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Canada

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Trained ECE shortage in Canada worsening, study says

Workforce shortages in ECEC in Canada have steadily increased since 2001. The evidence suggests these shortages are especially acute for employees who have training to work in the sector, says a new study released by the sector council, *Addressing Workforce Shortages in Early Childhood Education and Care*.

The study is part of a project that began in 2007 to define and understand existing workforce shortages in the ECEC sector and look at the feasibility of developing a forecasting model that provinces and territories could use to predict future shortages.

Overall there was a cumulative shortage of 24,766 ECEC workers between 2001 and 2007. In 2007, the shortage was highest in Quebec (1,400) and Ontario (1,000). Across Canada, there were 4,802 ECEC workers still needed to fill available positions that year. The study says the shortages are “quite significant” since the analysis shows that the estimates are likely for qualified early childhood educators.

Demand for ECEC workers grew by 40% between 2000 and 2007, compared to 15% for all occupations. “What seems to have occurred is that during the period of strong demand there was a huge employment spike for hourly paid over salaried employees in the ECEC sector,” said Robert Fairholm, from Centre for Spatial Economics, which conducted the study. “Hourly paid workers tend to be lower qualified and when employers can’t find enough workers they have been getting an educational exemption [from the government] to bring in people with lower levels of qualifications.”

Impact on quality

“This is not about just putting people in positions, but about putting the right people in the positions,” said Christine McLean, co-chair of the workforce shortages project steering committee and sector council board member. “Without a strong workforce, child care quality is affected and without child care quality child development outcomes are affected. The more trained early childhood educators we have, the better the quality and the better the child development outcomes.”

The study also explored previous research which indicated that it can be chal-

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lenging for parents to assess quality in early childhood education and care. The study notes that one way to address this is to make information about the level of quality at different centres/programs publicly available.

For example, there are cases of municipal governments providing information to the general public about child care centres that help parents assess the quality of the child care services provided. The ratings are available on the government web site, and in some jurisdictions the information is also posted at each centre. As a result, says Fairholm, “parents have started shifting their children to those centres with higher quality ratings, child care centres have responded by trying to keep trained educators through higher wages, and lower quality centres have tried to improve the training of their workforce.”

High turnover

Most of the demand for ECEC workers has not come from expansion of services, says the study, but because of high turnover rates due to a variety of reasons, such as maternity leave, other

family reasons, going back to school, retirement, and finding a job outside the sector. Significantly, according to 2006 statistics, 41.2% of those who have ECE qualifications were employed elsewhere, including in the elementary school system, and 19.4% dropped out of the labour force altogether. Only 35.7% were employed in the sector and the remaining 3.8% were unemployed.

The study looked at research on why ECEC workers leave the sector and found that ECEC staff cited lack of pay and promotion opportunities, lack of respect for the early childhood education and care field, and working conditions as the top three contributing factors.

Between 2001 and 2008, the study found that workforce shortages in the ECEC sector resulted in a net loss of \$141 million after taking into account all costs and benefits to society.

“The intriguing thing about child care is that it has some additional benefits to the economy above and beyond the short-term stimulus to the economy caused by increasing spending because when you have a child care space available and a parent puts a child in it, this

Small sidebar

often frees up the parent to go back to work,” Fairholm says. “So if we take that aspect of it into account the short-term stimulus from expansion of the system is larger than for any of the other sectors in the economy.”

Project results will be widely available in June 2009 on the CCHRSC web site. For more information on the Addressing Workforce Shortages in Early Childhood Education and Care Project, visit www.ccsc-cssge.ca.



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Revised occupational standards for early childhood educators (ECEs) in the works

The sector council is redeveloping the occupational standards for the core occupation in early childhood education and care (ECEC) to ensure that they fully reflect the skills, abilities and knowledge needed to work in the field today.

The revised standards will update the first-ever occupational standards for practitioners produced by the Canadian Child Care Federation in 2003.

It is normal practice to review occupational standards periodically, and a number of factors make it even more important to update them now. The most critical is the need to re-evaluate the occupation because of rapid changes in the sector, including an expanding scope of work for ECEs and the increasingly complex skill set required to work effectively.

