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CHILD CARE HUMAN
RESOURCES SECTOR COUNCIL



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Canada

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Supporting Employers Project

Child care employers want resources to do the job

Focus group participants in the sector council's Supporting Employers Project are "solution focused" and have many suggestions for addressing the daunting human resource challenges facing the sector, says project consultant Jacob Sulkers.

The project is the first cross-Canada effort to focus on profiling the different child care employer models, and to probe related human resource issues with the goal of sharing best practices and developing tools/resources to increase HR capacity in the sector.

Providing useful tools and links to existing resources is critical to supporting the development of good employers and employment practices, said CCHRSC's executive director Diana Carter. "We get frequent calls from employers asking us, for example, how to set compensation scales. This project will let us get a better handle on how child care gets delivered in different governance models, and whether the human resources issues are similar or whether there are some unique needs, so that we can develop tools with these needs in mind."

Participants told the project team in the spring that the biggest issues they face are how to find and retain qualified and experienced staff in a sector with tight budgets, and the need for human resource training for employers.

"What was encouraging," said Sulkers, "is that they knew there were problems but they didn't come to complain—they wanted to find solutions and be part of the process."

Learning on the job

Sulkers said participants cited the importance of developing sector-specific human resources and leadership training, as well as tools such as generic job interview questions, job descriptions, and training and policy manuals for ECE staff.

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Child care employers want resources to do the job

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“The majority of employers start as frontline workers and get promoted to higher levels until they become directors,” said Sulkers. “They don’t necessarily have human resources training, they wear many hats, and for the most part they have to learn as they go.”

Public education campaigns were also on the list of focus group priorities. Participants felt that promotion of the sector would help to increase recognition, and make more people consider ECE as a career.

As well, the focus groups emphasized finding ways to provide ongoing staff training since employers sometimes have little choice but to hire people whose experience and training are not at the desired level. Creating a supportive and collegial working environment for frontline staff was also a priority since salaries in the sector tend to be low.

Two sets of focus groups have been conducted for the project. The first was comprised of representatives from child care organizations, labour organizations, government agencies and training institutions and the sessions were held in Halifax, Montreal, Toronto, and Vancouver. The second set

involved child care employers who were directors or owner operators from a variety of governance models. Sessions were held in every province and territory.

A cross-Canada survey of 1,000 employers is also part of the project and will provide a profile of the different types of employers in the sector as well as statistical data on the issues and key areas of interest in terms of resource and tool development. In addition, a series of profiles of various employers are being developed to explore different governance models and document common issues and innovative HR practices.

The project could have a wide-ranging impact on the sector, said Darcelle Cottons, co-chair of the project steering committee and director of UBC Child Care Services. “In the biggest picture, it is part of infrastructure building, and in its best form it could influence training and better management. It’s been a neglected part of the sector.”

Highlights from the survey and focus groups and a set of employer profiles will be released this summer. The overall project findings are expected to be finalized and made public at the beginning of 2009.

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Preliminary work on credentialing project underway

A new sector council project, Pathways to Credentialing, represents an important first step to improving workforce mobility in the sector — a critical factor in the retention of skilled early childhood educators (ECEs).

“In addition to giving credentialing stakeholders an opportunity to come together and develop common resources, [the project] will provide ECEs with the information and tools they need to successfully achieve credential recognition in another province or territory,” says Mary Goss-Prowse, a member of the project steering committee and Registrar of Certification at the Association of Early Childhood Educators, Newfoundland and Labrador.

Practices for certifying or registering ECEs vary across Canada, and some jurisdictions have no formal process. Without tools that show how a credential achieved in one area relates to those in another, assessment is often done on a case-by-case basis, taking up the time and resources of officials, individuals and potential employers.

As the assessment process unfolds, many ECEs find themselves working at a lower level of pay within the sector. Others seek work outside the sector, contributing to workforce shortages and retention challenges.

The project will fully document the practices for certification/registration processes used in all jurisdictions, leading to the creation of a Guide to ECE Credentialing in Canada.

The Occupational Standards for Practitioners (CCCF, 2003) will be used as the framework for reviewing the various assessment processes and will help identify their similarities and

differences. An Essential Skills Profile (ESP) and Occupational Language Assessment (OLA) will also be developed to explore existing processes. Together, the credentialing guide, ESP, and OLA will form a tool kit that can be used for exploring certification in Canada and

skills development.

Work has already begun on the development of the Essential Skills Profile. Once it is complete in June 2008, a consultant will be engaged to begin analyzing certification/registration processes across Canada.

What is an Essential Skills Profile?

