need to understand how the pieces fit within the larger plan framework
- inconsistencies-framework should cover wages, education, services, facilities, space - better connectivity
- transfer of existing frameworks on to this-this is very dangerous if the values of ECE are not taken into consideration
- this is not a health system, this is not a K12 system - but it is a combination & all of its individual value system
- comprehensive - and stakeholders roles and responsibilities listed
- Bringing in a model that is implemental into every community
- consistency in the consultants across province
- needs to be broad and inclusive of prenatal to five.
- including all ages
- standardized quality of care
- consistency in the quality of care
- changes in the taxation department for children & families
- entitlement (around K12 but not around EY)
- Put all the aspects including social services

Service Connections and Integration

- Incorporate preschool programs into daycare centers
- Early Learning Center should be inclusive all of all supports in one place.
- Make it similar to community senior centers- schools, health center etc.
- fragmented nature of current patchwork of services
- organizations have to be working in one accord
- coordinating services to ensure that all centres follow the same curriculum
- promotion of learning in schools later evident
- unlicensed care-needs to be monitored
- centre/day home/private
- incorporating unlicensed home-based care
- co-ordination/addressing profit vs non-profit
- Reggio Emilio - parents/communities - had to meet to push forward

3.3.7 The Early Learning and Child Care Workforce

- access to education/work experience via apprenticeship program
- raise education standard but we need to think about Remuneration for ECEs- three classes not enough
- staff training/retention
- professionalism in the field
- compensation/wages
- retaining & retention of staff
- Leadership- Directors with knowledge on Play and Exploration but also how to run a business
- compensation
- retaining/ retention of workers
- professionalism in the field

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 discussions, 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 consider 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

Overarching Ideas

- how do we keep the framework holistic?- universal public good philosophy, community empowered and intersectoral conversation
- Set your vision as high as is possible
- long term
- long term vision
- dream big

Universal Access for Children and Families

- universal
- all children should have access
- logistics of universal vs. targeted
- universal access/publically funded
- accessible
- whoever is ready receives a spot- not areas who are lacking
- universal daycare publicly funded
- universal access, not based on socio-economic status (reality or in poverty) and publicly funded
- middle class centres?
- how to ensure universal access to quality care
- all levels of families deserve high quality childcare

The Accommodation of Diversity - Inclusion

- accessible French
- Inclusion
- children needing special support
- include all Saskatchewan children (on & off reserve)
- is there room for cultural diversity/adaption
- first nations?
- how do we include cultural identity?

A Child and/or Family Focus

- The child must be at the center
- kids must be centre of all priority
- health equity lens - children's rights lens
- respect the child
- takes a village to raise a child - communal raising of children
- families are valued and key persons for early learning
- to meet the children and families' needs
- Starting with families, how can we support them

ii) Developing a Vision and Goals

- What is it we want for our children?
- Vision and goals must be established before you determine the organization structure and delivery process
- You need to know where you are going before you determine how you are going to get there
- you have to know where you are going before you can plan how to get there
- what is end product? Reverse engineer to produce goals to meet outcome
- who has input into the vision/goals?
- Are we all rowing in the same direction? Have to know where you are going.
- reverse engineer - set a goal, then figure out how to reach that goal
- focus on where you want to go
- consider & include all elements to meet the goals
- vision and goals are in the "play & exploration" guides
- metaphor - developing Olympic athletes - goal to increase \$'s in SK, develop this at every level from youngest athletes, invest coach

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

- informing the public about child development practices so that they can drive the vision and goals
- create public will
- public education
- Public education for a collective vision

iv) The Governance and Management of Early Learning and Child Care

- Organization of ELCC who plans - Boards-Parents?
- Regulating across the province for wages/ benefits/fees
- responsibility vs. accountability
- intersectoral agencies speak different languages
- indicators for success?
- indicators needed along the way to assess programs to goals
- partnerships
- regional boundaries creates problem
- needs to translate across the sector regardless of viewpoint
- universal regulations, fees, etc.
- measuring & monitoring needed

- to develop partnerships and collaboration
 - a framework that is flexible and dynamic, provides high quality choices for parents/families and communities
 - parental involvement plus participation
 - how to get consistency of service delivery
- v) **Financing Early Learning and Child Care**
- affordable
 - how/who will support in that way?
 - not enough funding
 - Finance
 - publicly funded
 - a publicly funded system similar to health and education sectors as they are now
 - Availability of quality care- affordable
 - to see childcare as high quality and affordable for all families
 - subsidy-affordable
- vi) **The Organization of Services - A Continuum of Services**
- continuum of services (2 responses)
 - starting at prenatal care and working with families on child development from the birth of the child
 - the fragmentation and limited connection of services from prenatal through to adulthood - need for continuity
 - manage needs of children, families and ECEs
- vii) **The Approach for Supporting Children's Early Learning**
- definitions around ECE/ECD/EY etc. and what/who defines quality - no difference between care/learning - not mutually exclusive
 - how to define quality- what are our learning objectives?
 - relationship based
 - Education and care are the same
 - need to capture effortlessness of play
 - seeing children as competent - about empowering them
 - play, play, play
 - basic tools to begin with
 - better focus on social-emotional development
 - education the public about the value and importance of social/emotional learning over academic learning
 - more focus on social and emotional
 - all northern children get a healthy start in life - common value
 - a better focus on social, emotional development in order to prepare a child for 'school' rather than just the academics
 - every child to progress at developmentally appropriate rate
 - Supports involved in holistic approach

viii) The Early Learning and Child Care Workforce

- More in depth education for ECE/ Directors= License +regular/ mandatory PD development
- professional development
- remuneration/benefits/training for caregivers
- more training
- Education for staff
- what is quality- ELPG- quality- Educators trained
- higher levels of education- incentives for people to enter and stay in the field

ix) Questions and Concerns

- what ages are being considered?
- what is the age range we are talking about?
- what is the role of the parents?
- need to see it to believe it
- common language
- Define all the terms
- individual description