Prior to developing the standards, the project research will look at whether the core occupation needs to be re-defined, and determine whether new occupations—perhaps requiring their own standards—are emerging in areas of specialization, such as school-age, infant, family and inclusive child care.

The updated standards will have a positive and wide-ranging impact on a changing field, says sector council board member and project steering committee chair Stephanie Seaman. “It is a recognition of the evolving work of ECEs, the increased responsibilities we face every day and solid recognition of the professionalism of the field.”

Inclusive process

Engaging the sector is critical to the success of this project. As part of the pre-

liminary research, a sector survey will be available on the CCHRSC’s web site in April. The survey will gather input on the range of skills, knowledge and abilities required to work in the field and help to define the final scope of the occupation. Once the preliminary research is complete, ECEs currently working the field will contribute to the standards’ development through a series of three workshops in Eastern, Central, and Western Canada. A variety of sector stakeholders will also provide input on the draft standards at validation sessions to be held in the Fall 2009.

The process ensures that the standards are “rooted in the people who do

on the original CCCF standards and is a member of the project steering committee for the updated ones. For example, occupational standards can be used by employers to define staff selection criteria and professional development requirements, or by staff for self-assessment and to identify areas for professional growth. Standards can also be helpful to governments and post-secondary training institutions.

“Any college in Newfoundland that wants to offer ECE programs has to meet provincial program requirements and those are built on the occupational standards,” says Goss-Prowse, who is the registrar of child care services cer-

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Many uses

The standards will have many uses and help provide the foundation for building a well-trained and skilled workforce, says Mary Goss-Prowse, who worked

tification at the Association of Early Childhood Educators, Newfoundland and Labrador. She added that the standards are also the basis for the province’s ECEC program standards.

The final standards for the core occupation will be available in May 2010. They will complement the Occupational Standards for Child Care Administrators published by the sector council in 2006.

Self-regulating ECE college a first in the sector

More than 22,000 applications for membership have poured into Ontario's College of Early Childhood Educators since it opened in September 2008—the first college of its kind in Canada requiring registration for those who want to be recognized as early childhood educators (ECEs).

In January, when 15,000 applications were received by the college, staff went by car to the post office every day and brought back six or seven huge containers of applications," says Registrar and CEO Dainora Juozapavicius.

Mandated by the Early Childhood Educators Act in 2007, the college, with its head office in Toronto, "is akin to a licensing body. To use the title of early childhood educator or registered early childhood educator and practise the profession, unless exempted by the Act, you have to register and get certification from the college."

The primary duty of the college is to serve and protect the public interest, says Juozapavicius. "Establishing the college assures the public that if their child is in the care of an ECE then that person will be practising according to a set of standards."

Impact on recognition

Having a college also has a positive impact on recognition, a key human resource issue in the sector. "It recognizes ECE as a profession and acknowledges that ECEs can regulate themselves as a professional body. For too long people would often think of ECEs as non-professionals. Not having recognition con-

"It recognizes ECE as a profession and acknowledges that ECEs can regulate themselves as a professional body. For too long people would often think of ECEs as non-professionals. Not having recognition contributed to the undervaluing of ECEs," says Registrar and CEO Dainora Juozapavicius.

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The idea of a college had been promoted by some in the sector for decades. Its creation was endorsed by the province's Best Start Expert Panel on Quality and Human Resources, which identified strategies to strengthen the quality of early childhood education and care services.

Estimates of the number of ECEs in Ontario fall anywhere between 20,000 to 30,000. In order to receive a certificate of registration from the college, applicants must satisfy educational and training requirements stipulated in the regulations for the Early Childhood Educators Act and possess either:

- a diploma in early childhood education from an Ontario college of applied arts and technology (or equivalent outside of the province approved by the college);

- a degree from a Canadian university, with major course content relevant to early childhood education, approved by the college;
- an equivalency through successful completion of a prior learning assessment process approved by the college; or
- a letter of equivalency certificate or a recognition of equivalency certificate issued by the Association of Early Childhood Educators Ontario or the Association francophone à l'éducation des services à l'enfance de l'Ontario.

