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INCENTIVES FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS

In late 2007, the BC government announced two pilot programs which they say can help support the recruitment and retention of early childhood educators.

- A Student Loan Assistance program for Early Childhood Educators (ECE) who graduate in 2007 or 2008 and work in licensed child care for 2 years. They will receive up to \$1250 in each of 2 years to help pay back student loans.
- An Incentive Program for Early Childhood Educators who have not worked in licensed child care for at least 2 years. The first '100 returning' ECEs who apply can receive up to \$2500 at the end of each of their first 2 years of re-employment in licensed child care.

To set the record straight:

- In a 2007 survey of BC child care centres, 75% of respondents report that **low wages** and **lack of benefits** are the main reasons why it's hard to hire and keep staff.¹
- In 2001, one of the first acts of the newly elected provincial government was to **cut funds** that went directly into the wages of Early Childhood Educators. There has been little if any gain since 2001.²
- In 2006, the median gross hourly wage for BC's college-trained caregivers in group child care centres was \$12.58.³ Contrast this with the average hourly wage of \$20.39 for all BC workers 15 and over in the same year.⁴
- Since 2002, all Canadian provinces **other than BC** invested additional funds specifically to improve child care wages and benefits.
- BC's latest provincial 'pilots' **do nothing to improve wages or benefits for early childhood educators**. They also do nothing for the dedicated ECEs who have stayed in the field in spite of the low wages.
- **Government's acknowledgement of the province wide recruitment and retention crisis in child care is long overdue. But, to really make a difference, they need to dedicate funds to raise the wages and improve benefits for BC's new and experienced early childhood educators.**

¹ Results of Early Childhood Education Staffing Survey: October/November 2007, First Call BC Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition

² While BC's reporting makes a direct comparison difficult, in 2001, the median gross hourly wage for a broader group of BC ECE 'teachers' was \$13.28. (Beach and Friendly, Early Childhood Education and Care in Canada, 2001.)

³ Beach and Friendly, Early Childhood Education and Care in Canada, 2006

⁴ Statistics Canada. Retrieved from <http://www40.statcan.ca/l01/cst01/lab69k.htm>