

# Early childhood educator bursaries support career growth for key professionals <sup>[1]</sup>

**Author:** Government of British Columbia

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## AVAILABILITY

Access online <sup>[2]</sup>

## EXCERPTS:

More early childhood educators (ECEs) are furthering their education goals with financial support from the ECE Education Support Fund.

Child care centres may also benefit by having more qualified staff they need to offer high-quality child care to parents throughout B.C.

“Early childhood educators are the workforce behind the workforce that drives our economy,” said Katrina Chen, B.C.’s Minister of State for Child Care. “Delivering on our commitment to families to improve access to quality child care requires qualified ECEs, which is why we’re helping to cover the costs of training and professional development opportunities for ECEs. They deserve both recognition and the opportunity for advancement in this important profession.”

There were more than 1,215 successful applicants for the winter 2022 semester who received funding toward their ECE training or upgrading. Approximately 1,380 more students have been notified they were successful in their application for summer 2022 semester bursaries. Bursaries are worth as much as \$4,000 or \$5,000 per semester, depending on the stream applied for. Further intakes will be available for upcoming semesters. Interested applicants, including previous applicants, are encouraged to apply.

“There is no child care system without a strong and skilled workforce of early childhood educators,” said Karina Gould, federal Minister of Families, Children and Social Development. “Supporting the valuable work of early childhood educators is key to the success of a high-quality child care system, especially as we build more child care spaces across the country.”

A one-time \$49.2-million investment by the Government of Canada through the 2021-22 to 2024-25 Canada-British Columbia Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) Agreement will better support workforce development in the child care sector. This includes \$25.5 million to help provide ECE bursaries for three academic years, which began in September 2021. Since the launch of ChildCareBC in 2018, the ECE Education Support Fund has provided 12,300 bursaries to support more than 6,500 students pursuing a career in early childhood education.

“I am grateful beyond words,” said Patricia A., a student in the early childhood care and education diploma program at Capilano University. “This is not only an opportunity for me and my family but for our community as a whole. I am passionate about supporting and advocating for children and grateful that early childhood educators are finally getting recognition.”

Successful ECE students have a broader choice of study options, thanks to more than \$13 million to create more than 1,400 additional student spaces at 15 public post-secondary institutions since the start of ChildCareBC. Some institutions offer the ECE program via online learning, which allows students throughout B.C. to train, stay in their communities and get started on this in-demand career. Currently, ECE training is offered at 32 post-secondary institutions, with programs in all regions of the province.

To ensure child care centres can hire and keep qualified staff, the Early Care and Learning Recruitment and Retention Strategy was released in 2018 as part of the 10-year ChildCareBC plan.

In addition to the ECE Education Support Fund, which is open to current ECEs as well as those looking to enter the field, other actions taken as part of the strategy include:

enhancing ECE compensation by \$4 per hour, bringing the median wage to \$25 per hour;

delivering 151 student spaces in ECE programs through a work-integrated learning model, where child care professionals can obtain or upgrade their provincial ECE certification (including infant/toddler and special needs educator) while maintaining employment;

ensuring quality professional learning is available for ECEs and other early care and learning professionals throughout the province;

changing the Provincial Nominee Program to prioritize ECEs on their path to permanent residency in B.C.; and

changing legislation to create a standalone act for the oversight of the ECE profession which, when in force, will further demonstrate the value of this profession and support for standards of care and quality of practice for people working with young children.

To support the province's economic recovery, it is anticipated that there will be more than 10,000 new job openings for certified ECEs in the coming decade. These educators will enable more parents, especially mothers, to pursue work, education and other opportunities.

#### Quotes:

Emily Gawlick, executive director, Early Childhood Educators of BC (ECEBC) –

"ECEBC is proud to administer the ECE Education Fund. We have heard from countless students the positive impact the bursary has for them in continuing their professional goals in early childhood education."

Aryanna Chartrand, student and ECE Education Support Fund recipient –

"These bursaries are critical for students who are under financial strain paying for their studies. Without these bursaries, I would not be able to pursue my studies or interests in advocacy and activism that support my journey as an early childhood educator. As someone who relies on funding opportunities like this, I am excited that many more students will continue to have access to financial support."

#### Quick Facts:

More than \$2 million of ELCC funding supported bursaries for the winter 2022 semester, and as much as \$2.7 million will be disbursed to summer 2022 semester students.

Bursaries are a key tool to support the Province's ECE Recruitment and Retention Strategy to meet existing and future workforce demands for this rewarding and in-demand career.

Through federal and provincial investments, British Columbia has surpassed 30,500 new child care spaces funded since the launch of ChildCareBC.

Investments provided to the Province through early childhood workforce federal funding complement and support the Canada-wide early learning and child care vision.

**Region:** British Columbia <sup>[3]</sup>

**Tags:** professional learning <sup>[4]</sup>

development <sup>[5]</sup>

early childhood education and care <sup>[6]</sup>

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