

For Immediate Release

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**Evaluation provides recommendations for
Early Learning and Child Care System**

Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, September 4, 2013 – A recent report on the province's early learning and child care system is showing positive results in quality and access to early childhood programs, says Education and Early Childhood Development Minister Alan McIsaac.

"Our government is committed to building a stronger early learning and child care system and we know that by investing in the early years of children, we are investing in the future of our province," said Minister McIsaac. "Over the past five years, we have demonstrated this by making significant investments in a provincial early learning and child care system, an Early Learning Framework curriculum for Early Years Centre, and a full-day kindergarten program."

In May 2010, the provincial government launched the Preschool Excellence Initiative- a five year plan to phase in broad and significant changes to the early learning and child care system. In order to assess the progress of the system each year, it was necessary to establish baseline data. The department partnered with the Margaret and Wallace McCain Family Foundation to fund a baseline evaluation study.

The evaluation was independent of government and completed under the leadership of Holland College in partnership with the University of Prince Edward Island and provided an overview of progress and 32 recommendations on how to improve access, quality, governance and sustainability. Many of the recommendations are complete or are being addressed. The department is developing a plan to address remaining recommendations.

As part of the evaluation, information was gathered from directors of early years centres, private centres, educators, program support staff, parents, post-secondary early childhood faculty and other professionals. Data was collected using a number of sources and approaches, including surveys, focus groups, interviews, quality site visits

and case studies.

“I would like to recognize our partners for their hard work in completing this evaluation, which gives us a foundation to measure our progress,” said Minister Mclsaac.

The report is available online at www.edu.pe.ca.

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Backgrounder

In May 2010, Government launched the Preschool Excellence Initiative- a five year plan to phase in broad and significant changes to the early childhood education and care system. The initiative was supported by the largest investment in early childhood education and care in the history of our province to help better support children to make a successful transition as they enter the public school system. The Initiative draws on the recommendations of the 2010 *Early Years Report-Early Learning in PEI*.

The Early Years Report was based on extensive recommendations by parents and representatives of the early childhood sector. It drew on international expertise and research, and concentrated on building an early learning and child care system. The desire to create a high quality, sustainable early learning and child care system was influenced by an earlier policy decision to move Kindergarten into the public school system.

- Since the Preschool Excellence Initiative was implemented, 46 early years centres have been established, providing equitable access to families across the province.

- A temporary wage subsidy was introduced for qualified early childhood educators at private centres. While the wage subsidy increase was completed in April 2012, private centres continue to receive funding from the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development through a Quality Enhancement Grant.
- A new *Early Learning and Childcare Act* was created and passed and Regulations to accompany the Act are being written.
- Over 170 early childhood staff have received entry level training. Additional staff are in the process of taking, or have completed further certificate level training.
- An Early Learning Framework curriculum document was developed and rolled out at all English and French early years centres.
- An online registry was launched for parents who are searching for child care. An Early Years Advisory Committee was put in place to provide input on the implementation of the report and provide recommendations.
- Access to a high quality early learning and child care program involves consideration of availability and affordability. In the first year of the Preschool Excellence Initiative, early years centres increased spaces for infants by 125 per cent and there continues to be equitable access to early learning and child care for children.
- In the first year of the Preschool Excellence Initiative, parent fees were regulated and the Child Care Subsidy Program continues to provide support to eligible families, with a maximum daily rate that matches the regulated fee in early years centers.