4.1.2 On which aspects or features 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 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

- Accessibility/accessible (4 responses)
- Universal access/universality (5 responses)
- Availability
- Not available for children 0-18 months
- Maternity leave goes to 12 months
- Not much care available for 12-18 months
- all families should have access to childcare
- opportunity
- children's competence based on opportunity

ii) The Affordability of Services for Families

- Affordability/affordable (4 responses)
- Not able to afford care
- need for quality/consistency (funding)

iii) A Focus on the Interests of the Child

- children are important and a valuable part of the future
- it is a child's right
- all children deserve it

- vision - putting children at the centre of what we do - can help make more accountable for decisions that we make

iv) The Need for Quality Early Learning and Child Care Services

- quality (2 responses)
- high quality (2 responses)
- quality of service
- high quality care learning in- parent family care, childcare homes, childcare centres and school based Prek
- high quality is a fundamental goal but it needs to be defined
- prepare proper education infrastructure
- there needs to be a proper level of funding to ensure wages are at the appropriate level to attract high quality staff

v) The Approach for Supporting Children’s Early Learning

- Continuity
- Reliable
- ECE's as professionals at play
- ECE's guide play
- children as competent – it’s okay to get hurt, dirty, to try stuff!
- individualized/child directed
- Families- starting with their education
- importance of community

vi) Key Questions, Concerns or Factors to Consider

- importance, imminent need
- stretch - beyond what the current system, imagine what it could be
- need for actionable
- champion driven/designed
- diversity of population
- there are many measures of quality- which one should be used?
- kindergarten students are not prepared for school
- childcare and school partnership
- effort is our umbrella concept
- Jobs- helps with the overall economy of the province

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

Participants identified a small 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.

- universal system
- responsibility/financing
- top down - worry

- unclear language
- Universal wages/ benefits
- wages
- focused on care/ human vs economics, school readiness
- unclear inclusion of SAHP (says individual needs & circumstances but not necessarily around at home)
- what is affordable?
- organization - power struggle/resource mgmt.
- provides guidance to know where we are headed

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.

- More important to follow rules
- centralized vs. decentralized management
- support services - more
- we need the resources to implement our vision and goals
- Setting everyone on the same page (childcare, PreK) is huge
- Easier to meet goals
- common language/goals
- cost effectiveness
- very important if we wish to have our children ready for the future or to bringing us up to world standards
- the vision and the goals are there, do we have the people to role them out?
- without a common vision and goals, we will continue to have small splintered groups working passionately but with limited success
- we have focus on our vision for quality childcare and move forward to improve services for all families

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 a number of arguments including the Ministry level oversight of services, regional decision-making, the governance of community organizations as well as the preparation and support of senior staff.

i) Governance of Early Learning and Child Care at a Ministry Level

- Better one ministry or more than one?

- education & health are important
- social service provides other services
- intersectoral approach to governance - under single jurisdiction may cause that lens to dominate?
- does Minister of Education have capacity?
- could it be Minister of Family Wellness?
- need multi- ministry approach to early learning
- how do we ensure that when governance is assigned, other jurisdictions do not lose interest, yet provide a clear consistent governance model
- a shared vision needs to be developed and communicated across sectors and ministries
- What is the best governance model for early learning and care?
- if it's not multi-jurisdictional in governance/mgmt., there will be no ability to engage first nations

ii) The Approach and Process for Decision-making

- Who are the decision makers and what is the decision making process?
- whoever is governing must have enough resources to be effective or it will just become regulatory to meet minimum standards
- selected few with decision making power -make all decisions as to whether this may move forward
- resources drive decisions on governance
- there needs to be top down support/ resources for the child and family agenda and bottom up engagement
- Mix of government/ parents, business, subsidy higher
- it's a mess. Governance shouldn't be left to chance and circumstance
- what are the NGO/CBO/N4P roles?

iii) Possible Structures or Approaches to Service Management

- if there are more funding partners - do they need to be regional bodies – ‘arms-length’ to disseminate
- RIC structure is there but "authority" is not
- the more local the better- allows communities to have autonomy BUT must still meet universal vision/ standards
- how can the RICS be of assistance in this area
- Regional level management i.e. RIC
- early years coalitions- multi-sectoral supported through the RIC and Kids First Community developer management
- RICS are not a legal organization?
- focusing regionally to ensure oversight for quality components a single centralized system
- Decentralization at community level without barriers can be provided through an existing structure like Education
- interagency agreement-chair
- first nations making the disparity greater both on and off reserve realities
- centralizing services within a central body allows for smoother delivery of services, communication and financing

iv) The Governance of Non-profit Organizations

- individual parent boards are a questionable model, expertise of board members is all over.
- Parents in boards don't have business background or understand ECE.
- parent run boards -can affect how the centre is run
- parent run Boards- can't run a childcare centre, lack of knowledge of business
- should be more away from parent run community boards
- need capacity building/board development
- parent boards?
- how do we support parent boards?

v) The Engagement of Families

- will vulnerable families feel like early learning is being done to them?
- I think about parental involvement- public education
- culturally relevant
- community representation
- elder accepted
- parents are key factors

vi) Preparation and Support for Senior Leaders and Staff

- directors are not required to have any mgmt. training - ECE diploma doesn't give any. This is a large contributor to financial difficulties experienced by many
- leadership and training
- are individuals in management positions receiving support through education, mentorship
- continual yearly professional development
- more support for child care providers
- Lack of consistency across province(wages, fees)
- training- finding enough personnel
- ECE education and continuing professional development should be governed by a college or professional body
- succession planning

vii) The Financing and Delivery of Services

- Leveled organizational structure and equity of service
- Financing remains in silos even despite the best efforts of intersectoral efforts
- a provincial structure-but respecting the work load
- we have to restructure-the program-the bits and pieces are there but it just has to be organized
- quality care is important and ensuring quality will be needed
- how do we manage growth?

