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For immediate release

Findings from the recent report “Evaluation of Early Care and Learning Recruitment and Retention Strategy” in British Columbia are now available

Vancouver, BC, January 11th, 2023 – The Early Childhood Educators of BC (ECEBC) is pleased to share the *Evaluation of the Early Care and Learning Recruitment and Retention Strategy in British Columbia, Evaluation Report*. Funding for this report was provided through the Canada-British Columbia Labour Market Development Agreement.

In 2018, B.C. launched the [Early Care and Learning Recruitment and Retention Strategy](#) (ECL R&R Strategy). An evaluation project was set up to develop a continuous mechanism for the sector to provide feedback and information regarding the impact of diverse ECL R&R Strategy tactics as they are implemented. Interim reports are produced annually with a final report scheduled for 2024.

This evaluation report updates project progress through to the end of 2021, including the project management work plan report on Sector Steering Committee activities, and updates on implementation of the methodology. It includes results and lessons learned over the past three years of evaluation activity including Employer and Workforce surveys fielded in the fall of 2021. Finally, it includes plans for the extension of the evaluation to cover 2022 and 2023.

While it is too early to determine the overall effectiveness of the ECL R&R Strategy, the evaluation report’s interim findings will continue to inform B.C.’s ongoing efforts related to ECL recruitment and retention.

Key highlights

Wages

- Reported wages increased between roughly \$2.50 and \$4 an hour from 2019 to 2021. Monthly income of those working in child care centres has grown nominally by 9 per cent in that time. Yet many professionals consider their wages only modest recognition for their credentials and seniority.
- While average hourly wage rates are improving, the average ECL professional is still paid \$7/hour less than similarly educated adults in BC.

Impact of Wage Enhancement

- The BC Government's Early Childhood Educator Wage Enhancement (ECE-WE) is appreciated by the sector; approximately 90% of ECEs in BC received the ECE-WE in 2021.
- While the ECE-WE positively impacted wages in 2021, further impacts should be seen in next year's report, reflecting that the ECE-WE increased to \$4 per hour in March 2022 and included a lump sum payment retroactive to September 2021.

Staffing and Employment

- 45% of employers are losing more staff than they can hire.
- 27% of employers needed to refuse registering children into programs because of a lack of qualified staff.
- The main reasons provided by ECEs and ECEAs who previously left the field include low pay, lack of benefits, and poor working conditions.

Public Perception

- 85% of British Columbians believe child care workers are vital to children's learning and development.
- 75% of British Columbians consider child care an essential service.
- 71% of British Columbians consider child care workers as professionals.

As one early childhood educator who was interviewed said, "I would love to be considered the same as other teachers, like kindergarten or Grade 1 teachers. I would love for them to think of us as teachers because we are teachers. We're just teachers to children under the age of 5."

"The sector continues to benefit from year over year research with rich data to quantify the challenges and opportunities in the ECL labour market. The findings in this report reveal that low wages and a lack of benefits remain the main reasons qualified professionals are leaving this career. Further wage enhancements through a provincial wage grid would be welcomed, as would ensuring access to pensions and other meaningful benefits. While the ECL R&R Strategy has had a meaningful impact on wages, rates of burnout continue to rise since 2019. Access to benefits is low and improvements here is a key way to enhance retention in the sector. With most British Columbians viewing early childhood education as an essential service, renewed effort is needed to ensure regional disparities are addressed and a provincial system of child care is built."

Emily Mliczko, Executive Director of the Early Childhood Educators of BC (ECEBC).

About the Evaluation of the Early Care and Learning Recruitment and Retention Strategy in British Columbia

The research and community engagement process is governed by a **Sector Steering Committee**, key stakeholders who provided expertise and disseminated the engagement opportunities within their networks. Their commitment to the project is instrumental to its success.

The research, analysis and report were provided by the **Social Research and Demonstration Corporation (SRDC)**. SRDC is a non-profit research organization, created specifically to develop, field test and rigorously evaluate new programs.

The **Early Childhood Educators of BC** advances early childhood education and educators in the province of British Columbia. ECEBC is dedicated to building respect for early childhood education and educators and advancing the profession.

The **Sector Labour Market Partnerships** program provides “*funding to organizations within an economic sector, region, or population, to develop projects that help respond to workforce challenges.*” For more information about SLMP projects, see <https://www.workbc.ca/Employer-Resources/Funding-and-Programs/Sector-Labour-Market-Partnerships.aspx>



*Funding provided through the Canada-British Columbia
Labour Market Development Agreement.*

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