Early Learning and Child Care

System Transformation in Peel 2010-2014: An Overview
The Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) system – both at the provincial and local level – has undergone unprecedented transformation during the last five years (2010-2014), with more under way. This transformation has occurred alongside population growth and increased service demands – there are now 34,700 licensed child care spaces in Peel, a 31 percent increase since 2012.

This report highlights the key drivers behind the changing landscape of early years provincially and in Peel. As we reflect on this journey, I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge and celebrate our collective efforts in providing high quality and inclusive early years opportunities to Peel families. I believe the convergence of a number of factors – leadership from Regional Council, meaningful community partnerships and local flexibility created by Ontario’s legislative changes – have been major contributors in our success.

Under the Regional Council’s leadership, the review of our role in child care, with the introduction of Full Day Kindergarten, resulted in withdrawal from direct service delivery and reinvesting $12.7 million to strengthen the broader ELCC system in Peel. This, together with $54 million in new provincial funding since 2013, means that we can now touch the lives of more children and families in Peel. Achievements include:

- No wait for fee subsidy
- 51 per cent increase in the number of children receiving child care fee subsidy since 2012
- 44 per cent increase in the number of children with special needs supported since 2012

Our dedicated partners – including the Ontario Government (primarily the Ministry of Education), Peel School Boards, Child Development Resource Connection Peel, Child Care Operators, Sheridan College, Family Support Programs and Local Planning Tables like Success by Six – have played a crucial role in making our journey successful. Our collective impact will be further enhanced by continuing to actively engage our partners in solutions and strengthening their role in addressing local priorities.

The value of investing in the early years is firmly entrenched in evidence. We know that a good start in life leads directly to success in later years and reduced costs to taxpayers. We believe the approach that we have adopted is working and showing positive results.

This report provides valuable contextual information for current and future system planning in our community and to that end, is a great resource for system partners. As the service system manager for Peel, we look forward to continuing our work with partners to create more opportunities for children and families in our community.

Sincerely,

Janet Menard
Commissioner of Human Services
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction 2
Background 3
Provincial Policy Directions 2010-2014 3
Regional Policy and Transformational Initiatives 2010-2014 8
Region of Peel Research and Initiatives Supporting System Planning 12
Early Years System Planning Going Forward 15
Early Learning and Child Care System Change Timeline 2009-2015 17
The last five years (2010-2014) have been a period of unprecedented system change for Peel’s Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) community. This document provides an overview of how provincial early years modernization efforts have impacted Peel’s ELCC system, and how the Region of Peel has worked with system partners to rapidly plan and implement transformational initiatives.

This overview is intended as a key reference to support integrated system planning and transformation efforts with all system partners and to help inform integrated planning through Success By 6, Peel’s provincial mandated Best Start community planning table for children. This system overview will be used to inform the development of an Early Years System Plan in alignment with the province’s efforts to modernize the ELCC system.
1. Background

In June 2009, Dr. Charles Pascal's report, “With Our Best Future in Mind, Implementing Early Learning in Ontario”, articulated the vision for a seamless and integrated system to support children 0–12 years of age and their families. The report identified 20 recommendations with an aim to strengthen and modernize the ELCC system, including:

- Implement a full-day early learning program for four-and five-year-old children
- Modernize legislation to bring desired outcomes for children between 0–12 years of age and their families
- Identify funding and integrated accountability framework
- Develop and implement an Early Learning Policy Framework

Pascal’s vision led to several recent changes in the ELCC system, beginning with the implementation of full-day kindergarten. Peel’s system partners have been working together to plan and implement supports to address local system needs and evolving provincial direction.

