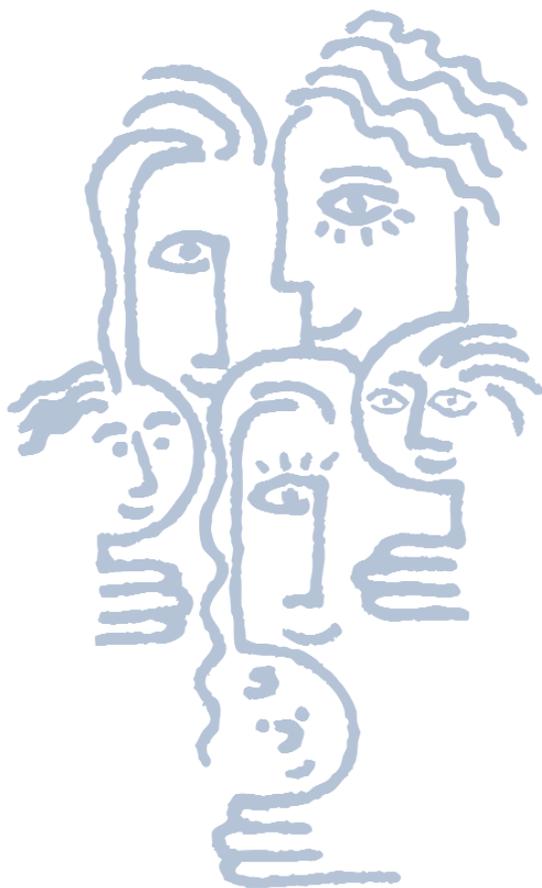


EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Supporting Employers in Canada's ECEC Sector



**Child Care
Human Resources
Sector Council**

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Prepared for the
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Introduction

Employers – including administrators, executive directors, managers, supervisors and boards of directors – are a key target audience for addressing the human resources challenges facing Canada’s early childhood education and care (ECEC) sector. However, there is currently no consistent national policy or approach to early childhood education and care in Canada, with each province or territory maintaining its own system of regulation, funding arrangements, and policy. In turn, the sector contains a wide range of employer governance models and employment settings and the context in which employers work varies by province and territory. As a result, there is a lack of information at the pan-Canadian level regarding the range and type of employers in the sector and their related human resource needs. The *Supporting Employers in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC)* project was developed to address that issue.

Overview

This document summarizes the key findings and recommendations of the project. Developed by the Child Care Human Resources Sector Council (CCHRSC) and funded by Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, the project was implemented between June 2007 and December 2008. The objectives of the *Supporting Employers in ECEC* project were to:

- Improve the understanding of employer governance models in regulated early childhood education and care settings;
- Document the human resources (HR) needs of ECEC employers in different regulated settings and contexts;
- Determine employers’ perspectives on how best to address priority HR issues in the sector, documenting innovative practices or tools that already exist;
- Identify and prioritize solutions that could help employers address HR issues; and
- Determine what tools could be developed to address prioritized HR issues.

A number of research activities were undertaken to achieve these objectives, including a literature review, pan-Canadian survey of ECEC employers, key informant interviews, focus groups, and site visits. For more detail on the research methodology see Appendix A on page 21, or review the *Main Report*.

Research Documents

The research results were used to create a profile of ECEC employers across Canada, detail the human resource issues they face, and identify practices that could help them address HR issues. In addition to the *Executive Summary*, the following project reports were produced:

- **Main Report:** This document provides an in-depth analysis of the findings of the *Supporting Employers in ECEC Project*, including the results of the literature review, employer survey, key informant interviews, focus groups and related recommendations.
- **Literature Review:** This report provides a full discussion of the key trends and issues affecting human resources in the ECEC sector.
- **Summary Profiles of Governance/Employer Models:** This report provides brief profiles of the main governance/employer models¹ identified during the research process.
- **Provincial/Territorial Mapping of HR Issues:** This report identifies the range of governance/employer models², the size/scope of operations, and the associated human resources issues of employers in each province/territory.

Preliminary Project Findings and a series of articles entitled *Employer Models in Canada's Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) Sector* were also produced in October 2008. Both documents are available on-line at: <http://www.ccsc-cssge.ca>.

¹ For summary information on employer governance models and classification, see Appendix A.

² Ibid.

Employer Survey At-A-Glance

In Spring 2008, 987 surveys were conducted with ECEC employers from across Canada. This section provides a brief summary of some of the employer survey findings. For complete survey findings, including a breakdown by province/territory and by governance model, see the *Main Report*.

