

Examination of Recruitment and Retention Issues within the Regulated Early Learning and Child Care Workforce in Newfoundland and Labrador

Final Report

Prepared for:
Early Childhood Educators Human Resource (ECEHR) Council

Prepared by:
Don Gallant and Associates

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Executive Summary

This examination of recruitment and retention issues within the provincial early learning and child care workforce was commissioned by the Early Childhood Educators Human Resource (ECEHR) Council.

The Terms of Reference specified the intent and scope of the project and delineated the research questions to be investigated. Three (3) major research issues identified were Recruitment, Retention, and Post-Secondary Education and Professional Development.

A further intent of this research was to enable a comparison to the sector status in 2007 (as documented in the report *Recruitment and Retention Issues for the Child Care Workforce in Newfoundland and Labrador* (June 2007). This latter objective will enable a determination of whether enhancements and activities undertaken since 2007 have had any appreciable and sustainable impact on recruitment and retention within the sector.

Summary of Key Findings

A. Workforce profile:

- The typical practitioner is female, started between the ages of 21 – 25 years, is now between the ages of 36 – 40 years, and has children living with them.
- The percentage of practitioners with ECE Certification has increased from 78.1% (2007) to 93.7%. 50.8% hold trainee level certificates as compared with 34.7% in 2007
- The percentage of practitioners holding a 2 year ECE diploma has increased by 6.9%, from 47.4% (in 2007) to a current level of 54.3%

B. Recruitment

- Low wages and general lack of benefits represented the primary challenges to successful recruitment. These are the same two primary challenges as identified in the 2007 study.
- The primary recruitment strategies suggested remained constant across the two time periods; namely, provide higher wages and increased benefits

C. Retention

- 65.3% of practitioners anticipate that they will continue working in the sector, (12.6%) indicated that they were leaving the sector and 20.8% were undecided
- The most frequently cited strategy to support people to continue working in the sector was ‘increase wages’ – relatively constant across 2007 (62.9%) and 2019 (58.7%)
- The average hourly wage (centre based) increased from \$7.00 (2017) to \$14.58. Average annual income of family child care providers increased to \$43,451 from \$22,200 in 2007.

D. Post-Secondary Education

- 21.1% of practitioners are actively seeking to upgrade their qualifications

- Consensus among all informant groups that there remains an unacceptable number of practitioners who do not hold a Level 1 certification.
- Informants expressed great concern regarding the current wait list for access to distance learning. Anecdotal reports indicate that the wait time for some courses may be as long as 2 – 3 years

E. Emergent Considerations

Raising the sector profile - All stakeholders emphasized the need to raise the profile of the sector, and that such must be regarded as a foundational element to any strategy designed to address recruitment and retention.

Wages and Benefits - Stakeholders at all levels emphasized repeatedly that the low wage rate within the sector and the lack of (or at very least the inconsistency of available benefits to practitioners) was a primary reason for continued challenges in both recruitment and retention.

Early Learning and Child Care as a Public Service - Many informants indicated it was time for serious consideration to be given to the merits (and implications) of making early learning and child care a universal publicly funded system.

Cultural and/or linguistic issues - Representatives of indigenous, francophone and new Canadian communities confirmed barriers faced were similar to those encountered within the broader sector, with additional challenges of access to training and professional development, cultural sensitivity and relevance of training, and challenges in recruiting bilingual ECEs.

Sector Incentives - Available financial incentives have been received positively by practitioners. However the current approach is considered cumbersome, labour intensive and frustrating by many recipients.

Creating a qualified work force - Approximately 50% of current practitioners must upgrade in order to meet the minimum required Level 1 standard.

Family Child Care - Any provincial strategy to address current or future recruitment and retention issues should make provision for expansion of this model throughout the province.

Working Conditions - There was considerable emphasis given by informants and practitioners on the impact of respectful and positive workplaces as a necessary ingredient in successful retention efforts.

ECE Certificate / Diploma programs - Data indicate that at least 100 practitioners leave the sector each year, yet there are only about 50 or so ECE graduates. If this trend continues it will be simply impossible for the sector to secure and maintain a qualified work force, and will have to increasingly rely on hiring unqualified candidates to fill vacancies.

1.0 Introduction

This examination of recruitment and retention issues within the provincial early learning and child care workforce was commissioned by the Early Childhood Educators Human Resource (ECEHR) Council. The Council was established to undertake child care workforce recruitment and retention initiatives. It is an incorporated, voluntary, not for profit organization with membership comprising representatives from a post-secondary institution delivering an early childhood education program, licensees from both the private and not for profit sectors, the professional early childhood education association (AECENL), early childhood educators working directly with children in regulated child care, regulated family child care, Labour, and general community.

The ECEHR Council had its beginnings in the Recruitment and Retention Working Group which was formed in November 2007 after the completion of the Report of the Child Care Workforce Industrial Adjustment Services Committee. The Working Group's mandate was to increase recruitment to the child care work force; and to improve the retention of qualified early childhood educators in Newfoundland and Labrador. This was to be achieved by reviewing and addressing the twenty-one (21) recommendations of the final report of the Child Care Workforce Industrial Adjustment Services Committee (September, 2007). The Child Care Workforce Industrial Adjustment Services Committee Report was officially released at a press conference on April 3rd, 2008.

The Recruitment and Retention Working Group was incorporated as the Early Childhood Educators Human Resources Council on June 30, 2009. The Recruitment and Retention Working Group is no longer in existence.

1.1 Document Organization

This report is structured as follows:

- section 2 provides context and background to the research project;
- section 3 describes the methodology used;
- section 4 - 7 present the major research findings as related to:
 - section 4 - a demographic profile of the regulated Early Learning and Child Care Sector workforce;
 - section 5 - Recruitment issues;
 - section 6 - Retention issues;
 - section 7 – Post-Secondary Education and Professional Development issues;
- section 8 provides a conclusion and considerations.
- Appendices contain the specific research issues for the project, and the survey instruments, including key informant interview and focus group protocols.

2.0 The Early Learning and Child Care Workforce

2.1 Background

In May 2006, the Department of Health and Community Services received funding through the Canada - Newfoundland and Labrador Labour Market Development Agreement to develop a recruitment and retention strategy for the child care workforce of this province. An Industrial Adjustment Services (IAS) committee was established in June 2006 and this Committee commissioned a comprehensive research project to identify factors related to issues facing the child care sector and its current and future workforce.

That project, one component of a series of related efforts undertaken by the IAS Committee, was intended to increase awareness and understanding of the underlying factors and challenges facing the sector and inform the development of a comprehensive provincial Recruitment and Retention Strategy.

Work undertaken by the IAS Committee led to the writing of two seminal documents related to child care workforce issues in this province. The first was the Examination of Recruitment and Retention Issues for the Child Care Workforce in Newfoundland and Labrador (Don Gallant and Associates, June 2007). The Gallant Report then formed the basis for the IAS Committee's strategic plan and its Report of the Industrial Adjustment Services Committee on Child Care Workforce Recruitment and Retention – Strategic Directions (Marie White, IAS Chairperson, September 2007).

A further outcome, subsequent to the work and 22 recommendations of the IAS Committee, was the formation of the Early Childhood Educators Human Resource (ECEHR) Council. The Council was formed to lead efforts to increase recruitment to the child care workforce and improve the retention of qualified Early Childhood Educators (ECEs) in Newfoundland and Labrador by reviewing and addressing human resource issues. The Council is comprised of representatives of AECENL, Family Child Care, Post-secondary ECE system, ECEs working directly with children, employers who are owners and operators, and Labour. The Council was incorporated as a not-for profit organization in June 2009.

The work of the IAS Committee represented the first comprehensive and focused examination of both recruitment and retention issues within this province's child care work force. It identified many factors that contributed to significant pressures within the sector to attracting and retaining a qualified and stable work force.

Some of the major findings from the 2007 research included:

- Serious shortage of qualified staff in all parts of the province.
- Retention issues resulting in high staff turnover – 28%
- Over 20% of centre operators reported staff turnover as being a major problem and over 30% of centre operators reported difficulty in finding qualified staff.

- Over 70% of licensees surveyed reported it was “difficult” or “very difficult” to fill positions when staff vacancies occurred.
- Wages were identified as the most important factor in recruitment efforts
- Factors such as working conditions, respect and recognition, and flexible scheduling were identified as significant considerations in overall job satisfaction (and retention)
- Wide variation in staff wages paid in centres across the province and across the for profit / not for profit sectors
- Availability of benefits (e.g. annual / sick leave, pension plan, health and dental, paid breaks and lunches, etc.) varied greatly across centres and impacted both recruitment and retention
- Fewer than 25% of centre based survey respondents reported receiving paid lunch or breaks; long or short term disability coverage; paid job protected maternity and paternity leave; and paid personal leave days.
- Most administrators in regulated child care reported not having education in Human Resource management skills.

It has been more than 10 years since the IAS Report and its associated recommendations. There have been considerable changes to the regulatory framework of early learning and child care services within the province, a 10 year strategy developed, and many enhancements introduced. However, data is lacking to determine if these enhancements and activities have had any appreciable and sustainable impact on recruitment and retention within the sector.

The following questions need to be addressed:

- Has the number and percentage of qualified Early Childhood Educators (ECEs) working in centre based and regulated family child care increased?
- Have the various enhancements such as the early learning and child care (ELCC) supplement, graduate bursary, etc. led to increased staff recruitment and retention?
- Are licensees now able to recruit qualified staff as needed?
- Has early childhood education become a more viable and valued career choice?
- Has availability and access to needed post-secondary education and professional development improved?

Through the ongoing work of the ECEHR Council (e.g. training workshops, focus group sessions, etc.) and ongoing discussions with both stakeholders and government officials, it is apparent that many challenges to adequate recruitment and retention remain. However, without up to date research it is impossible to address and answer these fundamental questions.

With funding support from the Department of Advanced Education, Skills, and Labour (AESL), this current research will provide an updated status of the current regulated early learning and child care work force, the degree to which recruitment and retention remains a priority challenge for the sector, and a comparison to the status in 2007. This latter data will enable a determination if introduced sector enhancements have had their desired affect and impact, and whether or not additional measures are required.

The Council anticipates that this data can inform a 'go forward' strategy that will address recruitment and retention issues in a more meaningful and impactful manner and provide up to date information to make needed sector based decisions.

2.2 Early Learning and Child Care Services – The Provincial Context

Early learning and child care services in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador are governed by the Child Care Act (2014) and associated Child Care Regulations (2017). The Act provides for the necessary requirements for licensing of child care centres, family child care homes, and family child care agencies. It also specifies conditions of operations, including health and safety, physical space, staff qualifications, staff ratios, age groupings and group size, and other conditions necessary for licensing and maintenance of licensed facilities.

Child care services in Newfoundland and Labrador fall within the mandate of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, within its Division of Early Learning and Child Development. Services are regulated and monitored by staff of the four departmental regions – namely Metro, Central, Western and Labrador. There are two basic types of early learning and child care services: informal, privately arranged care; and regulated services. Informal child care is generally referred to as the unregulated sector, and consists of informal child care within the parent's own home or at the home of caregivers such as grandparents and other relatives, friends, neighbours, babysitters and/or nannies. Such child care arrangements are restricted to groups of four children or fewer, or three if all children are under two years of age.

Regulated early learning and child care services have a more formal, structured approach. These services are subject to provincial regulations and are inspected and monitored. The Child Care Act and the Child Care Regulations provide the legal framework for policies and procedures that must be carried out within the regulated sector.

There are three types of regulated early learning and child care services in the province: centre-based, individually licensed family child care, and agency-approved family child care (a licensed family child care agency approves providers and their service).

Statistics provided by the Division of Early Learning and Child Development, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, indicate that as of December 2018 there were 196 licensed child care centres (including part time and after school programs) in the province - 111 in Metro, 25 in Western, 12 in Labrador, and 48 in Central. There was one family child care agency in the province operating in both the Metro and Western regions with a total of 103 family child care providers approved (Metro – 83, and Western – 20). In addition, there were 20 individually licensed family child care providers in the province (Central -16 and Western - 4).

2.3 Intent and Scope of the Project

This current project will update and build on the research conducted in 2007. To the fullest extent possible the same methodology and data collection instruments were used. This enabled not only an updated profile of the early learning and child care workforce and commentary on

continuing and persistent recruitment/retention issues (as of 2018), and it a direct comparison to the baseline data collected in 2007. Such a comparison will be highly valuable in determining if progress has been made (or not) in attracting and retaining qualified ECEs to the sector. Data will also enable analysis of whether the recruitment and retention issues in this sector have changed over the past decade.

2.4 Research Issues

The Terms of Reference for this research project specified the intent and scope of the project and delineated the research questions to be investigated. Three (3) major research issues identified for investigation were:

- Recruitment,
- Retention, and
- Post-Secondary Education and Professional Development.

A detailed set of research issues was used to guide inquiry during this project and assisted in the development of methodology. These research issues and questions were used to assist in the development of the questionnaires and interview protocols for both the focus group sessions and the key informant interviews. These methodologies and associated instruments are described in Section 3 of this report.

For the purposes of this report, the following is a glossary of terminology used:

- **Respondent** - refers to an individual who responded to one of the surveys
- **Informant** - refers to participants in key informant interviews and/or focus groups
- **Early Childhood Educator (ECE)** - refers to an individual who holds a Level 1 certification or higher
- **Practitioner** - refers to an individual who is working in the regulated child care sector, regardless of certification level
- **Family Child Care** - refers to regulated family child care

3.0 Methodology

3.1 Analysis of Administrative Data and Document Review

Relevant documents associated with early learning and child care services in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador were reviewed, including program documents, policy and procedure materials, and reports from past studies and evaluations. Available data from both the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and the Office of the Registrar at AECENL (Child Care Services Certification) were also used to assist in the identification of the number and distribution of child care facilities, determination of survey sample size, contact information and other relevant demographics.

3.2 Surveys

There was a total of three (3) surveys used in this project. See Appendix A. These instruments were developed for use with participants from identified workforce components of the early learning and child care sector (namely, licensees, practitioners in both centre based and family child care and former practitioners).

The surveys were administered via mail-out. These surveys were accompanied by a short letter of introduction which described the intent and the importance of the survey to the research project (see Appendix B). This covering letter also clarified and defined the terms used within the survey instruments. Surveys were distributed by Don Gallant and Associates and returned directly to the consultant using pre-addressed, stamped envelopes.

Licensees of all 196 centres in the province were sent surveys to be completed for each centre. In some instances, a licensee held multiple licenses and they were expected to complete one survey per licensed centre.

For the practitioner group, surveys were sent to the entire population, as identified through the available departmental and/or Registrar data bases. An attempt was made to complete a full census of the population of practitioners. For the purposes of this research, practitioners were defined as individuals working in either centre based or family child care. For centre based practitioners, surveys were sent to all centre based child care facilities in the province. A package of surveys (containing a sufficient number for distribution to all child care staff in each centre) was forwarded to the attention of the administrator. The covering letter to the administrator asked that the surveys (each contained in a separate self-addressed stamped return envelope) be distributed to all staff of the centre. For family child care providers approved by an agency, surveys (again each contained in a separate self-addressed stamped return envelope) were provided to the agency for distribution to individual family child care providers. For individually licensed homes, surveys were sent directly to them by the consultant.

Former practitioner questionnaires were sent to 150 individuals whose previous ECE certification had lapsed (as identified via the Registrar's data base) within the past 12 months.

Although it was recognized that this group did not encompass the full population of former practitioners and were not necessarily representative of all those that had left the sector, it was felt that seeking information from this identifiable group might provide valuable information regarding who and why people leave the sector.

3.2.1 Survey Response Rates

Table 1 presents the distribution and response rates for each survey sent to practitioners and licensees. There was an overall response rate across all respondent groups of 28%; with in-group response rates of 25.9% for practitioners (centre based -23%; family child care – 52.9%), 34.7% for former practitioners, and 35.7% for licensees.

In considering the response rate for the former practitioner group it must be noted that there were 22 surveys returned for reasons of inaccurate or outdated address.

The response rates achieved within this research project were higher than typically found with surveys of this nature. Literature indicates that response rates for mail surveys usually range from 5% - 25%.

Table 1 Distribution and response rates for each survey sent to practitioners and licensees

| Respondent Group | Surveys Sent | Surveys Received | Response Rate (%) |
|----------------------|--------------|------------------|-------------------|
| Practitioners | 1223 | 317 | 25.9% |
| Centre Based | 1100 | 252 | 23.0% |
| Family Child Care | 123 | 65 | 52.9% |
| Former practitioners | 150 | 52 | 34.7% |
| Licensees | 196 | 70 | 35.7% |
| TOTAL | 1569 | 439 | 28.0% |

3.2.2 Survey of practitioners

Practitioner surveys yielded responses from 317 individuals fulfilling a wide range of roles within the sector. Table 2 presents the roles of respondents and the number of respondents from each group. The majority of respondents (252) indicated that they worked within centre based child care, while a total of 65 respondents indicated that they worked within Family Child Care.