Applicants must also provide documentation of their educational attainment (photocopies must be signed by a guarantor) and Canadian citizenship or immigration status. In some cases employers are revisiting their hiring practices to ensure they are in line with the college requirements.

Extensive review

“The applications are reviewed by qualified staff trained in the review process,” says Juozapavicius. “Applications go through several different hands to make sure they meet the registration requirements and to verify the appropriate documentation has been submitted.”

Once an application is received it is immediately date-stamped and forwarded to a screener who ensures that it is complete and that all relevant documentation is included. A letter of acknowledgement is then sent to the applicant. The documents contained in the application are then reviewed to ensure that they are authentic and meet the actual requirements (for example that a diploma is from a recognized training institution). They are then sent to the director of registration, and then to the registrar, who examines the application and, if all the requirements have been met, issues a certificate of registration. Currently the process takes an average of four months.

There is an annual \$150 membership fee to maintain registration as an ECE. Some employers are providing financial support for the annual fee either by paying it outright, or up-front with a pay-back timetable.

“Those working in the field and their employers have generally been very supportive of the college,” says Juozapavicius. “However, there is still a need for outreach to raise stakeholder awareness of what the college does, why it came into being and what self-regulation entails.”

An area of immediate work is developing the standards of practice that will guide ECEs. “It’s our next big piece of work. We have a committee of our council established for that purpose and they will consult with stakeholders and ensure the members are engaged because it is a self-regulating body.”

As with other professional regulatory bodies, the college will also develop its own complaints procedure and processes related to disciplinary and fit-

ness-to-practice hearings.

The college is governed by a council whose 24 members will serve staggered terms of two and three years to ensure continuity. Fourteen council members are elected from the membership, and 10 are members of the public from a range of backgrounds and occupations who are appointed by the provincial government. “We are self-regulated but the key mandate of the college is the protection of the public interest. This is one of the reasons the council is composed of a combination of college members and public appointees.”

Juozapavicius said that it is too early to say whether ECE colleges will become a trend in other jurisdictions in Canada. However, the college has already sparked some international interest, and is hosting a delegation from Qatar in the spring.

To find out more about the College of Early Childhood Educators, or to download an application form, visit www.collegeofece.on.ca.

Labour Market Information Research Agenda moves forward

Obtaining accurate and reliable labour market information and data on Canada’s early childhood education and care (ECEC) workforce is a longstanding and well-documented challenge. The CCHRSC’s *Labour Market Information Research Agenda* project was designed to address that challenge and improve the quality and availability of labour market information on the ECEC workforce.

Since Fall 2008, a panel of experts—labour market economists, ECEC researchers, data experts and government representatives from the municipal, provincial and federal levels—have been working together to:

- analyze existing data sources (including the Census and Labour Force Survey);
- develop recommendations on how labour market information and data collection methods can be improved; and

- create a research and planning agenda that prioritizes data needs in the ECEC sector.

The panel is currently working together to develop the final Labour Market Information Research Agenda, which will be available in Fall 2009.

For more information visit the CCHRSC web site at: www.ccsc-cssge.ca.

Hub model of governance ready to move forward

A group of 10 child care centres in Winnipeg’s St. James area are working towards a new centralized “hub” model of governance that would enhance administrative efficiencies and give executive directors more time to spend on quality programming.

The model focuses on centralized governance, including the development of an overarching board that would be responsible for strategic directions, organizational structures, personnel, and finance for all 10 centres. Responsibilities that currently rest with centre directors would also be centralized, including:

- managing waiting lists;
- developing and administering human resource policies;
- hiring and deployment of substitute and casual staff;
- researching and planning professional development;
- billing, payroll, buying supplies; and
- keeping up to date with new legislation, policies and regulations.

Individual executive directors could be tapped to provide specialist skills in some of these areas, although they would no longer have exclusive responsibility for them.

The centres also believe a hub governance model could help with recruitment and retention by increasing career opportunities for staff, says Don Giesbrecht, executive director of the Assiniboine Children’s Centre and a member of the group’s governance model steering committee. “We see it as a way of raising the professionalism of the sec-

tor. We are trying to create some more career paths within child care, which right now are too horizontal. And we would want to look at the salary scales

model is a natural evolution for the centres. When they opened years ago, their programs and budgets were small. “Some now have budgets of \$1 million

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in the centres and take the best and red-line them to try to get everyone up to that level.”