About the Organization

- 70.3% of respondents identified their organization as “non-profit”.
 - The majority (65.3%) identified their governance model³ as a parent-board-led organization.
- 29.7% of respondents identified their organization as “for-profit”.
 - The majority (55.5%) identified their governance model⁴ as sole proprietor.
- Almost one-third (32.9%) of employers surveyed indicated that their annual operating budget was less than \$250,000. 19.8% of employers chose not to respond to this question, while the remainder had budgets between \$250,000 and \$5 million.
- 43.5% of respondents were responsible for less than 50 child care spaces.
 - 38.7% were responsible for between 50–100 spaces; and
 - 17.9% were responsible for more than 100 spaces.

About Staff

- 95.4% of respondents employed at least one ECE or ECE assistant.
- On average, respondents employed 13.85 ECEs/ECE assistants.
- 48.3% of respondents employed at least one supervisor.
 - 20.7% of respondents employed two supervisors.
 - 12.2% of respondents did not employ any supervisory staff members.
- On average, respondents employed approximately three (3.16) additional staff related to the delivery of ECEC (e.g., support staff, administrative staff). However, 20.5% of all respondents did not employ any additional staff for the delivery of child care.

About Human Resources and Training

- 28.4% of respondents indicated that recruitment of qualified staff was the greatest human resource challenge they face as employers, while 12.1% indicated a lack of time, and 9.9% indicated provision of adequate wages as the main challenge.
- 47.6% of employers indicated that the most common reason for recruiting challenges was low wages, while 34.6% indicated a lack of qualified staff/applicants.
- 47.5% of respondents indicated that wanting better pay was the most common reason ECEs/ECE assistants left the organization.

³ For summary information on employer governance models and classification, see Appendix A.

⁴ Ibid.

- 40.3% of respondents indicated that they had no strategies in place for retaining staff or reducing turnover. Where strategies to reduce turnover did exist, provision of staff benefits was the most frequently mentioned strategy at 27.4%.
- 78.3% of employers indicated that they had participated in some form of human resources management or leadership training or professional development; 21.7% had not.
- 76.8% felt that they or their management team would benefit from or need training or professional development related to human resources management in the next two to three years.
- 54.5% of respondents indicated that lack of time/ability to get away was their greatest barrier to taking human resources training.
- When asked what type of HR training would be of most benefit, respondents indicated that training in conflict management (79%), leadership, mentoring, or coaching (76.3%), team building (74.7%) and reviewing staff performance (74.2%) would be of most interest.⁵

⁵ Respondents could select as many responses as were applicable, thus the total may add up to more than 100%

Project Results and Recommendations

The *Supporting Employers in ECEC* project research identified nine key human resources areas that pose challenges for Canada's ECEC sector and ECEC employers:

- Need for sustainable infrastructure
- Internal human resource capacity
- Human resource leadership
- Respect for the ECE profession
- Recruitment of qualified staff
- Retention of qualified staff
- Training
- Professional development
- Compensation

This executive summary focuses on the 12 key issues and recommendations that were developed in response to the human resource areas listed above.⁶ As the issues and recommendations will show, the human resources challenges facing the sector are interrelated and complex. To address them multiple stakeholder groups must work together on solutions.

Need for Sustainable Infrastructure

Issue 1: All HR issues and solutions are embedded within the context of infrastructure, funding and policy. There is a need for the development and funding of a sustainable infrastructure for the early childhood education and care sector.

The key human resources issues facing the sector are intrinsically linked to ECEC policy, funding, and infrastructure because these factors influence the provision of services, training requirements and standards, compensation, and more. Several research studies have recommended the development of a regulatory and funding environment similar to that of the education system. Policy that recognizes the critical role of HR management and leadership is also needed to address the HR issues facing the sector. While the recommendations discussed below are intended to provide guidance to the sector with respect to human resources issues, their success (specifically, recommendations 1, 8, 9, 10, 12) is directly related to corresponding infrastructure, funding, and policy support.

Recommendation 1: Policymakers develop, resource and support an infrastructure that can sustainably support the key stakeholder groups of the early childhood education and care sector (e.g., employer/administrators, employees, employer councils, ECEC organizations/professional associations, training/pedagogical leaders, CCHRSC, etc.).

- **Activity 1A: Policymakers (Municipal, Provincial/Territorial, Federal):** Work with key stakeholders in the ECEC sector to identify priority areas for infrastructure development and provide corresponding resources and capacity building support for the development of such infrastructure.

⁶ See the *Main Report* for a full discussion of the human resources areas and related findings.

Internal HR Capacity

Issue 2: a) A lack of clarity about who the “employer” is and the governance model of early childhood education and care organizations from the employer perspective; and,
b) A general lack of HR expertise, capacity and knowledge on behalf of employers/administrators (e.g., directors, owner/operators, board members, managers, supervisors).

