

Stepping into the future

Strengthening Children, Families and Communities

***Newfoundland and Labrador's
Early Childhood Development
and
Early Learning and Child Care***

Annual Report 2003-04



Forward

Minister of Health and Community Services

On behalf of the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador I am pleased to present the 2003-04 annual report of the Early Childhood Development (ECD) and Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) initiatives. This report provides the public with program and expenditure information on ECD's third year of operation and on ELCC's first year of developmental activity.

This annual report reflects our ongoing commitment to the ECD and ELCC agreements and to the importance of strengthening programs and services for young children, their families and communities.

Both these initiatives are important investments in our youngest citizens. With our ECD partners, the departments of Education and Human Resources, Labour, and Employment, I would like to thank parents, organizations, individuals, and service providers who support early childhood development programs and services in this province.

John Ottenheimer

Minister of Health and Community Services

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Introduction

The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador understands that supporting the development of young children is an important contribution to a healthy society. Early Childhood Development (ECD) and Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) initiatives, in conjunction with other provincially and federally funded programs and services, emphasize the significance of the early years in children's development and consider how best to support families and communities in providing a healthy start in life for children.

The ECD and ELCC initiatives are long-term agreements between provincial and territorial governments and the Government of Canada. They involve the transfer of incremental and predictable federal funding to the provinces and territories to improve and expand early childhood development and early learning and child care programs and services. Both initiatives are designed to support the 0 to age 6 age group. This focus on the early years recognizes the importance of the growth and development that occurs during these years and the important contribution this period provides to life-long health and learning.

The ECD agreement, begun in 2001, entails four areas of action:

- promotion of healthy pregnancy, birth and infancy;
- improving parenting and family support;
- strengthening early childhood development, learning and care; and,
- strengthening community supports.

The ELCC Multilateral Framework, begun in 2003, is designed to expand on the third ECD area, strengthening early childhood development, learning and care; specifically enhancing child care services for children ages 0 - 6 years and their families (see Appendix I).

This 2003-04 annual report illustrates the continuing improvement and expansion of early childhood services for young children in Newfoundland and Labrador. It provides an update of ECD funded programs and services and related expenditures from April 2003 to March 2004, and provides information on developmental activity with respect to the first year of ELCC funding.

Description of Program and Services

This section highlights the description and activities of the programs and services that were supported by the ECD and ELCC initiatives in 2003-04.

Promotion of Healthy Pregnancy, Birth and Infancy

Mother Baby Nutrition Supplement

The Mother Baby Nutrition Supplement (MBNS) is a \$45 monthly benefit payable to all eligible low-income pregnant women and families with children under the age of one residing in the province. The MBNS replaced and expanded on the Mother Baby Food Allowance previously available only to women and families in receipt of Income Support.

The benefit provides financial support to assist with the additional nutritional costs of eating healthy during pregnancy and throughout a child's first year of life. Through referrals to community health nurses and family resource programs, the MBNS also enhances access to information and community support for pre- and post-natal care. Eligibility for the benefit is based on two criteria. Individuals/families are eligible for the MBNS if their income in the previous year was below the maximum income threshold for the Newfoundland and Labrador Child Benefit (NLCB) (currently at \$22,397), or the individual/family is presently in receipt of Income Support.

The MBNS was initiated in the province in December of 2001. The program supported approximately 1,775 families per month (1,325 post-natal & 400 pre-natal) in 2003-04.

Other program activities undertaken in 2003-04 include:

- design and distribution of educational materials for applicants regarding healthy lifestyles and nutrition;
- provincial distribution of program brochures and posters and advertising;
- establishing linkages with related community service providers and information exchange on programs and services available for families;
- increased referrals to public health nurses and Healthy Baby Clubs; and,
- provision of information on federally administered child benefits.

Healthy Baby Clubs

Healthy Baby Clubs are pre- and post-natal support programs offered through community-based family resource programs. The program is designed to actively promote and support healthy lifestyles for women during and after pregnancy through a mix of peer and professional supports. The program objective is to have a positive impact on the development of the baby and to increase support and knowledge for the mother.

Healthy Baby Clubs provide:

- peer support;
- information and skills training relating to healthy pregnancy and lifestyle, birth, and parenting;
- breastfeeding support;
- food supplements; and,
- supportive environments for pregnant women and families with newborns.