viii) General Comments or Questions

- Big business supports in community- school system taxes
- what is the framework for education?
- What is the program?
- Consistency

- accountability/transparency & issues in northern context
- Accountability process
- Communication
- more dialogue-more communication
- how to spread the urgency of responding to Early Learning and Childcare with my colleagues and others
- fear that northern consultation & consultation as a whole may be a checkmark rather than comprehensive & diligent

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

Participants identified five areas around which they anticipated stakeholders might reach agreement on the governance and management of early learning and child care. Participants commented most often on governance at a Ministry level and options for some form of regional oversight of services.

i) The Benefits of New Approaches to Governance and Management – Existing Challenges

- need a unified and blended system
- importance of collective agreement
- not working currently
- many organizations and programs not working together
- intersectoral
- inclusive - in thought/opinion but possibly not in action

ii) The Inclusion of Regional Structures

- even though we need a provincial framework, we need some regional autonomy to ensure unique needs/ perspective can be met
- already in SK
- RICs are connected to child and family agenda.
- Early years coalition operate on the side of each person's desk for community based action
- Regionalization? I believe it has certain perks but that RICS need to be reviewed for intricacies

iii) Organization Boards and Director Development

- board composition
- director training

iv) Parent and Community Engagement of Parents and Communities.

- Parents
- parent representation
- community leadership

v) **Service Delivery Considerations**

- Centers should have higher standards in curriculum
- quality care-main purpose
- There must be a more consistent and reliable remuneration of early care workers.
- Increase education required to work with young children and increase wages
- Lack of consistency (wages, fees)

vi) **General Comments or Questions**

- sustainability
- cultural
- human assets utilized
- flexible-accepting what success looks like
- how do we use and optimize existing structures?
- are KF management committees a possible structure to build on?
- What are the goals?

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

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

- it may be difficult to get parents, community partners involved- community involvement and time poverty for parents and community in terms of getting involved in monitoring quality and outcomes
- Decision making process
- How to Fund?
- targeted or universal
- public or private
- We can always 'allow' this to stop forward thinking and forward progress
- what programs are more valuable- even though all doing the same
- trusting outside officials
- south knows best
- Regional Governance
- Self-governance

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 saw changes in the governance and management of early learning and child care as important to improving services. They further identified specific areas for improvement.

i) **Level of Importance**

- Essential
- The better the structure the easier changes can be made

- they are essential that what we are doing isn't working - must look at synergies - build on success
- Very
- if we believe that children and families are a priority, we must change to ensure our children and family feel the impact of our decisions
- Very important

ii) **Areas for Improvement or Change**

- There is an inequity of quality of early learning program- PreK vs. Daycare because PreK teachers are 4 years "degreed" professionals
- Every child has access to a quality early learning environment
- We cannot pay the staff what they deserve if parents are not willing to raise the fees
- Not all centers are equal in quality
- If there was more regulation around curriculum, that could increase quality
- services - should be more accessible to more families
- currently we are limping along with only pockets of consistency
- some consistency- not even consistent among regulations and requirements
- moving away from parent boards is vital

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 financing of early learning and child care. They considered a range of topics including the level and source of financing, as well as financing strategies.

i) **Increased Levels of Funding**

- much more \$\$ has to be pumped into the system to make improvements
- infrastructure investments in north are needed quickly
- This is not an area where you can do more with less
- a lot of new \$ needed
- significant resources are needed
- sustained investments are needed with the purpose of improving quality across sectors
- Do we only support the social agenda when the provincial economy is booming?
- long term consistent/reliable
- child care centres & providers need more support & shouldn't be taking losses
- How do we get more funds?
- how much do we need - what will a quality system cost?

ii) **Public Support for Investments in Early Learning and Child Care**

- Public 'buy in' to providing universal and accessible early learning and childcare.
- Not everyone would see the value and would have to be educated so there is community support
- Does SK have an 'its' up to them 'mentally' towards EL and CC?

- those who don't have young children may not understand it's importance
- why is this so hard? Do people really get how important this issue/OPPORTUNITY is?
- public education is key in financing
- justifying the heavy investment needed will require a cultural shift in terms of public support for ELCC as a public good

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

- sliding scale for parents fees (2 responses)
- increase level of income before taxes for parents to be able to purchase services
- Parents should pay partial fees
- Subsidies is not adequate for parents
- can't put all burden on parents
- charge parents a % based on scale to make it equitable
- middle class accessibility
- multi-child families
- accessibility of services-cost to parents/available in community
- although staff are poorly compensated, fees for many families are still unaffordable
- how do families with vulnerabilities access the best services for their children
- responsibility parent vs public
- affordability, targeted funding vs. universal funding

iv) Public Investments in Early Learning and Child Care

- government funded (public \$\$) - increase in funding
- recognition from the government about the importance of early childhood
- first nations/province must be partners
- Ideal world= Universally \$ X provincial federal tax (Perhaps a fee? Income tested)
- we all are paying taxes-government should support childcare the same way
- public \$ (taxes) how could that be allocated
- it needs to be financed by the government so the children have equal opportunity to get good child care
- If it is to be universal and accessible it has to be publicly funded
- why can't we have publically funded EC?
- what is the cost of a publically funded system?
- what would universal look like?
- universal childcare?