There is a lack of clarity about who constitutes the “employer” in ECEC, and the distinctions between governance/ employer models. This lack of clarity creates a barrier to understanding the human resource needs of employers and creating resources to address those needs.

A major issue identified through the project research is that employers/administrators often lack human resources expertise, knowledge and capacity⁷. Many employers were promoted to their position because of their skills in early childhood education and did not have formal experience in human resources. As a result, many individuals responsible for human resources in ECEC organizations learned the required skills on the job and through “trial and error”, as opposed to formal training/professional development. Key informants and focus group participants also commented that where organizations are governed by a volunteer board, board members may not have specific HR training or skills. Thus, the issues that employers face are often compounded by a relative lack of knowledge and/or experience with human resources at different levels of the organization. In addition, smaller organizations, which are very common in the sector, often do not have support staff who can help with the many required HR duties. This puts additional strain on employers and limits their ability to develop their HR skills.

Recommendation 2: Create opportunities to enable employers to gain and share knowledge and develop and improve HR understanding and capacity.

- **Activity 2A: Employers/Employer Councils:** Self-organize into a recognizable group (e.g., employer council) to increase HR capacity, achieve HR efficiencies, share knowledge and develop infrastructure.
- **Activity 2B: ECEC Organizations/Labour/Professional Associations:** Provide collective leadership for members to advance HR practices and capacity.
- **Activity 2C: ECEC Organizations/Labour/Professional Associations:** Organizations and individual employers collaborate to help share knowledge and experience regarding the HR role of the employer/administrator in ECEC.
- **Activity 2D: Policymakers (Municipal, Provincial/Territorial, Federal):** Provide support for the establishment of employer councils or employer structures including recognition of any new body established.

⁷ **Note:** HR knowledge and capacity as discussed in this section refers to the *technical* knowledge/skills required by an “employer” in ECEC, such as setting/maintaining employment standards, rather than the *leadership skills* discussed in Issue 5.

Issue 3: a) A need for early childhood education and care-specific HR standards and policy in government regarding training; and,
b) a need for more defined formal post-secondary curricula addressing ECEC-specific HR knowledge/skill areas.

As discussed in Issue 2, many ECEC employers lack a background or formal training in HR. This has a direct impact on their ability to effectively manage human resources. Stakeholders consulted through the project suggested that developing formal policy and standards regarding HR management would ensure that employers had the educational basis for sound HR practices and reinforce the importance and applicability of HR training.

Employers also indicated a need for HR management and leadership-specific training in the sector. Approximately three-quarters of employer survey respondents (76.8%, N=987) felt that they or their management team would benefit from or need training or professional development related to human resources management in the next two to three years. However, there appears to be an overall shortage of professional development/training opportunities in HR management for the ECEC sector. This could be because, until recently, most training in the sector has focused on early childhood education (ECE) skills for practitioners rather than human resources management.

Recommendation 3: a) Establish comprehensive regulations/standards regarding training/education requirements for early childhood education and care administrators;
b) post-secondary training institutions develop curricula specific to ECEC human resources management in line with developed policy.

- **Activity 3A: Policymakers (Municipal, Provincial/Territorial, Federal) and Regulators:** Establish regulations or licensing standards regarding training requirements or credentialing of ECEC administrators or supervisors (overseen by government in some jurisdictions).
- **Activity 3B: Training Institutions/Pedagogical Leaders:** Develop curriculum regarding the technical aspects of HR management techniques for recruiting, screening, hiring, orienting, supervising and evaluating staff; in addition to planning professional development and knowledge of employment standards and legislation.

Issue 4: Lack of HR tools to support the implementation of sound HR practices specific to the ECEC sector.

Stakeholders commonly mentioned that there is an abundance of HR-related information available (e.g., on the internet), including resources for setting HR policies, interviewing and hiring staff, staff and self evaluation, and compensation. However, little is specifically relevant to the ECEC sector. Employers are faced with multiple competing demands, and as such, many do not have the time to research HR practices and “translate” them to meet their needs.

Recommendation 4: Develop and disseminate HR tools specifically designed for the ECEC sector to support the implementation of sound HR practices.

- **Activity 4A: Child Care Human Resources Sector Council (CCHRSC):** Develop tools, templates and resources based on existing resources, such as those produced by the HR Council for the Voluntary and Non-Profit Sector.

Human Resources Leadership

Issue 5: General lack of awareness of the importance of developing/continuously improving the skills related to the “leadership” role of employers/administrators in early childhood education and care.

There is a general lack of skills development or continuous learning opportunities regarding leadership in the sector (e.g., in areas such as staff motivation, mentorship, conflict resolution, and communication skills). Thus, many employers have not only learned the technical HR management aspects of their role through “trial and error” as discussed in Issue 2, but have also had to develop their leadership skills in a similar manner.

