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RESOURCES SECTOR COUNCIL



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Canada

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Innovation and infrastructure needed to support employers

To meet the human resources challenges in early childhood education and care (ECEC), employers must work collectively and share innovative strategies that have been successfully used by others, says a new report released by the sector council.

Supporting Employers in ECEC: Main Report says that the sector must continue to expand its ability for creative problem-solving as it grapples to find ways to strengthen administrative and leadership practices and human resource capacity. The study also underlines the importance of developing and resourcing a sustainable infrastructure for the sector to help employers address factors outside of their control, such as the impact of inflation on wages.

“The study verifies and validates what most of us have been saying and feeling,” says Denise Gilbert, co-chair of the project committee and Executive Director of Schoolhouse Playcare Centres of Durham, Ontario. “It also talks about potential ways to address the problems and shows that we—employers, labour unions, professional associations, training institutions, and child care organizations—are willing to share the responsibility. We all have a role to play.”

The report includes recommendations in areas where employers can have an impact, including improving human resources and leadership capacity; promoting exemplary practices and the value of the profession both inside and outside the sector; training and professional development for employers; and the monetary and non-monetary ways of recruiting and retaining staff.

“What we’ve done is identify the key common human resource issues we came across in our research and then identified for all stakeholder groups in the sector what sort of activities they could go forward with,” said the report’s researcher Jacob Sulkers. “The solutions are multi-level.”

Together is better

A key recommendation deals with creating opportunities for employers to learn from what others have done and to organize into groups such as employer councils in order to benefit from shared experiences and achieve potential economies of scale.

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Innovation and infrastructure needed to support employers

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“If there’s something at that level that could be done to enable employers to work together and give them a bigger voice it would perhaps eliminate some of the isolation we feel as employers,” said Gilbert. “The study shows that from employer to employer we all struggle with the same issues.”

The recommendations also address the need for sector-appropriate training in HR management and leadership, and providing the resources and support for time-strapped employers to pursue these programs. Most child care employers were promoted from front-line positions as early childhood educators. Many could benefit from child-care specific administration or leadership programs which are not widely available.

“You can’t look at child care and say that a business administration degree

would give you the skills you need as an administrator in the sector,” said Darcelle Cottons, co-chair of the project committee and director of UBC Child Care Services. “It’s a different enough sector that there are different requirements, different skills and abilities for administrators. We need training that develops and accomplishes these things.”

“Great ideas”

The study also recommends low-cost ways to support HR practices, for example, that the sector council develop tools and templates based on existing resources in the child care and other sectors.

The report includes an extensive appendix of human resources innovation in various provinces and territories. For example, a major issue for employers

in child care is recruiting and retaining qualified staff. Some employers offer creative benefits to attract employees, such as time off and registration costs for professional development, and staff break rooms. These benefits have many positive impacts and don’t need to be expensive. At the provincial level, Manitoba and Quebec have created wage scales that recommend market wages for ECEs.

“This report has some great ideas,” said Cottons. “It captures the pockets of innovation in various provinces and territories and this will hopefully encourage individuals, other provinces and territories, governments and training institutions to move forward.”

The full Supporting Employers in ECEC study, including the Main Report, is available at www.ccsc-cssge.ca.

Supporting Employers in ECEC Project – Reports Available

The information gathered for the Supporting Employers in Early Childhood Education and Care Project was used to create a variety of reports and documents that help to define key findings. Each of documents below will be available for download in late January, on the CCHRSC web site: www.ccsc-cssge.ca.

- **Main Report:** This document provides an in-depth analysis of all findings of the *Supporting Employers in ECEC Project*, including the results of the literature review, employer survey, key in-

formant interviews, focus groups and related recommendations.

- **Executive Summary:** This report summarizes key findings and recommendations from *Supporting Employers in ECEC: Main Report*.
- **Literature Review Report:** This report provides detailed information about the key trends and issues identified through a review of sector studies and reports, and academic journals.
- **Summary Profiles of Employer Governance Models:** This report provides brief profiles of the main employer gov-

ernance models identified during the research process.

- **Mapping of HR Issues:** This report identifies the range of governance/employer models, 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 currently available at: www.ccsc-cssge.ca.

Workforce Shortages Project an eye-opener for the sector

A groundbreaking sector council project that looks at child care supply and demand will provide information to help stakeholders plan ways to deal with current and future workforce shortages.

The Workforce Shortages Project is collecting national, provincial and territorial data to comprehensively estimate workforce shortages in the early childhood education and care (ECEC) sector and study the feasibility of developing tools to predict future workforce needs in 13 provinces and territories. The project is also study-

Robert Fairholm.

The most striking is the magnitude of the benefits of child care to the economy. Aside from the positive impact on parental workforce participation, the long-term benefits of improved educational outcomes for children “are huge,” said Fairholm. “The long-term benefits vastly outweigh the costs.”

