



**ASSOCIATION OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS
NEWFOUNDLAND & LABRADOR**

Position Paper

Operating Grant Program

It is the position of AECENL that the Operating Grant Program (OGP) has the potential to make centre-based child care more affordable to many families and while AECENL has no hard data, anecdotally it appears to be effective in achieving this goal.

AECENL supports that the OGP is voluntary and that current licensees can choose whether or not to participate. The more centres that participate, the more affordable spaces are created. It is the position of AECENL that new centres should be required to participate in the OGP to increase the number of affordable spaces on an on-going basis.

AECENL supports the flexibility in the OGP to allow for situations where the licensee can demonstrate financial need such as the higher cost of living in Labrador and for situations where an applicant does not have the ability to install a kitchen.

While in support of the intent and direction of the OGP, AECENL has some recommendations to make the plan more effective.

It is of concern to AECENL that family child care is not included and parents accessing this service do not have the same opportunity for a reduction in fees. It is the position of AECENL that in the review of the OGP planned for next fiscal year, family child care be given priority.

The quality of programming provided to children depends largely on having fully qualified ECEs. Level II ECEs have the knowledge to deliver quality programs. It is the position of AECENL that all ECEs responsible for development and delivery of programming should hold this level of certification.

Wages and working conditions are the two major elements in the recruitment and retention of Level II ECEs. AECENL is pleased that the ELCC Supplement is not included as part of the wage. However, the subject of the generally low salaries of ECEs has not been addressed. The benchmark of \$14.00 and \$12.00 does not reflect the level of education required to hold Level II Child Care Services Certification.

AECENL believes that licensees who avail of the OGP be required to pay their staff using the existing government classification and wage scale. It is the position of AECENL that current salaries be maintained if they are in excess of \$14 and \$12 and increments be included in annual reviews of each program's budget. Further that a review of the wages of others in the education system with similar required levels of education be undertaken to allow for equity within the department and across “. . . the complete continuum of learning from infancy to high school . . . ” as stated by a former minister.

AECENL believes that the potential for the majority of licensees to participate in the OGP would increase if instead of a “one size fits all” approach, a purchase of service agreement was used. There are many benefits and a purchase of service approach would ameliorate some of the concerns of AECENL. Licensees have a wide range of costs when operating a centre and in the absence of a purchase of service agreement, no allowances can be made for the wide range of costs that licensees have e.g. rents.

The staff-child ratio required by the regulations is set as a minimum. To increase the quality of their programs, some licensees employ more than the minimum number of ECEs. A purchase of service agreement would support that higher standard of care. It is the position of AECENL that, if a licensee currently employs more than the minimum number of ECEs, additional cost be taken into account when determining the amount of the grant.

The three pillars of the Ten Year Plan, quality, affordability and sufficiency, are closely interwoven and changes to one invariably affect the others. Government has made progress in making centre-based fees more affordable to families. However, more consideration needs to be given to how the OGP will affect quality: in particular the income levels of ECEs.

January 20th 2015

Revised September 2015

Revised January 2017