Table 2 Roles of survey respondents and the number of respondents from each group

| Current Role | Number of Respondents |
|----------------------------|-----------------------|
| Licensee | 9 |
| Administrator | 61 |
| Home Room Staff | 205 |
| Family Child Care provider | 65 |

In interpreting the above table, it is to be noted that several respondents indicated having multiple roles: licensees indicated an additional role of administrator (4), homeroom staff (5), and administrator/homeroom staff (1); and administrators also indicated serving in role as home room staff (17).

3.2.3 Survey of former practitioners

For purposes of this project, former practitioners were defined to be those individuals whose previous ECE certification had lapsed within the past 12 months (as identified through review of the data base of the Registrar for Child Care Services Certification). Surveys were sent to all identified individuals. The majority of respondents, 42 (80.7%), indicated that the last position they held within was within the centre based sector. Fifty (96.2%) of the former practitioners reported they are continuing to live in Newfoundland and Labrador. Table 3 displays the regions of the province where former practitioners currently reside.

Table 3 **Regions of the province in which former practitioners reside**

| Region | Number (%) of respondents |
|-----------------|----------------------------------|
| Metro | 22 (42.3%) |
| Central | 10 (19.2%) |
| West | 11 (21.2%) |
| Labrador | 7 (13.5%) |
| Out of province | 2 (3.9%) |
| total | 52 |

3.2.4 Surveys of Licensees

Surveys were sent to the licensees of all 196 centre based child care facilities in the province. At point of data collection, there were a total of 114 distinct licensees. In instances where a licensee held multiple licenses, multiple copies of the survey were sent to enable data collection for each centre.

Of the 70 centres that completed surveys, 33 were from the private (for profit) sector while 37 were classified as non-profit. Within the non-profits, there were 5 licensees who indicated holding multiple licenses (for 2, 4 and 11 sites), and within the private sector 7 licensees indicated holding multiple licenses (2, 3 and 5 sites).

3.3 Focus Groups

Focus Group sessions were held with representatives of 1) the ECEHR Council, 2) licensees and administrators, 3) practitioners (in both centre based and family child care), and 4) college students enrolled in Early Childhood Education programs (in both public and private institutions). These focus groups enabled an in-depth exploration of the issues related to recruitment and retention of a qualified and stable workforce within the sector. Each session was facilitated by the project consultant and was approximately 90 minutes in duration.

Selection of focus group participants, locations, and dates were finalized in conjunction with and assistance of Regional Child Care officials and Family Child Care Connections (in the case of family child care providers). Sessions were scheduled in the evening to facilitate maximum participation. Focus group protocols are contained in Appendix C.

ECEHR Council – One focus group session was held with the ECEHR Council at the beginning of the project. This session was used to assist the researcher to obtain a better understanding of some of the emergent issues and challenges. As well this session assisted in the further refinement of Key Informant Interview (KII) and Focus Group protocols.

Licensees and Administrators – One focus group session was held with representatives of licensees and administrators (St. John's).

Practitioners – A total of 8 focus group sessions were held with child care practitioners across the province. Sessions were conducted in St. John's (3), Stephenville, Corner Brook (2), Grand Falls-Windsor, and Gander.

ECE College Students – Three Focus Group sessions were held with ECE students (from both the public and private college system). Sessions were conducted on site, during regular class hours. Sessions were held with ECE students in CNA (St. John's - 2), and Keyin College (Carbonear). Participants included students within both the first and second year of studies.

3.4 Key Informant Interviews

For the Key Informant Interview (KII) series, a variety of key stakeholders within the sector were interviewed. Semi-structured interviews were used to seek information about recruitment and retention issues and strategies to address barriers to recruitment and retention. See Appendix D. Selection of KII participants was finalized in conjunction with the ECEHR Research Committee. Interviews were conducted through a combination of in person or telephone interviews.

A total of 45 interviews were held with representatives from each of the following groups:

- Licensees and Administrators (11)
- Practitioners (centre based) (4)
- Family Child Care providers (6)
- Family Child Care Home Visitors (3)
- Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Early Learning and Child Development Division (2)
- Regional Child Care officials (10)
- Private and Public College officials (4)
- Aboriginal and Francophone communities (2)
- AECENL (2)
- Family Child Care Connections (1)

As several of the KIIs interviews were group interviews, the interview series involved in excess of 70 individuals.

4.0 Workforce Profile

The purpose of this section is to provide a profile of the current workforce within both centre based and family child care in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador. This profile is based on an analysis of responses to the practitioner survey and does not represent an exhaustive inventory of all current staff working in the sector. While it is noted that surveys were distributed to the entire population of practitioners, and response rate was approximately 26%, caution should be exercised in interpreting this data and extrapolating findings to the entire population.

Typical profile of practitioners in child care centres / family child care

Overall, the survey data revealed that the typical practitioner within the provincial child care sector is female (97.8%), started in the sector between the ages of 21 – 25 years (33.4%), is now between the ages of 36 – 40 years (17.7%), and has children living with them (52.7%).

The above composite is based on demographic information obtained from survey respondents from both centre based and family child care provider groups. Specific comparisons of centre based and family child care providers groups, however, did reveal several demographic differences. These would include:

- Family child care providers are more likely to be married (91.3%) compared to practitioners in centre based (42.1%)
- Family child care providers are more likely to be older (52.5% > 41 years) compared to practitioners in centre based (31.4%)
- Family child care providers are more likely to have children living with them (78.5%) compared to practitioners in centre based (46.0%)
- Practitioners in centre based are more likely to be single (30.2%) compared to family child care providers (4.3%)
- The average age of entry into the sector for centre based and family child care practitioners is very similar (i.e. 26.4 years and 27.2 years respectively)
- The average age of centre based practitioners is 37.2 years, while the average age of family child care providers is 44.8 years.

Analysis of the practitioner survey data revealed several findings regarding the demographics of the sector workforce. Results of this analysis are portrayed in Table 4.

Table 4 Demographics of the child care workforce

| Elements | Centre based | Family Child Care | total |
|--|---------------------|--------------------------|--------------|
| Total Respondents | 252 | 65 | 317 |
| Gender | | | |
| Female | 245 (97.2%) | 65 (100%) | 310 (97.8%) |
| Male | 3 ((1.2%) | 0 (0.0%) | 3 (<0.01%) |
| No Response | 4 (1.5%) | 0 (0.0%) | 4 (0.01%) |
| Marital Status | | | |
| Single | 76 (30.2%) | 5 (4.3%) | 81 (25.6%) |
| Married | 106 (42.1%) | 54 (91.3%) | 160 (50.5%) |
| Divorced | 13 (5.2%) | 1 (0.01%) | 14 (4.4%) |
| Common Law | 46 (18.3%) | 4 (0.06%) | 50 (15.8%) |
| Separated | 7 (2.8%) | 1 (0.01%) | 8 (2.5%) |
| Widowed | 1 (0.4%) | 0 (0.0%) | 1 (0.32%) |
| No response | 3 (1.2%) | 0 (0.0%) | 3 (0.95%) |
| Age | | | |
| Less than 21 | 2 (0.8%) | 0 (0.0%) | 2 (0.63%) |
| 21 – 25 | 38 (15.1%) | 0 (0.0%) | 38 (12.0%) |
| 26 – 30 | 39 (15.5%) | 3 (4.6%) | 42 (13.2%) |
| 31 – 35 | 41 (16.3%) | 10 (15.4%) | 51 (16.1%) |
| 36 – 40 | 39 (15.5%) | 17 (26.2%) | 56 (17.7%) |
| 41 – 45 | 29 (11.5%) | 21 (32.3%) | 50 (15.8%) |
| 46 – 50 | 30 (12.0%) | 8 (12.3%) | 38 (12.0%) |
| More than 50 | 33 (13.1%) | 5 (7.7%) | 38 (12.0%) |
| Not reported | 1 (<0.01%) | 1 (0.01%) | 2 (0.63%) |
| # of practitioners with children living with them | 116 (46.0%) | 51 (78.5%) | 167 (52.7%) |
| Age of entry into sector | | | |
| Less than 21 | 62 (24.6%) | 13 (20.0%) | 75 (23.7%) |
| 21 – 25 | 87 (34.5%) | 19 (29.2%) | 106 (33.4%) |
| 26 – 30 | 37 (14.7%) | 13 (20.0%) | 50 (15.8%) |
| 31 – 35 | 21 (8.3%) | 7 (10.8%) | 28 (8.8%) |
| 36 – 40 | 20 (7.9%) | 8 (12.3%) | 28 (8.8%) |
| 41 – 45 | 9 (3.6%) | 4 (6.2%) | 13 (4.1%) |
| 46 – 50 | 6 (2.4%) | 0 (0.0%) | 6 (1.9%) |
| More than 50 | 7 (2.8%) | 0 (0.0%) | 7 (2.2%) |
| Not reported | 3 (1.2%) | 1 (1.5%) | 4 (1.3%) |

When comparing this demographic profile to that compiled based on the 2007 research data it is of interest to note the following trends:

- There are now 4.6% fewer practitioners in centre based aged 30 years or younger (31.4% versus 36% in 2007)
- There are 8.6% more practitioners in centre based aged 41 years and older (36.6% versus 28% in 2007)
- Percentage of family care providers with children living with them, while still higher than practitioners in centre based, has decreased by 12.8%, from 91.3% (2007) to 78.5% in 2019.
- The percentage of practitioners in both centre based and family child care who are single has remained relatively constant since 2007.
- The average age of entry into the sector (across both centre based and family child care) is 26.6 years. This is slightly different than that found in 2007 (i.e. 27.1 years).
- The majority of practitioners enter the child care sector at 25 years of age or younger (57.1%); a demographic that has remained virtually unchanged since 2007 (57%).

Educational Levels

As displayed in Table 5, the vast majority of practitioners surveyed (77.0%) indicated that their highest level of education (in any field) was at the college diploma (63.7%), bachelor’s degree (9.5%) or post graduate level (3.8%). Only 11.4% reported their highest education as high school.

Table 5 Highest level of education (in any field)

| | Centre Based | Family Child Care | total |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|--------------|
| Highest level of education | | | |
| High School | 27 (10.7%) | 9 (13.8%) | 36 (11.4%) |
| Some postsecondary courses | 27 (10.7%) | 8 (12.3%) | 35 (11.0%) |
| College diploma | 161 (63.9%) | 41 (63.1%) | 202 (63.7%) |
| Bachelor’s degree | 24 (9.5%) | 6 (9.2%) | 30 (9.5%) |
| Post graduate certificate/diploma | 5 (2.0%) | 0 (0.0%) | 5 (1.6%) |
| Post graduate degree | 6 (2.4%) | 1 (1.5%) | 7 (2.2%) |
| No response | 2 (0.08%) | 0 (0.0%) | 2 (0.01%) |
| total | 252 | 65 | 317 |

When comparing this profile to that compiled based on the 2007 research data it is of interest to note that:

- 63.7% of respondents indicated having at least a 2 year college diploma, as compared to 36.2% in 2007
- The percentage of respondents indicating their highest level of education was high school is now 11.4% compared to 20.7% in 2007

- The percentage of family child providers indicating a bachelor or post graduate education level has increased from 4.3% (in 2007) to a current 10.7%. For centre based respondents this demographic has decreased from 18% in 2007 to a current 13.9%

Table 6 shows the highest level of education (related to early childhood education) achieved by practitioners in this province. Only 13 (4.1%) of the total practitioner survey respondents indicated that they had no formal training in the area of early childhood education. 62.2% indicated having either a 1 year certificate (7.9%) or a 2 year diploma (54.3%) in a field related to early childhood education. However, family child care providers were more likely to have no ECE education (13.8%) as compared to centre based practitioners (0.2%).

Table 6 Highest level of education (related to early childhood education) achieved by practitioners

| | Centre Based | Family Child Care | total |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|--------------|
| Highest level of education | | | |
| None | 4 (0.2%) | 9 (13.8%) | 13 (4.1%) |
| Orientation Courses | 45 (17.9%) | 14 (21.5%) | 59 (18.6%) |
| Some ECE Courses | 31 (12.3%) | 10 (15.4%) | 41 (13.0%) |
| One Year college certificate | 23 (9.1%) | 2 (0.03%) | 25 (7.9%) |
| Two year college diploma | 143 (56.7%) | 29 (44.6%) | 172 (54.3%) |
| Post diploma certificate | 1 (<0.01%) | 0 (0.0%) | 1 (<0.01) |
| Bachelor's degree | 4 (1.6%) | 0 (0.0%) | 4 (1.3%) |
| Post graduate degree | 0 (0.0%) | 0 (0.0%) | 0 (0.0%) |
| No response | 1 (<0.01%) | 0 (0.0%) | 1 (<0.01) |
| total | 252 | 65 | 317 |

When comparing this profile to that compiled based on the 2007 research data it is of interest to note that:

- The overall percentage of practitioners who report as having no ECE education has decreased by 23%, from 27.1% in 2007 to 4.1% in 2019
- The percentage of practitioners holding a 2 year diploma related to early childhood education has increased by 6.9%, from 47.4% (in 2007) to a current level of 54.3%
- Percentage of family child care providers holding a 2 year diploma related to early childhood education has increased by 5.5%; from previous 2007 level of 39.1% to current level of 44.6%
- Percentage of centre based practitioners holding a 2 year diploma related to early childhood education has increased by 8.5%, from previous 2007 level of 48.2% to current level of 56.7%

- The percentage of family child providers reporting no formal ECE training has decreased by 38.5%, from 52.2% to a current level of 13.8%; while the percentage of centre based practitioners reporting no formal ECE training has decreased by 24.4%, from 24.6% (in 2007) to a current level of 0.2%

In reviewing data displayed in Table 6, it is important to note that the 1 year certificate / 2 year diploma does not necessarily refer to a specific ECE course of study, and thus does not directly translate into Level 1 or 2 certification (as displayed in Table 7 below).

Child Care Certification

There are five levels of certification (a level indicates how much training) and five classifications of certification (a classification indicates the type of child care). Centre based has 3 certification classifications (Infant, Pre-School and School age) while family child care has 2 classifications (infant and mixed age). The five levels of certification range from Trainee to Level 4.

Based on survey data, the majority of practitioners, 297 (93.7%) reported that they held some level of Child Care Services Certification (either Trainee or Level 1 – 4). All 65 family child care provider respondents reported that they were certified (at least at the Trainee level) while 20 (7.9%) of centre based staff respondents reported that they were not certified. It should be noted, however, that while all family child care providers reported holding some level of certification, 9 had also reported (as displayed in Table 6) as having no formal ECE education.

Table 7 presents the certification and classification level of practitioners in both centre based and family child care. Note that practitioners can hold multiple certification levels across several classifications. As can be seen from this table, the majority of the 232 certified practitioners working in centre based child care hold a Level 2 (school age classification – 58.6%). Of the 65 certified family child care providers, 32 (49.2%) report holding a Trainee level (mixed age classification). The least number of practitioners (178 / 59.9%) are certified to work with infants. The most predominant certification level held by practitioners is Level 2.

Table 7 Certification and classification level of practitioners in both centre based and family child care

| Type of Certification | Level of Certification | | | | | |
|---------------------------|------------------------|-----------|-------------|-----------|-----------|-------------|
| | Trainee | Level 1 | Level 2 | Level 3 | Level 4 | total |
| Centre Based n=232 | | | | | | |
| Infant | 0 (0.0%) | 10 (4.3%) | 111 (47.8%) | 1 (0.04%) | 13 (5.6%) | 153 (65.9%) |
| Pre-school | 61 (26.3%) | 21 (9.1%) | 134 (57.8%) | 3 (1.3%) | 13 (5.6%) | 219 (94.4%) |
| School Age | 58 (25.0%) | 17 (7.3%) | 136 (58.6%) | 8 (3.4%) | 13 (5.6%) | 222 (95.7%) |
| Family Child Care n=65 | | | | | | |
| Infant | N/A | 5 (7.7%) | 18 (27.7%) | 0 (0.0%) | 2 (3.1%) | 25 (38.5%) |
| Mixed | 32 (49.2%) | 2 (3.1%) | 6 (9.2%) | 0 (0.0%) | 0 (0.0%) | 40 (61.5%) |

When comparing this profile to that compiled based on the 2007 research data it is of interest to note the following trends:

- The number of practitioners in the sector reporting to hold Child Care Services Certification has increased by 15.6%, from 78.1% in 2007 to a current level of 93.7%
- The number of centre based practitioners who are certified to work with infants has increased by 42.4%, from 23.5% in 2007 to a current level of 65.9%
- Of the 297 practitioners who indicated holding certification, 151 (50.8%) hold trainee level certificates (across all classifications) as compared with 68 (34.7%) in 2007
- All family child providers now hold formal certification levels

Length of time working in the sector

Approximately half of the practitioners (44.8%) reported that they had been working in the sector for more than 10 years. Only 24 (7.6%) reported that they had less than 12 months experience in the field. Table 8 displays the distribution of respondents across periods of employment.