In 2003-04, the Department of Health and Community Services provided ECD and provincial funding to seven family resource programs to deliver Healthy Baby Clubs. It is anticipated that five additional family resource programs will be offering Healthy Baby Clubs in 2004-05. Table 1 below shows the increase in the number of families receiving support through this program since 2001-02.

Table 1: Number of families participating in Healthy Baby Clubs

Fiscal Year	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04
Number of families participating in HBC	211	277	357

The ECD and provincial funding builds on other funding sources available for Healthy Baby Clubs in the province. A significant source of support for Healthy Baby Club is through Health Canada's *Canadian Prenatal Nutrition Program* (CPNP) which provides funding to nine of the *Community Action Program for Children* (CAPC) projects.

The province works in collaboration with Health Canada and regional Health and Community Services/Integrated Boards to provide ongoing support, networking and professional development opportunities for Healthy Baby Clubs. In 2003-04, the Department of Health and Community Services funded monthly teleconferences for resource mothers of Healthy Baby Clubs and cost-shared with Health Canada a modified version of the *Canadian Mental Health's Helping Skills Training Program* for all of the Healthy Baby Clubs in the province. The Department of Health and Community Services, in collaboration with representatives from the Health and Community Services regions, also provided a 2 ½ day Healthy Baby Club orientation workshop for the coordinators, board members, and Public Health nurses associated with the six new ECD family resource programs.

Improving Parenting and Family Support

Early Intervention Services

Early Intervention Services refers to home-based services that are available in the province to families of infants and preschool aged children who are at risk for, or display, delayed development.

The intervention provided has a primary focus on child development outcomes, with four major goals as follows:

- to enhance families' knowledge in the area of their child's strengths and needs as it relates to child developmental and their child's delay/disabilities;
- to provide information on the availability and utilization of community resources;
- to strengthen parental skills in many areas, including advocacy, skill development, appropriate and effective discipline, and applied behaviour analysis; and,
- to work in partnership with families so each child can reach his or her full potential in all developmental areas.

ECD funding has enabled the province to significantly improve and expand early intervention services to families and young children. A total of 687 children received early intervention services in 2003-04 as compared to 646 children in 2002-03. The ECD funding has had a particular focus on increasing supports and services to preschool aged children with Autism. The number of children with a diagnosis of Autism who have received home-based intensive intervention services increased to 164 in 2003-04 from 107 in 2002-03.

ECD funding also supports twenty-five early intervention positions within regional Health and Community Services/Integrated Boards. The positions include two Psychologists, a Speech Language Pathologist, a Senior Child Management Specialist/Behaviour Management Specialist, ten Child Management Specialists, and a Provincial Consultant. In addition, funding provided in 2003-04 has enhanced the capacity of regional Health and Community Services/Integrated Boards to train Senior Therapists, and to purchase resources to enhance the intervention provided to children and their families (e.g., toys, books, and equipment).

In 2003-04, funding was provided to support a public workshop on behavioural/pharmacological interventions for persons with Autism and to support training/certification of local professionals in discrete trial teaching/applied behaviour analysis. Sixteen professionals have obtained certification to date and another twenty-five are in training for certification. As a result of training and certification, all six Health and Community Services regions in the province have the capacity to deliver intensive early intervention to preschool aged children with Autism.

In 2003-04, the Child Development Team of the Janeway Child Health Care Centre completed training in use of the Autism Diagnostic Interview/Observation (ADI/ADOS). Diagnostic training and increased awareness of the disorder has led to earlier diagnosis, from 4 ½ years of age in 1999-2000 to 2 ½ years of age in 2003-04. Approximately 85% of children diagnosed with Autism in the province receive the diagnosis via a multi-disciplinary team process.

ECD funding continues to support research initiatives such as the evaluation of the provincial Autism pilot project. The pilot was implemented from August 1999 to June 2003 and the final report will be available Fall 2005.

