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MEDIA RELEASE

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How Is the Child Care Crisis Affecting the Early Childhood Education Sector?

Vancouver – Evidence and research have shown that high quality early experiences support children’s overall development. Providing affordable, high quality early care and learning programs is good for children, families and the economy.

But what if those who are educated to care for our youngest citizens leave their careers? Not just one or two but half of them. This is the case in the early childhood education sector. Because of low wages and lack of recognition job retention has been a struggle. These educators aren’t leaving because they are tired of their job it’s because many feel they have no choice.

Lena Hirst, an experienced educator, has recently faced this dilemma, although she has special education credentials to work with infants and toddlers she was not able to afford child care for her own children. She made the tough decision and left a career she loves. “I love my job and have always been proud to announce that I am an Early Childhood Educator who provides quality care for children away from home,” says Hirst. “I am saddened that I will not be able to continue to provide parents with the knowledge that I will do everything possible to provide a safe, trusting environment for their children while they are at work.”

Canada sits at the bottom of the list of OECD countries when it comes to GDP investment and access to early childhood education and care services. Child care is primarily a user fee system that often sees families paying fees that are the second to housing expenses, with only enough licensed child care spaces for about 20 percent of BC’s children. Hirst adds, “I am also disappointed that my children will not be able to experience everything that a qualified, passionate childcare provider is able to offer.”

On average early childhood educators don’t earn a living wage level although they have specialized training. In 2013, BC had the highest rate of child poverty in Canada with 18.6% of children living in poverty. Poverty is one of the most significant environmental risk factors for child development. High quality, affordable and accessible child care is key to reducing poverty in BC. There is a long history built on research and evidence proving that quality programs have a positive impact on children’s futures. This is good for children, families and the economy.

Children learn through play in caring and supportive environments. BC children have the right to positive and nurturing experiences, and to do this we need to ensure consistent staff. BC families have the right to access high quality, affordable programs so they can work, study and participate in community life. Governments have a responsibility to support BC families with programs that lay positive foundations for children and families. The people who have dedicated their lives to this career know firsthand the struggles families face while often experiencing the same personal situation.

The Early Childhood Educators of British Columbia (ECEBC) has been advancing early childhood education and care since 1969. ECEBC is the collective voice to advance professional and personal commitment to the value of early care and learning by empowering the sector through education, collaboration and leadership.

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For more information, please contact:

Emily Mliczko, Executive Director
Lena Hirst

executive.director@ecebc.ca
lena_kley@yahoo.ca