Table 8 Distribution of respondents across periods of employment

| | Centre Based n=252 | Family Child Care n=65 | total |
|----------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------|
| Less than 12 months | 23 (9.1%) | 1 (1.5%) | 24 (7.6%) |
| 12 – 35 months | 36 (14.3%) | 5 (7.7%) | 41 (13.0%) |
| 36 – 59 months | 34 (13.5%) | 11 (16.9%) | 45 (14.2%) |
| 60 – 120 months | 50 (19.8%) | 15 (23.1%) | 65 (20.5%) |
| More than 120 months | 109 (43.3%) | 33 (50.8%) | 142 (44.8%) |

When comparing the above profile to that compiled based on the 2007 research data it is of interest to note that:

- 44.8% of practitioners report working in the sector for more than 10 years, which is a 5.8% increase in comparison to the rate of 39% in 2007
- 7.6% reported less than 12 months experience in the field which is an 8.3% decrease from the 2007 rate of 15.9%

The majority of practitioner survey respondents (193 / 60.9%) reported that they had worked in the child care sector prior to beginning their current job. 156 (61.9%) of centre based practitioners indicated having prior child care experience, while 37 (56.9%) of the family child care respondents indicated prior experience. The majority (131 / 67.9%) of those with prior child care experience reported that their previous experience was in centre based child care. Some respondents indicated having had prior experience in several different types of child care. Table 9 presents the reported prior child care work experiences of practitioners.

Table 9**Reported prior child care work experiences of practitioners**

| Type of previous child care experience | Centre Based n = 156 | Family Child Care n = 37 |
|---|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Centre based child care | 103 (66.0%) | 28 (75.7%) |
| Unregulated child care | 25 (16.0%) | 6 (16.2%) |
| Regulated family child care | 6 (3.9%) | 0 (0.0%) |
| other | 45 (28.9%) | 1 (2.7%) |

When comparing the above profile to that compiled based on the 2007 research data it is of interest to note that the percentage of current practitioners:

- with prior child care experience has decreased by 4%, from 64.9% to a current rate of 60.9%.
- with prior centre based child care experience has increased by 7.8%, from 60.1% to a current rate of 67.9%.
- with prior experience in the unregulated sector has decreased by 10.3%, from 26.4% to a current rate of 16.1%.

Analysis of practitioner survey responses also revealed that overall slightly more than half of current practitioners (164 – 51.7%) reported that they had worked in a different career prior to working in the child care sector. Family child care providers were more likely to have had prior jobs/careers (56.9%) while 50.4% of centre based practitioners reported prior jobs/careers. Family child care providers (38.4%) were more likely to have had a different job/career in excess of 10 years as compared to centre based practitioners (27.1%).

In comparison to 2007 data, the percentage of current practitioners with prior work experience (other than child care) has increased slightly from 49% to its current rate of 51.7%.

The majority of practitioner survey respondents (86.4%) indicated that they were employed on a full time basis. Of the 251 (1 no response) centre based respondents, 209 (83.3%) indicated an employment status of permanent full time, 27 permanent part time (10.8%), 9 temporary full time (3.6%), 6 temporary part time / casual call back (2.4%). All 65 family child care providers indicated full time employment.

5.0 Recruitment

Analysis of data from all sources confirm that recruitment remains a major issue / challenge. There was consensus among all stakeholders that there was simply not an adequate number of people entering the child care sector to keep pace with current demand.

What attracts people to the field of early learning and child care?

Focus group sessions across all stakeholder groups provided an opportunity to identify and discuss the various positive features / strengths of the sector. These discussions centered on identifying those features of the licensed child care / early childhood education sector that might be seen as reasons to pursue a career in the field. Below is a summary of the most frequently cited 'attractions':

- Hours of work – Monday to Friday, no evenings, no weekends
- Availability of work – with appropriate qualifications, employment is almost guaranteed; job security is high; and jobs are available in most communities across the province, and indeed across the country.
- Educational requirements – 2 rather than a 4 year degree; educational costs are less
- The work is challenging, rewarding, allows you to be creative, and is fun
- Availability of various financial incentives such as the ELCC supplement, bursaries, etc.
- Provides an opportunity to work with and influence children during their early years, and to make a real difference in their lives
- Every day is different – work is not boring
- Ability to obtain required education on line – allows you to learn while you earn
- Opportunity to work with children and families of different cultures
- Viable career for those not wanting to work in traditional (classroom based) school system
- Not a desk job; opportunity to be outdoors, hands on; play based
- It is a regulated profession

All informants prefaced their responses with an acknowledgement that the most compelling reason to pursue a career in child care was a love of children and a passion for working with / influencing children. While further acknowledging that there were many careers one could pursue based on a love of children, the features noted above were viewed as those that would attract people to the child care sector.

Focus group sessions also identified a number of unique/additional features that were identified by specific stakeholder groups. These would include:

Centre based practitioners

- Own children can attend the centre; reduced child care costs

Family Child Care providers

- Able to be your own boss

- Work from home
- Higher income (as compared to centre based)
- Annual vacation
- Not centre based
- Ability to access supplement and subsidy program
- Can accept more than 4 children
- Ability to choose the families one works with
- Small groups

ECE students

- Contribute to inclusion
- Ability to use prior experience
- Provides career options
- Work from home / own boss / establish own business

Licensees

- Early learning and child care sector now under mandate of Department of Education and Early Childhood Development
- Potential career advancement possibilities
- Can enter at any age
- Own business opportunities
- Good wages (at least in some centres)

Government officials

- Work in home community
- For those seeking a second career – ability to work part time
- Not needing to leave for education purposes – can do on line

Focus group sessions also identified several other features (or more correctly perceptions) that have impact on a person's intent to pursue a career in child care. The majority of informants expressed a view that the general societal perception of child care was still that it was 'women's work' and that it was easy. Informants also suggested that many (most) people view early childhood education as not much more than babysitting. Informants indicated that while these perceptions may in fact increase the number of people interested, at least initially, in pursuing a career in child care, ultimately these same misperceptions are among the leading reasons why so many people do not complete their ECE post-secondary education and/or leave the field prematurely.

Survey data supported the majority of opinions expressed by key informants and focus group participants. As indicated in Table 10, when asked to identify the three most important reasons people would want to consider a career in child care, current and former practitioners in both centre based and family child care were most likely to state 'to be a positive influence on children' and 'love of children'.

Table 10 Reasons offered by current (centre based and family child care) and former practitioners as to why people would choose a career in child care sector

| Reasons | Centre based staff (n=252) | Family child care providers (n=65) | Total (%) Current Practitioners (n=317) | Total (%) Former Practitioners (n=52) |
|---|----------------------------|------------------------------------|---|---------------------------------------|
| Love of children/love working with children | 113 (44.8%) | 29 (44.6%) | 142 (44.8%) | 16 (30.8%) |
| Challenging/Rewarding work | 117 (46.4%) | 20 (30.8%) | 137 (43.2%) | 6 (11.5%) |
| To be a positive influence on children | 135 (53.6%) | 27 (41.5%) | 162 (51.1%) | 9 (17.3%) |
| Work is creative | 22 (8.7%) | 1 (1.5%) | 23 (7.3%) | 3 (5.8%) |
| To help families | 23 (9.1%) | 1 (1.5%) | 24 (7.6%) | 3 (5.8%) |
| Work schedule/Hours of work | 36 (14.3%) | 8 (12.3%) | 44 (13.9%) | 3 (5.8%) |
| Stay home with my children | 0 (0.0%) | 24 (36.9%) | 24 (7.6%) | 2 (3.9%) |
| Care for own child | 6 (2.4%) | 0 (0.0%) | 6 (1.9%) | 2 (3.9%) |
| To be my own boss | 0 (0.0%) | 13 (20.0%) | 13 (4.1%) | 2 (3.9%) |
| Work available in this sector | 10 (4.0%) | 3 (4.6%) | 13 (4.1%) | 2 (3.9%) |
| Supplement | 16 (6.4%) | 1 (1.5%) | 17 (5.4%) | 0 (0.0%) |
| Career choice | 9 (3.6%) | 1 (1.5%) | 10 (3.2%) | 0 (0.0%) |
| Co-workers/employer | 7 (2.8%) | 0 (0.0%) | 7 (2.2%) | 0 (0.0%) |
| Shorter educational requirements | 5 (2.0%) | 1 (1.5%) | 6 (1.9%) | 2 (3.9%) |
| Seen as an easy job | 3 (1.2%) | 1 (1.5%) | 4 (1.3%) | 1 (1.9%) |
| Good wages | 29 (11.5%) | 13 (20.0%) | 42 (13.3%) | 4 (7.7%) |
| Provide a preferred learning site | 10 (4.0%) | 5 (7.7%) | 15 (4.7%) | 0 (0.0%) |

When asked about the most important factor that attracted them to work in the sector, 42.3% of all current practitioners and 50% of former practitioners responded that it was their desire to have a positive influence on the growth and development of children. The second most frequent response was love of children (28.4% and 40.4% respectively). When centre based and family child care provider responses were compared, it was revealed that family child care providers were more likely to offer ‘ability to stay home with my children’ and ‘be own boss’ as reasons. Centre based practitioners were more likely to cite ‘hours of work’ and ‘work available in the sector’ as reasons for being attracted to the sector. It is also noted that wages and ELCC supplement did not get identified by any current or former practitioner as being among the

most important reason for being attracted to the sector. Table 11 presents the most frequently reported responses of current and former practitioners to this question.

TABLE 11 Most important factor that attracted current practitioners to work in the early learning and child care sector.

| Reasons | Centre based staff (n=252) | Family child care providers (n=65) | Total (%) Current Practitioners (n=317) | Total (%) Former Practitioners (n=52) |
|---|----------------------------|------------------------------------|---|---------------------------------------|
| Love of children/love working with children | 79 (31.3%) | 11 (16.9%) | 90 (28.4%) | 21 (40.4%) |
| To be a positive influence on children | 118 (46.8%) | 16 (24.6%) | 134 (42.3%) | 26 (50.0%) |
| To help families | 7 (2.8%) | 1 (1.5%) | 8 (2.5%) | 0 (0.0%) |
| Work schedule/Hours of work | 14 (5.6%) | 1 (1.5%) | 15 (4.7%) | 3 (5.8%) |
| Stay home with my children | 0 (0.0%) | 27 (41.5%) | 27 (8.5%) | 0 (0.0%) |
| Care for own child | 2 (0.8%) | 0 (0.0%) | 2 (0.6%) | 0 (0.0%) |
| To be my own boss | 0 (0.0%) | 8 (12.3%) | 8 (2.5%) | 2 (3.9%) |
| Work available in this sector | 12 (4.8%) | 1 (1.5%) | 13 (4.1%) | 0 (0.0%) |
| No response offered | 20 (7.9%) | 0 (0.0%) | 20 (6.3%) | 0 (0.0%) |

When comparing findings as displayed in Tables 10 and 11 to that compiled based on the 2007 research data it is of interest to note that:

- In identifying the three most important reasons for considering a career in child care, current practitioners rated ‘love of children’ (44.8%) much lower than in 2007 (73.3%); and rated ‘to be a positive influence on children’ (51.1%) much higher than in 2007 (36.6%)
- In 2007, only 7.6% of practitioners rated “wages, benefits, and supplement’ as a reason for choosing a career in child care, while in 2019 this reason was cited by 18.6%
- In identifying the most important reason for considering a career in child care, current practitioners rated ‘to be a positive influence on children (42.3%)’ and ‘love of children (28.4%)’ which was a reversal to that found in 2007 – ‘to be a positive influence on children (10.3%)’ and ‘love of children (59.4%)’

Survey data (as displayed in Table 12 below) also provided additional insight into the factors that may contribute to enhanced recruitment within this sector. When current practitioners were asked to rate the level of importance of various elements in relation to recruitment, salary

and working conditions were rated by the most respondents as being important or very important.

The availability of the ELCC supplement, hours of work, opportunity to work with children, and availability of professional development opportunities were the next elements that were rated by the most respondents as being important or very important. The overall importance of benefits was rated lower by family child care providers than their counterparts in centre based. Of the elements listed, both centre based and family child care providers rated opportunity to work with other adults and opportunity for career advancement as having less overall importance. Educational requirements were rated by family child care providers as less important (73.8%) than by centre based practitioners (84.1%).

Table 12 Number (%) of current practitioners rating the following elements “important” or “very Important” in relation to recruitment in the child care sector

| Element | Centre based staff (n=252) | | | Family child care providers (n=65) | | |
|---|----------------------------|----------------|----------------|------------------------------------|---------------|---------------|
| | Imp | V. Imp | Total | Imp | V. Imp | Total |
| Salary | 33 (13.1%) | 209 (82.9%) | 242 (96.0%) | 13 (20.0%) | 49 (75.4%) | 62 (95.4%) |
| Working Conditions | 53 (21.0%) | 187 (74.2%) | 240 (95.2%) | 20 (30.8%) | 41 (63.1%) | 61 (93.8%) |
| Benefits (sick leave, pension, annual leave, etc. | 28 (11.1%) | 209 (82.9%) | 237 (94.0%) | 20 (30.8%) | 38 (58.5%) | 58 (89.2%) |
| Opportunity to work with children | 86 (34.1%) | 145 (57.5%) | 231 (91.7%) | 25 (38.5%) | 35 (53.8%) | 60 (92.3%) |
| Hours of work | 77 (30.6%) | 154 (61.1%) | 231 (91.7%) | 34 (52.3%) | 26 (50.0%) | 60 (92.3%) |
| Educational requirements | 83 (32.9%) | 129 (51.2%) | 212 (84.1%) | 21 (32.3%) | 27 (41.5%) | 48 (73.8%) |
| The value placed by society on the work | 63 (25.0%) | 138 (54.8%) | 201 (79.8%) | 25 (38.5%) | 28 (43.1%) | 53 (81.5%) |
| Opportunity for career advancement | 90 (35.7%) | 103 (40.9%) | 193 (76.6%) | 27 (41.5%) | 23 (35.4%) | 50 (76.9%) |
| Opportunity to work with other adults | 111 (44.0%) | 66 (26.2%) | 177 (70.2%) | 20 (30.8%) | 14 (21.5%) | 34 (52.3%) |
| Availability of ELCC supplements | 37 (14.7%) | 198 (78.6%) | 235 (93.3%) | 23 (35.4%) | 37 (56.9%) | 60 (92.3%) |
| Availability of ongoing professional development | 74 (29.4%) | 155 (61.5%) | 229 (90.9%) | 33 (50.8%) | 27 (41.5%) | 60 (92.3%) |

Former practitioners offered similar responses in terms of their ratings of the various elements. However, as indicated in Table 13, they were more likely than current practitioners to rate opportunity to work with other adults as being an important or very important factor.

Table 13 Number (%) of former practitioners rating the following elements “important” or “very Important” in relation to recruitment to the child care sector

| Element | Former Practitioners (n=52) | | |
|--|-----------------------------|------------|------------|
| | Imp | V. Imp | Total |
| Salary | 7 (13.5%) | 43 (82.7%) | 50 (96.2%) |
| Working Conditions | 14 (26.9%) | 36 (69.2%) | 50 (96.2%) |
| Benefits (sick leave, pension, annual leave, etc.) | 5 (9.6%) | 45 (86.5%) | 50 (96.2%) |
| Opportunity to work with children | 12 (23.1%) | 38 (73.1%) | 50 (96.2%) |
| Hours of work | 12 (23.1%) | 36 (69.2%) | 48 (92.3%) |
| Educational requirements | 7 (13.5%) | 38 (73.1%) | 45 (86.5%) |
| The value placed by society on the work | 9 (17.3%) | 31 (59.6%) | 40 (76.9%) |
| Opportunity for career advancement | 14 (26.9%) | 24 (46.2%) | 38 (73.1%) |
| Opportunity to work with other adults | 14 (26.9%) | 26 (50.0%) | 40 (76.9%) |
| Availability of ELCC supplement | 9 (17.3%) | 40 (76.9%) | 49 (94.2%) |

What are the major challenges to recruitment?