Strengthening Early Childhood Development, Learning and Care

Early Childhood Literacy Programs

Each year, eligible organizations submit funding proposals to the Strategic Literacy Funding Committee for review and consideration. This committee is chaired by the Department of Education. In 2003-04, early childhood literacy grants totalling \$237,840 were offered to 33 existing non-profit, community-based organizations to deliver early childhood literacy programs for children up to six-years-old and their families. Programs are not eligible to apply for 100% funding and partnerships are encouraged. As a result, the 2003-04 grants have made it possible for programs valued at a total cost of over \$750,000 to be offered in various communities throughout the province.

Based on recommendations from a review and assessment of existing early childhood literacy programs conducted in 2002-03, priority was given to programs which contained a parent/caregiver, child and book component. A complete listing of all early childhood literacy grants can be found at <http://www.gov.nf.ca/edu/early/literacygrants.htm>. Final reports received from programs which were funded in the previous year continue to indicate that these programs have a beneficial impact. For example, some schools have indicated that the number of children entering who require intervention is decreasing.

KinderStart Program

The *KinderStart* program is a provincial transition-to-school orientation program developed by the Department of Education for children and their parents/caregivers. The objective of this program is to help all children and their families connect with the school and to provide resources for them to use at home during the pre-kindergarten year. It consists of eight in-school sessions and accompanying information for principals, parents/caregivers and teachers. An activity bag of supplies and resources is provided for each parent/caregiver and child. Some resources were also provided for each *KinderStart* classroom. The Department of Education also supplied each school district with funding to offset the costs related to the implementation of this program.

Early feedback has been very positive. Approximately 5600 children and their parents/caregivers participated in the *KinderStart* program in 2003-04. A copy of the program guide and description of resources can be found at <http://www.gov.nl.ca/edu/literacy/kinderstart/main.htm> .

Child Care Services

Funding from ECD is being used to support the child care system in the delivery of services which promote healthy child development, provide opportunities for play, aid the child's transition to

school and meet the child care needs of families. This has been accomplished by continuing to provide funding for the Child Care Services Subsidy Program, the Educational Supplement, Equipment Grants for family child care, and resources to the Health and Community Services regions to maintain or increase their monitoring and support functions.

The *Child Care Services Subsidy Program* provides financial assistance to allow access to regulated child care services by low income families who require child care. Families who do not qualify for the full subsidy may qualify for a partial subsidy. The number of families supported by the subsidy program continues to grow and there are currently no children on waiting lists due to lack of funding. The program is administered by the regional Health and Community Services/Integrated Boards. The number of children/families accessing the Subsidy Program continued to grow in 2003-04:

Table 2: Number of Subsidies

March of fiscal yr.	2001	2002	2003	2004
# Subsidies	1038	1210	1373	1459

An *Educational Supplement* is provided to Early Childhood Educators who work directly with children in child care centres and who have minimally Level I Care Services Certification. This initiative serves two purposes; it augments the salaries of qualified staff, and it assists with the issues of staff recruitment and retention. Early Childhood Educators with Level I receive \$2,080 per annum, those with Level II or higher receive \$4,160.

The number of individuals eligible for the Supplement continues to increase.

Table 3: Number of individuals in receipt of the Educational Supplement

Fiscal yr.	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04
# Supplements	320	325	353

Equipment Grants are provided annually through ECD funding to regulated family child care providers to offset the cost of quality play materials to support the child's development. Family child care is considered regulated if the provider has been approved by a licensed family child care agency or holds an individual family child care license. The number of providers qualified to receive the grant has remained relatively stable at 36 in 2003-04, compared to 38 in 2002-03.

Human Resources funding is allocated at the provincial and regional levels annually to support the delivery of the Child Care Services Program. The number of professional positions supported in the province has more than doubled since 1999.

Early Learning and Child Care funding began in 2003-04. The first essential step in the further development of the child care system in Newfoundland and Labrador, supported by ELCC funding, involved consultation with stakeholders. In 2003-04 the Department of Health and Community Services conducted a province-wide Child Care Services Needs Assessment. The purpose of the needs assessment was to assist the priority setting process by considering the current parameters of child care services, the needs of children and families, and next steps to further enhance the system and best support our youngest citizens in the province. The objectives of the needs assessment were to determine where children from birth to age twelve are located geographically, where and what services exist by region and area, where and what the needs are by region and area and to propose next possible steps. Methods included a document review, examination of social indicators, a survey of regulated child care providers, a population survey of parents, and key informant interviews.