v) Funding Models Similar to Public Education/Schooling

- if you can fund public school why can't you fund child care - taxes
- school is publicly funded why not childcare?
- Can early years be publicly funded like the school system?
- each child regardless of it is rural or urban, home or centre should be treated and funded equally
- But education is universal
- early learning be part of education system -not mandatory - used at parents discretion but available to everyone

vi) Private Investments in Early Learning and Child Care

- what is the history of business involvement in child care in Canada
- business has to support child care services
- business - living wage?
- private funding (e.g. employers should contribute in "child pension")
- Business involvement?
- what role does the business/ private sector have to play in supporting ELCC?
- corporate funding
- employers -childcare expenses
- if corporations provide care for employees -do they meet the same requirements & standards as other provincial centres
- business/partnership with centres

vii) Financial Training for Service Directors

- financial mgmt. training for directors
- Training for Directors money wise
- financial training for directors
- financial mgmt. training

viii) Remuneration for Early Learning and Child Care Staff

- recognition in \$ and remuneration
- equal \$ to services
- Universal fees and wages for staff
- fair pay for early years educators
- commonality of employee benefits/salaries/training
- remuneration of ECEs
- ability to pay staff
- current levels of financing are not sufficient to adequately compensate staff in the field
- educators then equalized with teachers with education & certification to match similar levels
- investments in a living wage for childcare providers- public universal support for childcare is needed

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

Subsidies for Low-Income Families

- review and overhaul of the current subsidy system
- Subsidy needs to be revisited
- subsidy
- financing calculation based on gross rather than net
- government subsidies

The Effectiveness of Current Funding Approaches

- review of how all current \$'s are being spent. Are we being the best steward's of the \$'s?
- more efficient use of tax dollars
- Is the government financing model suitable to service delivery?

- Restructure spending
- financing currently a patchwork of funding options
- one-time/ small grants are not that effective
- chasing \$ wastes our time
- demand side funding leaves gaping holes in quality and accessibility
- planning is intersectoral but funding is silo'd
- Planning is often inter- ministerial but financing is sectorial
- using targeted approaches rewards poor results
- equity of funding for programs servicing same ages

Different Funding Models or Approaches

- look at different models e.g.. Sweden-child care facilities supported by community
- what models are currently working?
- look at Muhajarine et al - family policy assessment tool - paper for framework
- look at school board model for administering funds
- shared responsibility - explore a business model
- how might municipalities have an impact?

Service Monitoring and/or Outcomes

- accountability vs. responsibility
- indicators of quality ties to funding?
- subsidies? - attached to measurable outcomes (i.e. complete the education level or community kitchen training etc.)
- indicators to monitor success of resource investment are needed- i.e. EDI for public distribution
- who monitors -at what cost?
- what happens when indicators show issues - punitive vs supportive?

Funding Partnerships and Resource Sharing

- build on capacity (i.e. conferences with faith organizations, public buildings, play spaces etc.)
- Funding should be targeted and pooled intersectorally
- cost/resource sharing options - levels of government, school/health/human services, community/family
- finances should include in kind - this is a discussion about resources

Private For-Profit Service Delivery

- for-profit (childcare homes) how do they fit in public funded?
- private daycares shouldn't be supported at all
- If had for profit, still have regulations
- private

General Funding Questions or Observations

- Model that saves money in new centers
- incorporate leave practices to reduce waste
- where are our champions?

- very complex
- keep ratios low
- budgets for different facilities vary widely
- a framework should try include some of the cost benefits in the long run
- If set fees- what would that look like as not all overhead is the same?

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

Participants identified seven main financing areas around 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. They also commented on the need to gain public support for new investments and highlighted the importance of attending to how services are delivered including the recruitment and retention of staff.

- i) Families Access to Early Learning and Child Care**
 - equitable access
 - accessible for all
 - that there needs to be options
 - Universal

- ii) Affordable Early Learning and Child Care for Families**
 - making more affordable
 - Child care needs to be affordable
 - affordability
 - care in general not affordable 2 children in care-2nd mortgage
 - child care for a year more expensive than university tuition for a year
 - Spending by parents

- iii) Public Engagement and Discussion of Early Learning and Child Care**
 - discussion/public buy-in
 - brainstorming
 - building relationships
 - public will
 - Take time to sell value of early learning and childcare
 - we first need to understand that we are all stakeholders in quality early learning Once that happens we will gladly invest public money in early learning
 - If we measure, monitor and communicate how the investments have resulted in improved outcomes, we will continue to have stakeholder agreement for public investment

- iv) Public Funding for Early Learning and Child Care**
 - if childcare will be publicly funded, it will/ may change public perception on childcare
 - higher quality care is expensive to provide -we see that in education & health - we need public support for its value
 - government funding in general needs to increase

- explore a business model & other models (i.e. Sweden)
 - financing has to be stable
- v) **Child Care Subsidies for Low-Income Families**
- subsidies
 - subsidy system has to be scrapped and reorganized
 - subsidy rates comparing cost of living etc.
 - subsidy increases
 - Subsidy system is not working (2 responses)
 - subsidy system
 - 1982-level of subsidies hasn't changed
 - subsidy system needs changing (2 responses)
 - subsidy doesn't work as it stands
 - subsidies for parents (low income) increased
- vi) **The Early Learning and Child Care Workforce**
- Being able to attract and retain quality, educated early learning education/ workforce
 - recruitment & retention of staff
 - attract & retain EC workers
 - wages need to increase
 - EA grants need to increase
- vii) **The Organization and Delivery of Services**
- we need to upgrade our system
 - unification of services -so we know what is happening to the families
 - Eliminate private daycares (including day-homes)
 - high quality
 - why are we the lowest #'s supported?
- viii) **Questions and General Comments on Financing**
- Funding early learning and childcare is the 'sexy' thing to do but is it maintainable?
 - Q \$'s attached to reserves -what is the FNMI framework?
 - Q What does the spending of the \$ wisely look like - we may not need more \$ into system
 - education
 - business in community
 - Agree
 - someone else should pay for it
 - Financing is key
 - it's expensive
 - we need something better
 - equal stake of funding
 - Most, if not all, of the economic pressure currently on early learning is due to the increasing cost of living

4.3.3 On which aspects or features of the financing of early learning and child care do you think 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 and Return on Investments

- putting more \$ in ECE
- ROI
- it's a good investment

ii) Source of Financing

- Who should pay?
- Who actually opens their wallets?
- cost funding (who's responsible for funding service provided)
- responsibility
- whose responsibility?
- publicly funded
- no one wants to have to pay - parents, boards, government
- if taxes for corporation increase do corporations pull out - does the economy go down or is the return still high enough to handle the increased taxes?