Focus group sessions and KIIs provided an opportunity to identify and discuss the predominant features of the sector that might discourage people from entering the sector. Below is a summary of the most frequently cited ‘disincentives’:

- Low and inconsistent wages
- Lack of benefits
- Lack of value placed on early childhood education / ECE practitioners
- Lack of understanding by the general public of the value of early childhood education
- Not seen as a profession
- Lack of promotion
- High level of responsibility for low pay
- Difficulty in accessing required training – current waiting list for access to distance education; diploma course only offered at a few college campuses
- Female dominated profession
- Physically and emotionally demanding work; high degree of associated stress
- Lack of career counselling in secondary school system as to potential career in early learning and child care
- Cost

In addition to the features noted above to which there was common agreement, focus groups and KIIs also identified a number of unique/additional features that were identified by specific stakeholder groups. These would include:

Family child care providers

- High start-up costs
- Maintenance costs
- Isolation / no breaks
- Parents not aware of difference between FCC and the unregulated sector
- Long hours
- Inspection process; long and inconsistent
- Too much 'red tape'
- Cost of required renovations to home
- Regulations too stringent; making family child care into 'mini centres'

ECE students

- Too much after hours work
- Have to move to access education
- Working conditions

Indigenous (First Nations) / Francophone Communities

- Geographic remoteness of communities
- Difficult to compete with wages offered by other industries
- Competition from federal / provincial governments in hiring bilingual / French speaking staff
- Cost of living – no specific incentives to encourage the employment of ECEs in northern areas
- Young people leave these communities to continue studies – often not to return

Government officials

- Potential conflict with parents
- Sector is based on minimum standards
- Inadequate supports for children with significant needs
- Inadequate numbers of graduates with required certificate or diploma

Licensees

- Lack of pensions
- Being a practitioner in the child care sector is harder than expected
- ECEs discourage new people from entering the field

Analysis of data collected from all sources revealed a prevailing opinion among informants and survey respondents that the low wages and general lack of benefits provided by most child care facilities represented the primary challenges to successful recruitment. It is noted that these are the same two primary challenges as identified in the 2007 study.

The other major deterrent to successfully attracting increased number of people to the sector as identified by informants was that the sector and its practitioners were not valued or seen by

the general public as a profession. The majority of informants spoke of the current negative image of child care (e.g. seen by many as no more than babysitting) and the lack of value attached (in general) to this field as impacting negatively on recruitment efforts. Informants also identified that a general lack of understanding among the public as to the value of early learning also impacted negatively on the degree to which child care is seen as a viable and preferred career option.

How difficult is it for child care licensees to attract new practitioners?

Survey data revealed that 57 (81.4%) of the 70 licensee respondents felt that it was difficult or very difficult to fill positions when staff vacancies occurred. Table 14 compares the degree of difficulty experienced by licensees in communities with populations of less than 10,000 (n =28) and communities of greater than or equal to 10,000 (n = 42). Review of data revealed that respondents from communities with smaller populations experience more difficulty in recruitment once staff vacancies occur. In smaller communities, 26 (92.9%) of the licensees reported having some difficulty in recruiting while 31 (73.8%) of licensees from communities with larger populations reported having difficulty with this task. In comparing reported recruitment difficulties in non-profit versus private centres, it is noted that 90.9% (30/33) of licensees of private centres reported difficulty in recruiting qualified ECEs, while only 54% (27/37) of licensees of non-profit centres reported difficulty. Also note that in smaller communities both non-profit and private centres reported similar levels of difficulty in attracting new staff. In larger communities private centres experienced much greater difficulty in attracting staff (90%) compared to non-profit centres (30.5%).

Only 13 licensees (18.6%) indicated that the ability to recruit qualified staff was acceptable.

Table 14 **Frequencies of licensees (both non-profit and private sector) from communities with smaller or larger populations across reported level of difficulty in recruitment**

| Level of difficulty | Population <10,000 | | Population >= 10,000 | | Total |
|---------------------|--------------------|-----------------|----------------------|-----------------|------------|
| | NonProfit n=15 | Private n=13 | NonProfit n=22 | Private n=20 | |
| Very Easy | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Easy | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Acceptable | 1 (6.6%) | 1 (7.7%) | 9 (40.9%) | 2 (10.0%) | 13 (18.6%) |
| Difficult | 1 (6.6%) | 5 (38.5%) | 6 (27.3%) | 3 (15.0%) | 15 (21.4%) |
| Very Difficult | 13 (86.7%) | 7 (53.8%) | 7 (3.2%) | 15 (75.0%) | 42 (60.0%) |

Of the 70 centres responding to the Licensee survey, 18 (25.7%) reported that they currently had a staff vacancy at their centre. Reported staff vacancy rate varied greatly by type of centre, 39.3% of private centres reported a staff vacancy while only 13.5% of non-profit centres reported a vacancy.

Table 15 provides a summary of the survey data of the reasons offered by the licensees of the 57 centres reporting as difficult or very difficult to fill vacant positions. The primary reason given by the majority of respondents for the inability to fill vacancies with ECE qualified staff was lack of availability of suitable candidates. Multiple responses were allowed.

Table 15 – Reasons for difficulty in filling vacancies as reported by Licensees

| Reasons for difficulty filling positions | Number of licensees reporting these reasons |
|--|---|
| No qualified staff | 28 (49.1%) |
| Wages / Salary too low | 14 (24.6%) |
| No applicants | 5 (8.8%) |
| Hours of Operation | 4 (7.0%) |
| Geography | 2 (3.5%) |
| No French ECEs | 2 (3.5%) |
| Required training for Trainees | 4 (7.0%) |
| No answer | 6 (10.5%) |

During the interview series several licensees/administrators indicated that they are able to attract qualified candidates but only if they paid them higher wages. There was an opinion that practitioners are sometimes moving from centre to centre to secure higher wages.

When comparing these findings to that compiled based on the 2007 research data it is of interest to note that:

- Reported degree of difficulty encountered in filling vacancies has remained relatively constant – 2007 (83.7%) and 2019 (81.4%)
- In communities of less than 10,000 population the rated difficulty of filling positions has increased by 3.4%, from 89.5% (2007) to 92.9% (2019)
- In communities of greater than 10,000 population the rated difficulty of filling positions has decreased by 6.5%, from 80.3% (2007) to 73.8% (2019)
- The primary reasons cited for difficulty in filling positions remained constant across the two time periods; namely, no qualified staff available and salary too low

What would make it easier to attract new practitioners?

Data concerning strategies for making it easier to attract new practitioners was solicited from a variety of sources including key informant interviews, focus group sessions and surveys of licensees and practitioners (both current and former). Respondents were asked to suggest up to three strategies they felt should be used to enhance recruitment efforts within the sector.

Table 16 summarizes the responses to this issue obtained from survey respondents. As can be seen from the Table, there was a high degree of consistency between different groups of stakeholders in rating improvements to wages and access to benefits as the primary strategies for enhancing recruitment. Current practitioners rated promotion of the sector as a profession

as the third most important strategy while both former practitioners and licensees rated easier access to training as the third most important strategy.

Table 16 Recruitment strategies suggested across different groups of survey respondents

| Strategy | Practitioners n=317 | Former practitioners n=52 | Licensees n=70 |
|--|---------------------|---------------------------|----------------|
| Higher Wages | 205 (64.7%) | 40 (76.9%) | 52 (74.3%) |
| Increased benefits | 192 (60.6%) | 31 (59.6%) | 35 (50.0%) |
| Promote value of sector as a profession | 118 (37.2) | 20 (38.5%) | 13 (18.6%) |
| Easier access to training / credit for past training | 43 (13.6%) | 26 (50.0%) | 24 (34.3%) |
| Increased incentives (e.g. hiring bonus) | 16 (5.0%) | 2 (3.8%) | 3 (4.3%) |
| Improve working conditions / more supports | 57 (18.0%) | 5 (9.6%) | 6 (8.6%) |
| Provide grants to FCC (start up, equipment) | 19 (5.1%) | 0 (0.0%) | 0 (0.0%) |
| Increase ELCC supplement | 18 (5.7%) | 0 (0.0%) | 7 (10.0%) |
| Increased PD opportunities | 19 (6.0%) | 2 (3.8%) | 5 (7.1%) |
| Decrease regulations | 6 (1.9%) | 0 (0.0%) | 0 (0.0%) |
| Jobs available in sector | 7 (2.2%) | 2 (3.8%) | 0 (0.0%) |
| Profile as a career option | 9 (2.8%) | 2 (3.8%) | 0 (0.0%) |
| Info on difference between FCC and unregulated care | 5 (1.6%) | 0 (0.0%) | 0 (0.0%) |
| Publicly funded system | 4 (1.3%) | 0 (0.0%) | 1 (1.4%) |

Analysis of data from focus group sessions and KIIs with key stakeholders also revealed that improvements to wages and benefits were most often cited as the primary strategies for enhancing recruitment. Other suggested strategies included:

- There is simply not a sufficient supply of qualified ECEs to meet the demand within the centre based sector.

- Promotion of the sector (especially at the high school level) and its value to children and families. Focus on the positives associated with the sector, not the negatives.
- Increased promotion of early childhood education, value of child care by ECEs
- Increase options for access to ECE education; diploma courses to be offered at more sites across the province (in both public and private institutions); eliminate the current wait for access to distance learning
- Change the requirements for the placement component of the ECE diploma course
- Provide more information on early learning and child care to high school students
- Move to a publicly funded regulated child care system
- Hold more community events that highlight the value, importance of and demand for the early learning and child care sector
- Increase ELCC supplement
- Financial incentive to encourage employment (in early childhood services) in northern, rural and/or remote areas
- Have child care always represented at various career days / job fairs
- Target efforts toward increasing the number of male practitioners in the sector
- Decrease the complexity of the certification process
- Stop changing / revising the regulations and standards
- Provide mentors

Specific to family child care, the following strategies were suggested:

- Provide start up and ongoing grants
- Provide grants for purchasing equipment / materials
- Develop a list of substitutes and share with providers
- Allow Home Visitors to act as substitute (for short periods)
- Have ECE students complete placements at a family child care home
- Ensure consistency in the interpretation of regulations and standards
- Develop regulations and standards specific for a home – not a centre

Informants across all stakeholder groups agreed that improvements in wages and benefits would result in enhanced recruitment results in this sector. However, in addition to noting the need for enhancements in this area, there was significant support for efforts directed toward enhancing the professional profile of the sector. There is a very real perception that child care is viewed negatively by many people in society and that this, in turn, affects the likelihood of attracting people to the sector.

With respect to enhancing the professional status of the sector, the majority of informants were supportive of the transfer of child care services to the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. Informants were of an opinion that this move will undoubtedly over the long term enhance the image of the sector and help society to recognize the value of child care by reinforcing the developmental, growth and educational outcomes of early childhood education, rather than a preconceived focus on caring.

While not frequently cited by survey respondents, many informants within the focus group sessions suggested that one solution might be to move the child care sector into the publicly funded system – such as is the case currently with the traditional K – 12 system. Most acknowledged however that this might pose challenges (with significant financial and policy implications). However, they expressed the view that the overall advantages of moving toward a universal, publicly funded system of child care would outweigh the disadvantages. Proponents of the publicly funded system expressed the view that a publicly funded system would ultimately result in better quality child care, higher wages and benefits, better work environments, and enhanced professional status of the sector.

In comparing these findings to those compiled based on the 2007 research data it is of interest to note that:

- The primary recruitment strategies suggested remained constant across the two time periods; namely, higher wages and increased benefits
- The percentage of respondents (practitioners, former practitioners and licensees) who cited promote ‘value of the sector’ and ‘easier access to training’ was significantly higher in 2019 (i.e. 34.4% and 21.2% respectively) compared to 2007 levels of 17.3% and 8.4%

Who are the potential target groups for increased recruitment efforts?

The consensus opinion among informants participating in the key informant interviews was that enhanced recruitment outcomes could best be achieved through the development and delivery of a coordinated and provincial promotional campaign – a campaign focused on the strengths and value of regulated child care and the influential role played by early childhood educators. Informants did not feel that specific campaigns directed toward any one target group was either valuable or indicated. However in saying that informants also noted that the general messaging could be tailored in a way such that it would resonate with several noted audiences – namely, people who were choosing their first career (e.g. high school students / recent graduates), men and mature adults (e.g. those considering a change in careers) or those who are considering a second career post retirement (e.g. former teachers).

It was also felt that such a promotional campaign might also attract the interest of former practitioners and possibly those currently working in the unregulated sector.

In discussing efforts toward enhanced recruitment, informants also noted that such efforts would have limited success without enhancements to the overall wage and benefits structure within the sector. A further caveat raised by informants was that increased latitude should be introduced into the certification process that would provide for greater acknowledgment and credit for prior learning and education, and thus make attainment of required certification levels less onerous and less of a disincentive to entry into the sector. This latter comment was usually used in reference to former teachers expressing a desire to enter the sector.

How can new graduates be linked with emerging employment/self-employment opportunities in centre-based and family child care?

Discussions with key informants, particularly within the Focus Group sessions with ECE students, did not identify any major flaws as related to this issue. An analysis of informant responses revealed the most frequent suggestions for improvements to this area included:

- Provide additional and timely information to students while they are still in school, including information on location and distribution of early learning and child care services throughout the province;
- Increase information regarding family child care; allow students to do placement in FCC home (where provider has a Level 2)
- Allow students during their placements to work directly with the children (although not as part of ratio) rather than being focused on observation;
- Provide additional information regarding self-employment options and contact information as to agencies/programs that may provide support/assistance with new business start-up;
- Engage guest speakers from the early learning and child care sector especially as related to existing and/or emerging employment trends, career options and other opportunities in the field;
- Provide additional information and facilitate class discussions on the current Child Care Services Act and associated Regulations, with particular emphasis on the content and rationale for the Act and Regulations;
- Provide information on the provincial system of child care certification, including the process and requirements for obtaining and maintaining certification.

What messages should be sent in order to enhance recruitment outcomes?

In light of the strengths of the sector (as discussed earlier in this report) informants were asked what strategies / key messages should be used in order to increase general awareness and understanding such that greater numbers of individuals might become interested in a career in the sector.

There was consensus among all informant groups that, at present, early learning and child care was not highly valued by the general public. While acknowledging that this perception was slowly changing, the majority of informants expressed an opinion that the prevailing public view of child care was still one of ‘babysitting and care’ rather than early childhood education. There was consensus among informants that this perception was most damaging, and until it changed it would continue to serve as a major deterrent to recruitment.

Informants suggested that future messages / public awareness efforts regarding early learning and child care must address this issue and begin to frame the sector as one of extreme importance and influence on the developmental growth of young children (particularly in the early years), an explanation of the value of play based learning, and a focus on the professional status of the sector – a sector comprised of early childhood educators, not child care workers or caregivers.

Informants suggested that such a strategy should utilize traditional media (television, radio, print) and also fully utilize available and appropriate social media. Informants further suggested that the strategy, as much as possible, use endorsements by parents and practitioners based on real stories that reinforce the value of early learning and child care to both children and families. The strategy should be ongoing, not a focused 3 – 6 month effort.

Key messages / areas of focus identified by informants included:

- Emphasis must be placed on the value of the work (to the child, the families and to society in general) and the value and positive outcomes associated with high quality early childhood education; especially as related to younger (aged 1 – 3 years) children;
- Emphasize the value of quality child care to the child in terms of developmental growth, learning, and socialization; early childhood education as a foundation for future learning;
- Reinforce the fact that high quality child care is an investment in our children; shapes futures;
- Emphasize the importance of play and play based learning;
- Educate public as to what an Early Childhood Educator does; the requirements to become an ECE (2 year diploma) and remain an ECE (ongoing professional development hours);
- Provide messages regarding the increasing value of early learning and child care as a desirable and viable profession and career. Focus on the strengths of the sector – important, rewarding and challenging work, a foundation for inclusion, describe the various incentives available (ELCC, graduate bursaries, etc.), and ability to access distance education (earn and learn);
- Highlight the difference between regulated and unregulated child care;
- Ensure appropriate and adequate promotion of family child care, and how it differs from centre based and the unregulated sector; that it is high quality, monitored and in accord with relevant regulations;
- Discontinue using the term child care, instead use the term early learning and child development; early learning centres not day care centres; and
- Remove term ‘caregiver’ from legislation.

6.0 Retention

Analysis of data from all sources confirm that retention remains a major issue / challenge within the sector.

Why do people stay in the field of early learning and child care?

