

More support to meet demand for early childhood educators ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

To meet the demand for early childhood educators (ECE) in British Columbia, the Province is reallocating \$4 million within the Canada-BC Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) Agreement to provide additional bursaries through the ECE Education Support Fund.

This will allow more students to pursue their education goals and an ECE career.

“Passionate and nurturing child care workers are essential to ensuring all Canadian children have the best possible start in life,” said Ahmed Hussen, federal Minister of Families, Children and Social Development. “The Government of Canada is pleased to work with the Government of British Columbia to help train more qualified early childhood educators.”

The B.C. government launched the enhanced ECE Education Support Fund in September 2018, with a target of supporting 4,000 students by the end of March 2020. To date, this program has provided more than 5,400 bursaries to students pursuing their ECE education goals. This was done by adding an additional \$1.9 million in 2019 to the initial \$10-million investment.

“For too long, child care providers have struggled to find qualified staff and as a result, parents haven’t been able to find quality care for their children,” said Katrina Chen, B.C.’s Minister of State for Child Care. “Over the past three years, student interest in early childhood education has been extraordinary and these bursaries will help even more people train for this in-demand career. We’re making progress on our commitment to B.C. families of universal, affordable and accessible child care by investing in the people at the heart of it.”

As a result of the program’s success, the fund was expended earlier than expected and applications were closed on Oct. 11, 2019. Funds are now available for students who were waitlisted during the fall semester, as well as for students attending recognized post-secondary programs in the winter semester.

“The majority of a child’s brain development happens before the age of five,” said Katrine Conroy, B.C.’s Minister of Children and Family Development. “As a former ECE, I know what a rewarding career this can be and the critical role early childhood educators play in helping children in their earliest stages of life, which is why I’m so proud of our government for supporting this program and the important work ECEs do.”

The investment is part of the Province’s Early Care and Learning Recruitment and Retention Strategy, which launched in September 2018. As part of this strategy, government has invested nearly \$16 million in bursaries through the ELCC Agreement since 2017-18 to support students.

“These extra bursary funds are a welcome addition to a very successful program,” said Emily Gawlick, executive director, Early Childhood Educators of BC (ECEBC). “Educated early childhood educators are the backbone to a successful child care system, and the funds will go a long way to help many more students complete their studies.”

In addition, more than 10,000 early childhood educators have received a \$1-per-hour wage enhancement, with another \$1-per-hour lift to come in April 2020. More than 600 new seats in post-secondary ECE programs will also help more people to pursue a career in child care, while funding for professional development is supporting existing educators to maintain and upgrade their skills.

“I feel grateful and empowered to have financial support through the education bursary,” said Friday Bailey, ECE student. “Now I can upgrade my skills and better serve my community. Thank you to this government and ECEBC for investing in me, as well as in high-quality early care and learning. The bursary has made a significant positive impact on my family.”

Investing in child care and early childhood education is a shared priority between government and the BC Green Party caucus and is part of the Confidence and Supply Agreement.

Quick Fact:

- People wanting to nurture young children as ECEs, as well as current ECEs, can benefit from bursaries of up to \$4,000 and \$5,000.

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