



ECEBC | early childhood
educators of BC

Celebrating 50 Years. 1969 – 2019

Early Childhood Educators of BC Briefing Note

June 25, 2018

PREPARED FOR: The Honourable Katrine Conroy; Minister of Children & Family
Development

The Honourable Katrina Chen; Minister of State for Child Care

FOR INFORMATION

ISSUE + BACKGROUND:

- Early childhood is a critical period in shaping children’s developmental trajectories.
ⁱ Research has shown that high quality early childhood education and care (ECEC) programs can enhance child development and poor quality can do harm.
- The Government of British Columbia (B.C.) introduced new funding and supports in ‘Budget 2018’ to offer relief to British Columbia’s childcare crisis. The first step is the ‘Fee Reduction Initiative’ where funding is conditional on operators opting into a funding structure and agreement, so families can benefit from reduced fees. Government has announced an ‘Affordability Benefit’ to start in September 2018 and a labour market study has begun, among other changes.
- As a result, there is opposition to the plan from some operators who do not want to have restrictions on their business model. They have come forward with specific objections to the plan in the form of alternative policy recommendations with the aim of remedying perceived challenges with Government’s ‘Child Care BC’ plan.
- In this briefing note, the Early Childhood Educators of BC (ECEBC) addresses the policy recommendations of the recently formed BC Child Care Owners Association. Our response highlights areas where evidence contrasts the requests made by BCCOA.

KEY POINTS:

Childcare licensing regulations

Integral to the child care crisis in BC is the lack of availability of childcare spaces. BCCOA propose that government should increase the ratios of children per educator as a remedy.

- Evidence and research does not support increased ratios as a safe or beneficial solution to high demands for child care. Increasing child to Early Childhood Educator (ECE) ratios comes with significant risk:
 - Reduced quality of care:** evidence shows that high child to ECE ratios for children up to two years old are insufficient to allow staff to interact effectively with each child.ⁱⁱ This results in diminished quality of care. **Disaster or emergency situations:** In multi-age care scenarios, if ratios are increased per opponents' recommendation, it would be possible for one educator to have 6 children under the age of 3 in their care at one time in addition to 2 children over the age of 3 (Multi-age child care). This is 8 children to 1 educator. In the case of a fire, or other emergency this may not allow for the safe egress of all the children. Appropriate ratios are a fundamental way to protect quality care.
- **A Solution: Maximize underused spaces to address demand** Many municipalities, including Vancouver with high real estate values, are looking for ways to increase child care spaces by identifying underused public spaces like schools and community centres to address demand without undermining child-educator ratio best practices. There is even more opportunity in rural and suburban settings to optimize existing spaces without comprising quality of care and safety.
- While increasing the number of children per educator may stand to increase operator profits (more children, more fees collected), evidence shows this will diminish the quality of care and may place children at risk.

Qualifications of early childhood educators

BCCOA recommends amendments to a 1-year ECE Assistant license to practice (LTP).

- BCCOA also recommends amendments include a non-renewable one year LTP to include anyone who has completed a bachelor's degree or diploma in a varied and potentially unrelated field (including but not limited to tourism, disability studies, human ecology and kinesiology) as a way to remedy an ECE shortage in BC's child care sector.

- In the short term, this may increase the workforce however, there are two critical risk factors:
 - **Quality of workers:** Early Childhood Educators are specially educated to assist in the development of the language, numeracy, gross/fine motor, emotional control, and social skills unique to early brain development.ⁱⁱⁱ ECE Programs include critical aspects of bonding and healthy child development from a holistic perspective. This includes supporting families, working with community resources and advocating for the needs of children. ECEs also are also screened for suitability and required to demonstrate skills in practicum settings under the supervision of post secondary instructors.
 - - “The term "high quality" is shorthand for the characteristics of ECEC programs that go beyond basic health and safety to environments that support children's well-being, development, learning and quality of life. "High quality" ECEC services employ educators/staff who are well educated for their work; have decent working conditions and wages; work with groups of children of manageable size; provide non-didactic, creative, enjoyable, age-appropriate activities for children; ensure consistent adults and peer groups; and offer stable social and physical environments. They are responsive to diverse populations of children and parents, include children with disabilities in a meaningful way; and are adequately supported by infrastructure like regulation and funding.” (Child Care Canada)^{iv}.
 - **Retention of workers:** a quick fix solution like introducing improperly trained staff from unrelated disciplines will not foster the stable learning environment required to guarantee quality, sustainable child care.

Quality child care depends on quality educators. BC’s early childhood educators are highly skilled and trained. ECEs are equipped to provide the high quality, play-based child care that is critical for children’s social, emotional and cognitive development during their early years.

By supporting a universal system, all children in BC will have fair access to our top quality Early Childhood Educators.

Scope of Access to Child Care Fee Reduction Initiative (CCFRI) Funding to extend to operators caring for their own children.

- BCCOA to the B.C. Government Plan are calling for parents who provide in-home care to be able to access CCFRI for their own children.
- BCCOA cites that BC Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) voted to allow their own children into legislature while getting paid, and so why shouldn't parents providing care in their own home be eligible for funding.
- This is not an analogous recommendation: MLAs are being paid to perform a public service role, not a child care function for their own children. In addition, the care setting for in home operators is their own home. This is an irregular recommendation as parents are not typically paid to care for their own children. Paying parents to be caregivers to their own children may set a precedent which Government would need to consider carefully before proceeding.

Please feel free to contact me to discuss further.

Prepared by:

Emily Gawlick, Early Childhood Educator
Executive Director, ECEBC
Phone: 604-709- 6063 ext.2

c.c. BCCOA

ⁱ National Research Council and Institute of Medicine. From neurons to neighborhoods: the science of early childhood development. Shonkoff JP, Phillips DA, editors. Washington, DC: National Academies Press; 2000.

ⁱⁱ OECD. Encouraging Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care. Litjens and Taguma, 2010, <http://www.oecd.org/education/school/48308711.pdf>

ⁱⁱⁱ Judge, S. et al. (2006), Closing the Digital Divide: Update From the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Heldref Publications, Tennessee.

^{iv} Child Care Canada (Retrieved June 12, 2018), Child Care Canada: Child Care Resource and Research Unit: <http://www.childcarecanada.org/why-good-child-care-lifelong-learning>