Developing HR leadership skills and capacity in the sector is especially important since several key informants noted that many of the employers with strong HR leadership skills currently working in the field are nearing retirement age and there are few individuals ready to replace them. As a result there is a need to not only create training and professional development opportunities in the area of HR leadership, but also to create opportunities for employers to share information and learn from one another.

Recommendation 5: Enable employers to gain knowledge and experience in relevant aspects of ECEC sector leadership to ensure effective, productive and positive workplace environments.

- **Activity 5A: Employers/Employer Councils:** Individual employers share knowledge and develop opportunities to gain experience regarding the leadership role of the employer/administrator via formal and/or informal networking opportunities.
- **Activity 5B: ECEC Organizations/Labour/Professional Associations:** Share organizational knowledge and facilitate opportunities for employers to gain experience regarding their leadership role (such as leadership skills required to successfully motivate staff, manage conflict and ensure positive work environments) via forums, networks and/or online resources.

Issue 6: Insufficient curriculum and programs addressing the leadership role of the employer/administrator in early childhood education and care.

As noted above, and similar to the situation regarding HR management skills, there are few training/professional development opportunities for acquiring the leadership skills needed to be an effective employer in ECEC.

Recommendation 6: Develop curriculum and programs dealing with the leadership role of employer/administrator in early childhood education and care and supply resources to enable employers pursue such programs.

- **Activity 6A: Policymakers (Municipal, Provincial/Territorial, Federal):** Provide supports, incentives and information to employers/administrators about the requirements of and how to obtain further education and/or professional development regarding leadership roles (e.g., staff motivation, conflict resolution, team building, pedagogical leadership).
- **Activity 6B: Training Institutions/Pedagogical Leaders:** Develop curricula focused on the leadership role of the employer/administrator in early childhood education and care.

- **Activity 6C: Child Care Human Resources Sector Council (CCHRSC):** Provide information regarding the leadership role of the employer/administrator in early childhood education and care through dissemination of the *Occupational Standards for Child Care Administrators*. Provide information about how they can be used to i) develop curricula for training related to employers/administrators; and ii) to accredit programs providing training on the leadership role of employer/administrator.

Respect for the ECE Profession

Issue 7: a) General lack of public understanding/recognition of the (professional) requirements for, and benefits of, high quality early childhood education and care;
b) negative perception of ECEC as a valuable and viable career option.

A well-documented issue that impacts employers is the lack of respect for early childhood education as a profession and a general lack of understanding about the skills and knowledge required, with ECEs often viewed as “babysitters” rather than professionals. This poses a recruiting challenge for employers since it is difficult to attract skilled individuals to a profession that is not generally valued or respected.

In addition, while awareness of the important role early childhood education plays in the social and intellectual development of children has increased, respect for (and compensation of) the profession has not commensurably grown. However, it can be expected that this situation will begin to improve if research continues to be published detailing the importance of the early years and the positive impact ECEC can have on children, families and society.

Recommendation 7: a) Create a culture of professionalism visible to employers, staff, parents, students and the community;
b) provide information on and publicly recognize the benefits to children, families and society of exemplary early childhood education and care practices;
c) develop social marketing/promotional strategies for the early childhood education and care sector (see CCHRSC – *Career Promotions and Recruitment Strategy*).

- **Activity 7A: Employers/Employer Councils:** Employers/employer councils share information on exemplary practices and the benefits of such practices among themselves and with the general public. Employers encourage/support staff to be part of professional/ECEC organizations. Employers maintain membership in professional/ECEC organizations to act as an example for staff. Employers encourage participation in quality enhancement practices/activities.
- **Activity 7B: ECEC Organizations/Labour/Professional Associations:** Publicly recognize exemplary practices in early childhood education and care (e.g., appreciation days, awards, honours).
- **Activity 7C: Policymakers (Municipal, Provincial/Territorial, Federal):** Publicly recognize exemplary practices in early childhood education and care (e.g., appreciation days, awards, honours). Establish funding policies to enable employers to support staff (e.g., hiring support staff, paid planning time, staff room, breaks), thereby helping develop a culture of professionalism in the sector.

- **Activity 7D: Policymakers (Municipal, Provincial/Territorial, Federal):** Support sector stakeholders to develop social marketing/promotion strategies for the early childhood education and care sector, describing the benefits to children, families and society of exemplary early childhood education and care.
- **Activity 7E: Child Care Human Resources Sector Council (CCHRSC):** Continue to communicate the findings and recommendations from the *Career Promotions and Recruitment Strategy*.