Essential Skills are **enabling skills** that help people perform the tasks required by their occupation. They provide people with a foundation to learn other skills and enhance people's ability to adapt to change. There are nine essential skills: writing; reading text; document use; oral communication; working with others; thinking skills; computer use; and continuous learning.

An Essential Skills Profile describes how each of the nine essential skills are used by workers in a particular occupation. For each essential skill, a profile generally contains:

- Complexity ratings that indicate the level of difficulty of the tasks related to the skill.
- Examples that illustrate how that skill is used in the occupation.
- A standardized description of how that skill is used to allow comparisons between occupations.

It is important to note that essential skills are not the technical skills required by a particular occupation. Instead they apply to all occupations. For example, writing skills are required in a broad range of occupations, but the complexity and frequency of the writing varies. While some workers fill out simple forms, others may write complex reports.

An Essential Skills Profile serves as a companion to Occupational Standards. The profile can be used in variety of ways, from exploring the skill level required for a given occupation to providing real life examples in curricula or deciding what job skills to seek when recruiting. Profiles for both the Early Childhood Educator and Child Care Administrator roles will be available in late 2008.



New Brunswick

Child care workforce part of pay equity effort

New Brunswick is conducting an extensive job evaluation process in the child care sector, one of three female-dominated sectors being targeted as part of the province's new pay equity initiative.

Child care, home support and transition house workers are seen as “perhaps most affected by perceived issues of pay inequity,” said Cindy Lanteigne, Director of the government’s Wage Gap Reduction Initiative.

Regional information meetings have already been held with child care employers and staff to explain the process

The job evaluation initiative is part of a broader government plan to bring about pay equity and address the under-employment of women in the province. The government has also said it must set an example by taking steps to become a model employer. (It provides wage enhancements to child care and home support workers, and pays the salaries of transition house workers and support workers providing care to children with special needs.)

Sector involvement key

Joint steering and job evaluation committees for the child care sector have already been established with represen-

said Soles. “They are the experts.”

A detailed questionnaire is being developed for child care staff on various aspects of their jobs: education, qualifications, responsibility, effort and working conditions. The responses will be analyzed and will form the basis for job descriptions with assigned point values to tasks. The initiative is restricted to child care centres and home-based child care services that are government-approved.

The jobs included in the evaluation process are primary child care staff and supervisors who spend at least 75% of their time working directly with children, and support workers for children with special needs.

Since occupations in child care are female-dominated, male-dominated jobs outside of the sector will have to be chosen for comparators to determine if there is any pay inequity. The entire process will be completed in early 2009, and the government will then have to decide how to proceed if pay inequity is found.

For more information visit: <http://www.gnb.ca>, keyword: Wage Gap

The job evaluation initiative is part of a broader government plan to bring about pay equity and address the underemployment of women in the province. The government has also said it must set an example by taking steps to become a model employer.

and timelines, and the response has been positive, said program manager Anne Soles.

“The [staff] are excited. The main reason they came is they feel they are being undervalued—they are not getting paid appropriately.”

tation from government, employers and the workforce. The committees’ membership also reflects non-profit and for-profit services, and the province’s regions and two official languages.

“It is a transparent process and having the industry involved is important,”



Quebec

Projects enhance skills, professionalism of ECE staff

The organization representing Quebec's child care centres, L'Association québécoise des centres de la petite enfance (AQCPPE), has embarked on two major campaigns to improve quality in programming and enhance the skills and professionalism of those who work in the sector.

The Brio project

Brio is an ambitious professional development campaign aimed at the province's 40,000 program managers, early childhood educators and family child care providers, and the 7,000 parents who sit on administrative councils of les centres de la petite enfance (CPEs).

AQCPPE launched Brio in response to two major studies on quality in the sector and the ministère de la Famille et des Aînés' revised early childhood education program. The revised version updates the approach and objectives of Quebec's child care program with respect to the changing socio-economic realities of families, the increased role child care plays in socialization, and new knowledge about child development.

"We wanted to support ownership for the ministry's revised program," said Geneviève Issalys, Coordonnatrice Innovation, recherche et développe-

ment et soutien à la formation. "But we also wanted to do more than a one-day orientation because this is a good opportunity to give some higher level training and improve skills in applying the program."

Launched in the fall of 2007, the project has already reached more than 4,000 people who work in the sector. "People have told us that they appreciate the uniform content and the approach of the training and allowing them to learn about the new program collectively," said Issalys.

"We are using a participatory style of education for the workshops and integrating reflection on practice—"What is it that I do in my practice?"—so that we can start from the staff's experience and validate their role in the environment of early childhood education and care."

Parent administrators are also part of the training because "they make decisions for the organization and we want to sensitize them to their management role, the educational mission of the CPEs, and how to make decisions within the context of this mission."