The best fit

The idea for a new governance model has been in the works for the last three and a half years. “We now have proposals from various consultants and are figuring out which one we think is the best model and best fit.” The centres will be applying to the provincial government for funding to implement the model—the only way that the initiative can realistically go ahead since the cost is “well into the six figures.”

Giesbrecht says the hub governance

to \$1.5 million a year and have more than 200 children in their programs. Collectively there are almost 350 employees and taken together the budgets are close to \$7 million.”

Giesbrecht stressed that the hub governance model will not take away from the centres’ community roots. “There is a strong desire for each organization to maintain its unique programming. We will still want to ensure there is a level of accountability back to the neighbourhood, for example, the way schools have parent advisory committees.”

For more information contact: Don Giesbrecht at don@assiniboinecc.org or by phone at 204-889-9858.

The Agreement on Internal Trade and ECE

The Agreement on Internal Trade was signed in 1994 with the goal of reducing barriers to the movement of labour, goods, services, and investment between provinces and territories. The labour mobility clause of the agreement focuses on ensuring that when workers in a regulated profession or trade move from one jurisdiction to another, they can continue to work in their occupation without having to undergo extensive reassessment, retraining or retesting.

Initially, compliance with the labour mobility clause was voluntary. However, in 2006, an official deadline of April 1, 2009 was set for adherence. This is particularly relevant to the early childhood sector as it directly affects seven provinces and one territory that license, certify, or register ECEs: Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba, Newfoundland and Labrador, Ontario, Prince Edward Island, Saskatchewan and Yukon. As a result, government officials involved in ECEC in those regions are currently working together to meet the requirements of the agreement (which may lead to revised regulatory practices in some jurisdictions).

CCHRSC's *Pathways to ECEC Credentialing Project*, which focuses on documenting the credential assessment processes that currently exist in each province and territory, will also examine the impact of the AIT as it relates to the project. Project results will be available in Fall 2009.

For more information on the Agreement on Internal Trade: www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/ait-aci.nsf/eng/Home.

3rd Annual ECE Affinity Group Forum

Mark your calendars for the ECE Affinity Group Forum, to be hosted by Grant MacEwan College in Edmonton! The dates have been set for November 19-21, 2009.

The ECE Affinity Group is a joint initiative of the Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC) and the CCHRSC. The group brings together members of the ECE post-secondary training community to share ideas, best practices, and current trends and issues.

For more details on the forum, visit the CCHRSC web site, www.cpsc-cssge.ca, in May.

To join the ECE Affinity Group please go to the ACCC web site: www.accc.ca/networking.

Inuit children face challenges, but also thrive

Inuit have the youngest population in Canada, with 35% under the age of 15 years, says Mishael Gordon, the early childhood development (ECD) coordinator for the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK). The organization has a stated mandate to promote the well-being of Inuit children and ensure that "Inuit early childhood development encompasses Inuit language, Inuit culture and ways."

ITK has identified many challenges which limit Inuit children's access to and participation in licensed child care services, including:

- very long waiting lists;
- lack of qualified staff;
- inadequate facilities;
- inequitable services due to jurisdictional differences; and
- limited family resources which lead to lack of community involvement.

Despite these and other challenges, the children are thriving, says Gordon, noting that Inuit have the highest percentage of use of their language of origin, close ties to culture and tradition, and a strong community connection. To learn more about early childhood in Inuit communities visit: www.itk.ca.

Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, formerly Inuit Tapirisat of Canada, is the national voice of Canada's Inuit. Founded in 1971, the organization represents and promotes the interests of Inuit. In its history, ITK has been effective and successful at advancing Inuit interests by forging constructive and co-operative relationships with different levels of government in Canada, notably in the area of comprehensive land claim settlements, and representing Inuit during the constitutional talks of the 1980s.

Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK) represents about 50,000 Inuit in 55 communities across Canada.

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