Recruitment of Qualified Staff

Issue 8: a) Inability to recruit high quality trained staff to the early childhood education and care field;
 b) a proportion of graduates of ECE programs are entering the sector without the skills required by employers;
 c) some students being encouraged to pursue an ECE degree/diploma are those that have relatively lower educational skills.

All stakeholder groups consulted identified recruitment of qualified staff as a key HR issue facing the ECEC sector. Just over half (53.4%, N=987) of all employer survey respondents said they had faced challenges recruiting ECEC staff over the past year. The relatively low wages and lack of benefits across the majority of the sector, as well as the lack of respect for/understanding of ECE work, were said to be key contributing factors to these recruitment challenges.

Employers noted that, compared to five years ago, fewer applicants were applying for available positions. Of those who did apply, employers felt that fewer were qualified for the position. This could be linked to the fact that many new graduates choose to use their ECE training as a “stepping stone” to a career in a higher paying, more competitive sector (i.e. education) rather than entering early childhood education.

Employers also noted that while many new graduates who enter the sector are well-prepared, the proportion seen as unprepared is of concern. Employers were particularly concerned about graduates’ perceived lack of practical skills (e.g., day-to-day work, communicating with parents). Many also commented that students who do not do well academically in high school are often encouraged to enter post-secondary ECE programs.

Employers require staff who can provide high quality education and care. Thus having staff who are well trained and prepared to work in the sector is a necessity for addressing recruitment issues.

Recommendation 8: a) Enable employers to provide both monetary and non-monetary benefits and a positive working environment (also recommended to improve retention);
 b) ensure training and curriculum are in line with the needs of employers; and
 c) actively encourage students with the necessary skill sets to pursue a career in the sector.

- **Activity 8A: Employers/Employer Councils:** Provide both monetary and non-monetary benefits and a positive working environment, with the aim of increasing effectiveness of staff recruitment and retention efforts (thus reducing the frequency of recruitment needs in the long term).
- **Activity 8B: ECEC Organizations/Labour/Professional Associations:** Develop resources and infrastructure support to assist the sector to recruit high quality staff.

- **Activity 8C: Policymakers (Municipal, Provincial/Territorial, Federal):** Support sector stakeholders to develop social marketing/promotion strategies for the ECEC sector; provide financial supports to help attract high quality individuals to the sector; develop tracking processes for any recruitment/retention plan to ensure measurable results of any initiatives.⁸
- **Activity 8D: Training Institutions/Pedagogical Leaders:** Ensure curricula and training provided are in line with the needs of employers by maintaining active advisory committees that have some employer representation; actively encourage high quality students to pursue careers in the ECEC sector by developing and providing information for high school counsellors.
- **Activity 8E: Child Care Human Resources Sector Council (CCHRSC):** Work with key stakeholders in the ECEC sector to support the sector as a whole with the goal of promoting the occupation of ECE as a professional endeavour and attracting high quality students and staff.

Retention of Qualified Staff

Issue 9: High rates of staff turnover and attrition.

Stakeholders often commented that employers face retention challenges. Almost two-thirds (65.2%) of all survey respondents (N=987) felt that staff turnover/retention was an issue during the last two years.

Employers cited a variety of reasons for staff turnover, including:

- wanting better pay and/or benefits;
- leaving the ECEC sector/changing careers;
- the job did not meet expectations;
- maternity/paternal leave; and
- health issues.

As with recruitment, generally low compensation and a lack of respect and recognition for the profession were identified as key factors contributing to difficulty retaining staff. The impact of working conditions was also noted, as working in early childhood education and care can be difficult, with long days and physically demanding and stressful work. The need for a healthy, available workforce becomes all the more critical as the sector faces retention difficulties. If staff leave or take time off due to illness, stress or injury, further strain is placed on employers who are often already short-staffed.

Recommendation 9: Provide a range of retention tools, strategies and training to those in leadership roles (e.g., administrators, employers, board members, supervisors) on effective retention strategies.

Note: Recommendation 8 a) also applies to retention (i.e., enable employers to provide both monetary and non-monetary benefits and a positive working environment).

- **Activity 9A: Employers/Employer Councils:** Provide both monetary and non-monetary benefits (e.g., time off for and registration costs of professional development, extended health benefits, staff break rooms) and a positive working environment, with the aim of increasing job satisfaction and retention.

