March 27, 2006

His Worship Larry Di Ianni
Mayor, The Corporation of the City of Hamilton
71 Main Street West
1st Floor
Hamilton, ON L8P 4Y5

Dear Mayor Di Ianni:

On November 25, 2005, the Government of Ontario signed a five-year, $1.9 billion Early Learning and Child Care Agreement (ELCC) with the Government of Canada to deliver a comprehensive early learning and child care program to Ontario children and their families, including greater access to more high-quality, licensed child care spaces.

As you are aware, the Government of Canada has cancelled the 2005 Early Learning and Child Care Agreement, negotiated and signed by Ontario in good faith. The federal government has decided that a one-time final payment of $254 million with respect to 2006/2007 will be made to Ontario.

Across Ontario we have seen remarkable success in the rapid expansion of new child care spaces. With the funding from the 2005 ELCC Agreement, Ontario municipalities have indicated that they will create approximately 14,000 new licensed child care spaces by September 2006. This is more than half of our three-year target of 25,000 spaces and is reflective of the overwhelming need among Ontario families for high-quality, licensed child care spaces. However, with the termination of the 2005 ELCC Agreement, Ontario will not be able to continue to expand the number of licensed child care spaces across the province as originally planned.

The Government of Ontario remains committed to helping more children be ready and eager to achieve success in school by the time they start Grade One. We recognize that municipalities require stable and permanent child care funding. A one-time payment from the federal government does not address the need for ongoing funding to enhance child care in Ontario as originally planned. In order to maximize the impact of the funding provided for the second and final year of the 2005 Agreement, the province is allocating the 2006/2007 payment from the Government of Canada over the four-year period remaining in the original agreement. This, combined with the new 2003 ELCC funds, will help municipalities to secure and sustain the new spaces that have been created to-date.

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Very shortly, your staff will receive notice of a Best Start Information Session to be held on April 11th. The purpose of this meeting will be to provide further information regarding the 2006/2007 Best Start funds, the Best Start Phase One Integrated Implementation Plans, and next steps. We look forward to this opportunity to continue to work collaboratively with our municipal partners as we move forward with Ontario’s Best Start Plan.

As our partners, you know first-hand the importance of this agreement to families in your communities. I look forward to your continued support in calling on the Government of Canada to honour the five-year, $1.9 billion Early Learning and Child Care Agreement on behalf of the thousands of families who need high-quality early learning and child care for their children.

Sincerely,

Mary Anne Chambers
Minister