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Canada

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Finding the best ways to train today and tomorrow's ECE workforce

The CCHRSC training strategy project will help the sector and governments deal with some of the biggest challenges in supporting a quality workforce, says project steering committee co-chair Gyda Chud.

"For example, there has been an explosion of knowledge about young children and their development," she said. "How will that translate into a curriculum that prepares early childhood educators in the best way possible?"

The project's goal is to develop a pan-Canadian training strategy that takes into account the experiences and approaches of each province and territory. It's a tall order—and the final product won't come in a one-size-fits-all package, since each jurisdiction has its own training requirements and programs.

Areas of study

A basic question is whether early childhood education (ECE) training programs are adequately preparing students to meet the needs of children in child care now and in the future. Some of the other areas

connections between the ECE sector and the school system.

- Ways to strengthen ties across training institutions at the pan-Canadian level to improve student mobility and portability of credentials, and develop relationships with faculty in different colleges and universities.
- Ways to be innovative, by looking at successful training initiatives across the country.

the project will study include:

- The implications for ECE graduates, children and families of closer con-

The project will study ways to strengthen ties across training institutions at the pan-Canadian level.

The project has built in a number of opportunities for broad, communi-

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Finding the best ways to train today and tomorrow's ECE workforce

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ty-based consultation. Project researchers have completed their report on the survey of students in post-secondary institutions, and the results of the faculty survey are being analyzed (see sidebar). Still in the planning stages are cross-country focus groups with employers, interviews with key stakeholders, and round tables with key organizations to share information and gain their input.

The project steering committee includes representatives from the sector council as well as a number of representatives from outside of the council.

“This is a first for a sector council project,” said Chud, who is a past chair of the CCHRSC. “The council wanted to engage and bring into the work people who are knowledgeable and who have a really important perspective to contribute. The aim is to broaden participation in the work.”

The final project report is expected to be finished by July 2007.

Survey trends revealed

The training strategy project surveyed ECE students graduating in spring 2006 from eight post-secondary institutions, and faculty from 18 post-secondary institutions [the same eight institutions as the student survey plus 10 colleges and universities that were included in the sector council's Labour Market Update (LMU) study in 2003]. A follow-up survey was also done with students who graduated in 2003 and were included in the LMU.

The project's survey of students asked about why they chose ECE, their satisfaction with their program, and their future plans. The survey of faculty probed the educators' views on how well prepared they felt students were to work in the sector, as well as questions specific to faculty: their own education and career path, and their future plans. Project researchers Jane Beach and Kathleen Flanagan underlined that the surveys are not representative and should be treated with caution. The researchers were looking mainly for trends in the survey responses.

The student survey analysis revealed three important themes consistent with the labour market update's findings:

- Students felt less prepared to work with children with special needs than with typical children and with adults. Students identified working with children with special needs 40 times more often than the next most frequently mentioned areas requiring more preparation.
- Many students do not plan to work in child care after graduating. Overall, 60% said they planned on working in a regulated child care centre upon graduation; and only 50% planned on doing so after five years.
- A significant minority (26%) said they plan on an eventual career in the education system.

The latter two findings have important implications for recruitment and retention in the sector, and the relationship between early learning and child care and the education system. Other student survey findings include concerns about wages reflecting the value of the work, the quality of some field placements; the repetitive nature of some of the course content; and the lack of programs geared to students with prior child care experience.

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**Editors: Bozica Costigliola,
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Career Promotions and Recruitment Strategy – what the focus groups tell us

Information gathered during focus groups with current and former child care workers, guidance/career counselors, immigrants, and job changers paint a picture of why people stay in the field despite low wages and how careers in child care are perceived. The findings will help the sector council develop a career promotions and recruitment strategy to attract more people to jobs in the sector and encourage skills development among the existing workforce. Some highlights include:

Entering the field

For most existing and former child care workers in the groups, working in child care was not simply a job, but a “calling”. Often early experiences taking care of younger siblings or participating in youth groups had revealed a talent and interest in working with children. Yet many participants pointed out they were not aware of early childhood education (ECE) as a formal occupation (with college training programs and certification) until it was suggested by a family member, friend or school counselor or they were already volunteering in the sector. This indicates that despite the importance of personal interest, there is a need to increase understanding of ECE as a viable employment sector with post-secondary training programs.

