

April 8, 2008

Dear :

I am very pleased to again be able to provide more information on the exciting initiatives under Nova Scotia's 10-year Early Learning and Child Care Plan. The Premier of Nova Scotia, the Honourable Rodney MacDonald, and I had the opportunity to announce four initiatives available as of April 1. I echo the Premier's commitment to help the families of Nova Scotia access quality child care that is affordable and available for every child. My personal commitment is that the Early Learning and Child Care Plan brings tangible results to enable Nova Scotia families the opportunity to benefit from a solid foundation that begins in day care.

Following our November 2007 announcement regarding the enhancements to the Child Care Subsidy Program, I am pleased to provide further details. These changes will enable more families to access child care subsidy, helping us reach the goal of accessible and affordable child care for Nova Scotia families. As of April 1, families with one or two children and a net income of about \$62,000 may be eligible. The amount of subsidy will be in proportion to a family's net income. Also, the assessed daily parent fee has been lowered from \$2.25 per day per family to \$1.00 per day per family - lowering child care expenses for all families who qualify for subsidized day care.

We anticipate more families to qualify for child care subsidy under this revised criteria. In order to ensure that a waitlist is not unintentionally created, we will be conducting reviews of the number of utilized subsidized spaces. In the near future, we will announce 100 more spaces and will provide more information soon.

We are also pleased to announce that we are extending the Child Care Operating Grant to include part-day child care centres. This grant, which was introduced in April 2007, provides support to wages and benefits of child care facility staff. Specifically this funding will provide \$2 per day per occupied space and is retroactive to April 1, 2007. Application forms and information has been sent to all part-day centres.

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We are delighted to announce funding under a Support Child Care Grant Program. This program is intended to provide a stable source of funding to assist in the creation of new or the enhancement to existing, inclusive child care programs for children with special needs. This is a key part of the Early Learning and Child Care Plan and is available to all licensed child care centres and Family Home Day Care Agencies.

In November we also announced that we are launching a Recruitment and Retention Strategy to help fill the need for more educators. This two-year strategy will lay the foundation of a quality early learning and child care system. The strategy will build a plan to stabilize and enhance the child care workforce in order to deliver quality licensed child care services in Nova Scotia. The strategy will include various short and long-term initiatives starting this April that focus on: promoting child care as a career choice; organizational development; developing leadership; developing workforce skills and capacity and reviewing accountabilities specific to funding aimed to increase salary and benefits.

The first initiative under the Recruitment and Retention Strategy is the Early Childhood Education Assistance Program. This is intended to enhance the ability of licensed child care centres and Family Home Day Care (FHDC) Agencies to recruit and retain staff by providing financial support to individuals interested in pursuing a career in Early Child Education (ECE). This funding reduces the cost barriers for people interested in pursuing a career in Early Childhood Education (ECE). Funding will be available to a maximum of \$5,000 per year, per applicant for up to four years of the program. Successful applicants will be required to work in a Nova Scotia licensed child care centre or Family Home Day Care Agency in order for reimbursement.

We are about to enter the third year of the Plan and we are delighted with the opportunity to help Nova Scotia families and enable more children to have the best start in life. We look forward to more great programs as we continue to implement Nova Scotia's 10-year Early Learning & Child Care Plan.

More information about Nova Scotia's 10-year Early Learning and Child Care Plan can be found on our web site at <http://www.gov.ns.ca/coms/families/ELCCProgram.html>.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Judy Streach". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "J".

Judy Streach