

A close-up photograph of a woman with dark hair smiling warmly at a baby. The baby is wearing a maroon head covering and is in a yellow swing seat. The background is slightly blurred, suggesting an outdoor setting.

A NEW  
DAY FOR  
FAMILIES

CHILDCARE BC

# Investing in our Early Childhood Educators

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Early Care and Learning Recruitment  
and Retention Strategy



BRITISH  
COLUMBIA

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## A NEW DAY FOR FAMILIES

CHILDCARE BC





## Message from the Ministers



**HONOURABLE KATRINE CONROY**  
MINISTER OF CHILDREN  
AND FAMILY DEVELOPMENT



**HONOURABLE KATRINA CHEN**  
MINISTER OF STATE  
FOR CHILD CARE

### **CHILD CARE PROFESSIONALS ARE THE HEART OF B.C.'S CHILD CARE SECTOR.**

Every day, they care for some of B.C.'s most important citizens – young children. Yet for too long, the sector has gone unsupported, struggling with wages and recruitment and retention.

The issues that the sector is facing cannot be dealt with in isolation. Continued low wages have left providers struggling to hire qualified staff, while staffing shortages mean that those already in the sector have no relief if they are unwell or looking to take some vacation time. This lack of a healthy work/life balance can quickly lead to burnout. Together, these issues have led many providers to scale back their operations, or to close entirely.

We know that people expect quality services that are accessible and affordable, and the professionals who provide those services deserve to be compensated appropriately for the work they do.



# A NEW DAY FOR FAMILIES

CHILDCARE BC

*Childcare BC* sets out to address these issues, and recognize child care employees for the essential role they play in preparing B.C.'s kids for the future, while supporting parents to work or pursue their education – in particular, women. This strategy, supported by a \$136-million investment over three years, and supplemented by \$16.3 million in federal funding – lays out the first steps to delivering a comprehensive recruitment and retention package to better support the sector.

Child care providers throughout the province have told us that compensation is the main reason why they are struggling to find qualified staff. The median Early Childhood Educator (ECE) wage stands at \$18 an hour – lower than the living wage in many areas of the province. Yet child care providers are unable to offer higher wages for staff without passing this cost on to parents in the form of fee increases.

That's why we are enhancing wages for the sector. Along with this investment, we are also boosting the training and development supports available to child care professionals. Bursaries will support post-secondary students who are looking to pursue a career in the child care sector, with funding also available to existing professionals working in the field who want to upgrade their skills.

Taken as a whole, we believe this recruitment and retention strategy will help to make a career as an ECE a more attractive choice. Our current projections show we will need an additional 12,000 ECEs and other child care professionals over the next ten years in order to expand the availability of licensed child care and achieve the ambitious targets set in the *Childcare BC* Plan. It's vital we take action now to ensure there are qualified staff available as we move towards universal child care over the next ten years.

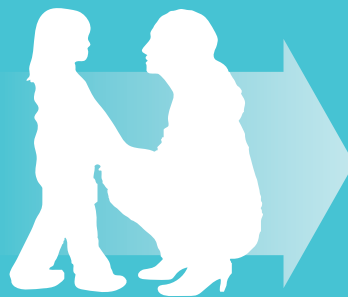
We know that we can't fix the systemic issues overnight. This strategy is the first step in a long-term commitment to improve supports for the child care sector and recognize these valued professionals for the passion and dedication they show every day.

# Investing in Child Care Professionals

**“OVER THREE YEARS, AN INVESTMENT OF MORE THAN \$1 BILLION WILL SET THE PROVINCE ON THE PATH TO A UNIVERSAL CHILD CARE PLAN THAT WILL MAKE CHILD CARE AFFORDABLE FOR PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS, CREATE MORE THAN 22,000 CHILD CARE SPACES ACROSS THE PROVINCE, AND ENSURE THOSE SPACES MEET RIGOROUS QUALITY AND SAFETY STANDARDS.”**

*– Feb. 20, 2018, BC Budget 2018 news release.*

As part of the *Childcare BC Plan*, the B.C. Government is investing \$136 million, supplemented by another \$16.3 million in federal dollars, over three years to enhance the quality of child care, including substantial investments in the child care workforce through this Recruitment and Retention Strategy.