Fairholm. “To satisfy current needs you need to look for people with ECE who are working in other sectors or who are not in the paid workforce.”

The sector council hopes the project’s findings will help the provinces and territories plan for adequate numbers of staff as they develop child care spaces. Training institutions will be able to use the information to determine the potential demand for ECE programs, while the findings will help policy makers put in place initiatives to help recruit people into the field.

“The figures will show what the shortages will be and what will happen if child care spaces don’t increase over time,” said Christine McLean, project co-chair. “Even without adding any more spaces, we already know we need more people. But when you see the enormity of the problem and start to do the math that is the eye-opener, and front and centre is the urgent need

The most striking (finding) is the magnitude of the benefits of child care to the economy. Aside from the positive impact on parental workforce participation, the long-term benefits of improved educational outcomes for children “are huge,” said project researcher Robert Fairholm. “The long-term benefits vastly outweigh the costs.”

ing the socio-economic impacts of the shortages, as well as current innovative practices around recruitment and retention.

“We’re looking at what is happening with the birthrate, immigration rates, the number of graduates from ECE programs and what plans there are for child care expansion,” said Margot Young, project committee co-chair and Canadian Union of Public Employees representative on the sector council board. “We’ve never looked at things in such a comprehensive way.”

The preliminary findings are already producing some “eye-popping” results, says economist and project researcher

Not enough people

The sector is already facing acute workforce shortages. According to the 2006 Census, about 36% of those with ECE qualifications are working in the sec-

“Even without adding any more spaces, we already know we need more people. But when you see the enormity of the problem and start to do the math that is the eye-opener, and front and centre is the urgent need to build the workforce.”

tor. But even if all of those who are currently unemployed instantly found a job, “you still wouldn’t have enough people to satisfy the demand,” said

to build the workforce.”

The final results of the project will be available in May 2009 at www.ccscc-cssge.ca.

Pathways to ECE Credentialing

Credential assessment processes for early childhood educators (ECEs) vary widely across Canada, with few common approaches in place. Yet, whether voluntary or mandatory, credential assessment (certification, registration, and equivalency) can play a key role in building a professional and skilled ECE workforce.

That's why the Pathways to ECE Credentialing Project focuses on creating a tool kit designed to increase understanding of credential assessment processes across the country and support skills development in the sector.

The first step in the Pathways project was the creation of occupational tools including an *Essential Skills Profile (ESP)* and an *Occupational Language Analysis (OLA)* for the early childhood educator role. With the ESP and OLA nearing completion, the focus is now

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on creating a guide to ECE credentialing in Canada. The guide will contain detailed information on each process, the steps involved, and potential outcomes. In addition, a secondary analysis will use the Occupational Standards for Practitioners, ESP, and OLA as a common framework to review the

processes and determine how they reflect the occupational requirements.

Once complete, the *Guide, Essential Skills Profile*, and *Occupational Language Analysis* will form the foundation for the *Pathways to ECE Credentialing Tool Kit*, available in Fall 2009.

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; numeracy; 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.

For more information on essential skills, see the CCHRSC's Spring 2008 bulletin at: www.cpsc-cssge.ca, or visit www.itsessential.ca.

What is an Occupational Language Analysis?

An Occupational Language Analysis (OLA) defines the standard language requirements (speaking, listening, reading, and writing) of an occupation. More specifically, the OLA identifies the Canadian Language Benchmark levels required to perform tasks identified in the Occupational Standards and Essential Skills Profile.

Benchmark levels are assigned on a scale of 1 – 12. It is important to note that the OLA does not identify just one “mastery” level benchmark for each task identified, but instead provides a range

of benchmarks. By identifying both the minimum and highest level required to perform the task, the user is able to identify where they fall in the range and set objectives for growth and development.

All Occupational Language Analyses are validated by sector stakeholders prior to release. For more information, visit www.itsessential.ca and review the language analyses section.

Who might use an Occupational Language Analysis?

Trainers, curricula developers, English as a second language teachers

- to develop occupation-specific language training curriculum, course materials or assessment tools
- to understand language complexity
- to modify non-language training (e.g., technical, soft skills training) to accommodate a broader range of language proficiency

Employers

- to understand and identify communication requirements of an occupation
- to accommodate or bridge communication gaps
- to inform the development of workplace training plans
- to inform policy development
- to assist in performance management

Students, potential ECEs

- to understand occupational language requirements
- to plan for personal/professional development to meet occupational language requirements
- to identify career paths
- to build resumes

Sector councils, sector organizations, unions

- to define occupational requirements
- to evaluate, facilitate and/or support occupation-specific learning opportunities
- to inform the development of HR tools and products

Career and guidance counsellors

- to advise individuals on career options and educational routes

Governments

- to inform labour market policies and programs

Ontario

Mentoring project for supervisors uses occupational standards

Ontario is piloting a new program for child care supervisors designed to improve the quality of licensed care. Mentoring Pairs for Child Care matches less experienced child care supervisors with those who have more experience in their own communities. The sector council's *Occupational Standards for Child Care Administrators* is an integral part of the program.

