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BC Childcare Sector Labour Market Partnership Engagement Report: A snapshot of the challenge

The Early Childhood Educators of BC (ECEBC) is pleased to share the BC Childcare Sector Labour Market Partnership Engagement Report. Funding for this report was provided through the Canada-British Columbia Labour Market Development Agreement.

Over 1,700 individuals contributed to the report, including employers and employees from all types of childcare settings. The research and community engagement process was governed by a Steering Committee, key stakeholders who provided expertise as well as disseminating the engagement opportunities within their networks. Their commitment to the project was instrumental its success.

The report summarizes four key themes within the childcare labour market: labour shortage, recruitment and retention, training and career development, and sector governance.

"We can barely operate at our current capacity with a shortage of staff." This was repeated throughout our engagement activities and led to the following labour shortage findings:

"There is a shortage of qualified Early Childhood Educators (ECEs) in BC; the shortage of qualified ECEs puts stress on existing staff and contributes to burnout; there are not enough ECEs with Infant Toddler certification to meet the need; there is a demand for more Indigenous ECEs; childcare providers struggle to access vacation time or sick days due to a lack of qualified substitutes."

While there are numerous job openings, employers struggle to find and retain staff. Influencing factors included <poor> public perception of the profession and low wages. Positions must often be filled by less qualified staff, such as ECE Assistants, or else close their childcare centres.

There are barriers that prevent ECE Assistants from completing their ECE certificate. The report found: "There is a lack of financial incentive for ECEAs to pursue full ECE certification; there are not enough quality <local> ECE training programs; the current model for practicums is inadequate." Practicums are a fundamental and crucial piece of certificate completion.

Many of those working in childcare struggled to stay in the field. In addition to the stresses mentioned above, the report found childcare providers saw the following barriers: "there are few opportunities for staff to benefit from mentorship; there is a lack of professional development opportunities in my area; there is a lack of career pathways for childcare workers who want to advance within the field." We applaud the childcare workers who are motivated to continuously improve their skills and provide quality care to children.

The Early Childhood Educators of BC advances early childhood education and educators in the province of British Columbia. We provide professional development opportunities, training, and resources for early childhood educators across the province. We support early childhood educators to inform the broader community about their work. We are dedicated to building

respect for early childhood education and educators. "This project was a fantastic opportunity for our diverse sector to come together to identify both broad-reaching and unique challenges along with creative solutions. It was imperative to engage with the sector, so their insights can support the development of labour market policies and strategies. This project was a first step, and we look forward to continued partnerships." Emily Gawlick, Executive Director of the Early Childhood Educators of BC (ECEBC).

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

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