2. Provincial Policy Directions 2010-2014

A) FULL-DAY KINDERGARTEN (2010-2014)

Full-day kindergarten (FDK) is a voluntary provincial program that was phased-in over five years, reaching full implementation in September 2014 in 291 schools to 30,797 children across Peel’s four school boards. FDK is an important step in achieving an integrated ELCC system and ensuring the early development of children in Peel. In its service system manager role, the Region of Peel, worked closely with school boards, licensed child care operators, and other system partners to support the FDK transition and stabilize its impact on licensed child care where 80 per cent of licensed spaces had supported four-and five-year-olds.
B) SCHOOLS FIRST CAPITAL RETROFIT POLICY (2012-2015)

In the summer of 2012, the province released the “Schools-First Child Care Capital Retrofit Policy” and announced $113 million in funding over three years to repurpose school based licensed child care spaces to serve younger age groups (0–3.8 years).

Collectively, Peel’s school boards were allocated over $6 million to repurpose child care spaces in schools to serve the younger age groups. To date, over 1,000 spaces have been converted or are in progress. The Region of Peel continues to work closely with school boards and licensed child care partners to identify retrofit opportunities and is a signatory with school boards on the plans upon submission to the province.

C) CHILD CARE MODERNIZATION DISCUSSION PAPER (2012)

In June 2012, the province carried forth its commitment to modernize the child care system with the release of the discussion paper, “Modernizing Child Care in Ontario.”

The paper initiated a conversation with the public by outlining the province’s long-term vision to build a high quality, accessible, and coordinated ELCC system for preschool and school-aged children through a series of actions.

The province invited feedback on the paper and the Region of Peel response included perspectives of diverse system partners. Three key themes emerged:

- Equitable and transparent funding
- Supports for children with special needs
- Quality supports

The province has a long-term vision to build a high quality, accessible, and coordinated ELCC system for preschool and school-aged children.
D) ONTARIO EARLY YEARS POLICY FRAMEWORK (2013)

In January 2013, the province released the *Ontario Early Years Policy Framework* to support greater integration and coordination across an array of early years services. Key priority areas for action are:

- Full implementation of full-day kindergarten
- An effective approach to implementing Best Start Child and Family Centres
- Improve delivery of speech and language services
- Stabilize and transform the child care sector

In addition, to realize this integrated vision, the Ministry of Education launched an Early Years Leadership Strategy that provided funding for a senior level Early Years Lead Positions in school boards.

E) DAY NURSERIES ACT REGULATIONS CONSULTATION (2013)

In December 2013, the Ministry of Education proposed a series of regulatory changes to the *Day Nurseries Act* and invited feedback from stakeholders on the proposed changes to the Act which was originally enacted in 1946.

In February 2014, Peel Region submitted a community response which was informed by consultations with over 150 ELCC system stakeholders. This was shared with Council on February 27, 2014.

Key themes included the need to:

- Focus on quality
- Balance between access to child care options for families and flexibility for child care providers
- Develop healthy public policy that fosters physical activity and healthy nutrition for children
- Recognize that the early learning child care setting is a key environment for intervening in the prevention of obesity in children
F) NEW EARLY LEARNING AND CHILD CARE FUNDING FORMULA/FRAMEWORK (2013 - ONGOING)

The province introduced a new population-based child care funding formula and framework to address historical funding inequities and to help stabilize the ELCC system as a result of FDK. The new funding formula is more equitable, evidence-based, and includes a streamlined approach to funding and increases flexibility for Service Managers to address local needs while continuing to align with provincial policy outcomes.

Under the new formula and framework, System Managers are required to develop their own funding approaches to address local priorities and assist the operation of licensed child care programs, including supporting the transformation of the system to serve younger children.

Since 2013, Peel received an additional $46.1 million (exclusive of wage enhancement) from the province as a result of the new funding formula and framework. These funds are attributed to the Region’s demographics, including high population growth and socio-economic trends (e.g. households living below low-income cut-off).

G) ONTARIO’S PEDAGOGY FOR THE EARLY YEARS (2014)

The document “How Does Learning Happen? Ontario’s Pedagogy for the Early Years” builds on the Ontario Early Years Policy Framework and is a key component of Ontario’s vision for the early years.