⁸ ELCC Sector Study (2006) Prepared for Government of Saskatchewan identified embedding “tracking processes into [a] Plan to ensure that future efforts at assessing the labour market and related training needs can have more of the breadth and depth that ensure accurate and targeted information.” P.67

- **Activity 9B: ECEC Organizations/Labour/Professional Associations:** Labour organizations work with ECEC/professional organizations and/or employer councils to identify or offer potential solutions regarding retention.
- **Activity 9C: Policymakers (Municipal, Provincial/Territorial, Federal):** Provide financial supports to employers and/or employees to encourage retention of existing ECEC staff.
- **Activity 9D: Training Institutions/Pedagogical Leaders:** Provide training to those in leadership positions on effective practices for retaining staff (e.g., effective leadership strategies, positive and professional work environments and healthy workplace practices).
- **Activity 9E: Child Care Human Resources Sector Council (CCHRSC):** Work with key stakeholders in the ECEC sector to promote the sector as a whole.

Training

Issue 10: a) A shortage of available qualified graduates/job candidates with adequate training and an overall lower number of students with the necessary skill sets entering training for ECE;
b) limited variety of training formats for ECE.

As mentioned in Issue 8, many employers felt there was a shortage of new graduates who were well prepared, suitable or had the practical skills for work in the sector, and that students who do not do well academically in high school are often encouraged to enter ECEC. Thus, from the perspective of employers, the overall quality of students entering the field is lower than what is required or desired.

Frequently noted was the relatively high cost and time commitment necessary for ECE post-secondary education. Obtaining an ECE diploma can take between two to four years, which is not always a viable option for “untrained” staff who are already working in the field or new Canadians. “In-person” education is still the most common form of ECE training, although distance education opportunities are available from some post-secondary institutions. There is a need to look at alternative methods of delivering ECE training to ensure that those in rural/remote communities and those who are already employed have access to training opportunities.

Recommendation 10: a) Encourage and facilitate ECE training/education by providing incentives and financial supports;
b) give recognition of the value of training/education;
c) recognition and portability of credentials of ECE training/education between jurisdictions (e.g., credential recognition systems);
d) develop and promote provincial/territorial and pan-Canadian curriculum frameworks for ECE education and additional alternative modes/formats for ECE training (e.g., credential recognition systems).

- **Activity 10A: Employers/Employer Councils:** Acknowledge training as a benefit to providing high quality, effective early childhood education and care and subsidize the cost of employee training (current or future employees); provide on-the-job orientation and training to ensure new staff are aware of roles/responsibilities.

- **Activity 10B: Policymakers (Municipal, Provincial/Territorial, Federal):** Provide financial supports to encourage individuals to pursue post-secondary training; introduce province/territory-wide curriculum frameworks for training; examine potential for provision of alternative methods of ECE training delivery; ensure actions dedicated towards training are made in concert with actions for recruitment/retention⁹, and work with other jurisdictions to support the development of pan-Canadian occupational standards, common curricula and portability/recognition of credentials where feasible.
- **Activity 10C: ECEC Organizations/Labour/Professional Associations:** Create a culture of professionalism that reinforces the importance of adequate training and recognition and portability of credentials, and work with partners to provide supports (e.g., bursaries, scholarships for recognized training which meets standards).
- **Activity 10D: Training Institutions/Pedagogical Leaders:** Review programs and curricula to ensure training meets the needs of the sector; offer training that is in line with provincial/territorial or pan-Canadian curricula; develop alternative modes of training to facilitate a greater range of students participating in ECE training.
- **Activity 10E: Child Care Human Resources Sector Council (CCHRSC):** Work with key stakeholders in the training/pedagogy area of the sector to ensure training is meeting the needs of the sector; communicate key competencies necessary to be able to work in the sector.

Professional Development

Issue 11: Limited access to and participation in professional development (PD) opportunities is difficult due to: the lack of availability of replacement staff, cost of training/PD, timing (e.g., evenings, weekends, full-time study) and access to relevant/new opportunities.

In order for employers to improve recruitment and retention, there is a need to support individuals to obtain the education and qualifications they need to provide high quality services¹⁰. Barriers to staff accessing education and professional development include:

- **The resources—money and time—required for formal ECE training.** Getting an ECE diploma or degree can take anywhere between two to four years, which is not always viable for staff, especially those who have been in the field for a long time. As well, employers rarely have adequate resources to cover the cost of ECE training programs for their staff.
- **Finding replacement/substitute staff to fill in for staff who attend training.** This is a challenge for many employers. By extension, where there are labour force shortages, staff may have difficulty obtaining release from their work schedules to pursue training. This puts further stress and strain on a workforce that is already facing many challenges.

⁹ ELCC Sector Study (2006) Prepared for Government of Saskatchewan recommended intertwining any decisions made regarding training with strategies regarding recruitment and retention as the issues were “inescapably inter-twined” (p.67)

¹⁰ Lero, Donna et al. *Investing in Quality: Policies, Practitioners, Programs and Parents: A Four-Point Plan to Delivering High Quality Early Learning and Care Services in Ontario*. Ontario: Expert Panel on Quality and Human Resources, 2007.

