PREFACE

The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador is focused on providing regulated child care services throughout the province that are built on three key pillars outlined in our 10 year child care strategy *Caring For Our Future: Quality, Sufficiency and Affordability*. The creation of a new department, the *Department of Education and Early Childhood Development* recognizes that the best education systems integrate early learning activities and the formal education system.

Government recognizes the benefits and the necessity of a well-developed system of quality, sufficient and affordable child care. A strong system of regulated child care supports economic stability on both a community and a provincial level. It contributes to gender equity, enables parents of young children to participate in the labour market, assists in poverty reduction and helps to build a skilled future workforce. In addition to these benefits, research indicates that there are improved developmental outcomes for children who take part in early learning opportunities, such as those provided in regulated child care, especially for the children who are most vulnerable in our society.

Government also recognizes that focusing on integrated services and enhanced quality early learning opportunities in a child’s formative years, when children’s brain development is most open to learning and growing, will build a stronger foundation for children’s lifelong learning. Quality programming in both child care centres and family homes is fundamental to an effective, high quality system of regulated child care.

The intention of legislation, policy and standards for regulated child care services is to promote healthy child development during the early years and ensure a safe, nurturing and inclusive learning environment for the children who participate.

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