**EARLY CARE AND LEARNING PROFESSIONALS INCLUDE EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS (ECES), ECE ASSISTANTS, FAMILY CHILD CARE PROVIDERS, OUT OF SCHOOL CARE LEADERS, CHILD CARE PROVIDERS, AND/OR RESPONSIBLE ADULTS\***

*\*Defined under the Child Care Licensing Regulation as a person over the age of 19 who has completed at least 20 hours of courses related to child development, guidance, health and safety, or nutrition*

A qualified workforce is the critical foundation to the success of all components of the *Childcare BC Plan*. Early Childhood Educators and other Early Care and Learning professionals are the heart of the child care sector. Analysis indicates the existing workforce must expand in order to ensure programs are operating within legislated requirements, and there is a sufficient supply of qualified professionals to work in all programs, whether existing or new. In addition, research indicates qualified Early Care and Learning professionals, with their requisite knowledge, skills and abilities, are key to creating a quality child care system.



**“NEVER BEFORE HAS THERE BEEN AN OPPORTUNITY OF THIS SCALE TO BRING THE SECTOR TOGETHER FOR STRENGTHENING, COLLABORATION AND CONSENSUS BUILDING.”**

*Emily Gawlick,  
Executive Director,  
Early Childhood  
Educators of BC*

### **THE GOALS OF THE RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION STRATEGY INCLUDE:**

- ✓ **AN ADEQUATE AND STABLE WORKFORCE, COMPRISED OF QUALIFIED AND SKILLED EARLY CARE AND LEARNING PROFESSIONALS;**
- ✓ **ACKNOWLEDGING EARLY CARE AND LEARNING AS A VIABLE, SUSTAINABLE AND VALUED CAREER; AND**
- ✓ **APPROPRIATE COMPENSATION PLANS AND HUMAN RESOURCE STRATEGIES.**

Government is investing in the diverse array of providers who comprise the Early Care and Learning workforce as pivotal professionals who are valued and needed to ensure that quality programs are available across the province for children and families. We know the *Childcare BC* Plan will not succeed without them.

There have been many challenges and issues facing the workforce over the last several years. Compensation has been identified as a critical issue and a significant barrier to recruitment and retention across the sector.

In addition to compensation, post-secondary ECE programs can be difficult for students to access, either due to costs or the availability of seats in a program. Accessibility is particularly challenging for prospective students living in rural or remote areas of the province. Completing on-site practicum placements can also be challenging, especially for students who are already participating in the





workforce and cannot afford to take time away from work to complete these important requirements. More flexibility is, therefore, needed to support students in achieving their goals and pursuing their certification.

Under the Child Care Licensing Regulation, ECEs are required to complete ongoing professional development to maintain their certification, and these requirements can be challenging to complete due to the quality and availability of opportunities across the province. We know that

accessing professional development is particularly difficult for ECEs living in rural and remote communities and that there is not always a good selection of quality online or distance education courses. Additionally, more in-depth, reflective, and advanced professional development can often be challenging to find, and to access due to high demand. Government is working to make courses more accessible and affordable so that post-secondary students can complete their education wherever they are in the province.