- **Little incentive to pursue further training or professional development.** Tuition is expensive and, often obtaining further training does not result in a significant pay increase. Many noted there is little “return for investment”, creating a challenge for employers who want to encourage training/professional development for staff.

Professional development activities for those in leadership roles were also identified as an area for further action. Key informants most commonly stated that any training or professional development should be aimed at directors/administrators, supervisors or board members. However, labour shortages and the increased demands placed on administrators (e.g. working directly with children in the programs due to staff shortages), mean that they often have very limited time to attend professional development activities. Overall, employer survey respondents noted cost and inability to be away from the workplace as the most common reasons for not participating in professional development.

Recommendation 11: Establish and provide support for various PD opportunities (including professional resource centres), which will enable employers to facilitate their own and their staff’s training/PD.

- **Activity 11A: Employers/Employer Councils:** Work collectively to encourage and facilitate staff training/professional development opportunities; where relevant opportunities are not available, work collectively to obtain desirable opportunities (e.g., work with professional associations, unions, or arrange PD together).
- **Activity 11B: ECEC Organizations/Labour/Professional Associations:** Act as a training/professional development provider or broker to deliver expert and high quality PD opportunities consistent with established standards; establish professional resource centres.
- **Activity 11C: Policymakers (Municipal, Provincial/Territorial, Federal):** Provide financial incentives or assistance to encourage/facilitate further training/professional development for both employers/administrators and their staff; provide operational funding for professional resource centres to help develop infrastructure; act as a training/professional development provider or broker.
- **Activity 11D: Training Institutions/Pedagogical Leaders:** Examine the potential to offer professional development activities in unique/innovative ways (e.g., distance education, on-site training).
- **Activity 11E: Child Care Human Resources Sector Council (CCHRSC):** Continue to promote the findings from the training strategy project and the key skills, knowledge and abilities identified in the *Occupational Standards for Child Care Administrators*.

Compensation: Wages and Benefits

Issue 12: The majority of early childhood education and care organizations do not have adequate financial resources, resulting in low wages and a lack of benefits.

Staff wages are extremely variable across the country, although generally wages are low, especially when compared to other jobs with similar training requirements and levels of responsibility. Benefits, including pensions and disability plans, are rare.

The ability to pay staff competitive wages and provide benefits was a challenge faced by many employers in the sector. This is due in part to the fact that the operating funds at the majority of ECEC organizations, from which staff salaries are drawn, come from parent fees¹¹ and it is difficult to increase those fees without making the services less accessible to parents. While government subsidies and funding opportunities do exist, most employers cannot pay their staff significantly higher wages without raising parent fees. Focus group participants commented that low pay can be especially problematic for new graduates, many of whom have student loans and cannot afford to work in the sector.

About one-quarter of survey respondents mentioned providing benefits or competitive wages as key strategies used to retain staff. While this shows that some organizations can offer higher wages and benefits, it also seems to indicate that there is a significant proportion of the workforce that does not have access to benefits or competitive wages.

Recommendation 12: a) Encourage stakeholders to collaborate to identify innovative practices to increase wages and benefits;
b) develop legislation/policies to increase dedicated funding levels for ECE compensation.

- **Activity 12A: Employers/Employer Councils:** Work with publicly funded groups to help resource HR capacity and infrastructure; employers should share information with each other and act with a collective “voice” when dealing with issues related to compensation.
- **Activity 12B: ECEC Organizations/Labour/Professional Associations:** Collaborate with ECE employees in the collective bargaining process; lead strategies to develop resources, tools or employer councils/ boards to help employers provide increased wages or benefits, thereby helping to act collectively on this sector-wide issue.
- **Activity 12C: Policymakers (Municipal, Provincial/Territorial, Federal):** Develop legislation to increase dedicated funding levels for ECE compensation.
- **Activity 12D: Training Institutions/Pedagogical Leaders:** Instil in students/individuals receiving training that ECEC is a profession and should be recognized and compensated as such.
- **Activity 12E: Child Care Human Resources Sector Council (CCHRSC):** Continue to publish reports/documents that detail the wage and compensation issues facing the sector; share innovative practices and strategies through publications or websites.

¹¹ Québec is an exception: government provides the bulk of the operating funds.