iii) Financing Strategies

- how to correct the situation?
- how to fund it?
- how?
- I see a lot of potential disagreement on the "how"

iv) Allocation of Financing for Early Learning and Child Care

- what services?
- what is quality and what the cost is?
- what kind of service?
- capacity and administrative funds - accountability & transparency, centralized accounting/community development

v) Families Access to Early Learning and Child Care

- free for families to use
- universal access?

vi) The Early Learning and Child Care Workforce

- Universal wages and fees
- salary guide/benefit

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 very important or essential to improving the services available for children and families. They further identified some key changes to strengthen the field and highlighted some current financial challenges.

i) Level of Importance

- Critical
- finances are key. If the \$'s aren't there, the rest doesn't happen
- Very (2 responses)
- extremely important/strongly important (3 responses)
- imperative
- huge as it's a major barrier
- improved financing would improve access and quality
- Financing is the game changer, we fund what we have
- Vital
- a big job but essential
- very important - changes create opportunity to reimagine system
- fundamentally- affect quality (programs/ staffing, tec.)
- financial shifts are vitally important
- major
- has to change yesterday
- It is not the only factor but one of the most important
- "Show me the money"- that will lead to quality

ii) Possible Financing Changes

- town, municipalities, etc. can be involved. Reserves in kind, the less we spend in overhead the more there is for programs, wages, etc.
- spending smarter - not necessarily more.
- More affordable fees will increase demand for licensed care.
- Funding structure needs be overhauled
- other countries doing it, why can't we?
- How can we better support our families financially so they can succeed?
- need mechanism for collaborative funding

iii) Current Financing Challenges

- the current system meets the needs of only the very impoverished and the wealthy
- current funding is inadequate in many cases to offer anything beyond custodial care
- Parents are having to choose quality vs. affordability
- contradictory messages from government
- everyone afraid to tackle on/off fed/provincial funding
- affordability
- access
- the low level of wages makes it difficult to attract quality people into the field

iv) Other Questions

- Do we have enough trained personnel to help us meet the growing need of childcare workers?

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 service?

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 for how services might be reorganized to address current challenges. They further outlined some alternate models of delivery.

i) Services that are Accessible to Parents and Families

Affordable Services

- should be affordable
- subsidized by government - not a financial burden to parents

Accessible and/or Responsive Services

- Equity
- Equitable
- should be accessible
- multiple options
- shift work
- cultural appreciation
- recognize and cater to all levels of need
- addressing toxic stress situations
- responding to foster parents
- focus on input from parents/families

ii) Public Support for Early Learning and Child Care

- Need to consider buy-in from provincial and Municipal Gov., business community and of course the general public
- right people at the table
- public education

iii) Financing Early Learning and Child Care

- Change the way the funding is not increase
- Shifting the funding from Prek to childcare
- Clarification about PreK and funding
- we don't often know where the funding is coming from
- proper funding

- shifting funding around

iv) **Regional or Local Organization of Service Delivery**

- regionalization
- There isn't a solid organ unit after 4 years centrally or regionally, look at PreK and Kindergarten
- opportunities to organize & deliver services through - RICS -school boards - communities - community based organizations
- Municipality engagement
- we need to explore partnerships with municipalities as an unapproached, underutilized partner
- role of school division

v) **Current Organization and Delivery Challenges**

- fragmented
- too fragmented
- Revisit- reimagine Prek and Kindergarten- too many transitions, influenced by rituals of schools, too focused on school readiness indicators
- is parent run board the way to go?
- Move away from parent board
- Duplicate Service
- competition between services (i.e. PreK & child care work together)

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

A Framework or System

- needs to be or follow one framework understanding systems are unique
- have one plan
- priority of it
- a multi-functional system
- a system not a collection of services
- structured model-public & private, for profit /NFP, large facility/institutional -small home
- we need to improve the system but it has to be more integrated
- Integrated
- all inclusive
- health

Service Centres or Hub Models

- hub program
- places for parents to gather/access to services
- Include preschool and parents group in centers
- Early learning center- includes all PreK health/ medical
- Partnerships: New center model
- centres with other supports (e.g. Health care)
- what happened if daycares interacted with seniors -more investment in senior right now - create international centres

- Child and family centres
- child care centres can connect with some services
- The province recently introduced three Family Resource Centres; does this indicate support for multisite, multiservice organization? Is this a direction we should preserve
- early learning & family centre in the schools
- organizing existing childcare and learning into early learning and family centres
- Model for new centers- save money and time
- model for new centres
- model for new centres template
- consultant to open new centres only

Partnerships and Collaboration

- Collaboration/ Partnership
- working together (bringing different groups & services together)
- good partnerships – health
- child care centres developed in business buildings
- it takes a whole community to raise a child

Regulation, Monitoring and Standards

- Regulation (example PreK without Regulation)
- Home based family childcare unregulated
- monitoring done at a higher level-government
- curriculum & standards
- provides opportunities to measure, monitor, improve a system

vii) Early Learning and Child Care Workforce

- who is to deliver it - level of education required?
- recruiting the right people

viii) Questions or General Comments or Concerns

- not everyone is on the same page and same vision
- what does early learning look like to everyone?
- how would it need to change from where it is now?
- how do we get there?
- who will organize?
- location-where in the community?
- what is already established?
- what can we learn in this regards with other provinces?
- cost of delivery
- Universal care will eliminate PreK and Kindergarten
- variable ways
- best practices

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

Participants identified seven main 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 areas included the need for services to be accessible to families, to meet the developmental needs of children, and to revise the current organization and delivery of services.