The pedagogy is organized around four foundational conditions that are important for children to grow and flourish: belonging, well-being, engagement, and expression. The pedagogy is centred on a philosophy that children are competent, capable of complex thinking and rich in potential, which is applicable to all ages and stages of life. The pedagogy sets principles to guide practice in early years settings and provides a continuum of development for children from birth to age eight.
H) **ONTARIO SPECIAL NEEDS STRATEGY (2014)**

In November 2014, the province announced the *Ontario Special Needs Strategy* – a joint initiative of the Ministries of Children and Youth Services, Health and Long-Term Care, Education, and Community and Social Services. The goal of this strategy is to improve outcomes for children with multiple/complex special needs through collaborative work involving parents, youth, service providers and communities.

Local planning tables for service coordination and rehabilitation services were established across the province to lead the initiative. Many of Peel’s system partners are involved in Peel’s local planning tables, including Peel’s Early Learning Special Needs Advisory Committee (PELSNAC) and Peel Inclusion Resources Services (PIRS) partners.

I) **THE CHILD CARE MODERNIZATION ACT (2014)**

The *Child Care Modernization Act (CCMA)*, 2014 (Bill 10) received Royal Assent on December 4, 2014. The CCMA repeals and replaces the *Day Nurseries Act* that has governed child care in Ontario since 1946. This legislation sets out to improve safety and help foster the learning, development, health and well-being of children through four key changes to the child care system:

- Greater government authority and enhancement tools to strengthen oversight and enhance safety
- Increased access to spaces in licensed home child care settings
- Program clarity around licensing requirements
- Enhanced safety and quality of child care

The legislation sets out to strengthen oversight and enhance safety to foster the learning, development, health and well-being of children.

The CCMA legislatively places broad new accountabilities and responsibilities on system managers that go beyond the historical and limited ‘service delivery agent’ role as outlined in the *Day Nurseries Act*. Of note is the CCMA’s requirement that System Managers will now be responsible for assessing the economic viability of the licensed child care system and if necessary, make or facilitate changes to help make such programs and services economically viable and the requirement to develop local Early Years System Plans in collaboration with other system partners such as school boards.
3. Regional Policy & Transformational Initiatives (2010-2014)

Peel’s licensed child care system has experienced major growth in the past two years with a 29 percent increase in spaces from 26,500 in 2012 to 34,084 in 2014. In response to the emerging priorities that accompany local growth, and the impact of the provincial modernization efforts, the Region of Peel has undertaken several initiatives:

A) EARLY LEARNING AND CHILD CARE SERVICE PLAN (2010-2011)

The Region of Peel developed its Child Care Service Plan (2010-2011) in collaboration with the community to address the initial impacts of full-day kindergarten on child care providers. This plan helped inform the allocation of one time transitional operating funding of $900,766 to transition existing spaces to care for children 0–3.8 years of age in non-profit agencies and provide repairs and maintenance for both non-profit and for-profit licensed child care agencies in Peel.

(Received by Regional Council on September 9, 2010)
B) REGION OF PEEL EARLY LEARNING AND CHILD CARE TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS (2012)

As a result of an evolving ELCC system at the provincial and regional level and the impact of FDK, Regional Council established an ELCC Task Force to review the Region’s role in the provision of licensed child care and as a Service Manager for the broader system.

In September 2012, Council approved 21 ELCC Task Force recommendations in five key areas:

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<tr>
<th>Service delivery and planning</th>
<th>Quality</th>
<th>Funding</th>
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<td>Special needs</td>
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<td>Advocacy</td>
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Throughout the ELCC Task Force process, parents and professionals identified where the Region could enhance supports to strengthen Peel’s ELCC system.

The ELCC Task Force also recommended that the Region implement a phased withdrawal from the operation of its 12 Learn.Play.Care. Child Care Centres with the reinvestment of this funding to enhance the broader service system.