An analysis of the qualitative data from informants indicate that people generally stay in the sector due to a combination of reasons. Informants cited a passion for / love of children being a primary reason in combination with a high degree of job satisfaction and relationships with colleagues and being part of a team. Informants also spoke of the attachment formed with the children as being a reason many practitioners remain in the sector. Informants further added that most people who have been involved in the sector for a period of time love their job and find the work that they do challenging yet fulfilling and rewarding.

Practitioners who participated in focus group meetings were most likely to state love of children and job satisfaction as primary reasons for practitioner retention. Other reasons that were most often cited during focus group sessions included the following:

- Love of children / passion for the sector
- Job satisfaction
- Relationship with colleagues / being part of a team approach
- Hours of work / proximity of work / availability of work
- Attachment to the children
- Access to the ELCC supplement
- Positive and supportive work environment / working conditions
- Work is challenging and rewarding – not boring
- It is a career chosen based on qualifications
- Reduced cost of child care for own children
- Income (family child care)
- Alternative to working in centre based sector (family child care)
- To make a difference in the lives of young children
- Lack of other options / don't want change
- Supportive employer
- Considerable investment of time and money in the sector (especially for licensees)

Table 17 presents a summary of the survey responses of practitioners when asked what is the most important reason you want to stay working in this sector? The most frequent response offered by 131 (41.3%) of respondents was job satisfaction.

Table 17: Reasons for staying offered by practitioners

| Reason for staying | Centre based practitioners n=252 | Family child care providers n=65 | Total Practitioners n= 317 |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Job satisfaction | 123 (48.8%) | 8 (12.3%) | 131 (41.3%) |
| Love of children | 44 (17.5%) | 17 (26.1%) | 61 (19.2%) |
| To be a positive influence | 53 (21.0%) | 15 (23.1%) | 68(21.5%) |
| Wages and benefits / income | 15 (5.9%) | 5 (7.7%) | 20 (6.3%) |
| Location / Hours of work | 9 (3.6%) | 0 (0.0%) | 9 (2.9%) |
| ELCC supplement | 5 (1.9%) | 0 (0.0%) | 5 (1.6%) |
| Be own boss / at home with children | 0 (0.0%) | 19 (29.2%) | 19 (6.0%) |
| Valued and respected | 5 (2.0%) | 4 (6.2%) | 9 (2.9%) |
| Provide safe environment for children | 4 (1.6%) | 2 (3.0%) | 6 (1.9%) |

In comparing these findings to those compiled based on the 2007 research data it is of interest to note that:

- Job satisfaction was cited more often in 2019 (41.3%) than in 2007 (15.9%).
- The number of practitioners who cited ‘to be a positive influence’ as a primary reason for staying in the sector increased significantly; from 9.2% (2007) to 21.5% (2019)
- The number of practitioners who cited ‘love of children’ as a primary reason for staying in the sector decreased significantly; from 52.6% (2007) to 19.2% (2019)
- Wages and benefits, as a reason for staying in the sector, was cited more frequently in 2019 (6.3%) compared to 2007 (2.3%)

How long do practitioners anticipate they will remain working in the sector?

The majority of practitioners currently working in the child care sector anticipate that they will continue working in the sector (65.3%). However, a significant number of respondents indicated that they were leaving the sector (12.6%) or were undecided as to remaining in the sector (20.8%). Table 18 displays the responses of centre based and family based child care providers when asked if they plan to continue working in the regulated child care sector.

Table 18 Centre based and family child care provider responses to whether or not they plan to continue working in the regulated child care sector.

| Group | Do you plan to continue working in regulated child care? | | | |
|--------------------------|--|------------|------------|-------------|
| | Yes | Undecided | No | No response |
| Centre based (n=252) | 161 (63.9%) | 53 (21.0%) | 34 (13.5%) | 4 (1.6%) |
| Family child care (n=65) | 46 (70.8%) | 13 (20.0%) | 6 (9.2%) | 0 (0.0%) |
| Total | 207 (65.3%) | 66 (20.8%) | 40 (12.6%) | (1.2%) |

In comparing these findings to those compiled based on the 2007 research data it is of interest to note that:

- The percentage of practitioners who anticipate continuing to work in the sector increased by 10.3%, 65.3% compared to 55.0% in 2007
- The percentage of practitioners who reported being undecided as to remaining in the sector decreased by 8.3%, 20.8% in 2019 compared to 29.1% in 2007
- The number of respondents who indicated that they were leaving the sector remained relatively constant; 12.6% in 2019 compared to 13.1% in 2007

Why do people leave the profession?

Informants participating in the interview series and focus group meetings were most likely to suggest low wages and lack of benefits as the primary reasons that people leave the centre based child care sector. Informants noted that there are many other job options that can be secured by current practitioners that pay the same or better wages (with additional benefits), do not have significant educational requirements, and have reduced workloads and much less responsibility.

Informants offered a range of other explanations for the departure of staff. These would include the following:

- Low wages and lack of benefits
- Stress / burn out
- Poor working conditions
- Lack of value associated with early learning and child care / not respected or appreciated by parents
- Lack of educational qualifications / inability to upgrade
- Work is very physically demanding
- Too many government regulations
- Family reasons / health / age
- Dealing with children with significant challenges without the necessary supports
- Lack of hours
- Isolation (exclusive to the family child care sector)
- Workload

- Reality of working in the sector does not match one's expectations
- Lack of other career options
- No planning time made available / having to perform other non ECE duties
- Cannot perform administrator role if required to be part of ratio (exclusive to administrators)
- No mentors
- Other job options / career change
- Lack of support from licensee

Family child care provider Informants participating in the interview series and focus group meetings were most likely to cite stress as the primary reason that people leave the family child care sector. Other reasons cited included:

- Stress / burn out due to long hours, isolation
- Lack of benefits
- Lack of value associated with early learning and child care / not respected or appreciated by parents
- No operational grant available
- Too many government regulations
- Inconsistency in inspection standards / inconsistency in application of standards
- Licensing process is long and complicated
- Start-up / maintenance costs
- Conflict with parents
- Regulations are turning FCC homes into mini centres
- Family reasons / health / age of own children
- Lack of families

In the survey, practitioners currently working in the sector were asked about the reasons people would leave. More than one response was possible. Low wages was offered more often than any other response (85.8%). The second most frequent reason suggested (42.6%) was dissatisfaction with benefits. Many respondents (32.2%) felt that stress on the job and lack of respect or value by society (29.0%) would also be reasons people might leave. Table 19 provides a list of the responses offered to this survey question along with the number (%) of respondents who offered each response.

Table 19: Number (%) of current and former practitioners offering different reasons why people might leave the sector.

| Reason for staying | Centre based practitioners n=252 | Family child care providers n=65 | Total Practitioners n= 317 | Former practitioners (n=52) |
|--|---|---|---------------------------------------|--|
| Low wages | 230 (91.3%) | 42 (64.6%) | 272 (85.8%) | 43 (82.7%) |
| Lack of benefits | 119 (47.2%) | 16 (24.6%) | 135 (42.6%) | 19 (36.5%) |
| Lack of value / respect | 72 (28.6%) | 20 (30.8%) | 92 (29.0%) | 14 (26.9%) |
| Stress / burnout | 82 (32.5%) | 20 (30.8%) | 102 (32.2%) | 22 (42.3%) |
| Poor working conditions | 67 (26.6%) | 4 (6.15%) | 71 (22.4%) | 7 (13.5%) |
| Lack of support | 18 (7.1%) | 1 (1.5%) | 19 (6.0%) | 26 (50.0%) |
| Health issues | 14 (5.6%) | 1 (1.5%) | 15 (4.7%) | 26 (50.0%) |
| Relocate / other job / retirement | 19 (7.5%) | 5 (7.7%) | 24 (7.6%) | 0 (0.0%) |
| Can't upgrade | 15 (6.0%) | 3 (4.6%) | 18 (5.7%) | 0 (0.0%) |
| Family reasons | 15 (6.0%) | 5 (7.7%) | 20 (6.3%) | 2 (1.9%) |
| Lack of hours / families | 18 (7.1%) | 12 (18.5%) | 30 (9.5%) | 2 (1.9%) |
| Licensing / regulatory issues | 9 (3.6%) | 11 (16.9%) | 20 (6.3%) | 3 (5.8%) |
| Too physically demanding | 5 (2.0%) | 7 (10.8%) | 12 (3.8%) | 3 (5.8%) |
| Lack of career advancement opportunities | 5 (2.0%) | 2 (3.1%) | 7 (2.2%) | 2 (1.9%) |
| Don't like working with children | 6 (2.4%) | 2 (3.1%) | 8 (2.5%) | 3 (5.8%) |
| Cannot access supplement | 10 (4.0%) | 0 (0.0%) | 10 (3.2%) | 0 (0.0%) |
| Cost of start-up / maintenance | 0 (0.0%) | 5 (7.7%) | 5 (1.6%) | 0 (0.0%) |
| Isolation | 0 (0.0%) | 5 (7.7%) | 5 (1.6%) | 2 (1.9%) |

When asked about the most important reason for their leaving the sector, 38.5% of respondents to the former practitioner survey indicated the reason was that they were dissatisfied with the wages. Table 20 displays the reasons offered for leaving by former practitioners.

Table 20 Number (%) of former practitioners and their most important reasons for leaving the sector.

| Reason for leaving | Former practitioners |
|-------------------------------|----------------------|
| Dissatisfied with wages | 20 (38.5%) |
| Dissatisfied with benefits | 3 (5.8%) |
| Relocated | 5 (9.6%) |
| Inadequate hours of work | 4 (7.7%) |
| Maternity / paternity leave | 3 (5.8%) |
| Conflict with co-workers | 2 (3.9%) |
| Job was too stressful | 5 (9.6%) |
| To work in unregulated sector | 3 (5.8%) |
| Other jobs option available | 2 (3.9%) |
| No potential for advancement | 1(1.9%) |
| Retirement | 3 (5.8%) |
| Centre closed | 1 (1.9%) |

As indicated previously, 40 (12.6%) of the total number of current practitioners (centre based and family child care) reported that they did not plan to continue working in the regulated child care sector. Table 21 provides a list of the reasons offered for this decision and the number (%) of practitioners expressing a desire to leave who offered this reason. Multiple answers were allowed.

Table 21 Number (%) of current practitioners expressing intent to leave regulated child care and their reasons for leaving.

| Reason for leaving | Centre based (n=34) | Family child care (n=6) |
|--|---------------------|-------------------------|
| Dissatisfied with wages | 34 (100%) | 3 (50.0%) |
| Dissatisfied with benefits | 1 (2.9%) | 2 (33.3%) |
| Stress | 2 (5.9%) | 4 (66.7%) |
| Returning to school | 1 (2.9%) | 0 (0.0%) |
| Too difficult to obtain / maintain certification | 5 | 0 (0.0%) |
| Centre closed | 1 (2.9%) | 0 (0.0%) |
| Other job options | 1 (2.9%) | 1 (16.7%) |

Licenseses were asked to identify the number of people who had left their centre permanently and the primary reason for their departure (other than lay off, sick leave or annual leave) in 2018. Sixty - three centres reported losing a total of 101 staff. Of these, it should be noted that 12 (11.9%) left the centres to work in other areas of child care (regulated or unregulated). Returning to school and maternity leave were the two most common reasons reported by licenseses for staff departures (both at 13.9%). Dissatisfaction with wages/benefits was the primary reason for 11 (10.9%) of the people who left. Within private centres, returning to

school was the primary reason for leaving (20.3%) while in the non-profit sector, dissatisfaction with wages/benefits and maternity leave were the primary reasons. Table 22 provides a summary of the reasons offered and the number (%) of staff reported to have left for each reason.

Table 22 Number (%) of primary reasons for staff leaving child care centres as reported by licensees

| Primary Reason | Number (%) of staff leaving for this reason | | total |
|------------------------------------|---|----------------|------------|
| | Non Profit (n=42) | Private (n=59) | |
| Returning to school | 2 (4.8%) | 12 (20.3%) | 14 (13.9%) |
| Maternity or parental leave | 6 (14.3%) | 8 (13.6%) | 14 (13.9%) |
| Fired or dismissed | 5 (12.0%) | 7 (11.9%) | 12 (11.9%) |
| Dissatisfied with pay or benefits | 6 (14.3%) | 5 (8.5%) | 11 (10.9%) |
| Accepted a job in another centre | 5 (12.0%) | 5 (8.5%) | 10 (9.9%) |
| Leaving community or province | 2 (4.8%) | 4 (6.8%) | 6 (5.9%) |
| Inadequate hours available | 2 (4.8%) | 4 (6.8%) | 6 (5.9%) |
| Lack of appropriate qualifications | 0 (0.0%) | 6 (10.2%) | 6 (5.9%) |
| Not enjoying / not suited for work | 4 (9.5%) | 1 (1.7%) | 5 (5.0%) |
| Secured other employment | 2 (4.8%) | 2 (3.4%) | 4 (4.0%) |
| Found the job too stressful | 2 (4.8%) | 1 (1.7%) | 3 (3.0%) |
| Opened own centre | 2 (4.8%) | 0 (0.0%) | 2 (2.0%) |
| Ill health | 1 (2.4%) | 1 (1.7%) | 2 (2.0%) |
| Conflict with parents | 1 (2.4%) | 0 (0.0%) | 1 (1.0%) |
| To work in regulated FCC sector | 0 (0.0%) | 1 (1.7%) | 1 (1.0%) |
| To work in unregulated sector | 0 (0.0%) | 1 (1.7%) | 1 (1.0%) |
| Retired | 1 (2.4%) | 0 (0.0%) | 1 (1.0%) |
| unknown | 1 (2.4%) | 1 (1.7%) | 2 (2.0%) |

In interpreting these reasons, it should be noted that it is possible that many of the reasons cited may not be stand-alone reasons, for example, practitioners who left for reasons of returning to school may have indeed been motivated to return to school because of low wages.

Reasons cited for staff departures were relatively consistent across both the non-profit and private sectors. The notable exceptions being that many more practitioners in the private sector cited returning to school (20.3%) as compared to the non-profit sector (4.8%), and practitioners in private centres were more likely to cite lack of appropriate qualifications (10.2%) as the reason for leaving the sector.

In comparing the reasons cited as to why people leave the sector in 2019 compared to 2007 it is of interest to note that:

- The total number of staff who were reported as having left the sector within the previous 12 months was 109 in 2007 (from 50 centres) and 101 in 2019 (from 70 centres)
- Dissatisfaction with wages and benefits and returning to school were among the top reasons cited in both time periods

What strategies should be used to address challenges to retention?

Practitioners (both current and former practitioners) and licensees were asked in completing their survey to suggest up to three strategies that should be used to support people to continue in the child care sector. Table 23 lists the most common suggestions offered and the number (%) of respondents from each group offering these suggestions.

Table 23 Suggestions for supporting people to remain in the sector and the number (%) practitioners offering each suggestion.

| | Number (%) of respondents offering this response | | | |
|---|--|--------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------|
| | Centre based (n=252) | Family child care (n=65) | Former Practitioners (n=52) | Licensees (n=70) |
| Increase wages | 167 (66.3%) | 18 (27.7%) | 34 (65.4%) | 36 (51.4%) |
| Increase benefits | 133 (52.8%) | 19 (29.2%) | 19 (36.5%) | 29 (41.4%) |
| Promote child care / increase value of sector | 49 (19.4%) | 16 (24.6%) | 15 (28.9%) | 15 (21.4%) |
| Increase ELCC (and pay monthly) | 29 (11.5%) | 6 (9.2%) | 0 (0.0%) | 8 (11.4%) |
| Support / listen to practitioners | 15 (6.0%) | 4 (6.2%) | 12 (23.1%) | 2 (2.9%) |
| Make it easier to obtain / upgrade qualifications | 31 (12.3%) | 12 (18.5%) | 0 (0.0%) | 7 (10.0%) |
| Improved working conditions | 77 (30.6%) | 4 (6.2%) | 26 (50.0%) | 12 (17.1%) |
| Unionize | 11 (4.4%) | 0 (0.0%) | 0 (0.0%) | 5 (7.1%) |
| Paid professional development | 15 (5.2%) | 3 (4.6%) | 7 (13.5%) | 7 (10.0%) |
| Higher staff to child ratio | 6 (2.4%) | 0 (0.0%) | 5 (9.6%) | 5 (7.1%) |
| More career options | 7 (2.8%) | 2 (3.1%) | 5 (9.6%) | 0 (0.0%) |
| Provide incentives | 13 (5.2%) | 4 (6.2%) | 0 (0.0%) | 3 (4.3%) |
| Make operational, start up and equipment grants available | 0 (0.0%) | 14 (21.5%) | 0 (0.0%) | 0 (0.0%) |
| Consistent enforcement of regulations | 5 (2.0%) | 5 (7.7%) | 0 (0.0%) | 5 (7.1%) |
| Change practicum requirements | 2 (0.8%) | 9 (13.9%) | 0 (0.0%) | 0 (0.0%) |
| Availability of substitutes | 5 (2.0%) | 4 (6.2%) | 0 (0.0%) | 5 (7.1%) |
| Increased learning opportunities | 13 (5.2%) | 3 (4.6%) | 25 (48.1%) | 0 (0.0%) |
| Reduce isolation | 0 | 3 (4.6%) | 2 (3.9%) | 0 (0.0%) |

When asked what one change would make it even more desirable to remain in the sector, the majority of practitioner survey respondents answered higher wages. The second most frequently cited suggested change was increased benefits. Table 24 provides a list of the responses offered and the number and percentage of respondents who offered each response.

