



For immediate release

Vancouver, BC - December 11, 2023

Quantity Does Not Equal Quality: Our young children deserve qualified educators

The Early Childhood Educators of BC (ECEBC) is concerned about the continued emphasis to provide free training for obtaining an Early Childhood Educator Assistant (ECEA) certificate. An ECEA certificate only stipulates having one course and assistants are not legally required to continue their education for five years at which time they only need to take one more course to continue to meet the assistant requirement. Additionally, we are concerned that recruitment of new students is being portrayed as entry level employment. Both of these factors do not acknowledge the complex work of an early childhood educator or adequately equip anyone to work professionally with children.

Filling the child care staffing shortage with more unqualified staff is not a solution to the child care crisis but rather is adding stress to an already extremely fragile system. Overwhelmed educators who are taking on additional burdens due to gaps created by the lack of qualified staff are continuing to leave the sector in unprecedented numbers. As indicated in the *Evaluation of the Early Care and Learning Recruitment and Retention Strategy in BC, Evaluation Report(2021)*, 45% of employers are losing more staff than they can hire and 27% of employers needed to refuse registering children into programs because of a lack of qualified staff.

"The BC and Federal Government have a unique opportunity to build a child care system that not only supports families but also creates spaces that children can flourish in," Christina Dicks, ECEBC Chair.

ECEBC has received reports of incidents that include: exclusion and expulsion of children with non-conforming behaviours from programs, overwhelmed educators who are taking on additional burdens due to gaps created by unqualified staff, retention issues of student educators who work in conditions that reflect centre inabilities to maintain/provide appropriate mentorship as a result are choosing not to complete their studies, and recruitment of new students is being promoted as "an anyone can do it work" rather than focus on the suitability of the person to work with children. Recruitment and retention strategies should seek to create quality early childhood spaces and not create unsafe conditions for children.

As cited in, *The Role of the Early Childhood Educator in British Columbia position statement(2022)*, "In relationship with children, families, communities, materials and places, educators engage in intentional pedagogical work in response to the complexity of our current conditions. Early childhood education is a space to co-create new worlds with alternative narratives." These conditions include the right to be with people who are fully qualified, those who have the knowledge and skills to engage in this complex work.

We are calling on government to implement the following actions:

1. All early childhood education assistants must be currently enrolled in an early childhood program leading to a certificate to practice as an early childhood educator. The plan for completion should be five years or less.
2. Implement a wage grid, similar to teachers within the Ministry of Education and Child Care, where salary is based on academic credentials/certificates to practice and experience.

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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