

alPHa RESOLUTION A09-6

TITLE: **Preschool Speech and Language Program Budget**

SPONSOR: **Thunder Bay District Health Unit**

WHEREAS Ontario's Poverty Reduction Plan (Government of Ontario, 2008) identified that The Best Start Plan is designed to help ensure that children are ready to learn by the time they start Grade One, and that the Plan includes provision of preschool speech and language services at neighbourhood Best Start hubs to increase access; and

WHEREAS Speech and language skills are essential to a child's healthy development, ability to communicate, learning readiness, academic and literacy success; and

WHEREAS Preschool Speech and Language Services are directly linked to the Ontario Public Health Child Health Standard Requirements; and

WHEREAS The Ministry of Children and Youth Services' objectives for the Preschool Speech and Language (PSL) program are to identify and serve the estimated 10% of children in the preschool population with speech and language disorders; lower the average age of identification to 24 months; eliminate waiting lists; provide parents with direct access to the system; provide common speech and language assessment protocols; provide interventions appropriate for the age and needs of the child; and provide services as close to home as possible; and

WHEREAS Preschool Speech and Language Services are funded by a variety of different funding sources and are offered by different agencies with varying accountabilities, resulting in duplication of infrastructures and uncoordinated services for children and their families; and

WHEREAS A child's need for speech and language services can continue after the age of five, and may begin at any point during childhood; and

WHEREAS There is little consistency regarding levels and model of service delivery across the province when a child makes the transition from Preschool Communication Services to school based services; and

WHEREAS Children living in the north and other underserved areas are frequently excluded from access to speech and language services because of unique barriers such as transportation costs and remote locations; and

WHEREAS It has been demonstrated that schools are the most appropriate and effective services providers for children past the age of five;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT alPHa urge the Ministry of Children and Youth Services to increase the 2009/2010 funding for preschool speech and language programs to continue to deliver services at current levels at a minimum;

AND FURTHER THAT special consideration is given to communities that include a high urban aboriginal preschool population;

AND FURTHER THAT the Ministry of Children and Youth Services take a leadership role in reviewing the current funding structures for preschool speech and language services throughout the province of Ontario with a view to increasing accountability;

AND FURTHER THAT the Ministers of Health & Long-term Care and Health Promotion work with the Minister of Education and Training, and the Minister of Children and Youth Services to ensure school boards of Ontario are recognized as the appropriate provider of speech and language services to Ontario's children;

AND FINALLY THAT a smooth transition to school based speech and language services be achieved by supporting the school boards of Ontario to provide speech and language services, and funding school boards to do the same.

ACTION FROM CONFERENCE:

Moved: M. Harding (Thunder Bay)

Seconded: V. Blackmore (Middlesex-London)

Resolution CARRIED AS AMENDED