“The occupational standards are a primary reference for the program,” said Tammy McCormick-Ferguson, Executive Director of the Early Childhood Community Development Centre (ECCDC) in St. Catharines. The organization is implementing the program and used the standards to develop training material, help match supervisors into pairs, and to inform the evaluation.

The members of each mentoring pair will work their way through a process of group learning, one-on-one conferencing, networking and guided communication to develop their supervisory skills. They and their employers will receive an honorarium to help offset expenses related to project participation. Mentors and mentees must commit to at least 11 hours a month for a 12-month period. The pilot phase—from January 2009 to December 2009—is restricted to 12 communities and can accommodate up to 400 mentoring pairs, but the next phase in 2010 will be province-wide and be available to up to 800 mentoring pairs.

College credit

Eleven community colleges that offer ECE programs are associated with

the pilot, but only eight offer post-diploma child care administration programs. The latter have agreed to provide equivalency should they develop an administration program. The project intends to work with all other colleges with ECE programs in Ontario in 2010 and is hopeful that a solution can be found so that all future participants can also receive college credit.

The Mentoring Pairs for Child Care program was developed in response to the report by Ontario's Best Start Expert Panel on Quality and Human Resources, which identified a gap between the actual and required knowledge for child care supervisors to do their jobs.

“The report said that an important way to affect quality in child care is to ensure that the skills and knowledge are there at the leadership level,” said Jamie Kass, the sector council representative on the Mentoring Pairs for Child Care project advisory board. “This project gets to this issue by supporting supervisors, directors, and administrators to improve their skills and knowledge through a mentoring approach.”

For more information please visit: mentoringpairsforchildcare.org.

Occupational Standards for ECEs

Since the first set of Occupational Standards for Child Care Practitioners were developed by the Canadian Child Care Federation in 2003, the range of services provided by the early childhood education and care (ECEC) workforce has grown extensively. As the sector evolves, there is a need to re-examine the scope of the core occupation in ECEC and determine if there are new/emerging occupations that will require additional standards. This, combined with the recognized need to update occupational standards regularly, led to the *Occupational Standards for Early Childhood Educators Project*. The project began in October 2008 and focuses on:

- **Research and consultation to determine the scope of the core occupation in ECEC (Winter 2009)**

The full range of services that the ECEC workforce provides will be explored, including school-age care, infant care, family child care, and inclusive child care.

- **Development of the Occupational Standards for ECEs (Spring/Summer 2009)**

The standards will be developed through a series of workshops with early childhood educators and child care workers working directly with children on a day-to-day basis.

- **Validation of the Occupational Standards for ECEs (Fall 2009)**

The standards will be validated through a series of consultation sessions with key stakeholders, including ECEs and child care workers.

The final *Occupational Standards for Early Childhood Educators* are expected to be available in Spring 2010.

Would you like to participate in creating Occupational Standards for ECEs?

Between May and October 2009, 10 - 12 workshops will be held to develop and validate the Occupational Standards for ECEs. While locations have yet to be determined, participants must include ECEs and child care workers working in a wide range of settings and environments. Each workshop will require a voluntary commitment of between half a day and three days. Mileage, parking and meals will be reimbursed.

If you are an ECE who would like to participate,

please fill out and return the form below by February 20, 2008.

If you are an employer who would like to recommend that a member of your staff participate, please have the staff member fill out and return the form below by February 20, 2008.

Note: Each workshop must include a broad range of perspectives and experiences. As a result, participants selected will depend on the response from their region. Not everyone who responds will be

Occupational Standards for ECEs Workshop Participant Form

Please fill out and return the form below by February 20, 2009.

Forms can be submitted by fax: (613) 239-0533

or mailed to: Child Care Human Resources Sector Council, 151 Slater St, Suite 714, Ottawa, ON K1P 5H3.

Name: _____ Position/title: _____

Number of years in the field: _____

Place of employment: _____ Employer: _____

Street address: _____ City/town: _____ Province/Territory: _____

Day-time phone: _____ Evening Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

Please respond to the following questions:

1. What age groups do you work with? (Check all that apply)

Infant Toddler Pre-school Junior Kindergarten Kindergarten School-age

Other: _____

2. What type of organization do you work for? (Check all that apply.)

Not-profit (board led) Commercial/Private Aboriginal Community

Worksite/Private Company Education Institution/Hospital Government

3. Do you work in a unionized or non-unionized environment ?

4. How much time can you commit to the Occupational Standards development or validation workshops?

(Check all that apply.)