i) Services that are Accessible for all Families

- accessibility/accessible (2 responses)
- the fact that every child and family deserves equal choice
- early learning and family programs
- universal
- available to all
- affordability
- minimal cost to families

ii) Support for Children's Development

- it is hard to believe given the vast # & type of stakeholders that there would be a lot of agreement, maybe the sole agreement would be that child care & early learning is required
- parents role
- Focus on child needs
- importance of social/emotional competencies and other key principles
- importance of early learning development for future well being
- importance of sharing books/early literacy

iii) An Early Learning and Child Care System

- a fully funded universal early learning model from conception to age 8 with partnerships with health, therapies, literacy, etc., we could allocate all funding from preK & K to fund this if the high quality was there
- we need a system of EL & care

iv) Improvements in the Organization and Delivery of Services

General Improvements

- delivery system has to improve
- we need better organization
- municipal \$ for childcare -what does this do -the province rev-sharing grants-so many things downloaded our rural population cannot do this

Consolidation of Governance

- the ability to operate under one umbrella
- eliminating separate boards

Better Linkages/Transitions between Services

- warm transition to other services (real person helps families to access/transition services)

v) High Quality Services

- High quality care
- higher quality
- assurances of quality - do no harm
- review of kindergarten and follow best practices
- Hope's Home – model

vi) Partnerships and Networking

- Partnerships
- networking
- more refined partnerships and organization is required
- start from existing facilities and build partnerships
- partnerships with school divisions
- connect with services already there
- we need one group/ or several working together.
- how do we create capacity for collaboration/ recognition discussions?
- better ministry partnerships

vii) Supporting the Early Learning and Child Care Workforce

- supports
- most service providers are exhausted and waiting for someone else to take a lead
- training/professional development - keep current

viii) General Comments

- large business (2 responses)
- complex service to deliver (same as education)
- flexible
- Perhaps once importance of early learning and childcare (investing in) is owned by the general public and politicians.
- corporate sponsorship
- education/clarification about what is
- Educating before- partnering, networking and supporting

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

Participants provided a small 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.

- similar to school divisions
- Priority...?
- Where to start?

- With which group?
- content
- the "how"
- replacing parents is supporting parents
- funding (who/how)
- cost of public funding
- how to finance
- how to deliver

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

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

i) Level of Importance

- very important
- very important, without changes it will continue to be accessible to very poor or very wealthy
- very important -change gives us opportunities to reimagine or imagine a system
- change must happen to improve services
- critical

ii) Comments on Changes

- Strong base for child learning experience
- Family feel more welcome, have more choice in their community
- accessible for every needs
- one place for one children
- Parents co-educator to childcare professional.
- with better partnerships this may improve care that is already present
- waiting lists will continue to grow
- educate in order to move forward

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 or 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**
 - Lack of quality advocates makes quality program difficult.
 - Society does not understand the importance of early years
 - how to educate public on get the "buy in"
 - commitment to the value of early learning

- ii) **General Comments on Quality**
 - we need to invest in high quality early learning and care facilities in a community gathering place that brings all sectors together.
 - proactive
 - Education-Quality
 - funding
 - I am concerned that if we do not support quality in ELCC we will just be 'wasting' our investment in early learning
 - healthy society, well educated

- iii) **Program Structure and Supports**
 - access to evidence-research and best practice
 - general supports/ partnerships
 - synergistic with other sectors
 - policies & procedures
 - # of spaces per Early Childhood educator (workload)
 - lower staff ratios
 - accreditation
 - accreditation of homes star ratings
 - identify barriers to early learning (e.g. poverty, housing, health issues)-link to resources
 - parent engagement

- iv) **Program Resources (Curricular Resources)**
 - implement play & exploration in all centres
 - play & exploration
 - tools to develop play & exploration
 - how do you implement play & exploration for infants & toddlers
 - Curriculum for all licensed centres- must follow curriculum
 - keep growing with Play and Exploration- PD to support implementation
 - play & exploration - guide not curriculum - rolled out without proper instruction
 - play & exploration –mandatory

- v) **The Measurement and/or Assessment of Quality**
 - common definition of quality - national statements are available
 - common definition of quality
 - How to evaluate or assess quality?
 - Why is the ELP6 not mandatory?
 - How do we measure quality?
 - what is quality child care?

- what does quality childcare look like?
- how to assess quality?
- measurable outcomes to move the "needle" (qualitative & quantitative)
- quality needs to be measured

vi) Service Regulations and Program Standards

- define by the people (1), the place (2), the practice (3). 1. interactions between adults/children, child/child 2. the environment 3. children and their learning experience
- evaluation
- regulating all early childhood programs
- equal expectations of the delivery
- Evaluation of programs/ ongoing performance evaluation
- supportive not punitive accountability
- maintaining standards
- program evaluation (e.g. % of children who are school ready using EDI scores)
- consistency
- make ECCERS ITERS FDCEIS mandatory

vii) The Early Learning and Child Care Workforce

Educational Preparation and or Continuing Education

- Consistent levels of education for early learning and care professionals
- ongoing 'credentialing'/ learning in early childhood development
- invest in educators training - get rid of orientation course as an entry level. 3 classes does not prepare staff or support quality
- need mgmt. training for Directors
- qualified staff
- minimal requirement of hiring staff be reviewed
- professional development mandatory
- well educated staff
- better ECE training program
- Investment from government to ensure training
- more professional development
- Education for staff
- a degree in ECE
- higher standards for ECE educational standards
- four year university program
- what kind of education would benefit educators in order to implement the programs?
- Most critical is education of the profession- post secondary EC education degree, post graduate degree offerings
- raising the educational levels would allow for a more consistent interpretation and implementation of the further developed 'Play and Exploration'
- education of ECE's
- ongoing professional development geared towards the needs of the ECE's (not going to the same workshop every year because it's fun). Having a broader based PD opportunity

Remuneration for Early Childhood Educators

- remuneration of staff - wage parity
- I think it is unbelievable, despicable that ECE are among the lowest paid individuals working with our most precious and vulnerable.
- what do other care givers/ educators receive- nurses, home care aids
- my mechanic earns \$30- \$50 per hour