Regional Council’s decision to reinvest a total of $12.7 million from the withdrawal of the direct delivery of child care together with increased provincial funding resulted in the Region exceeding its goals in delivering upon the ELCC Task Force recommendations. As a result, Peel has achieved milestones and made significant progress in many areas including the following:

- Elimination of the fee subsidy wait list since mid-2013 (compared to 3,093 children on the fee-subsidy wait list in 2012)
- 13,428 children received fee-subsidy in 2014 compared to 8,900 children in 2012 (number of children served includes part and full time, exits and new placements throughout the year)

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<tr>
<th>FEE SUBSIDY WAIT LIST</th>
<th>RECIPIENTS OF FEE SUBSIDY</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3,093</td>
<td>8,900</td>
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<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>13,428</td>
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</table>

2012 mid-2013 2012 2014
C) SPECIAL NEEDS STRATEGY AND PEEL INCLUSION RESOURCE SERVICES (PIRS) (2013)

The Peel Special Needs Strategy for ELCC was developed in response to ELCC Task Force direction to enhance supports for children with special needs and to increase access to quality inclusive licensed child care.

A central focus of the strategy is a shared service delivery model called the Peel Inclusion Resource Services (PIRS) model which leverages the collective resources among six special needs programs across the licensed child care sector in Peel. The focus of the new model is to build the capacity of providers to support children with special needs, as well as those with undiagnosed needs/behavioural issues.

The Peel Early Learning Special Needs Advisory Committee (PELSNAC) provides planning, coordination and support of the delivery of services for children with special needs, 0–12 years of age, in Peel. PELSNAC’s 2014-2016 priorities are seamless transitions, capacity building, strengthened partnerships and equitable access.

In 2014, PIRS had a 98 per cent provider participation rate and 1,335 children with special needs were supported compared to 929 in 2012.

D) THE DEVELOPMENT OF PEEL’S NEW LOCAL ELCC FUNDING AND POLICY FRAMEWORK (2013 ONWARD)

Given historical inequities in provincial funding, and a growing population, Peel benefited greatly from a new provincial population based funding formula introduced in 2013. Peel received the largest increase under the new model (53 per cent). Provincial funding has continued to grow due to Peel’s population growth and economic factors such as percentage of households living below low-income cut-off.
Through the new provincial funding formula and framework, Peel has received an additional $46.1 million in annualized 100 per cent provincial funding for licensed child care and special needs supports. Annual increases are:

- 2013 – $28.5 million
- 2014 – $9.6 million
- 2015 – $8.0 million

The province asked Service Managers to develop new local funding policies that aligned with provincial direction, including the development of a General Operating Funding to help support overhead costs. While it worked on developing new local policies, Peel focused on stabilizing the ELCC system by supporting program viability system transformation to serve younger age groups and provincial child care modernization efforts.

The additional funding has supported fee subsidy, special needs resourcing, system capacity building (professional development), repairs and maintenance, and toys and equipment. Non-profit licensed providers were also eligible for transitional operating grants and capital retrofit funding. Examples of key outcomes include:

- Over 12,500 participants received professional development opportunities from 2013 to 2014
- 422 licensed child care programs were supported with funding for repairs and maintenance, play-based material and equipment, and transformation or capital retrofits to serve younger children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITY PARTICIPANTS</th>
<th>SITES RECEIVING UPGRADES AND/OR NEW EQUIPMENT/MATERIALS</th>
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<tr>
<td>12,500</td>
<td>422</td>
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<td>2013 to 2014</td>
<td>2012 to 2014</td>
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The Region is currently developing its new local ELCC funding and policy framework informed by a comprehensive service provider engagement process. The new funding model will include new general operating funding to support overhead expenses and will integrate all funding streams into one policy framework. This new model will increase access to license child care by supporting ELCC system priorities including transformation of Peel’s licensed child care system to serve younger age groups and stabilizing the system as it continues to adjust to the impacts of FDK.

4. Region of Peel Research and Initiatives Supporting System Planning

System partners and the Region of Peel are leading several activities, including research and initiatives that help inform system planning at both the broader system and provider agency level.

A) FULL-DAY KINDERGARTEN (FDK) IMPLEMENTATION AND RESEARCH

The Peel District School Board and Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board, together with the Region of Peel, have collaborated with Dr. Janette Pelletier from the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education on a research project that examined the implementation and impact of Ontario’s FDK initiative.