Half a day One day Two days Three days



Manitoba

Inclusion symposium generates sharing of ideas, energy

A pan-Canadian, cross-sectoral gathering to share the lessons learned about innovations in inclusion in early childhood education and care (ECEC) brought almost 200 participants to Winnipeg in August 2008.

“There was a lot of energy, and sharing of ideas and practices,” said Debra Mayer, executive director of the conference’s sponsor, SpecialLink: The National Centre for Child Care Inclusion. “The symposium tapped into a need expressed by many—‘How is inclusion working in your part of the country? What can I learn from the experiences of others? How can we do a better job of including children with special support needs?’ The presenters willingly shared their knowledge and there was an energy and commitment that ran strong over the three days.”

Participants heard from presenters on topics such as: ways to develop inclusive

practices in ECEC programs; provincial and territorial policy responses to inclusion issues; and programs that provide on-site support for inclusion, work with Aboriginal families who have children with special needs, and collaboratively teach independence of movement to children with severe disabilities.

The event marked the first time in 16 years that researchers, parents, early childhood educators and interventionists, policy makers, researchers and academics came together to discuss child care inclusion issues.

CCHRSC Executive Director Diana Carter reported to the symposium on the current status of inclusion training in ECEC. She said that while inclusion

issues are receiving increased attention in the sector, much needs to be done to ensure improved training for practitioners working with children who have special needs.

Carter said three key areas need to be addressed: clear and consistent training requirements for ECEs to work effectively with children who have special needs; standards to inform these training requirements; and a clear plan of action with activities, timelines and performance indicators.

Visit www.speciallinkcanada.org to view or download the symposium sourcebook, *Applying Lessons Learned* and many of the presenter PowerPoint presentations.

Labour Market Information Research Agenda (LMIRA)

Labour Market Information (LMI) is data collected on a particular workforce or sector of the economy. Regularly collected labour market information is important because it helps paint a picture of an occupation in the short- and long-term and can be used to inform decisions related to employment, work and business by governments. In turn, it can help determine the type of investments that would benefit the sector at the regional, provincial/territorial and federal level.

The CCHRSC’s Labour Market Information Research Agenda Project was developed in response to the need for consistent, regularly collected, pan-Canadian data on Canada’s early childhood education and care (ECEC) workforce. In addition, data collection methods vary across the country, making it difficult to analyze and compare. The LMIRA project will address these issues by bringing together a panel

of experts to examine data collection methods and create a long-term research planning agenda for the sector. The expert panel will include:

- Labour market economists.
- Early Childhood Education and Care experts.
- Labour market and ECEC data experts.
- Government officials from departments involved in labour market information and ECEC data collection at the federal, provincial/territorial, and municipal levels.

The final LMIRA will recommend ways to improve the availability of labour market information on the ECEC sector.

The LMIRA project began in Spring 2008. The final agenda will be released in Fall 2009.

Comings & Goings

Farewell Dixie...

This summer the CCHRSC said good-bye to long-time board member **Dixie Mitchell**. Over the past five years, Dixie has played a key leadership role on the council's board and executive committee. Dixie brought a wealth of experience to her work with the council, including extensive knowledge of training, mentoring, inclusion, and aboriginal and northern communities. She also contributed greatly to several CCHRSC projects, including the Occupational Standards for Child Care Administrators project, which she co-chaired. Dixie's commitment, dedication, and insight will be missed.

Welcome Ann...

This fall the CCHRSC welcomed **Ann Keizer** as our newest Director at Large. Over the past twenty years Ann has held a variety of roles in the early childhood sector, including time as a child care provider, employer, board member and post-secondary trainer. Ann is currently employed as Regional Early Childhood Consultant with the Government of Northwest Territories. Based in Fort Smith, Northwest Territories, Ann brings extensive knowledge of northern and rural child care to the CCHRSC board. Welcome Ann!

Transitions

A representative from the Provincial/Territorial Directors of ECEC Working Group sits on the CCHRSC board in an ex officio (non-voting) capacity. This year **Lenora Angel**, Executive Director of Child Care Programs and Services with the Government of British Columbia joined the CCHRSC board, taking over for long-time P/T representative **Kathy Reid**, former Director of the Manitoba Child Care Program.

Kathy's presence on the CCHRSC board was critical in sharing the provincial/territorial government perspective and ensuring that the CCHRSC was well-informed of government initiatives across the country. Her involvement in several CCHRSC projects, including the Career Promotions and Recruitment Strategy project, contributed much to the work of the council. The CCHRSC looks forward to continuing its relationship with the P/T Directors of ECEC Working Group through Lenora.



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