Table 24 Number (%) of practitioners and the responses they offered when asked, “What one change would make it even more desirable for you to remain (in the child care sector)?”

| Suggested Change | Number (%) of respondents offering this response | |
|---|--|--------------------------|
| | Centre based (n=252) | Family child care (n=65) |
| Increased wages | 169 (67.1%) | 17 (26.2%) |
| Increased benefits | 29 (11.5%) | 8 (12.3%) |
| Promote child care as a profession | 15 (6.0%) | 8 (12.3%) |
| Increase supplement | 4 (1.6%) | 3 (4.6%) |
| Increased supports for children with challenging needs | 6 (2.4%) | 0 (0.0%) |
| Make it easier to obtain / upgrade qualifications/certification level | 12 (4.8%) | 2 (3.1%) |
| Improved working conditions | 5 (2.0%) | 0 (0.0%) |
| Introduce a publicly funded system | 6 (2.4%) | 0 (0.0%) |
| Unionize | 4 (1.6%) | 0 (0.0%) |
| Easier access to supplement | 6 (2.4%) | 2 (3.1%) |
| Decreased workload | 5 (2.0%) | 3 (4.6%) |
| Less regulations / government interference | 7 (2.8%) | 4 (6.2%) |
| Make Operational Grant available | 0 (0.0%) | 11 (16.9%) |
| Increased job security | 3 (1.2%) | 0 (0.0%) |
| Change practicum placement requirements | 2 (0.1%) | 5 (7.7%) |
| Availability of substitutes | 0 (0.0%) | 2 (3.1%) |

When former practitioners were asked ‘what one change would have encouraged you to stay within the sector’, the most frequent responses included: higher wages and better benefits (31 – 59.6%), less government interference (9 – 17.3%), more support (5 – 9.6%) and increased respect (5 – 9.6%).

When asked about one change that might make it more attractive to return to working in the child care sector more than half of former practitioners (24 / 46.2%) indicated that offering higher wages might be sufficient inducement to return. Nineteen (36.5%) of the respondents stated that they simply did not wish to return, or they had retired. Nine (17.3%) suggested that less government interference might make it more attractive for them to return.

Informants participating in the interview series and focus group meetings were most likely to indicate that increasing wages and providing adequate benefits were the primary ways by which to increase retention.

Informants offered a range of other suggestions that might be ways by which to increase retention within the sector. These included the following:

- Increase in wages (adopt a provincial wage scale)
- Access to adequate benefits (especially a pension plan)
- More staff; better ratios; increased access to substitutes, develop a casual call in list and share across centres
- Provision of a 'floater' position to each centre, this would enable staff to take regular breaks, step out of ratios for planning purposes, etc., and would contribute significantly to reducing stress and burn out among practitioners
- Increased value and respect for early childhood education and Early Childhood Educators (in both centre based and family child care models)
- More options and easier access to methods to upgrade current qualifications (PLAR, competency based assessment, etc.)
- Eliminate the current wait list for distance learning
- Improved working conditions
- More incentives (e.g. signing bonus)
- Increase the ELCC supplement
- Provide a Northern allowance
- Change the requirements for the placement component of the diploma program
- Make education/training more relevant to the skill sets that will be required once one enters the sector
- Increased and more timely supports for children with challenging needs; provide training to practitioners on inclusion
- Offer free child care
- Recognize that inspection / monitoring is not support;
- More career options
- Provide a partial supplement as one advances toward Level 1 and 2
- Less paperwork
- Free professional development
- Human Resource / administration training for Administrators and Licensees
- Educate parents
- Increase the number of qualified staff (Level 1 or higher) in centres and family home child care
- Make Operational Grant available to family child care providers
- Increased access to playgroups (for family child care providers)
- More frequent / longer visits by Home Visitors (for family child care providers)
- Financial assistance to hire a substitute (2nd person) for a few hours per day/week
- Update / revise regulations so they have greater applicability to family child care model

- Family Resource Centres could become / be used as a resource for ECEs and provide access to resources
- Ensure that administrators have adequate time out of ratio
- Government needs to stop inspecting – and start supporting
- Need to create a culture of reflective practice

In comparing these findings to those compiled based on the 2007 research data it is of interest to note that:

- The most frequently cited strategy that should be used to support people to continue working in the sector was ‘increase wages’ – this was relatively constant across 2007 (62.9%) and 2019 (58.7%)

What are typical wages, and working conditions for practitioners?

Practitioner survey data revealed that the vast majority (209 - 83.3%) of practitioners in the centre based child care sector (n=251) have permanent, full time status. Less than 20% work permanent part time (10.8%), temporary full time (3.6%), or temporary part time / call back (2.4%).

The average reported wage of centre based staff as collected via survey data was \$14.98 per hour with the reported range being \$11.00 to \$26.00 per hour. The \$14.98 rate is based on analysis of data from all survey respondents which included licensees and administrators. Survey data reveal a wage rate for licensees (working in centres) of \$17.36, and a rate for administrators of \$17.22. When data from these two groups is factored out, the average reported hourly wage for centre based practitioners is \$14.58. Table 25 displays the distribution across the hourly wage range.

Table 25 Distribution of hourly wage rate across practitioners

| Hourly wage | # of practitioners (n=239) |
|--------------------|-----------------------------------|
| \$11.00 – \$11.99 | 5 |
| \$12.00 – \$12.99 | 40 |
| \$13.00 – \$13.99 | 37 |
| \$14.00 – \$14.99 | 47 |
| \$15.00 – \$15.99 | 43 |
| \$16.00 – \$16.99 | 20 |
| \$17.00 – \$17.99 | 9 |
| \$18.00 – \$18.99 | 10 |
| \$19.00 – \$19.99 | 8 |
| \$20.00 – \$20.99 | 9 |
| \$21.00 – \$21.99 | 4 |
| \$22.00 – \$22.99 | 3 |
| \$23.00 - \$26.00 | 4 |

The average number of hours per week worked as reported by centre based respondents was 37.8.

When asked if they were laid off (without pay) at any point in the year, 48 centre based practitioner survey respondents (19.0%) indicated they are laid off without pay at least once a year. Summer is the time when staff are most likely to be laid off and when staff are laid off for the longest period of time. Thirty – eight are laid off for on average 7.0 weeks during that time. Staff are least likely to be laid off at Easter time. Only 15 staff report being laid off at that time of year and they are typically only laid off for about a week. Table 26 provides a list of the times of the year that practitioners are laid off, the number who report being laid off at each time and the average number of weeks they are laid off.

Table 26 Time of year and number of practitioners laid off without pay

| Time of Year | Number (%) of staff who report being laid off | Average number of weeks laid off |
|---------------------|--|---|
| Christmas | 28 (58.3%) | 1.7 |
| Easter | 15 (31.3%) | 1.1 |
| Summer | 38 (79.2%) | 7.0 |

Family child care providers reported that on average they are open for 50.7 weeks per year. 89.2% of family child care providers report being closed for varying lengths of time during certain times of the year – Christmas (74.1%), Easter (19.0%) and summer (72.4%).

All 65 family child care providers indicated full time employment. The average annual income of family child care providers as collected via survey data was \$43,451, with the reported range being between \$20,000 to \$71,000. Family child care providers were not asked to provide an hourly wage rate. Table 27 displays the distribution across the annual income range, for those 53 providers who responded to this survey question.

Table 27 Family Child Care Income range and distribution

| Annual Income | # of family child care providers (n=53) |
|----------------------|--|
| \$20,000 – \$29,999 | 5 (9.4%) |
| \$30,000 – \$39,999 | 17 (32.1%) |
| \$40,000 – \$49,999 | 13 (24.5%) |
| \$50,000 – \$59,999 | 11 (20.8%) |
| \$60,000 – \$69,999 | 4 (7.6%) |
| \$70,000 – \$79,999 | 3 (5.7%) |

Data from the licensee survey allowed for comparison between wages paid by private and non-profit centres. Of the 70 centres responding to the survey, 33 indicated they were private and 37 reported they were operating non-profit centres. Twenty-nine (87.9%) of the private and 24

(64.9%) of the non-profit centres indicated that they provided different salaries based on level of certification. Table 28 provides the average starting salaries and average highest salaries offered by private and non-profit centres based on certification level, and Table 29 displays the salary range associated with each level. As can be seen in these tables, trainee and level 1 and 2 practitioners in non-profit centres have higher starting and end salaries while level 3 and 4 practitioners in private centres have higher starting and end salaries.

Table 28 Average starting salaries and average highest salaries offered by private and non-profit centres across different levels of certification

| Certification Level | Average Starting Salary | | Average Highest Salary | |
|---------------------|-------------------------|------------|------------------------|------------|
| | Private | Non-profit | Private | Non-profit |
| None | 12.35 | 12.30 | 12.83 | 13.10 |
| Trainee | 12.59 | 13.99 | 13.25 | 15.61 |
| Level 1 | 13.73 | 15.28 | 14.40 | 16.86 |
| Level 2 | 14.40 | 16.73 | 15.78 | 18.90 |
| Level 3 | 15.95 | 15.69 | 17.05 | 16.60 |
| Level 4 | 16.56 | 15.65 | 17.47 | 17.17 |

Table 29 Salary Range by Certification Level

| Certification Level | Salary Range by Certification Level | |
|---------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------|
| | Private | Non-profit |
| None | 11.25 – 14.75 | 11.50 - 13.00 |
| Trainee | 11.15 – 17.00 | 11.50 – 22.22 |
| Level 1 | 11.50 – 18.00 | 12.00 – 23.94 |
| Level 2 | 12.50 – 27.00 | 12.00 – 28.05 |
| Level 3 | 14.00 – 20.00 | 14.35 – 17.93 |
| Level 4 | 14.00 – 21.00 | 14.35 – 19.50 |

Seventeen (51.5%) of the private and 31 (83.8%) of the non-profit centres reported that they provided different salary levels based on the roles of the practitioner in their centres. Table 30 provides a summary of data pertaining to average starting and highest salary paid based on role of staff, and Table 31 displays the salary range for each role. Starting and highest salaries in the non-profit sector were higher than salaries in the private sector across all roles.

Table 30 Average starting salaries and average highest salaries offered by private and non-profit centres across different roles.

| Role | Average Starting Salary | | Average Highest Salary | |
|------------------------------|-------------------------|------------|------------------------|------------|
| | Private | Non-profit | Private | Non-profit |
| Home Room (Trainee) | 12.46 | 13.10 | 13.23 | 14.24 |
| Home Room (Level 1 or above) | 13.89 | 14.08 | 15.26 | 17.48 |
| Administrator | 16.35 | 19.53 | 17.87 | 22.51 |
| Inclusion Support | 14.38 | 19.50 | 15.28 | 23.94 |

Table 31 Salary range by role of worker

| Role | Salary Range by Role | |
|------------------------------|----------------------|---------------|
| | Private | Non-profit |
| Home Room (Trainee) | 11.15 – 17.00 | 11.15 – 22.22 |
| Home Room (Level 1 or above) | 12.00 – 21.00 | 11.15 – 23.94 |
| Administrator | 14.00 – 21.00 | 15.00 – 28.50 |
| Inclusion Support | 13.00 – 19.00 | 19.50 – 23.94 |

In comparing these findings to those compiled based on the 2007 research data it is of interest to note that:

- The percentage of practitioners reporting as being permanent full time has remained constant – 2007 (83.3%) and 2019 (83.3%)
- The percentage of family child care providers reporting as being full time has increased by 34.8%, from 65.2% (in 2007) to the current level of 100%
- Average hours of work per week (centre based) has remained relatively constant – 38.4 hours in 2007; 37.8 hours in 2019
- The average hourly wage (centre based) has increased significantly; in 2007 it was \$7.00/hour and in 2019 it is \$14.58/hour. Based on these hourly rates and using 2080 hours as a typical work year, yields an average annual income of approximately \$30,000 (in 2019) as compared to \$19,100 in 2007, an annual increase of approximately \$10,000
- The reported average annual income of family child care providers has increased significantly - \$43,451 in 2019 as compared to \$22,200 in 2007
- The percentage of centre based practitioners who report as being laid off (without pay) at least once a year has decreased by 5.4%, from a rate of 29.4% in 2007 to a current level of 19.0%
- In 2007 the provincial minimum wage was \$7.00, and centre based staff earned an average of \$9.81 – a ratio of 1.40 above the minimum level; In 2019 the provincial minimum wage is \$11.15, and centre based staff earned an average of \$14.58 – a ratio of 1.31 above the minimum level

Comparisons between private and non-profit centres were also made with respect to benefits offered by these centres. Table 32 reveals the number (%) of private and non-profit centres offering various benefits to their staff. As shown, non-profit centres are far more likely than private centres to offer noted benefits; with the exception of periodic merit increases and subsidization of child care fees.

Table 32 Type of benefits provided by private and non-profit centres

| Type of Benefit | Number (%) of private centres offering this benefit n= 33 | Number (%) of non- profit centres offering this benefit n= 37 |
|---|--|--|
| Paid coffee breaks | 12 (36.4%) | 27 (73.0%) |
| Paid lunch time | 7 (21.2%) | 9 (24.3%) |
| Paid prep /planning time | 13 (39.4%) | 21 (56.8%) |
| Compensation staff meetings after working hours | 16 (48.5%) | 32 (86.5%) |
| Compensation in-service training | 9 (27.3%) | 27 (73.0%) |
| Financial assistance for workshops/conferences. | 15 (45.5%) | 31 (83.8%) |
| Paid overtime | 12 (36.4%) | 27 (73.0%) |
| Payment of child care association memberships | 9 (27.3%) | 32 (86.5%) |
| Yearly increases in wages | 11 (33.3%) | 28 (75.7%) |
| Periodic merit increases in wages | 10 (30.3%) | 0 (0.0%) |
| Subsidization of child care fees for parent employees | 22 (66.7%) | 19 (51.4%) |
| Dental coverage | 17 (51.5%) | 28 (75.7%) |
| Extended Health Care | 17 (51.5%) | 27 (73.0%) |
| Employee Assistance Plan | 2 (6.1%) | 9 (24.3%) |
| Short term disability | 6 (18.2%) | 14 (37.8%) |
| Long term disability | 5 (15.1%) | 24 (64.9%) |
| Life insurance | 16 (48.5%) | 26 (70.3%) |
| Retirement/Pension Plan | 0 (0.0%) | 26 (70.3%) |
| Unpaid, job protected maternity/parental leave | 11 (33.3%) | 9 (24.3%) |
| Paid sick days per year | 15 (45.5%) | 18 (48.7%) |
| Paid personal leave days per year | 12 (36.4%) | 15 (40.5%) |
| Paid vacation days per year | 18 (54.6%) | 23 (62.2%) |

Respondents (n=70) to the Licensee survey were asked to identify the top three (3) benefits that should be extended to staff. The following is a summary of the most frequent responses to this question:

- Increased wages 47 (67.1%)
- Health benefits 43 (61.4%)
- Paid sick leave 22 (31.4%)
- Pension 21 (30.0%)
- Paid vacation 16 (22.9%)
- Improved access to training 10 (14.3%)
- Improved working conditions 9 (12.9%)
- Increased ELCC supplement 5 (7.1%)
- Access to substitutes / better ratios 4 (5.7%)
- Free child care 3 (4.3%)
- More flexible hours 3 (4.3%)
- Decreased regulations 3 (4.3%)
- French language training 2 (2.9%)

Practitioners were also asked to specify the benefits they receive in the centres in which they are employed. Table 33 provides a list of the benefits reported, and the number (%) of centre based staff who reported receiving such benefits. This table reveals that (with the exception of compensation for attendance at after-hours staff meetings) less than 50% of practitioners reported receiving any of the noted benefits.