# Recruitment and Retention

## **EARLY CARE AND LEARNING PROFESSIONALS COMPRISE A LARGE GROUP OF DIFFERENT SEGMENTS OF THE SECTOR.**

Currently there are over 18,000 certified ECEs, and more than 6,000 ECE Assistants registered with the ECE Registry. ECEs and ECE Assistants may be working in a variety of programs, from In-Home Multi-Age programs to large Group Child Care facilities, and in any number of positions. An additional 12,000 ECEs will be needed once the universal child care system is fully implemented over the next ten years. B.C.'s strong labour market is currently attracting experienced ECEs to other sectors and career paths, and the planned expansion of licensed child care spaces will also contribute to increased demand for trained ECEs. We know that not all certified ECEs are currently working in child care programs, having left for jobs in related positions like Health Authority Licensing Officers or post-secondary instructors. We also know that many ECEs leave the profession completely, taking their careers in different directions, often because of the challenges associated with working in a highly demanding profession like child care.

Taken as a whole, this recruitment and retention strategy aims to make a career as an ECE a more attractive and sustainable choice. It's critical the Province take action now to make sure qualified staff are available as B.C. moves towards universal child care over the next ten years. Encouraging individuals to choose a career in Early Care and Learning is vital to the success of the profession. Equally important is finding ways to ensure professionals working in the sector feel valued and recognized for the important contributions they make to children, families and communities every single day.

These systemic issues will not be fixed overnight, and additional future actions will be needed to meet key goals under *Childcare BC*. This strategy is the first step in a long-term commitment to improve supports for Early Care and Learning professionals throughout the province and recognize them for their passion and dedication.

## COMPENSATION

According to the most recent data (2016/17) reported by child care operators through the Ministry of Children and Family Development's Child Care Operating Funding Program, the current median wage of ECEs in licensed Group Child Care facilities is approximately \$18 per hour, with an annual median salary of \$38,000. This strategy is working to address salary pressures faced by those working within the sector, the majority of whom are women.

To help recruit and retain a skilled and qualified workforce for child care services across the province, Government has committed \$21 million in 2018/19 to enhance wages for front-line ECEs working in licensed child care facilities that have enrolled in the Child Care Fee Reduction Initiative if eligible to do so. A \$1-per-hour wage enhancement will come into effect in early 2019 and will be retroactive to September 1, 2018. This improvement is the first of many new developments to strengthen B.C.'s child care workforce. In particular, this wage enhancement is the first step in a multi-year, phased approach to address compensation concerns, with an additional \$1-per-hour enhancement scheduled for April 1, 2020, which will increase the total wage enhancement to \$2-per-hour for eligible front-line ECEs.

## EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Working towards universal child care means targeting supports to reduce pressures where the need is greatest. For the Early Care and Learning profession, this means increasing and strengthening the workforce by continuing to build capacity through quality education and training opportunities.

There are currently 32 public and private post-secondary institutions in B.C. offering a total of 96 ECE Training Programs (55 basic and 41 post-basic). These programs are recognized by the Provincial ECE Registry as delivering curriculum that meets the competency and educational requirements needed for ECEs in the profession. While there are online/distance-education programs available at many institutions, this model is not always the best path for students, and some are faced with leaving their communities to attend programs.

As a start, the Ministry of Advanced Education, Skills and Training is investing \$7.4 million over three years to expand existing ECE programs across public post-secondary institutions. This will help an additional 620 ECEs graduate over the next three years.

## ECE BURSARY PROGRAM



- » FUNDING OF UP TO **\$500** PER COURSE TO HELP WITH TUITION, BOOKS AND MATERIALS
- » 60% OF BURSARY FUNDS WILL BE PROVIDED AT THE BEGINNING OF THE SEMESTER; REMAINING 40% WILL BE PAID OUT ONCE A COURSE IS COMPLETE

## ECE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT FUND

- » FUNDING OF UP TO **\$5,000** PER SEMESTER TO HELP EXISTING CHILD CARE STAFF WITH ANCILLARY COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH CONTINUING EDUCATION AND TRAINING, SUCH AS:
  - » TUITION, BOOKS AND MATERIALS
  - » TIME OFF TO COMPLETE PRACTICUMS
  - » CHILD CARE EXPENSES WHILE IN CLASS
  - » TRAVEL COSTS



To help students access ECE education, the Ministry of Children and Family Development is investing \$10 million of its \$153-million Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) Agreement with the Government of Canada to enhance and expand the Early Childhood Educators of BC ECE Education Fund (formerly called the ECE Bursary Program). Two funding streams will support students who are pursuing their ECE certification, and help current Early Care and Learning professionals to complete or upgrade their certification (*see box above*).