The social indicators or demographic statistics selected included overall population, population of children from birth to age twelve, population projections, birth trends, out-migration, income, education, employment, the number of young mothers, and lone parent families.

The main purpose of the survey of regulated child care services (both child care centre and family child care providers) was to determine the number of children that could be accommodated and demand for spaces. The telephone surveys resulted in a 96% response rate for centres, and 66% response rate for family child care providers.

The purpose of the population survey of parents was to assess the utilization of child care services for children twelve years and younger, and to determine the need for child care services for children of this age group. A total of 2,202 telephone surveys were completed.

Key informant interviews were included in the assessment to gain a deeper understanding of child care issues, as seen by individuals who have a special knowledge of child care. A potential list of sixty-three key informants including policy developers, service providers, and members of interest groups, was compiled from around the province. A total of forty-eight interviews were completed.

Eleven of the fifteen recommendations in the needs assessment form the basis for developing the ELCC plan for this province. The recommendations are summarized as follows:

Availability

- Promote availability by mounting a campaign on regulated care based on its benefits, how to access it and how to develop it if availability is limited.

Quality

- Develop and implement a system that measures and supports quality child care.
- Provide information on quality child care to families.

Family Child Care

- Stimulate regulated family child care so this option can be more widely available to families requiring child care services.

Inclusion of Children with Special Needs

- Inquire into training needs of child care service providers with respect to children with special needs and explore the options for meeting their needs.
- Strengthen collaboration between child care service providers and those currently identifying, assessing and providing resources to children with special needs.
- Strengthen the ability of child care services to include children with special needs in their programs.

Implementation of programs through ELCC funds will begin in 2004-05.

Strengthening Community Supports

Family Resource Programs

Family resource programs promote the well-being of children and families through the implementation of a variety of community-based programs emphasizing healthy child development, parenting skills, social support and community capacity building. The province through the Department of Health and Community Services supports family resource programs through the National Child Benefit (NCB) and the Early Childhood Development (ECD) initiatives.

In 2003-04, the nine family resource programs supported under NCB provided support to 2,400 families in 144 communities (2,168 parents/caregivers and 2875 children). Six family resource programs funded by ECD began implementing their programs in 2003-04 and supported 636 (785 parents/caregivers and 908 children). Family resource programs receiving enhancements under ECD were able to expand their programs to include 713 families (804 parents/caregivers and 904 children). With the addition of ECD, over 100 new communities and neighbourhoods have access to family resource programs. Table 4 shows the growth of the ECD family resource programs from 2002-03 to 2003-04.

Table 4: Growth of ECD family resource programs (new and enhancements) from 2002-03 to 2003-04.

Fiscal Year	Families	Parents/ Caregivers	Children	Communities served	Family resource programs
2002-03	453	463	508	31	11
2003-04	1349	1589	1812	102	30

Six family resource programs completed an evaluation covering the period from April 1, 2002 to December 31, 2003 which focused on the process of their developmental phase and early implementation phases. An external evaluator was hired by each of the organizations to help with this process. Common recommendations included the need for continued strategic planning and board development, the need to develop strategies to encourage more ownership by the participants, and to strengthen what is being offered before expanding into other communities. The next evaluation cycle is 2004-07.

In addition to direct support to the programs, in 2003-04 the Department of Health and Community Services funded regularly scheduled teleconferences. The table below indicates the groups and the number of sessions from September 2003 to June 2004.

Table 5: FRP teleconferences

Groups	HCB Resource Mothers	FRP Staff (all FRP's)	Coordinators (NCB and ECD)	Joint Coordinators (NCB, ECD, CAPC)	Provincial Association FRP
Sessions	7	3	3	1	2

The Department of Health and Community Services also cost-shared with Health Canada one provincial professional development training event for all family resource programs in the province, and supported a provincial consultant position for family resource programs.

In 2003-04, the Department of Health and Community Services continued to support a provincial committee for family resource programs consisting of provincial and regional Health and Community Services representatives. This committee provides support to the provincially funded family resource programs by offering program support to projects and linkages to the regional Health and Community Service system. Provincial representatives from the Department of Health and Community Services and the Department of Education also participate on the Joint Management Committee overseeing Health Canada's nine *Community Action Programs for Children* (CAPC) and *Canadian Prenatal Nutrition Program* (CPNP) projects.