Perceptions

All participants felt that the public fails to understand the role of early childhood educators. Many felt they were seen as passive child minders, rather than educators who develop a curriculum and are responsible for role modeling, safety and nutrition. When a comprehensive job description was shown to job seekers, many said they had underestimated the intellectual demands and education required.

Overall, this perception contributes to other issues such as reluctance of parents to pay for high quality care, lack of student referrals by high school guidance counselors to college programs, and low educational requirements in some provinces.

Professional development

Many participants indicated that they could only take professional development at their own expense or on their own time. As a result, time and resources for continuing professional development were highly valued. Several participants noted that not only does the staff member who takes the training benefit, but that other staff also benefit when the trainee returns to work and shares the learning.

Immigrants

Immigrants who participated in the groups described difficulty getting their foreign qualifications recognized. In addition, many worried about the limitations of their language skills. Because children learn language in child care settings, immigrant participants anticipated that parents would not want staff whose first language was not English. However, this issue was not raised by the supervisors, directors or current

child care professionals who saw a first language other than English as a benefit.

The benefits

While low wages and lack of benefits are major issues influencing who stays in the sector and for how long, both existing and former workers described jobs with strong non-monetary rewards. Those who stayed in the field did so because they loved the work and found it meaningful and important, saying it provided an almost daily sense of accomplishment. They were motivated by seeing progress in the children, by assisting families with fundamental needs, and by knowing they were contributing to society. They stressed the complexity of programming done to promote the whole development of the child and the importance of early learning on developing future generations.

Next steps

These are just some of the findings that will inform the development of the overall Career Promotions and Recruitment Strategy set for release in January 2007. Visit our web site at www.ccscc-cssge.ca to see how these findings, as well as those of the key informant interviews, impact the strategy's development.

Now available!

Occupational Standards for Administrators

Released this summer, the *Occupational Standards for Child Care Administrators* met with overwhelming interest and support from the sector. More than 1,400 orders were received in advance of the August 2006 release, demonstrating the need for a tool to support and enhance leadership capacity in the early learning and child care sector.

The advance orders also provide insight into how people plan to use the standards. The most common uses are listed below:

- 1) Identifying professional developments needs or skills gaps
- 2) Ensuring best practices
- 3) Developing curriculum/training
- 4) Hiring/developing job descriptions
- 5) In libraries/resource centres
- 6) For accreditation/certification
- 7) For licensing

Given the positive response, the CCHRSC plans to deliver occupational standards workshops across the country between September 2006 and July 2007. Check out the News and Events section at www.cpsc-cssge.ca for details. In addition, a companion paper detailing ways to use the stan-

dards is under development and will be available this winter.

Get your copy of *Occupational Standards for Child Care Administrators*

Free copies of the standards can be downloaded from www.cpsc-cssge.ca. Print copies can be purchased for \$10 by using the order form located on our home page on our web site (above).

Note: if you identify as low income or under- or unemployed, contact the sector council office directly at 1-866-411-6960 for low or no cost options.

A tool of best practices

More than 160 practitioners with extensive knowledge and experience in child care administration developed and validated the occupational standards through regional workshops and provincial/territorial validation exercises. The result is a tool that reflects best practices in the administration of early childhood settings and was designed to support and enhance leadership in the sector.

ACCC Early Childhood Education Faculty Forum

The Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC) and the Child Care Human Resources Sector Council invite you to the first pan-Canadian Early Childhood Education (ECE) Faculty Forum. The goal of the forum is to bring together ECE colleagues from a variety of contexts and regions to share current trends and issues, best practices, and new initiatives.

When: November 23-25, 2006

Where: Red River College, Winnipeg, Manitoba

Who should attend: Anyone who works or has an interest in early childhood training and education.

For details or to sign-up: www.accc.ca/events

Ontario

Quality and Human Resources Panel

preparing its report

Ontario's Best Start Expert Panel on Quality and Human Resources is working on its final report and plans to send it to the Minister of Children and Youth Services, Mary Anne Chambers, by the end of 2006.