Remuneration and Links with Higher Levels of Education

- qualified staff =higher wages
- educated staff/ remuneration
- educated staff - trained in early education development level IV -remuneration to affect this education
- Absolutely raise the required education levels for ECE and correspondingly the remuneration

Restructuring the Workforce – Professionalization and Support for Staff

- diversifying staff include the nurse, social worker, administration
- diversifying staffing positions
- professionalism
- recognized ECE's
- the cost vs time for ECE's to take classes, no big incentive
- support for ECEs
- mentorship
- Children need adults who see them as developing and who can help with social and emotional development
- what supports or training can be accessed?
- why is early learning and child care educators not included in the apprenticeship program - what are the barriers?(i.e. financing to support investment)
- PreK- educator and teacher- different curriculum, combination of both necessary

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 identified broad or multiple aspects of quality as well as most specific service features or program elements that contribute to quality. Participants also raised some further questions on the nature of quality in early learning and child care and how it is best defined or understood.

i) Multiple or Broad Aspects of Quality

- all of the above
- Parents deserve high quality for the fees
- all of them
- our children are entitled to quality
- quality services = healthy happy children
- planning

- implementation
- we are all stakeholders
- supports

ii) Defining Quality

- public education about what quality is?
- what does quality look like?
- Quality needs to be defined and measurable
- defining high quality based on OECD reports, there are many existing/ living models
- Just having an early learning or childcare program does not mean it is of quality

iii) Specific Program Features

Program or Curricular Resources

- access to new ideas and programming
- provision of an early childhood "curriculum" frameworks within this broader EL and childcare frameworks.
- play and exploration is an excellent resource to deepen and broaden understanding of philosophical & pedagogical theory and practice

Parent and Family Engagement/Supports

- parent engagement/ support families and children
- keeping holistic models in mind and high quality is also reflective of community/ family conditions
- thinking towards family resource centres

Services Costs

- cost
- quality costs - qualified staff cost - fees are increased

iv) Evaluation, Data Collection and Research

- continual planning & evaluation
- evaluation and monitoring
- data collection & evaluations
- data sharing/research
- keep data collection and evaluation respectful of children and families

v) The Early Learning and Child Care Workforce

Education and Preparation

- educated staff
- apprenticeship program??
- education framework for staff, board (i.e. child development)
- Highly qualified staff
- Continuing education
- need to have educated staff to implement quality

- quality is about people, could have the best faculty in the world, if you don't have the good people, you don't have quality
- education
- educated staff of utmost importance along with remuneration
- Education- relevant courses available and expectations in the child
- management training for Directors
- Most would agree that educational levels and remunerations are required
- education of staff
- our ECEs should be supported to implement quality program and quality environment
- accountability with time & experience to model practices & to educate staff day to day

Remuneration and Benefits

- salary increase
- benefit package to support staff retention
- appropriately paid

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 aspects or features of 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 it
- the cost to implement
- money –funding

ii) Public Support

- educate public to buy it

iii) The Definition of Quality

- what is quality- everyone defines it different
- what is quality

iv) The Measurement of Quality

- Best measurement tool for Quality
- outcomes and measurement/ goals

v) Service Delivery or Program Aspects

- Curriculum
- profit/ non- profit

vi) The Early learning and Child Care Workforce

- staff may not want to take classes
- the B.Ed. teachers require further training

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 further identified key changes needed to improve the quality of services including a greater understanding of the importance of quality, as well as greater emphasis on the workforce, program resources and infrastructure.

i) Level of Importance

- Critical
- huge!
- Very important
- extremely important excuse the crudity but "How do you make a silk purse from a pigs ear?"
- extremely - too many years of talk
- we are wasting our public investment if we don't demand quality
- medium -quality could happen if : we were not chasing \$\$ - we would afford to pay and retain staff

ii) Elements of Change

Public Awareness and Support

- Public needs to understand the importance of early years
- educating public is a key component
- Preschool is missing from this conversation- the impact they have on public understanding of early learning and care

Early Learning and Child Care Workforce

- support for the profession of early learning
- salary compensation
- we need to value early childhood educators in school system and at childcare centres

Program Resources

- The ELP6 is a great resource, and it needs more PD around it to make it mandatory
- Play and Exploration defines quality but we don't have the people to implement it

Service Delivery and Infrastructure

- rules seem to be more valued than the outcomes- need more flexibility to ensure quality
- quality transportation to access quality child care (municipalities)

5. PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

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

Participant comments on the ideas, themes and questions that stand out for them covered a range of content areas. The common areas of discussion included the engagement of parents, the importance of change, as well as the various dimensions of the organization, financing and delivery of services they had considered in earlier discussions.

i) Engaging Parents and Building Support for Early Learning and Child Care

Raising Awareness, Building Support

- Public awareness of School values
- buy-in from others
- public awareness (something shocking) -costs more \$ to build a prison
- need a shift in the cultural thoughts and view of early learning
- until public support is made, shift will not be made
- bringing people to support early childhood development
- ideas -it has been a real opportunity to revitalize passion & purpose to the work of supporting the early years
- different organizations that were gathered to discuss -having other agencies express their perspectives & see the commonality
- One voice

Engaging Parents and Families

- How do we provide information to families?
- having parents & families part of the approach
- where are parents situated in this group?
- we need to have input from parents & community. Why? How? Where??

ii) The Importance of Change and a Good Time to Make Change

- let's get on with it!
- The timing is right to move forward
- The economy is such as its time to push the agenda hard.
- We need to get moving
- Time for Action
- preaching to the choir
- sense of urgency
- get going
- there is a lot of passion and drive for change across the sector
- we keep working
- hopefully will be a power & strength to move this forward
- we've been at this for so long it has to go somewhere fast

iii) The Complexity of Making Change

- how difficult the process is
- how difficult is the complex issue
- ELCC is so diverse!
- lots of work to do (2 responses)

iv) The Development of a Provincial Framework for Early Learning and Child Care

Development of a Framework

- A framework is needed that allows for change, regional adaptation and data collection/ measurement
- When start to make long term vision and plans
- stop talking write a framework
- we need a framework in order to have a better system
- how we continue on with the discussion to create the early years framework

Planning and Goal Setting

- Strategic plans
- Achieve goals

v) Governance and Management of Early Learning and Child Care

System Building and Development

- amalgamate all children services in SK in fed/provincial jurisdiction - streamline & similarize
- better integration of early years branch services
- how do we build a better understanding of first nations/aboriginal involvement in governance & policy development
- key ideas- need to change in system looking at fragmented system
- systems change and measuring outcomes

Regulation of services

- We need to regulate our systems.
- standardized regulations for all early learning (quality care etc.)