Expenditures

The following table provides provincial expenditures from 2000-01 with further investments made during 2001-02, 2002-03 and 2003-04. From the \$19,440,313 invested in 2003-04, the Federal Government through the Canada Health and Social Transfer provided approximately \$8.2 million for Newfoundland and Labrador's Early Childhood Development initiative. A further amount of \$.4 million was received for the Early Learning and Child Care initiative and will be invested in programs and services in 2004-05.

Service/Program	Expenditures (unaudited)			
	Baseline 2000-2001	Fiscal Year 2001-2002	Fiscal Year 2002-2003	Fiscal Year 2003-2004
<i>Mother Baby Nutrition Supplement</i>	n/a	\$882,000	\$990,000	\$977,000
<i>Mother Baby Food Allowance</i>	\$780,000	n/a		
<i>Healthy Baby Clubs/Family Resource Programs</i>	\$1,200,000	\$2,233,239	\$2,304,771	\$3,153,373
<i>Early Childhood Literacy Programs</i>	\$79,615	\$192,310	\$266,366	\$245,082
<i>KinderStart</i>	n/a	\$192,254	\$198,856	\$201,619
<i>Early Intervention Services*</i>	\$1,638,385	\$2,576,404	\$3,829,334	\$3,832,356
<i>Child Care Services*</i>	\$7,226,800	\$8,769,030	\$8,711,614	\$11,030,883
<i>Administration**</i>	n/a	\$193,674	\$238,554	\$ 428,173
<i>TOTAL</i>	\$10,924,800	\$15,038,911	\$16,539,495	\$19,440,313

* annual expenditures include an approximate amount for baseline staffing resources.

** includes expenditures for staffing, travel, communication, professional, and purchased services.

Appendix I

Multilateral Framework Agreement on Early Learning and Child Care

Introduction

In September 2000, First Ministers¹ released a communiqué on Early Childhood Development (ECD) that recognized the critical importance of the early years of life in the development and future well-being of the child. Recognizing that families play the primary role in supporting and nurturing children, they committed to improve and expand early childhood development programs, building on existing investments.

Progress has been made under the Early Childhood Development initiative in each of the four key areas for action identified by First Ministers:

- Promote healthy pregnancy, birth and infancy
- Improve parenting and family supports
- Strengthen early childhood development, learning and care
- Strengthen community supports

Governments remain committed to improving and expanding programs and services in any or all of these four key areas for action over time.

Building on this commitment, Federal, Provincial and Territorial Ministers Responsible for Social Services agree to make additional investments in the specific area of early learning and child care. Ministers recognize that quality early learning and child care programs play an important role in promoting the social, emotional, physical and cognitive development of young children.

This early learning and child care framework represents another important step in the development of early childhood development programs and services. This initiative is consistent with, and builds upon, the commitments made by First Ministers in September 2000.

Objective

The objective of this initiative is to further promote early childhood development and support the participation of parents in employment or training by improving access to affordable, quality early learning and child care programs and services.

Areas for Investment

To advance the objective set out above, Ministers agree to further invest in provincially/territorially regulated early learning and child care programs for children under six. In the context of this framework, regulated programs are defined as programs that meet quality standards that are established and monitored by provincial/territorial governments.

Early learning and child care programs and services funded through this initiative will primarily provide direct care and early learning for children in settings such as child care centres, family child care homes, preschools, and nursery schools. Types of investments could include capital and operating funding, fee subsidies, wage enhancements, training, professional development and support, quality assurance, and parent information and referral. Programs and services that are part of the formal school system will not be included in this initiative.

Effective Approaches

In the settings described above, effective approaches to early learning and child care are based on the following principles:

Availability and Accessibility:

Flexible and responsive early learning and child care options should be broadly available to promote early childhood development and to support parents as they participate in employment or training. Examples of initiatives that support availability and accessibility could include increasing early learning and child care spaces, supporting extended and flexible hours of operation and parent information and referral.

Affordability:

Early learning and child care services should be affordable. Governments have established mechanisms to assist parents in meeting the costs of early learning and child care. Examples of initiatives that support affordability could include enhancing fee subsidies that take into account parents' ability to pay and operational funding.