In addition to helping those who are looking to pursue a career in the child care sector, Government must do more to support those who have worked in the field for many years. This means offering more flexible education opportunities, so that professionals who are unable to take time off or afford a course at a post-secondary institution can still complete their education. The Ministry of Advanced Education, Skills and Training is currently working with public post-secondary institutions to develop Work-Integrated Learning pilot sites that will explore what work-based education and training can look like across the province. This innovative initiative will also support professionals who have considerable experience to upgrade their qualifications, including Early Care and Learning professionals who have moved to B.C. from another province or country.

These education and training initiatives, in addition to reviews on training requirements and opportunities for other Early Care and Learning professionals (e.g. Responsible Adults) over the coming months, will add stability to the sector by supporting the recruitment and retention of skilled and qualified individuals.

## **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Professional development is essential for Early Care and Learning professionals to keep up with the latest trends and best practices in the sector and to meet their mandated professional development requirements under the Child Care Licensing Regulation. Supporting quality development opportunities means Early Care and Learning professionals can continue to offer the best level of care and education to B.C.'s children. However, many in the sector are currently struggling to access courses to maintain their learning and continually improve their practice. This strategy aims to address this issue by increasing the quality of training and making it more available.

The Ministry of Children and Family Development is investing \$6.3 million from the ELCC Agreement with the Government of Canada to create a professional development fund to expand opportunities for ECEs to complete ongoing professional development and stay current on emerging research, trends and practices in the early learning sector.

The Community Early Childhood Facilitators Program (Facilitators) – which provides a platform for ECEs working in the field to collaborate with peers, reflect on best practices and share innovative ways to enhance the early years learning environment – has been successfully piloting a project in three B.C. communities over the past few years through funding from Children and Family Development. This innovative professional development program supports high quality practice, and provides a much-needed venue for ECEs to build a network of professional supports and remain current on emerging research and best practices. To support the work of the Facilitators, Government will work with the Early Childhood Pedagogy Network to expand this pilot program across the province over the next three years, including developing an online platform that will offer resources and learning modules for ECEs to continue their professional learning.

Additionally, the Ministry of Education is partnering with the United Way of Lower Mainland to improve the social-emotional development of young children through professional development between community-based ECEs, StrongStart BC facilitators, and Kindergarten teachers, via the Changing Results for Young Children (CR4YC) program.





In this unique program, these educators come together to share their practices and improve their skills in supporting children's social and emotional well-being. Each educator focuses on a child that needs additional support, and by working with each other and expert advisors, expands knowledge and practices to support all the children they work with. In 2017/18, eight school districts participated in the CR4YC pilot project. The results of this pilot showed improvements in children's social and emotional development, and increased educators' skills in supporting the well-being of all children under their care. The Ministry of Education is expanding CR4YC to 36 school districts in 2018/2019, and to all school districts that wish to participate in 2019/20.

### **THE EARLY CHILDHOOD PEDAGOGY NETWORK (ECPN)**

**THE EARLY CHILDHOOD PEDAGOGY NETWORK (ECPN) WILL COORDINATE AND TRAIN COMMUNITY FACILITATORS WHO IN TURN WILL WORK IN BC COMMUNITIES ACROSS THE PROVINCE TO SUPPORT ECES AND CHILD CARE PROVIDERS IN THE DELIVERY OF EVIDENCE-BASED, HIGH-QUALITY CARE AS PART OF A PROVINCE-WIDE PROGRAM. WORKING WITH OTHER EARLY YEARS PARTNERS, THE ECPN WILL:**

