



Meeting Summary: The Canada Wide Early Learning Child Care Engagement Table (ELCCET)

Meeting 7: Jan 20th 2024, 9:15 a.m. - 4 pm

Background

The seventh meeting of the Minister's Early Learning and Child Care Engagement Table (ELCCET) was held on January 20, 2024. The meeting was focused on:

- Gathering feedback on the group benefits, pension plan and wage increase announcement.
- Sharing updates and gathering feedback on the future direction of the 'Inclusion Support Grant', a grant used to support the costs of delivering inclusive licensed child care services.
- Gathering input on a redesigned (draft) quality improvement tool for possible use in licensed child care settings.
- Providing updates on other work that is important to the Table, and the sector, including the Minor Infrastructure Program, the extended hours pilot in Sydney Cape Breton, public consultation and Family Home expansion.

Agenda

- 1) Introductory comments, check-in
- 2) Minister's address
- 3) Group benefits and pension plan feedback
- 4) Input on future direction of the Inclusion Support Grant
- 5) Update and input on elements of the Quality Matters Program (a quality monitoring program in licensed early learning and child care)
- 6) Updates on other projects

The meeting began with a discussion about the sector's recently announced group benefits and pension plans and ECE wage increase. The Department answered questions and members shared feedback. Plan details, resources and FAQs can be found at [Pension and Group Benefits | Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement \(childcarenovascotia.ca\)](https://childcarenovascotia.ca/Pension-and-Group-Benefits).

The majority of the meeting was dedicated to the topics of inclusion and quality, building on discussions from November's meeting. Outcomes of the Inclusion Support Grant Working Group were discussed and Table members shared input on further considerations regarding long-term, strategic changes meant to support a culture of inclusion across the sector. A draft quality improvement tool was reviewed by the Table and considerations for the tool and its future use were collected. These will be carefully considered as this work moves forward.

Discussion Details: Benefits and Pension



The Department asked Table members what they have been hearing from the sector regarding the pension, group benefits and wage increase announcement. Many members recognized the positive impact this will have on recruitment, retention and professionalization of the sector. Some raised the challenges felt by those close to retirement who will not benefit from a pension package to the same extent as their junior colleagues. Concerns were also raised about the financial impact to eligible support staff who are not paid through a provincial wage scale but will be contributing to their pension and group benefits' plans.

Those looking for more information about plan details should review recorded sector calls and access plan providers' websites, at [Pension and Group Benefits | Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement \(childcarenovascotia.ca\)](https://www.childcarenovascotia.ca/Pension-and-Group-Benefits).

Discussion Details: Inclusion Support Grant

The Department shared updates on the review of the Inclusion Support Grant and asked for feedback regarding roles, responsibilities, funding and professional learning pathways to enhance inclusive practices across the sector. Many shared that currently, inclusion staff are often used to maintain legislated staffing ratios due to staffing shortages. They shared that this is likely to persist without role clarity and accountability, and until staffing levels can be further stabilized.

There was general agreement that there is a need for more inclusion training and learning for all staff, and that resources and future inclusion roles must focus on enhancing the inclusive practice capacity of all staff working in the sector.

When asked about considerations for funding for inclusion, members agreed that the goal of inclusion funding must be to enhance inclusive service delivery for all children.

Regarding accountability, Table members support policies and processes required to ensure accountability for delivering inclusive services, but many cited the need to carefully balance the benefits of policies and processes against additional administrative burden on ECEs and Operators.

Discussion Details: Quality Matters

Table members provided directional input on a draft quality improvement tool which outlines standards and guidelines for quality child care delivery; it could also serve as a self-evaluation and planning tool for ECEs and operators. Members suggested modifications to the tool including clearer language and detailed guidelines for culturally responsive pedagogy. They also shared thoughts on ways in which the tool could be used in the future to gather information and improve practice at the individual, centre and system levels. The Department will carefully consider this feedback and looks forward to communicating updates to the sector as this work advances.



Session wrap-up

The day concluded with updates on emerging operational and strategic initiatives. The Department looks forward to sharing these updates more broadly as details are finalized.

The next in-person table meeting will take place in Spring 2024.