Quality:

Early learning and child care should be of high quality to support optimal child development. Examples of initiatives that support high quality early learning and child care could include enhancements to training and support, child / caregiver ratios and group size, compensation, recruitment and retention, physical environment, health and safety, and learning environment.

Inclusiveness:

Early learning and child care should be inclusive of, and responsive to, the needs of children with differing abilities, Aboriginal (i.e. Indian, Inuit and Métis) children and children in various cultural and linguistic circumstances. Examples of initiatives that support inclusiveness could include special needs programming and supports, and culturally and linguistically appropriate resources and training.

Parental Choice:

Early learning and child care services should provide the flexibility to respond to the varying needs and preferences of parents and children. Examples of initiatives that support parental choice could include innovative approaches to service provision in rural and remote communities, and flexible approaches that address a range of family and employment circumstances.

Working Together

Consistent with commitments made by First Ministers, governments will work together in full respect of each other's responsibilities, recognizing that provinces and territories have the primary responsibility for early learning and child care. Each government will determine its priorities within this initiative. Each government agrees to publicly recognize and explain the respective roles and contributions of governments to this initiative.

Governments will continue to work with the Aboriginal peoples of Canada to find practical solutions to address the developmental needs of Aboriginal children.

Governments will ensure effective mechanisms for Canadians to participate in developing early learning and child care priorities and reviewing outcomes.

Funding

First Ministers agreed that investments for early childhood development should be incremental, predictable and sustained over the long-term.

Federal, Provincial and Territorial Ministers Responsible for Social Services agree that support for early learning and child care is a critical investment in our children's future. Ministers agree that further investments in early learning and child care should also be incremental, predictable and sustained over the long-term.

Ministers recognize that this initiative builds on the significant provincial/territorial investments already made in early learning and child care and agree on the need for flexibility to address local needs and priorities. This initiative also complements important existing federal investments for children and families.

Public Reporting

Ministers believe in the importance of being accountable to Canadians for early learning and child care programs and services. Clear public reporting will enhance accountability and will allow the public to track progress in improving access to affordable, quality early learning and child care programs and services.

In the First Ministers' communiqué on Early Childhood Development, governments committed to report annually to Canadians on investments and progress in the area of early childhood development. Consistent with that commitment, and with early childhood development reporting by jurisdictions, Ministers commit to report annually to Canadians on their progress in improving access to affordable, quality early learning and child care programs and services.

More specifically, Ministers will report annually to Canadians on all early learning and child care programs and services as defined in this framework, beginning with a baseline report for 2002-2003. Reports will include:

- Descriptive and expenditure information on all early learning and child care programs and services;
- Indicators of availability, such as number of spaces in early learning and child care settings broken down by age of child and type of setting;
- Indicators of affordability, such as number of children receiving subsidies, income and social eligibility for fee subsidies, and maximum subsidy by age of child; and,
- Indicators of quality, such as training requirements, child / caregiver ratios and group size, where available.

Governments commit to publicly release baseline information by the end of November 2003; annual reports will be released beginning in November 2004. The purpose of performance measurement is for all governments to be accountable to their publics, not to each other. The amount of federal funding provided to any jurisdiction will not depend on achieving a given level of performance.

Governments will strive to continue to improve the quality of reporting over time.

Knowledge, Information and Effective Practices

Research, knowledge and information are the foundations of evidence-based decision-making and are critical to informed policy development. Governments recognize the importance of evaluation in determining the effectiveness and outcomes of initiatives in early learning and child care and agree to work together to develop an evaluation framework within one year of federal funding being received. Where appropriate, governments agree to pursue evaluations based on this framework, and to work together to share information on effective practices in early learning and child care, which may include evaluation findings.

Next Steps

Federal, Provincial and Territorial Ministers responsible for social services will begin implementation of the commitments and priorities outlined in this framework as soon as possible.

¹ While the Government of Québec supports the general principles of the Early Childhood Development Initiative and the Early Learning and Child Care Initiative, it did not participate in developing these initiatives because it intends to preserve its sole responsibility on social matters. However, Québec receives its share of federal funding and the Government of Québec is making major investments toward programs and services for families and children. All references to viewpoints shared by the federal, provincial and territorial governments in this document do not include the viewpoints of the Government of Québec.