The Brio project, which will continue until 2012, is expected to improve skills and lead to a more cohesive approach to the early childhood education and care program offered by Quebec's child care centres and family child care settings.

The Odyssée project

The second project, Odyssée, seeks to improve the quality of ECEC practices. It is looking at best practices in four areas: educational approach with children; guiding and supporting parents; managing and implementing collective projects; and partnerships and links in the community.

A 14-member team, deployed in 12 regions, is meeting with the CPEs to identify which best practices have worked well for them in these four areas. From there, the information is analyzed by a research team, compiled, and disseminated to staff in centre-based and family child care settings.

The project is a way of recognizing and supporting early childhood educators in their roles as professionals, said Issalys. "Directors and teachers have their mandatory training that prepares them for work, but they gradually become professionals when they work and apply theory to practice on the floor. We guide them in this professional development process by getting them to share their practices and reflect on them."

Like the Brio project, Odyssée's overarching goal is to improve the quality of the early childhood education and care in Quebec. The project should be completed by the end of 2009 and will culminate in an important conference.

Funding available for training, recruitment

It's no secret that there are pressing workforce shortages facing Canada's child care sector. Neither is the importance of having trained of early childhood educators to deliver quality services. In recognition of these needs, a number of government

funded initiatives are underway. Details differ, but the goals are similar: to address the sector's recruitment and training challenges. A brief look at some of these initiatives below...



Alberta - Ministry of Children's Services

The *Child Care Bursary for Leaders in the Child Care Community* is a three-year program designed to off-set educational costs for staff aspiring to leadership roles in the sector. In addition to funds for tuition and books, a travel amount of up to \$500 is available to applicants living over 100 kilometres away from the institution they attend. The maximum disbursement per bursary is \$10,000. The program runs until 2010.

The *Staff Attraction Incentive* is being offered to recruit back trained child care professionals who have been out of the field for at least six months. A commitment to working in a pre-accredited or accredited child care program for two years is required. Eligible child care programs will receive up to \$5,000 over the two-year period, to be transferred to the employee at the end of each year. A 12% benefit contribution is also made to the child care program to off-set the cost of mandatory employer contributions.

For more information: <http://child.alberta.ca/home/704.cfm>



Manitoba - Manitoba Child Care Program (MCCP)

Tuition Support Program: An *Early Childhood Education Tuition Support Conditional Grant* of up to \$4,000 is available to full-time ECE college students to assist with tuition costs. Applicants must agree to work in Manitoba's licensed child care system for a minimum of two years after graduation or repay the grant.

Replacement Grant: The *Staff Replacement Grant* is available to cover substitute costs so that child care assistants may attend ECE college workplace training. Workplace students who typically go to school two days a week and work three days a week are able to continue to receive their full salary while they train.

Training Grant: An annual \$250 *training grant* is available to all child care assistants working in non-profit child care centres or family child care providers. The grant assists with the cost of taking ECE courses at recognized post-secondary institutions.

Recruitment Incentive Program: A *Recruitment Incentive Grant* of up to \$3,000 is available for eligible ECE IIs or IIIs returning to employment in a non-profit child care centre after an absence from the licensed system of at least two years. The individual must meet current qualification requirements and agree to work in the Manitoba licensed child care system for a minimum of two years or repay the grant.

For more information: In Manitoba, contact your local child care coordinator. General inquiries can be directed to: Child Care Information Services at cdcinfo@gov.mb.ca or (204) 945-0776.



British Columbia - Ministry of Child and Family Development

The **ECE Incentive Grant Program** is designed to encourage licensed ECEs who have not worked in the field for at least two years to return to the sector. A maximum of 100 full time applicants will receive the grant of \$2,500 annually for 2 years. Payment is issued directly to the applicant upon completion of their first and second year as an ECE in a licensed child care facility. Grants will be awarded after June 30, 2008. The two years of consecutive employment must start before then.

For more information: http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/childcare/ece_incentive/index.htm

MCFD has also partnered with the Ministry of Advanced Education (AVED) to implement the **British Columbia Early Childhood Educator Loan Assistance Program**.

Under this program, recent ECE graduates may be eligible for up to \$2,500 to assist in the repayment of their BC student loan. Applicants must be from an approved training institution. The final year of study must be between January 1, 2007 and December 31, 2008.

For more information: http://www.aved.gov.bc.ca/studentaidbc/repay/repaymentassistance/loanassistance_ece.htm

Newfoundland and Labrador – Depart- ment of Health and Community Services

The **Early Learning and Child Care Supplement** provides up to \$6,600 to eligible ECEs. The ELCC supplement is paid quarterly, directly to the applicant. To qualify, the ECE must have a current Level I – Level IV Child Care Services Certification and work directly with children in a regulated child care setting.