The panel was set up to provide advice on the best ways to ensure the quality of early learning and child care programs, particularly through strengthening the workforce. The panel's five working groups spent close to 1 ½ years looking at a range of interconnected workforce issues such as training and qualifications, recruitment and retention, compensation and working conditions, infrastructure support for the workforce, and data needs. The panel also reviewed international and provincial initiatives pertaining to human resource issues in early learning and child care.

A key issue for the panel are the implications for early childhood educators and teachers of Best Start's vision to integrate junior and senior kindergarten seamlessly with child care. As well, panel members looked at potential changes to the regulatory framework and how they would respond to the current needs of children and families, and affect the workforce.

The report will include recommendations aimed at helping the government develop policies, legislation and other measures to support a trained and skilled workforce.

Executive committee member Jamie Kass is the sector council's representative on the expert panel. Executive committee member Karen Chandler is the panel's senior policy advisor.

Newfoundland and Labrador

Child care plan provides support for ECE workforce

Newfoundland and Labrador's new early learning and child care plan will put in place a foundation for supporting and developing a qualified workforce, says sector council board member Mary Goss-Prowse.

Goss-Prowse is the Registrar of Certification for the province's Association of Early Childhood Educators and the Canadian Child Care Federation representative on the sector council board.

"The intent of the plan is to try to provide more qualified staff and incentives for people to train or upgrade," she said. "The measures are on top of the quarterly educational enhancements the government put in place in 2001."

More income

The plan calls for an annual income supplement of between \$1,000 and \$2,000 a year for child care staff earning less than \$25,000, based on early childhood education (ECE) educational attainment. Eligible staff earning up to \$35,000 will receive the money on a pro-rated basis. The new supplement is restricted to those who are salaried employees.

Other workforce-related aspects of the plan include:

- An annual \$500 educational payment for entry-level centre-based and regulated family child care providers who are actively upgrading their qualifications to Level I.
- Extending eligibility for the existing educational supplement to family child care providers with Level 1 or higher certification.
- \$100,000 a year to enhance staffing in child care services to support inclusion of children with special needs, and support for a provincial conference on inclusion.
- The development of a recruitment and

retention strategy for the sector.

- Professional development and training in quality improvement and playground safety.

Training initiatives

The plan provides for a \$5,000 training bursary per student for 50 students each year from 2006 to 2009. As well, the College of the North Atlantic will receive one-time funding of \$1.7 million to enhance its Early Childhood Education Program.

The college will use the funding to make its distance ECE program more available by increasing course accessibility on the Web and hiring two new faculty, said Joanne Morris, an ECE faculty member at the college and sector council chair.

"The goal is to increase the capacity of the distance program so that practising ECEs can upgrade their qualifications to meet certification requirements," she said. "This will increase the level of training in existing child care centres and family child care homes."

Morris said the college also plans to expand and upgrade the ECE facilities at two campuses to include infant and toddler care as part of the demonstration centres.

In other areas of the early learning and child care plan, the government announced it will be establishing licensed child care services in rural communities "based on need, interest and capacity," potentially creating 16 new sites and 200 new child care spaces. As well, the plan includes measures to increase eligibility and levels of child care subsidies for parents.

Quebec

Pay equity deals reached for child care workers

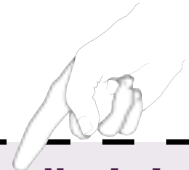
Public sector pay equity settlements providing wage increases for 18,000 school-age and 25,000 community-based child care workers were announced by the Quebec government in the summer and fall.

The adjustments for the school-age sector of 3.8% for supervisory level employees and 10.6% for school-age child care workers are retroactive to November 21, 2001.

Still outstanding is how the money will be phased in. While the legislation provides for a five-year phase-in to 2006, it also allows employers who have financial difficulties to apply to pay equity commission to spread the payments over eight years. The government has asked the commission to allow the longer phase-in period.

The settlement is part of a \$630 million final pay equity deal that will affect about 326,000 women and men in the health and education sectors. These sectors are traditionally female-dominated.