Table 33 **Number (%) of centre based practitioners indicating receipt of various benefits**

| Type of Benefit | Number (%) of practitioners indicating receipt of this benefit (n= 252) |
|---|--|
| Paid coffee breaks | 71 (28.2%) |
| Paid lunch time | 34 (13.5%) |
| Paid preparation/planning time | 103 (40.9%) |
| Compensation for attendance at staff meetings after working hours | 128 (50.8%) |
| Compensation at in-service training | 87 (34.5%) |
| Financial assistance for workshops / conferences. | 95 (37.7%) |
| Paid overtime | 90 (35.7%) |
| Payment of child care association memberships | 41 (16.3%) |
| Yearly increases in wages | 52 (20.6%) |
| Periodic merit increases in wages | 47 (18.7%) |
| Subsidization of child care fees for parent employees | 99 (39.3%) |
| Dental coverage | 116 (46.0%) |
| Extended Health Care | 100 (39.7%) |
| Employee Assistance Plan (e.g. Counselling) | 30 (11.9%) |
| Short term disability | 49 (19.4%) |
| Long term disability | 56 (22.2%) |
| Life insurance | 91 (36.1%) |
| Retirement/Pension Plan | 46 (18.3%) |
| Unpaid, job protected maternity/parental leave | 64 (25.4%) |
| Paid sick days per year | 119 (47.2%) |
| Paid personal leave days per year | 114 (45.2%) |
| Paid vacation days per year | 125 (49.6%) |

Analysis of survey data from centre based practitioner respondents revealed that on average they received paid vacation (6.3 days), family responsibility leave (0.95 days) and paid sick leave (4.2 days) per year.

When asked if they were satisfied with the benefits they received, respondents to the practitioner survey indicated the following:

- Yes – 55 (21.8%)
- No – 187 (74.2%)
- No answer – 10 (4.0%)

As related to family child care providers, a majority reported that they take paid vacation each year (average of 12.2 days). As to benefits, family child care providers are self-employed, and therefore do not receive benefits from an employer. A minimum number of respondents indicated having access to health benefits (4.6%), disability (3.1%), life insurance (13.8%), Employment Insurance (12.3%) and sick leave (38.5%).

In comparing these findings to those compiled based on the 2007 research data it is of interest to note that:

- In general, non-profit centres are far more likely than private centres to offer noted benefits, and this finding is consistent with that found in 2007
- The percentage of centres providing sick leave, paid vacation and personal leave has increased from 2007. In 2007 centres provided sick leave (37.3%), paid vacation (33.8%) and personal leave (17.1%) compared to rates of 47.3%, 49.6%, and 45.2% respectively in 2019
- Non-profit centres were more likely to offer sick leave, paid vacation and personal leave than those in the private sector. This finding is consistent with that found in 2007

Data was collected on the number of people in centre based and family child care who collect or collected the early learning and child care supplement, the graduate bursary, the Trainee bursary and/or the on campus field placement bursary. Centre based staff were more likely than their counterparts in family child care to access the ELCC supplement; 61.9% compared to 41.5%. Table 34 lists the supplements available, the number and percentages of centre based staff and family child care providers receiving each and the average amount of supplements received.

Table 34 Number (%) of centre based staff and family child care providers receiving financial incentives and the average amount of received

| | Number (%) of centre based staff receiving | Average amount received annually | Number (%) of family child care providers receiving | Average amount received annually |
|-----------------------------------|---|---|--|---|
| ELCC | 156 (61.9%) | \$11,520 | 27 (41.5%) | \$12,177 |
| Graduate Bursary | 39 (15.5%) | \$5,493 | 7 (10.8%) | \$5,200 |
| Trainee Bursary | 8 (3.2%) | 975 | 0 (0.0%) | 0 (0.0%) |
| On Campus Field Placement Bursary | 9 (3.6%) | 1350 | 0 (0.0%) | 0 (0.0%) |

In comparing these findings to those compiled based on the 2007 research data it is of interest to note that:

- The percentage of practitioners availing of the ELCC supplement has risen from 44.3% in 2007 to a current level of 57.7%

The Operating Grant Program (OGP)

The Operating Grant Program (OGP) is a key component of the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Early Learning and Child Care (Bilateral) Agreement, which in turn supports the Province’s 10-year child care strategy. The OGP helps to address the affordability of early learning and child care services for families with young children throughout Newfoundland and Labrador. The OGP requires participating child care centres to lower their rates to current child care subsidy daily rates. The Provincial Government provides an operating grant to these participating centres. Table 35 displays participation rates for both private and non-profit centres based on responses to the licensee survey.

Table 35 Participation rates of child care centres in the Operating Grant Program

| | Non Profit | | Private | |
|--|------------|----|---------|----|
| | Yes | No | Yes | no |
| # of centres in receipt of Operational Grant | 17 | 20 | 24 | 9 |

When licensees were asked what has been the impact of access to the Operating Grant for their centre, respondent responses included:

- Without it we would have closed
- Helps pay for a position
- Decreased cost for our parents
- It was a major factor in getting full enrolment
- Have not yet received our initial payment

Survey data (as displayed in Table 36 below) provides additional insight into the factors that may contribute to retention within the sector. This table displays the number and (%) of current practitioners (centre based and family child care) rating the various elements as “important” or “very Important” in relation to retention within the sector.

When data is combined across all current practitioners, salary and working conditions were rated by the most respondents as being important or very important. Benefits, being valued by your employer, and hours of work were the next elements that were rated by the most respondents as being important or very important.

In comparing responses of the two groups of practitioners it can be seen that wages, working conditions and benefits were rated slightly higher by centre based practitioners than by family child care providers as to overall importance in retention. Of the elements listed, both centre based and family child care providers rated opportunity to work with other adults, educational requirements, and opportunity for career advancement as having less overall importance.

Table 36 Number (%) of current practitioners rating the following elements “important” or “very important” in relation to retention in the sector

| Element | Centre based staff (n=252) | | | Family child care providers (n=65) | | |
|---|----------------------------|----------------|----------------|------------------------------------|---------------|---------------|
| | Imp | V. Imp | Total | Imp | V. Imp | Total |
| Salary | 15 (6.0%) | 231 (91.7%) | 246 (97.6%) | 21 (32.3%) | 42 (64.6%) | 63 (97.0%) |
| Working Conditions | 43 (17.1%) | 202 (80.2%) | 245 (97.2%) | 19 (29.2%) | 42 (64.6%) | 61 (93.8%) |
| Benefits (sick leave, pension, annual leave, etc. | 24 (9.5%) | 218 (86.5%) | 242 (96.0%) | 16 (24.6%) | 46 (70.8%) | 62 (95.4%) |
| Opportunity to work with children | 61 (24.2%) | 171 (67.9%) | 232 (92.1%) | 12 (18.5%) | 51 (78.5%) | 63 (97.0%) |
| Hours of work | 66 (26.2%) | 172 (68.3%) | 238 (94.4%) | 30 (46.2%) | 32 (49.2%) | 62 (95.4%) |
| Educational requirements | 77 (30.6%) | 135 (53.6%) | 212 (84.1%) | 24 (36.9%) | 27 (41.5%) | 51 (78.5%) |
| The value placed by society on the work | 59 (23.4%) | 155 (61.5%) | 214 (84.9%) | 32 (49.2%) | 28 (43.1%) | 60 (92.3%) |
| Opportunity for career advancement | 88 (34.9%) | 120 (47.6%) | 208 (82.5%) | 28 (43.1%) | 27 (41.5%) | 55 (84.6%) |
| Opportunity to work with other adults | 103 (40.9%) | 83 (32.9%) | 186 (73.8%) | 26 (40.0%) | 19 (29.2%) | 45 (69.2%) |
| Availability of ELCC supplements | 33 (13.1%) | 204 (80.9%) | 237 (94.1%) | 17 (26.2%) | 44 (67.7%) | 61 (93.8%) |
| Valued by employer | 22 (8.7%) | 218 (86.5%) | 240 (95.2%) | 12 (18.5%) | 50 (76.9%) | 62 (95.4%) |
| Availability of ongoing professional development | 67 (26.6%) | 161 (63.9%) | 228 (90.5%) | 29 (44.6%) | 32 (49.2%) | 61 (93.8%) |

Practitioners were asked (in the practitioner survey) to indicate their agreement / disagreement with a number of statements related to their perception of their role within the sector and the sector in general. This data is displayed in Table 37 and provides further insight into the factors that may contribute to both recruitment and retention in the sector.

Respondents indicated high levels of agreement with statements such as the work I do is rewarding (87.7%), the work I do is challenging (91.2%), I feel qualified for the work I do (93.4%), and I am satisfied with the hours of work (71.0%).

Respondents indicated much less agreement with statements of I am satisfied with the wages/income received (19.2%), society places high value on child care (19.6%) and I am satisfied with opportunities for advancement (36.9%).

Perhaps the most revealing commentary is reflected in the low level of agreement (38.8%) with the statement 'I would recommend a career in child care'.

Table 37 Number (%) of practitioners indicating agreement with statements related to perceptions of early learning and child care

| | Centre Based n=252 | Family Child Care n=65 |
|--|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| | Agree/Strongly Agree | Agree/Strongly Agree |
| The work I do is rewarding | 218 (86.5%) | 60 (92.3%) |
| The work I do is challenging | 227 (90.1%) | 62 (95.4%) |
| The work demands are realistic | 135 (53.6%) | 40 ((61.5%) |
| I feel valued for the work I do | 98 (38.9%) | 35 (53.8%) |
| I feel qualified to do the work I do | 234 (92.9%) | 62 (95.4%) |
| There are opportunities for advancement | 92 (36.5%) | 25 (38.5%) |
| Society places high value on a career in child care | 50 (19.8%) | 12 (18.5%) |
| Satisfied with opportunities available for PD | 94 (37.3%) | 43 (66.2%) |
| No plans to make a career change | 120 (47.6%) | 40 (61.5%) |
| Interaction with parents is a rewarding part of my job | 155 (61.5%) | 46 (70.8%) |
| There is adequate support for children with special needs in child care settings | 67 (26.6%) | 17 (26.2%) |
| Satisfied with the wages / income received | 37 (14.7%) | 24 (36.9%) |
| Should be paid more for the work I do | 221 (87.7%) | 50 (76.9%) |
| Satisfied with the amount of vacation I receive | 101 (40.1%) | 34 (52.3%) |
| Satisfied with the amount of sick leave I receive | 62 (24.6%) | 30 (46.2%) |
| Satisfied with the number of hours I work | 190 (75.4%) | 35 (53.8%) |
| The ELCC supplement is an incentive to obtain further education | 127 (50.4%) | 33 (50.8%) |
| Would recommend a career in child care to others | 98 (38.9%) | 25 (38.5%) |
| My work environment is flexible with respect to my family responsibilities | 124 (49.2%) | 33 (50.8%) |

What are some ways to improve wages and working conditions?

Informants at all levels acknowledged that the child care sector is basically a 'one revenue source' sector, i.e. parent fees. Without a significant increase in the fees charged to parents

(which most felt would not be an acceptable action), the majority of informants expressed an opinion that employers (i.e. licensees) had no real ability to direct additional funds to wages. To address wages in the sector, the majority of informants indicated that there would be a need for additional government funding.

The majority of informants spoke very positively of the Operational Grant Program (OGP), and the fact that it has enabled many centres to increase the wages paid to practitioners. The predominant opinion among informants was that the OGP was a legitimate method by which government could invest directly in the sectoral wage structure, and spoke of the need for that investment to be increased such that wages could be increased beyond the current minimums of \$12.00 and \$14.00 (for practitioners and administrators). To do so would make the OGP applicable and valuable to many more centres, and thus impact on the wages of many more practitioners. Informants further spoke of the value (need) to the introduction of a provincial wage scale, which again could be achieved through increased sector investment via the OGP.

While acknowledging the limited fiscal capacity of employers to affect real change to the wage and benefit structure, informants did indicate that employers had greater control over prevailing working conditions. Informants indicated that much could be done in many centres that would lead to the creation of a more positive work environment for practitioners. Foremost among the suggestions in this regard was for licensees and administrators to demonstrate to their staff that they are indeed valued and appreciated. The physical environment should provide some basics such as adult sized seating, bathrooms, space for personal belongings, a lunch/break room, etc. Basic and required materials should be readily available and practitioners should not be expected to pay out of pocket for materials. Practitioners spoke of the need for adequate planning time. Administrators (and licensees) must ensure that communications with and among practitioners is effective and reciprocal. To the fullest extent possible practitioners should feel part of the decision making process within the centre, and that their opinions and suggestions are valued.

Other comments as to wages and/or working conditions included:

- Physical environment - need to make the workplace more attractive
- Funds available via the operational grant needs to be increased to enable greater wage increases
- Licensees need to be more aware of their centres
- Provide incentives – non financial
- Increased support to practitioners – let them know their concerns are being heard

7.0 Post-Secondary Education and Professional Development

Does post-secondary education and professional development impact on recruitment and retention?

Data from interviews and focus group meetings confirmed that training and professional development are considered within the sector to have a significant impact on recruitment and retention of staff. The majority of informants indicated that requiring all practitioners to hold a Level 1 classification (generally acquired via completion of a 1 year certificate) will ensure that practitioners have the prerequisite skills necessary to be effective early childhood educators and would significantly increase the professionalism of the sector. Only a minority of informants expressed any concern that such a requirement was unnecessary.

Informants noted that addressing recruitment and retention issues must be about getting *qualified* staff, not just about getting and keeping sufficient numbers of staff. A qualified workforce is a fundamental necessity in ensuring high quality child care.

Informants expressed concern that at present access to post-secondary education (e.g. certificate / diploma courses) was less than adequate and that if the sector was to reach a point where sufficient numbers of qualified ECEs were available, education had to be made available to more people and in more locations.

Informants were most likely to report that finding qualified staff was an easier task in larger communities, particularly in the St. John's region, than in other areas of the province. One reason offered for this opinion was that in order for individuals to access post-secondary education they had to leave their hometowns (e.g. in St. John's, Corner Brook etc.) and once completed frequently did not return to those communities. Instead, they tend to stay on in the communities where they complete their education. Data from practitioner surveys indicated that most practitioners are not working in the communities where they completed high school.

Table 38 presents the findings with respect to whether or not practitioners were continuing to reside and work in the communities where they completed high school. Although caution must be taken in interpreting this data, it does suggest that the majority of practitioners find work in communities other than their home community.

Table 38 **Number (%) of practitioners reporting location of current work relative to community where they completed high school.**

| Location of work | Centre based | Family | Total |
|---|---------------------|---------------|--------------|
| Same community where attended high school | 118 (46.8%) | 27 (41.5%) | 145 (45.7%) |

Pre-service education and upgrading

Cost and accessibility of post-secondary education were most often noted as significant barriers to potential and current practitioners (especially those in more rural areas) who might be interested in obtaining initial / furthering education. Informants noted that many individuals who might be interested in pursuing a career in early learning and child care are adverse to incurring significant amounts of debt to complete a 2 year diploma because of the low wages they can expect upon entry into the sector.

While the majority of informants spoke very highly of the benefits of the ELCC supplement as an incentive for current practitioners to upgrade their qualifications, the majority of practitioners (especially those in rural areas) revealed that the requirement to complete a 4 week placement at a Demonstration Child Care Centre as part of the 1 / 2 year course as a major impediment. They stated that while it was possible for them to complete the coursework required for their education through distance education, the placement requirement, which would necessitate many leaving their families and their hometowns for an extended period, made completion of the programs of study unlikely. This issue was seen as particularly problematic for family child care providers who would basically have to close their business during the placement period, with no guarantee of regaining their families upon completion of the placement period. Most family child care providers indicated this was a risk they were not prepared to take.

Table 39 displays the number of current practitioners who are or not actively pursuing upgrading of their qualifications. Data reveals that only 67 (21.1%) of practitioners are actively seeking to upgrade their qualifications (e.g. from trainee to Level 1 / from level 1 to level 2). To place this in context, it is to be noted that survey data indicated that there were 151 individuals at the trainee level, meaning that at best, only 44.3% of these individuals were attempting to upgrade.

Table 39 Number (%) of current practitioners working toward certification / upgrading certification level

| | Centre based n=252 | | Family child care n=65 | |
|--|--------------------|-------------|------------------------|------------|
| | yes | no | yes | no |
| Working toward certification / upgrading certification level | 62 (24.6%) | 190 (75.4%) | 5 (7.7%) | 60 (92.3%) |

Table 40 reveals that the great majority of current practitioners (91.0%) who are actively upgrading their qualifications are enrolled in distance learning.

