



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 5, 2026

DNSSAB Proposes Learn and Stay Pilot for ECEs in Nipissing

Pilot aims to recruit early learning and child care staff, reduce child care waitlists, and reopen licensed classrooms

North Bay, ON: The District of Nipissing Social Services Administration Board (DNSSAB) has submitted a proposal to the Province to pilot a Learn and Stay Program for Early Childhood Educators (ECEs) in the District of Nipissing, aimed at addressing critical workforce shortages that are limiting access to licensed child care.

More than 1,300 children are currently on waitlists across the District, while licensed child care programs report the need for approximately 140 additional qualified early years professionals to operate existing funded spaces. Without sufficient staffing to meet provincial ratios, classrooms remain closed despite available funding and physical space capacity.

The proposed Learn and Stay pilot would remove financial barriers to early childhood education and training while strengthening local recruitment and retention. Key elements include:

- Free tuition, textbooks, required training costs, and living supports
- Priority access for local, Francophone, Indigenous, rural, and underserved learners
- A post-graduation service commitment within the District of Nipissing
- A direct pathway to employment in licensed child care programs

“We have the funding and the licensed spaces, but without qualified educators, those spaces cannot operate,” said Mark King, DNSSAB Board Chair. “This pilot is about growing our own workforce, supporting people to train here and build their careers here, so families can access the child care they need.”

The proposal builds on the success of the Learn and Stay model already implemented locally in Paramedic Services, where 20 paramedics recently completed their education

and are now working in the District. DNSSAB is seeking to apply the same proven approach to Early Childhood Education to improve recruitment, reduce waitlists, and fully utilize provincial investments in Northern Ontario.

About DNSSAB:

The District of Nipissing Social Services Administration Board (DNSSAB) is the service delivery agency for essential human services to the residents of the Nipissing District. These include Ontario Works, Housing Services, Children’s Services, and Paramedic Services. The jurisdiction of the DNSSAB covers a population of about 85,000 people, spread out over 17,000 square kilometres, 11 municipalities, two First Nations, and two unorganized areas – Nipissing North and Nipissing South. The Board is made up of 11 Municipal councillors and one elected representative for the Townships Without Municipal Organization. The Board members exercise powers, duties and responsibilities relating to the delivery of human services, while respecting the DSSAB Act and the Board’s Procedural By-Laws and governance model. Shared responsibilities with the Province and municipalities are combined within the DNSSAB.

Learn more at dnssab.ca

DNSSAB Contact:

Brooke Piercey, Communications and Executive Coordinator

brooke.piercey@dnssab.ca | 705-474-2151 ext. 63164