Research findings are consistent with the provincial FDK evaluation in which benefits were reported for language and cognitive development, communication and general knowledge as well as social competence. The results of child outcomes are directly attributable to the seamless day and play-based learning at FDK sites. In addition to decreasing the costs of licensed child care for parents, FDK provides parents with consistent care options throughout the school year.
B) HEALTH AND EARLY YEARS

In 2013, as part of the “Nurturing the Next Generation” strategic priority, Peel Public Health conducted an environmental scan to better understand Peel’s early child development programs and services as well as the capacity of the community to support healthy child development. The environmental scan findings are based on program delivery staff feedback, highlights include:

- Gaps in nutrition education and physical activity supports for families with young children
- Gaps in mental health services for children and their families as well as gaps in the early identification of developmental delays
- Service organizations lack financial resources resulting in long waitlists for early years services and staff burnout

In 2013, Peel Public Health also conducted a situational assessment of child care policy in the areas of healthy eating and physical activity in licensed child care. As a result, recommendations to improve the healthy eating and physical activity of Peel’s children were developed by Public Health and Human Services, including:

- Strengthen policies that govern licensed child care in Peel
- Improve the healthy eating and physical activity knowledge and skills of licensed child care providers
- Create supportive environments to improve the healthy eating and physical activity for all children in Peel, recognizing that the majority of children do not attend licensed child care

Peel staff are now identifying strategies to action the recommendations. These include:

- Strengthening partnerships with local and provincial stakeholders
- Identifying evidence-informed resources and tools for child care providers to use in the classroom
- Advocating for enhancements to the nutrition and physical activity components of the early childhood education curriculum
C) EARLY LEARNING AND CHILD CARE DATA AND PLANNING TOOLS WEBPAGE

System partners identified the need for reliable data and planning tools to support decision making. This fueled a vision for access to key data that is accessible to providers, a one-stop-shop of links to resources, and trend analysis. In August 2014, the Region, in collaboration with system partners launched the Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) Data and Planning Tools webpage. The webpage aligns well with the ELCC Task Force recommendation regarding service delivery and planning and understanding of the demand and supply of child care in Peel.

The webpage features valuable early years population and child care demand forecasts, an interactive mapping tool to explore data and analysis of system trends. Child care providers, school boards, early years services, and other service providers and system partners are able to use data tools to help make key decisions and identify trends. For example, the webpage provides information that can be used to answer questions, such as:

- Where to locate programs and services (Interactive Mapping Tool)
- Where to retrofit child care programs to serve younger children (0–3.8 years of age)
- Impacts of FDK and broader system change

D) PEEL CHILDREN AND YOUTH INITIATIVE/SUCCESS BY 6

Peel Children and Youth Initiative (PCYI) was established in 2010 as a collaborative focused on joint planning, community capacity building and partnership enhancement to improve systems and supports for children and youth (0–24 years of age). PCYI facilitates broad system planning for 0–24 years of age. PCYI’s Board includes executive staff from school boards, Region of Peel, United Way of Peel Region, Youth Services, Children’s Aid Society, Local Health Integration Network, Sheridan Institute of Technology and Advanced Learning and Community Agencies.
Success By 6/Best Start Network has the role as the only mandated community planning group for 0–6 years of age under PCYI’s umbrella in Peel. Partners, service providers, school boards, Public Health and community members work collaboratively through PCYI to foster integration, evidence-informed decision making, and system-wide partnerships.

PCYI has established a System Integration Framework to support integrated system planning across 0–24 years of age that takes steps to align existing and new planning tables for school age and transitional youth inspired by Success By 6. All aligned planning tables are represented on smaller groups to review priorities, work plans, gaps and opportunities for collaboration across the broader system.

PCYI research supports system change, knowledge transfer, partnerships and policy. The group has released several research reports including one led by Success by 6 in 2014 on “Newcomer Engagement in Early Child Development Services and Support in Peel Region” that called upon agencies to consider what they could do differently to support the recommendations.