- ✓ **DEVELOP AND PROVIDE TRAINING TO COMMUNITY FACILITATORS**
- ✓ **PROVIDE ONGOING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR BOTH COMMUNITY FACILITATORS AND COMMUNITY ECES**
- ✓ **DEVELOP A WEBSITE TO BE BOTH A VIRTUAL NETWORK FOR COMMUNITY FACILITATORS, AS WELL AS PROVIDING ONLINE ACCESS TO PROFESSIONAL LEARNING RESOURCES.**

# Quality

**THE QUALITY OF A CHILD CARE PROGRAM IS NEVER HIGHER THAN THE QUALITY OF THE EDUCATORS WHO WORK IN THOSE PROGRAMS.**



**OCCUPATIONAL COMPETENCIES OUTLINE THE SKILLS, KNOWLEDGE AND ABILITIES THAT AN ECE NEEDS IN ORDER TO DELIVER QUALITY CARE. THEY ARE USED BY POST-SECONDARY INSTITUTIONS TO SHAPE THEIR CURRICULA, AND BY THE PROVINCIAL ECE REGISTRY TO RECOMMEND RECOGNITION OF POST-SECONDARY PROGRAMS AND CERTIFY ECE APPLICANTS.**

Supporting the child care workforce to deliver quality care is one of the key goals of *Childcare BC*. A key component of this is ensuring that ECEs have clear, up-to-date standards to guide their practice, and that post-secondary institutions have guidelines to help them develop high-quality curricula to train new ECE professionals. A solid legislative foundation is also important for supporting a quality workforce, and Government will examine options for how legislation and regulation can better accomplish that.

The current *Child Care Sector Occupational Competencies* are used by B.C.'s post-secondary institutions to develop their educational programs for new ECEs. They are also used by the Provincial ECE Registry to recommend recognition of post-secondary training programs, and to certify individuals wanting to work as an ECE in B.C. These competencies, developed in the late 1990s, and reviewed in 2004, are in need of further updating to ensure they reflect the current trends and best practices in Early Care and Learning. To support this, Government is working with the sector to develop ECE Standards of Practice. In addition to providing clear standards to guide ECE practice in B.C., these updated standards will assist in communicating to prospective ECEs, families, and communities the important and skilled work that ECEs do to enhance the quality of B.C.'s child care system.

B.C.'s Early Learning Framework, first published in 2008, supports quality early care and learning by helping ECEs and elementary school teachers understand the diverse and complex needs of children. The Ministry of Education is leading a major revision to the Framework, to be completed by April 2019. The revised Framework will support educators of children up to the age of eight in child care, early learning, and school settings. It will include expanded Indigenous perspectives and greater consideration for children's diverse abilities. The revised Framework will also continue to promote play and inquiry-based practice for all early years educators, and will serve as a resource for the *Child Care Sector Occupational Competencies*.

## CONCLUSION

Under *Childcare BC*, the B.C. Government has already delivered significant measures to improve access to more affordable child care. Now it must also deliver supports for the thousands of professionals who play a vital role in giving B.C. children the best start in life.

This strategy offers broad-ranging investments that will make a career as an Early Childhood Educator a more attractive and viable prospect and improved access to education and training will allow child care providers to deliver the best care possible. While there is still a long way to go to offer the recognition and support that our Early Care and Learning professionals deserve, these initiatives are a first step in a long-term commitment to improve the sector.

Government will work closely with the sector over the coming months to gather feedback on these supports and better understand what else is needed in order to bring about sustainable, long-term improvements for Early Care and Learning professionals throughout the province.

A photograph of a man and a young child sitting at a table in a library, reading a book together. The man is on the left, wearing a blue denim shirt, and the child is on the right, wearing a blue and white striped shirt. They are both smiling and looking at the book. The background is a blurred bookshelf.

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