Regional Management or Oversight

- allows for -funding - measuring, monitoring, data collection - change based on identified needs - regional variation
- Using the RICS as a governing tool and also more consideration and development of the RICS
- allows you to do things regionally in a way that is in tune with your community
- how to create a space for inclusion of aboriginal child care services on reserve

vi) Financing Early Learning and Child Care

- publicly funded and available to everyone
- funding (2 responses)

- publicly funded
- working together without boundaries of funders

vii) Organization of Services

Closer Integration of Services/Service Continuum

- you can't separate them
- continuum of care from prenatal on
- hub system- many services connected to each other
- "if a house is on fire, nobody stands around wondering who will put the fire out, we come together and save the house."
- continuity of care

Service Delivery and Approach

- quality discussion has to be also about cultural relevance.
- how are we going to balance the voices between education and childcare?
- supporting; resilient agencies
- Accountability (2 responses)

viii) The Next Steps in Introducing Change to Early Learning and Child Care

- what is our action plan?
- Who is going to do the next step?
- Where to we go from here and who takes the lead?
- Who gets to be more involved and who gets to decide?
- how do we organize and fund this
- how do we implement (2 responses)
- how do we engage people who will move this forward
- now what?
- What will happen next?
- Does the government see EL and CC as a priority?
- How we can determine what works and how we can replicate these 'best practices'?
- In what ways does privacy stops us from achieving good communication between EL and CC facilities, health and education.
- When will it change? How?
- when is this change going to happen and how?
- where do we go from here? (2 responses)
- How can we move the needle beyond discussion?

ix) Comments and Questions on Quality Early Learning and Child Care

- what does quality child care look like?
- quality care
- importance of high quality care & creation of it
- quality care- common beliefs and values so we don't remain scattered
- be careful with terminology- are we valuing children and families?

- create a language around EC & broad based education which has core components for working in EC

x) Families' Access to Early Learning and Child Care

- Universal childcare
- Keep working towards (universal childcare)
- universal care continue services
- help to generate a feeling of universal entitlement (for parents)
- top down & bottom up to have the shared vision of providing universal quality early education
- universal child care
- affordable and accessible programs for all children

xi) Supports and Roles for the Early Learning and Child Care Workforce

- Professionalism introduce
- we need the people to implement the vision and goals
- higher education
- Stakeholders in PreK (for example) have a vastly different idea and vision than a front line worker
- resource people available to families

5.2 What do you see as the next 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 key stakeholders including the provincial government, parents and other stakeholders. Participants also commented on the need for the further development of a possible provincial framework.

i) Engagement with the Provincial Government

- take this information to the government
- Need to ensure we have champions in the government (provincial and municipal) and public as well
- Province needs to come together with the same goals.
- government to move on it!
- government - society - which direction
- Proper people in government to represent childcare
- need government to recognize EL as a priority
- govt has to prioritize early learning
- A strong message from the government....As a province we believe children and families are important and valued.
- province must buy-in
- to understand and create vision for child and family agenda - which is a government initiative
- invite media and government to discussions
- engage ministry at a deeper level in our discussions

ii) **Public Education on Early Learning and Child Care**

- public/sector awareness campaign
- More public awareness with ECE as well as government needs more awareness.
- Public awareness is big as well
- awareness campaign
- make this important, prominent issue
- societal culture shift
- education-staff, board
- get people to buy-in to this concept
- public education
- getting message out
- attaining public support
- need to get everyone to understand the importance of early years

iii) **Calls for Action on Early Learning and Child Care**

- To advocate for a provincial vision for child and family agenda
- Strong lobby- to achieve
- advocate for a provincial vision
- Quit talking and do it!
- There has been lots of talk, we need action
- Action
- would like to see something come from this
- action plan
- let's not stop

iv) **Further Stakeholder Discussions and Broader Engagement**

Stakeholder Discussions

- more of these discussions - evidence/results
- let's continue with what we have learned/discussed today
- take the next step towards quality early learning child care
- To continue working on these steps, to have one goal
- we keep having discussions, we need to start implementing our vision and goals we try to set out
- continue to have conversation
- continue discussion with a variety of stakeholders

Broader Engagement

- extend invitations to the government, large corporations, parents and others about early learning - to raise the issue with provincial governments
- Media on our side
- summary from today shared
- engage first nations - figure it out
- have to include everyone as a stakeholder

- v) **Financing Early Learning and Child Care**
 - funding has to come from somewhere
 - funding
- vi) **Development of a Provincial Framework – Clarity on Vision and Goals for Early Learning and Child Care**

Framework and Goals

- Get a concrete framework
- Direction+ Goals
- developing the framework
- get a framework in place
- concrete direction and goals
- put policies and framework in place and make it mandatory

Principles and Vision for Early Learning and Child Care

- put aside small vision and embrace the larger
- create a vision
- value our children
- children's rights
- Saskatchewan should be the birthplace of universal childcare
- collaboration/partnerships

vii) **Further Research and Investigation**

- review of the current system
- review the public system and the sector
- review and rebuild system
- defining quality care so that it is flexible enough for community & cultural influence

viii) **Questions and Areas for Further Clarification**

- where are we going from here?
- what's the plan?
- It depends...
- address the tough questions
- Leadership?