5. Early Years System Planning Going Forward

The ELCC system has undergone significant changes in recent years with more to come as a result of evolving local system needs and provincial direction.

2015 will be another transformative year for system planning and implementation with the recent passage of the Child Care Modernization Act (CCMA) and a series of proposed regulatory changes to be released. Alongside the implementation of the new Wage Enhancement initiative and the development of a new local ELCC funding model and policy framework for Peel.
Service Managers and system partners across Ontario are awaiting more information on key initiatives that will further transform the early years landscape across Ontario. This includes provincial directions and guidelines that will help inform the planning and development of:

- Best Start Child and Family Centres, which is an important component of early years system planning going forth as a universal and integrated support to all families
- Early Years System Plan requirements under the new legislation

Through the established community planning tables, system partners and the Region will continue to work collaboratively in planning and implementing transformational changes in the ELCC system. Early years system planning will build on the foundations of the last five years and embrace a more comprehensive approach to planning reflective of all services and supports for children and families including public health early years and child and family friendly cities and active lifestyle priorities.

For any community, establishing and building on a strong foundation for children’s early years is the most powerful key to a strong social and economic future. Dr. Charles Pascal’s vision for a seamless and integrated system to support children from 0–12 years of age and their families is coming to fruition in Peel as we work together with all system partners to create an integrated early years system for children and families.
## EARLY LEARNING AND CHILD CARE SYSTEM CHANGE
### TIMELINE 2009-2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>REGION OF PEEL</th>
<th>PROVINCE</th>
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<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Dr. Pelletier Best Start/ full-day kindergarten 4-year Research Study</td>
<td>2009 Release of report: <em>With Our Best Future in Mind</em></td>
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<td>Peel Child Care Service Plan (2010-2011)</td>
<td>Creation of Early Years Division</td>
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<td>2011</td>
<td>Review of Region’s role in child care commences</td>
<td>2010 Five-year implementation plan for full-day kindergarten commences</td>
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<td>ToCP #10 (Health Services) Optimize early child development in Peel (2011-2014)</td>
<td>2012 “Modernizing Child Care in Ontario” discussion paper</td>
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<td>Regional Council approves ELCC Task Force recommendation to withdraw from</td>
<td>Schools First Capital Retrofit Policy</td>
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<td>direct delivery of child care and strengthen ELCC System</td>
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<td>Region of Peel response to the Child Care Modernization Discussion Paper</td>
<td>2013 New provincial child care funding formula and framework (took effect in 2013)</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Ontario Early Years Policy Framework released</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Day Nurseries Act Regulations Consultations</td>
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<td>2013</td>
<td>Peel’s Special Needs Strategy for Early Learning and Child Care</td>
<td>2014 Release of “How Does Learning Happen?” Ontario’s Pedagogy for the Early Years</td>
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<td>Peel Inclusion Resource Services (PIRS) Model developed</td>
<td>New Wage Enhancement Initiative announced</td>
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<td>Peel Public Health’s environmental scan “Nurturing the Next Generation”</td>
<td>Child Care Modernization Act (CCMA) passed</td>
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<td>Transition Operating Grant funding</td>
<td>Ontario Special Needs Strategy announced</td>
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<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>Local conversation commences regarding Best Start Child Family Centre approach</td>
<td>2015 Wage Enhancement implemented</td>
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<td>PCY/Success by 6 — Newcomers Engagement in Early Child Development Services and Supports in Peel Region Report</td>
<td>Regulatory changes under new CCMA (pending)</td>
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<td>ELCC Data and Planning Tools Webpage launched</td>
<td>Best Start Child Family Centre approach (pending)</td>
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<td>2015 Proposed local funding and policy framework to Council (Spring)</td>
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<td>2015</td>
<td>Proposed local funding and policy framework to Council (Spring)</td>
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FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, CONTACT:

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10 Peel Centre Dr., Brampton ON L6T 4B9
EarlyYearsSystemUpdate@peelregion.ca