The **Early Childhood Education Bursary Program** is designed to improve recruitment and retention of qualified ECEs by reducing student debt. To qualify, candidates must graduate from



a recognized 2-year ECE program, obtain permanent part or full time work after graduation, and agree to provide two years of service as an ECE to the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. In return, the province provides a \$5,000 bursary to assist in paying off student debt. For more information: <http://www.edu.gov.nf.ca/studentaid-system/grants.htm#ece>



Committee members and provincial stakeholders celebrate the launch of the report.

Report examines recruitment and retention in Newfoundland and Labrador

Related this April, the *Report of the Industrial Adjustment Services Advisory Committee on Child Care Workforce Recruitment and Retention Issues - Strategic Directions* contains a detailed supply and demand analysis and features recommendations around: recruitment and positive messaging; training and professional development; wages, benefits, and working conditions; and departmental collaboration.

The sector council's executive committee was pleased to be on hand for the release and enjoyed meeting with members of the committee. The report can be accessed at: www.aecenl.ca.

Goodbye Marta...



Marta receives the Saskatchewan Centennial Medal for outstanding personal achievement and professional contribution to the child care field (2005).

This year the sector council bids a fond farewell to Marta Juorio. Marta has been with the council since the beginning, representing the Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada. Drawing on close to 20 years experience as executive director of the YWCA Child Development Centre in Saskatoon, Marta played a key role in many projects, including the

development of the *Occupational Standards for Child Care Administrators (2006)*. Marta also drew on four terms on the Advisory Committee for the Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology's ECE program in her role as co-chair of the *Training Strategy Project (2007)*. A knowledgeable and dedicated board member, Marta's insight and positive spirit will be missed.

New resources from CCCF help build strong practitioner-family team

The Canadian Child Care Federation (CCCF) recently launched the first part of a new set of user-friendly accessible tools designed to support partnerships between practitioners and parents in order to enhance young children's social development. The materials focus on working with families to help children learn positive behaviour and strengthen their communication (language and literacy) skills.

Research shows that strong child care practitioner-family partnerships benefit children's social well-being. In fact, practitioner-family relationships are a key element of quality as identified in the CCCF's National Statement of Quality Early Learning and Child Care. Yet building these partnerships isn't always easy. Miscommunication, diversity of experience and differing expectations are all factors that hinder successful partnerships.

Articles, resource sheets, and other materials are available free of charge to all CCCF members. The materials can be used as information or as the foundation for workshops on building a strong practitioner-family team. Watch for more details in the Spring 2008 issue of *Interaction* or on the CCCF web site: www.qualitychildcare-canada.ca.

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Where we'll be

Event: Saskatchewan Early Childhood Association conference: "Good Education Cares – Good Care Educates"

What: Workshop on the Occupational Standards for Child Care Administrators

When: Friday, May 9th, 2008

Where: Delta Regina, Regina,

More information: www.skearlychildhoodassociation.ca/

Event: Employing the Occupational Standards for Child Care Administrators Institute

What: One-week institute offered by the University of Winnipeg

When: May 12 – 16, 2008

Where: Winnipeg, MB

Event: Early Childhood Educators of BC Conference "Between Two Seas: Bridging Children and Communities"

What: Workshops on the Occupational Standards for Child Care Administrators

When: May 30 – 31, 2008

Where: Richmond, BC

More information: www.ecebc.ca

Publications free to trainers and students

CCHRSC is offering some of its publications to ECEC trainers who can use the material in post-secondary courses and programs. To obtain any of the publications listed below, e-mail info@ccsc-cssge.ca with "Free Publications" as the subject line and be sure to mention how you will use the

publication, including the name of the course or program it will be used in. Each of the documents below can be viewed in the Research and Publications section of CCHRSC's web site (www.ccsc-cssge.ca).

Publication	Maximum # of copies available per request
<i>Working for Change: Executive Summary</i>	40
<i>Working for Change: CD-Rom containing Main Report, Executive Summary, Profiles and Literature Review</i>	25
<i>Career Promotions & Recruitment Strategy: Executive Summary</i>	25
<i>Child Care Wages and a Quality Child Care System</i>	10
<i>Bulletin, Winter 2008: People, Programs, and Practice: Training Strategy Release</i>	15
<i>Bulletin, Spring 2007: Special Issue on Inclusion</i>	15
<i>Bulletin, Fall 2006: Finding the Best Ways to Train Today and Tomorrow's Workforce</i>	15

Copies of the full-length *Training Strategy for the ECEC Sector* are also available (one per person). All publications will be distributed on a first come first served basis.

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