

Media Release September 5, 2018

Investment in Early Childhood Educators: Important to a quality child care system.

The Early Childhood Educators of BC (ECEBC) is pleased by the recent announcement by the Provincial Government on their Childcare BC, ECE workforce strategy.

The announcement today shows Government's commitment to build a childcare system that values the role of the professionals, Early Childhood Educators (ECE's), who hold one of the most important jobs in society, caring for and educating our youngest citizens.

"It is a great day when we see the important work of early childhood educators brought to the forefront. Through the provision of significant funding for educator training, and addressing the wages in our sector, we are on our way to building a strong, healthy professional workforce, one that is highly skilled and fairly paid. Our children deserve the very best and our early childhood educators do as well."

Charlene Gray, Chairperson ECEBC

Since 1969, ECEBC has been advancing early childhood education and care. Research has shown quality early childhood experiences make a lifelong difference on the healthy development of young children. While there have been many advancements, we have also seen alarming trends that have undervalued the expertise and importance of the workforce. Lack of qualified colleagues, low wages, and minimal (or no) benefits are added stresses on Early Childhood Educators who already engage in physically and emotionally demanding work. This is significant, given that the most important ingredient in quality care is the early childhood educator.

In 2010, ECEBC, along with the Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC developed the Community Plan for a Public System of Integrated Early Care and Learning (\$10aDay Plan). Based on research, this document provided a blueprint for how a publicly funded childcare system could be possible in our province. It has been instrumental in influencing public perception and public policy around childcare and was the catalyst for the current dialogue and understanding of the sector.

Today's announcements reflect important investments and are key steps needed to enhance the early childhood profession. They represent a multi-pronged approach which includes, but is not limited to:

- Wage enhancements for certified ECE's,
- Continuing education through the Student and Workforce Bursary programs and,
- Building professional networks and supporting quality.

The ECE wage enhancements will have a positive impact on the sector by increasing the overall income of ECE's, as well as demonstrating a commitment by government to support the professional workforce. A certified ECE who works 40 hours per week may see their gross income increase by \$2080 and again in 2020. These measures strengthen an employer's ability to access, attract and retain qualified staff. This is the first investment in 17 years that increases wages for educators while decreasing parent fees.

While the wage increases are both appreciated and timely, many certified ECEs will still struggle with low wages. As indicated in ECEBC's Strategic Model and other work, such as the \$25 an Hour Campaign, we will continue to champion the need for a wage increase until all early childhood educators are receiving a wage that reflects the important work they do.

Those who are not yet fully certified will be able to access the ECE Bursary program and receive financial support to complete their education. This program is with support from the Ministry of Children and Family Development, through the Federal Early Learning and Childcare bilateral agreement. ECEBC is proud to offer two bursary programs:

ECE STUDENT BURSARY

This program is open to all ECE students enrolled at an accredited ECE post-secondary institution. Students are eligible to receive up to \$4,000 in funding per school semester.

ECE WORKFORCE BURSARY FUND

This program is targeted towards professionals employed at a BC licensed childcare facility or Registered License Not Required childcare facility. Working professionals may qualify for up to \$5,000 to assist with the costs of upgrading or completing their ECE credentials.

For more details, please visit the ECEBC website, www.ecebc.ca.

We recognize today's announcements are part of the government's multi-year childcare plan and we are encouraged by this positive step forward.

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