



## Saskatchewan Early Learning Leaders Caucus

A Canadian Child Care Federation Committee

**SKLC and its parent organization CCCF are proud advocates for leadership development.**

We support many ELCC leadership groups in Saskatchewan, such as Saskatchewan Federation of Early Learning (SFEL), Saskatoon Preschool Foundation (SPF) and Saskatchewan Early Childhood Association (SECA).

# Hanging in the balance of a quality system.

As one of the first provinces to roll out \$10-a-day child care, we applaud the Government of Saskatchewan on this key milestone and positive step for parental support.

However, the retention of qualified educators, through workforce supports, is even more important. The high cost of staff turnover is difficult on children, families and programs. A comprehensive strategy is lacking as we continue on this journey towards a high-quality, inclusive ELCC system for all.

**The Government of Saskatchewan will need to develop achievable targets to increase and build the capacity of the ELCC workforce, to create the thriving child care environments that children deserve.** We are optimistic the Ministry of Education will find inclusive remedies to support families, centres and homes with quality and affordable care opportunities.

A workforce strategy beyond a wage grid must be comprehensive and supported through additional government supply-side funding and include: formal ELCC education, competitive salary scales, professional learning incentives, learning communities, paid sick and vacation time, benefits and pension provisions. These measures show that ECEs are valued for the essential contributions they make to ensuring a high-quality and inclusive child care system in Saskatchewan.

Working conditions also play a significant role in why ECEs stay in the field. Long work hours, staff shortages, insufficient relief time and no funding for non-contact time to devote to planning, engaging with families and other staff all contribute to stressful work environments and challenges in retaining qualified educators. As part of a workforce strategy, these challenges must be addressed, especially investments in funded non-contact time for ECEs.

To succeed at retention, public funding must be allocated to the cost, expansion and flexible delivery options of post-secondary ELCC programs. A career ladder and academic pathways must be made clear to ensure ECEs can advance their education and English language learners are able to participate in post-secondary ELCC education. Further, that diploma or degree qualified pedagogical leaders be funded and made available to support new and existing staff and practicum students.

SKLC celebrates the outstanding success of SECA, one of our affiliate partners, on its recent funding agreement with the Government of Saskatchewan to support recruitment of additional early childhood educators.

We are pleased the Ministry recognized that supporting the development of a strong and stable workforce is imperative to creating an accessible, affordable, quality and inclusive child care system in Saskatchewan.

While recruitment is an important part of workforce development, retention is also imperative. Retention of qualified pedagogical leaders must be a priority for the Ministry as it continues advancement of the sector.

**Qualified educators, learning environments, evidence-based curriculum frameworks and better working conditions must be considered and funded to make the ELCC system truly high-quality and accessible.**

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