Conclusion

While ECEC employers face a wide array of human resources challenges, many sector stakeholders have already begun developing solutions¹² designed to meet their needs. Sharing and building on these innovations can help the sector move forward on human resource issues. Some examples of promising practices and initiatives include:

- The development (and governmental recognition) of employer councils to build employer capacity (e.g., Early Learning Operators of PEI, Associations of CPE in Québec).
- The development of market competitive wage scales (in Manitoba, PEI and Québec),
- The “Hub” model of ECE administration currently being explored in Winnipeg, Manitoba, where ECEC organizations work collaboratively to increase the human resources capacity of their organizations. This approach may include centralizing their administrative/HR services.
- Organizations working together to offer pension plans for the ECEC sector, such as the Province of Québec and Régime de retraite du personnel des CPE et des garderies conventionnées du Québec and a multi-sector pension plan created by the Canadian Union of Public Employees and the Service Employees International Union.
- Initiatives, such as those developed by the governments of Alberta and British Columbia, that provide funding support to administrators to upgrade HR skills. Many provincial governments also offer education bursaries to encourage and support ECE training (e.g., Newfoundland, Manitoba, British Columbia and Alberta).
- Finding ways to ensure ECE training meets the needs of employers, for example in Ontario, where the provincial government requires training institutions to maintain an advisory committee with employer representation.
- The development of HR tool kits developed specifically for the sector by the Manitoba Child Care Association (*Human Resources Management Guide*) and the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care (*Child Care Management Kit*).

Employers in the ECEC sector face a variety of interrelated human resources issues and challenges which are embedded within the context of infrastructure, funding and policy. Just as there is no single cause for these challenges, there will be no single solution. Any action on one human resource issue is likely to impact others. To be effective, initiatives designed to support employers will need to be executed in concert with other activities. In addition, sustainable solutions will only be achieved through ongoing collaboration between all stakeholders.

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¹² For a complete list of interesting and innovative practices being used to address the human resources issues facing ECEC employers, see the *Main Report, Section 5: Current Practices and Areas for Future Development* or Appendix A.

Appendix A

Research Methodology

Research firm R.A. Malatest & Associates Ltd was engaged to conduct the project research. A variety of research methods were employed in order to achieve the project objectives, including:

Literature Review

A literature review was conducted in order to provide background and context on the HR issues facing the sector.

Employer Survey

Information was gathered directly from employers via a mixed-mode telephone/online survey. Between March 27 and June 2, 2008, 987 surveys were completed with licensed child care employers, with proportional representation from each province and territory. Surveys were completed with individuals who were partly or solely responsible for human resource management at their organization. Respondents included directors, managers, board members, supervisors, or HR specialists, depending on the organization. Thus, for the purposes of this project, the person most directly involved in HR issues, such as recruitment and retention of staff, training, and setting workplace standards, was considered the “employer”. In many cases this was the legal employer (i.e., the entity that directly employs the workers), while in other cases this was a director, manager, supervisor or board member of an organization.

Key Informant Interviews

Twenty-nine interviews were conducted with individuals from multiple stakeholder groups including:

- Provincial/Territorial government officials responsible for ECEC;
- Provincial/Territorial and national ECEC organizations;
- Early childhood education and care employers;
- Training/research institutions;
- National Aboriginal organizations; and
- Representatives from other sector councils with similarly structured sectors.

Focus Groups

Fifteen Employer Focus Groups were held with employers from a range of governance models¹³ from each province and territory. Eight Mixed Stakeholder Focus Groups were also held and included ECEC organizations, training institutions, provincial government officials, and Aboriginal organizations.

Site Visits

Six site visits were conducted at different ECEC organizations to provide a first-hand insight into the operation of various ECEC employer governance models and to provide greater context for the project research.

¹³ For summary information on employer governance models and classification, see next page.

A note on Employment Settings and Governance Models

It is important to note that one objective of the project was to determine the type and distribution of various ECEC employer governance models across the country. Using previous definitions of ECEC governance models, information from the key informant interviews and focus groups, and by examining responses to the employer survey, a total of seven governance model groups were identified. The groups provide the foundation for the analyzing the overall project research findings.

The table below identifies the seven Governance Model Groups, and the various types of governance/employer models that make up each group. Further information on the categorization process for the Governance Model Groups can be found in Section 3.1.1 of the *Main Report*.

Governance Model Groups

	Governance Model Group	Types of Governance Models Included in Group
For-profit	1. Commercial/Private organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sole proprietor • Corporation • Partnership • Franchise • Co-op (for-profit)
Non-profit	2. Board Member Governed organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent board member operated • Community board member operated • Co-op (non-profit)
	3. Aboriginal organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First Nations Band/Tribal Council operated • Aboriginal Human Resources Development Agreement (AHRDA)
	4. Community organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community organization (e.g. YMCA/YWCA, etc.) • Religious institution
	5. Worksite/private company	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worksite/private company operated
	6. Educational Institution/Hospital organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • University or college • School board • Hospital
	7. Government organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Municipal/local government • Provincial/territorial government

For further detail regarding the research methodology, see the *Main Report*.

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