The settlement for community-based child care workers in Quebec's Centres de la petite enfance provides for 8.8% over four years, with pay equity adjustments starting in May 2007. The adjustments are not retroactive.



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Comings and goings

The sector council thanks the following outgoing members and staff for their important contribution:

Long-time board member **Sheila Davidson** is moving on. A powerful voice, Sheila brought the perspective of advocate, employer and practitioner to the table. As working group chair, Sheila played a critical role in the development of the 2004 study Working for Change, which serves as the foundation for all of our current work. Sheila continues her leadership role as chair of the Career Promotions and Recruitment Strategy project steering committee.

Executive board member **Raymonde Leblanc** is moving to Guatemala! From her role as treasurer to her involvement in the creation of the bylaws and policies that govern our work, Raymonde consistently made an active and thoughtful contribution. As a CSN representative on the board, Raymonde's insight into issues related to Quebec, official languages, and labour was critical to the development of our projects.

As a Canadian Child Care Federation representative on the Executive

Committee, **Barbara Coyle** brought a strong focus on partnership, communication, and outreach to the table. Her knowledge of the child care sector and experience working at the pan-Canadian level was a great asset.

Marcia Lopez was on the sector council for a two-year term as a representative of the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE). Her insight into labour, home child care, and diversity issues contributed to many of our projects.

Tina Bergeron is leaving the sector council after more than a year as administrative coordinator. Dedicated and capable, Tina brought excellent organizational skills and a warm personality to the CCHRSC. We wish Tina and her family the best of luck in Montreal!

Welcome to our new board members

Elaine Ferguson is executive director of Child Care Connection-Nova Scotia. She is also currently president of

Partners In Practice (an organization that promotes mentoring in early childhood practice) and the administrative manager for both the Nova Scotia Child Care Association and the Certification Council of Early Childhood Educators of Nova Scotia. With 36 years experience in the sector, Elaine was a founding member of the Canadian Child Care Federation and will represent the federation on our board.

Margot Young joins us as a representative for the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE), which represents child care workers in seven provinces across Canada. A senior research officer with responsibility for the child care and university sectors, Margot has been a staff advisor to CUPE's National Child Care Working Group since 2000. Margot has worked on a wide range of human resource issues such as pensions, employment equity, work/life balance and wage equity. One of her projects highlighted the links between quality and unionization in child care.

Workforce Profile

Tammy Ball, Bashaw, Alberta



In the town of Bashaw, Alberta (population 825), providing quality child care to families means looking for ways to be innovative and flexible.

As the Early Childhood Manager in the town, Tammy Ball is charged with doing just that. She manages Generations Day Care Centre; Bashaw and District Preschool (where she is also a facilitator); the town's parent and tot program, Rattles and Rascals; and Pathways to Success, a project that aims to integrate services in the community for children 0 to 12 years of age over the next five years. Eventually, the hope is that services for everyone "from 0 to 99" will be in some way integrated.

It's a challenge to serve the diverse child care needs of rural families.

"Not everyone works nine to five," says Ball. There are farm families, parents who work shifts in the town's hospital, and those who work in the oil patch.

"We're looking into out-of-the-box thinking, for example, considering home child care with qualified staff, or more flexible hours so it could be that the day care is open until 10 p.m. during haying because that's what has to get done."

Ball received an early childhood development diploma from Red Deer College. The move to an administrative job after eight years of working on the floor as a daycare worker, preschool teacher, and special needs aid was hard at first, "but now it's amazing because I have the opportunity to make a real difference."

Ball juggles a number of roles. She spends two days a week at the preschool. The rest of her time is spent planning, supervising staff and families, or meeting with community partners for the Pathways to Success Program. "A lot of my job is to get out into the community and meet people and that's what I'm having the most fun with."

Ball is enthusiastic about the potential to have a positive effect on the lives of families in Bashaw. "I have an amazing opportunity now in my job to help develop services that are responsive to the community and that partner with others. I really believe there is a connection between quality child care and the health of communities."

How to reach us

Child Care Human Resources Sector Council

151 Slater, Suite 714
Ottawa, ON K1P 5H3
Phone: (613) 239-3100
Toll free: 1-866-411-6960
E-mail: info@ccsc-cssge.ca

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