Table 40 Methods being used to certify and/or upgrade certification levels

| Methods being used to certify / upgrade | Centre based n=62 | Family child care n=5 |
|---|-------------------|-----------------------|
| Attending college courses | 1 (1.6%) | 0 (0.0%) |
| Enrolled in distance learning | 58 (93.5%) | 3 (60%) |
| Taking AECENL training | 3 (4.8%) | 2 (40%) |

Table 41 displays the reasons cited by practitioners for not pursuing certification and/or upgrading of current educational levels. Multiple answers were allowed. A review of this data reveals that almost one third of centre based practitioners and one quarter of family child care providers cited non affordability as a reason (overall rate of 35.6% across both groups). It is also of note that despite being able to access increased levels of the ELCC upon upgrading, 33.2% of practitioners indicated that they felt there was no benefit to doing so.

Table 41 Reasons cited for certification / upgrading not being sought

| Reasons certification / upgrade not being sought | Centre based n=190 | Family child care n=60 |
|--|--------------------|------------------------|
| Have achieved highest level required | 20 (10.5%) | 2 (3.3%) |
| Satisfied with current level | 72 (37.9%) | 20 (33.3%) |
| No benefit to upgrading | 63 (33.2%) | 20 (33.3%) |
| Not sure of processing for upgrading | 10 (5.3%) | 5 (8.3%) |
| Am not continuing in the field | 16 (8.4%) | 3 (5.0%) |
| Cannot access required training | 18 (9.5%) | 4 (6.6%) |
| Cannot afford to certify / upgrade | 61 (32.1%) | 28 (46.7%) |
| Wait listed for distance | 12 (6.3%) | 1 (0.2%) |
| Not enough time to complete studies | 4 (2.1%) | 8 (13.3%) |

Suggestions for enhancements in post-secondary education and upgrading

There was a consensus among all informant groups that despite the introduction of many positive incentives designed and intended to assist practitioners acquire the necessary ECE qualifications, that there remained an unacceptable number of practitioners who do not hold a Level 1 certification. Informants suggested that a focused and concentrated effort to raise the educational level within the sector was needed and that a greater imperative must be given to this issue by government. Quite simply, informants were of an opinion that it has taken / is taking much too long to create a sector in which all practitioners meet minimum educational standards.

Foremost among suggestions offered by informants was that required education should be made more readily accessible to practitioners throughout the province. Informants indicated that for those individuals who enter the sector without the prerequisite 1 year certificate or 2 year diploma (i.e. level 1 or level 2 classification) having them complete an orientation course (as offered by AECENL) and then register for on line distance education (which typically takes

years to complete) in not the answer. Similarly, having current practitioners use distance education as the primary means to upgrade qualifications was seen as a protracted and onerous process.

Informants expressed great concern regarding the current waiting list that exists as regards to accessing distance learning. Anecdotal reports indicate that the waiting list for some courses may be as long as 2 – 3 years. Informants saw this as simply unacceptable. Not only does this situation make it impractical for practitioners to upgrade in a timely manner, it is also denying them access to a substantive financial supplement, and, as expressed in practitioner interviews and focus groups, was a source of great frustration.

Much concern was expressed relative to the recent ‘grandfathering’ (to trainee status) of practitioners working in the sector for more than 10 years. Informants were not opposed to this action but were very concerned that requiring those with less than 10 years to return to school (either classroom or distance learning) will result in the loss of many competent and experienced practitioners. Informants (especially licensees) suggested that many of these practitioners will leave the sector rather than engage in further academic upgrading.

A further issue identified by informants was the current requirement that individuals complete a 4 week practicum placement (as required to obtain the 1 year certificate / 2 year diploma) at a designated Demonstration Child Care Centre. These demonstration centres are only available at the college sites that deliver the ECE course. For many current practitioners this means leaving their home community and their place of employment. Despite the availability of financial support, the majority of practitioners indicated that this was an action they could not afford, and for many meant that they would not be able to upgrade their qualifications.

Informants noted a range of possible solutions to the above noted issues, including:

- Distance learning wait list – discussions between government and the College of the North Atlantic need to occur as soon as possible to identify what additional resources need to be provided in order to eliminate the wait list. Resources should be provided such that all practitioners who require distance learning to acquire, minimally, the 1 year certificate should be able to do so within the next 2 year period.
- Increased use of competency based assessment – for those practitioners who do not hold a minimum of Level 1 classification and have more than 2-3 years’ experience in the regulated child care sector, a competency based assessment process should be developed and applied to ensure that these practitioners get full and maximum credit for skill sets acquired through their practical experience. In some cases, this assessment might mean the granting of a level 1 designation, and for most should reduce the number of distance courses required and thus shorten the length of time needed to fully upgrade. Informants suggested that once the assessment instrument was developed it could be delivered on site by regional Early Childhood Consultants, college instructors and/or other designated ECE ‘experts’.
- Practicum placements - Informants were supportive of having additional centres and family child care homes in each region designated as sites in which the practicum

placement could be completed. Informants acknowledged that not all centres / homes would be appropriate for such use but that sufficient numbers of high quality centres / homes should be available in each region. Informants acknowledged that any centre / home used for practicum purposes would need to undergo some form of assessment. Informants further recognized that there would need to be enhanced ability to assess performance of staff completing their practicum at these sites but that this challenge should be able to be addressed. Some suggested that this might be an enhanced role for the Regional Child Care Services Consultants in evaluating the performance of training practitioners.

Other general comments / suggestions included:

- Efforts to address recruitment / retention issues within the child care sector will only ever be partially successful until the wage and benefit structure of the sector is significantly enhanced
- The current system is seriously flawed – too few students are being accepted; too few graduating
- To address future and current recruitment challenges within the sector, the number of entrants into college programs and the number of graduates must be increased
- The college system needs more ECE instructors
- The current wait list for distance learning is extremely problematic and must be eliminated; this will require additional resources being provided to the college system
- Increase the number of colleges that offer the ECE course
- Ensure that course content is consistent in both private and public colleges
- Use competency based assessments – not require people to return to school
- Paid placements
- Deliver a basic diploma and then offer post-diploma certificates in school age, infant, administration and exceptionalities
- Introduce a publicly funded child care system
- All family child care providers should have at least Level 1
- Practicum placements should be more practical / hands on
- Provide time off to do the courses
- Many / most practitioners cannot afford to take time off to go back to school
- Graduates of the certificate and diploma courses do not seem as prepared now as formerly – not ready to work in the centres
- Placement process must change – do in own centre / home with increased visits by ECE consultant etc.
- FCC providers have to close their business in order to complete required 4 week practicum field placement
- Entry level / trainee training needs to be revised / revamped
- There is a need for the ECE course to be completely reviewed and revised – need to involve licensees and administrators in this review

- The current ECE course could be longer (e.g. 3 years) but given the current wages in the sector, most will not be prepared to compete a 3 year program. Perhaps an intersession could be added
- Instructors are great – all have worked in the field so the discussions, examples are all very practical in nature
- The current ECE program should not be reduced
- Fewer courses / More placements in centres
- Give more credit for other courses completed / private college credits
- Very frustrating that former teachers face difficulty in getting credit for prior course work.
- Maybe do a week long institute for former teachers who wish to enter the sector.
- When new staff are hired, allow them a 1 – 2 week period in which they are not part of the ratio, to allow them to orient to the centre and the children
- Develop and deliver Summer Institutes – on a regional basis – practitioners paid while attending
- Put increased emphasis on family child care in the certificate / diploma courses
- Training is too academic – not linked to the real work
- Put infant care in first year
- Increased communication between colleges and government

Incentives to encourage practitioners to upgrade their qualifications

The majority of informants indicated that the current incentives available to practitioners to assist in completing educational requirements and/or obtaining higher levels of certification (particularly the ELCC supplement) were positive features of the sector and were a significant factor in encouraging more people to engage in upgrading.

It should be noted, however, that survey data collected from current practitioners did present a slightly different perspective. Despite the availability of these incentives, of the 151 individuals at the trainee level only 44.3% were actively engaged in efforts to upgrade, with 35% citing financial reasons for not pursuing upgrading. A further mitigating factor often cited by practitioners was the requirement to conduct a placement component of the ECE course at a training centre in St. John's / Corner Brook. The majority of informants were in favour of designating a centre / family child care home in each region in which placements could be completed.

A further concern noted by many informants was the cumbersome, complex and labour intensive processes for applying for and distributing the ELCC. Most felt that the process needed to be streamlined, be simpler and more transparent. Practitioners in the focus group sessions also expressed frustration with the way in which the ELCC was taxed, indicating that they were not able to request taxation at a higher rate to ensure that at year end they did not incur an additional tax bill. Concern was also expressed with the length of time between submission of the required documentation and the issuance of funds.

A comment made by many informants with respect to the ELCC was that it should not be viewed or treated as a wage supplement. The predominate opinion was that while the supplement may be a very effective and needed incentive to encourage practitioner to upgrade their qualifications, it does not alter the basic wage structure within the sector. While certainly the supplement provides income to Level 1 and Level 2 ECEs, it does not increase their salary.

Acknowledging that for many the upgrading process is lengthy as most will do only 1 -2 distance courses per semester, and that they do not get the ELCC (or an increase) until fully completing requirements for Level 1 or 2, many informants suggested that a partial ELCC supplement should be made available once a practitioner reaches the mid-way point of upgrading.

Professional development

The majority of informants noted that required participation in ongoing professional development (PD) activities was an integral component to creating and maintaining a qualified workforce. Appropriate professional development enables the practitioner to stay current in terms of new early childhood learning theory and/or practice and allows practitioners to seek out knowledge in areas in which they may need additional exposure.

There was a consensus among informants that the current requirement to obtain 30 hours of professional development over three years (10 hours per year) was a realistic and reasonable requirement to maintain certification level. Informants indicated that required professional development also contributed to the 'professional' status of early childhood education.

The majority of informants and practitioners felt that access to professional development opportunities (e.g., via local workshops, on line webinars, annual AECENL conference, etc.) was acceptable and that the vast majority of practitioners should encounter no significant problems in obtaining the required professional development hours.

However, there was some concern expressed that accessibility of professional development opportunities, particularly in some of the more rural areas, might be problematic. This concern was confirmed through interviews with practitioners in Labrador (especially the coastal communities) where internet access can be sporadic. A further concern noted was that Regional Early Childhood Education Consultants no longer conduct professional development events. Most informants felt that this practice should change, as having the consultants actively involved in delivery of professional development activities both increases the events that can be offered in any particular region and also reinforces the supportive role of the Consultant position.

Informants and practitioners suggested several ways in which professional development could be enhanced, and these included:

- More diverse and more relevant training – not just the same topics each year
- Should be paid / not on my own time
- More local workshops

- Access to professional development is now haphazard and very much an individual effort. Be helpful if events could be planned in advance so that practitioners could select the most relevant
- A list of sites where webinars can be accessed for professional development hours should be developed and shared with practitioners either by AECENL or the Regional Consultants
- Introduction of bilingual college leadership in early childhood education; offering of college training for young graduates of French language schools as well as graduates from French immersion
- Move AECENL conference to regions – a different region each year

Should specialized streams of professional development be developed?

With respect to specialized streams of training, informants noted a number of key areas where professional development for practitioners could be enhanced, including:

- Increased training in the area of inclusion and strategies for better supporting and including children with exceptionalities (e.g. challenging behaviours) in child care settings.
- Professional development relevant and appropriate for those with Level 4 certification
- More information as related to changes in provincial child care policy and legislation/regulations
- Need on site mentoring which would be more important than professional development
- Family child care providers indicated a need for more professional development opportunities specifically relevant to family child care
- Workshops on work - life balance, coping mechanisms and strategies to deal with / reduce stress

There was support expressed for the need for specific professional development opportunities for licensees and administrators. Informants noted that licensees often lack ECE knowledge and that many licensees and administrators lacked necessary administrative and human resources skills that would be needed to operate a more effective and high quality child care setting. Informants noted that training in areas such as human resource practices, administration, supervisory skills, etc. would be of great benefit to licensees and administrators and undoubtedly lead to the creation of more inviting and supportive workplaces where employees feel valued and respected.

Additional comments in this area included:

- ECEs are not administrators; the focus within their training is on early childhood education not on the skills that are needed in an administrative role. For those ECEs in, or considering moving into, an administrator role additional training would be most valuable.
- Training is needed in such areas as human resources practices, financial management and budgeting, leadership and team building, management and supervision,

communications, performance management, etc. In developing possible topic areas, it is highly recommended that input be sought from licensees and administrators.

- Need for mentorship opportunities between administrators.
- Value to creation of an 'Administrators network' or at the very least create space for administrators to get together (e.g. at the annual AEACENL conference).
- The Human Resources Manual (An Introductory Guide to Human Resources Management in Licensed Child Care – produced by the ECEHR Council) should be sent to all centres.
- Workshop on ECE for all current and potential licensees.

Early Childhood Education programs

Currently students entering the early childhood field can apply for acceptance into the 2 year diploma program and choose to complete either a 1 year certificate or a 2 year diploma course. The courses are offered by both public institutions (College of the North Atlantic) and the private sector (Keyin College) in several locations across the province. If students decide to leave after completion of the 1 year certificate, they can continue to work toward their 2 year diploma via distance learning or return and complete it in class.

Informants revealed that there is no formal or specific strategy used by colleges to attract students to Early Childhood Education. Informants indicated that there are open houses for high school students held at the colleges and that representatives of the college will often participate in career fairs at high schools, etc. There is also ongoing liaison with educators in the secondary education system, but again not in any formal or comprehensive manner. Colleges also noted that web based information regarding their programs is readily accessible on the internet by prospective students. ECE students once accepted have access to employment / student counsellors of the college.

Key informants from both public and private colleges indicate that there are provisions for prior learning assessments, and that students can challenge for credit for various courses.

While no formal statistics were made available during the course of this research, informants indicated that the typical ECE student was female, with the majority having prior experience in working with children (although not necessarily within the child care sector). Informants estimated that about 10% - 15% of students came directly from the high school system, and that in recent years there has been an increased number of mature students enrolled (particularly in the private college). It was estimated that perhaps 25% of students had direct prior experience in the child care sector.

The consensus across college informants was that current student enrolment does not meet the known labour demand within the sector. Available data would indicate that there are about 75 students accepted into the program each year across the various campuses. Informants indicated that increasing the number of students accepted into existing programs and/or adding the ECE course to additional sites would require additional resources (e.g. more

instructors). Many of the college informants also expressed concern as to whether there would be sufficient demand to warrant additional delivery sites.

Informants estimated that about 50% of students entering the Early Childhood Education program graduate with a 2 year diploma, and that the graduation rate has increased over the past several years. Graduation rates were reported to be much higher within the private college.

Distance learning is based on the number and availability of instructors. There are generally about 20 – 25 new students accepted each year, but this is limited to only certain courses per semester. Informants acknowledged that a significant waiting list does now exist and that without additional resources (e.g. more instructors) this issue will continue.

College informants spoke of the challenge of trying to address all the necessary content for infant, toddler, preschooler, and school-age in one program, and in the context of a one-year certificate or 2-year diploma course. Many informants identified the need for a 3 or 4 year program to cover all the content. However, informants also acknowledged that from a student perspective, given the current wage structure in the sector, completion of an extended certificate/diploma course would not be seen as an attractive option. Several Informants suggested that a full review of course content was both needed and timely. This latter suggestion was also made by students within the ECE student focus group sessions. Student informants also spoke of the need for a mentorship program for individuals who are new hires within the sector.

What barriers to certification exist?

Informants suggested that more recognition should be given for prior learning and experience when assessing qualifications for certification. Informants suggested that caution must be taken to ensure that there is no reduction in the expected quality and competency of practitioners but there was a strong perception that current certification criteria are too rigid and are turning away suitable and skilled individuals.

What are the existing support systems in place for administrators, licensees and practitioners?

Informants indicated that with the demise of PACAL no support system was available in this province for licensees and/or administrators. Licensees further commented that at present there is no 'unity' among licensees and that an organization to represent their concerns is needed. As related to practitioners, informants identified AECENL as the primary organization that plays a support role. Family Child Care Connections was identified by the majority of informants as a legitimate and valuable support for family child care providers (who are approved by that agency). Many informants felt that this agency should play a larger role with respect to advocating for needed changes and enhancements within the family child care sector.

Informants also identified the Regional Child Care Services Consultants as a major source of support for all levels within the child care sector. Other informants identified the annual AECENL conference, Regional Child Care Social Workers, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (Early Learning and Child Development Division), and related indigenous and francophone associations as sources of support. Within the practitioner group many informants identified co-workers as a primary source of support.

The majority of informants expressed a concern that there did not appear to be any organization that was actively engaged with and working on behalf of practitioners within the sector. Therefore there was no organization that brought forward the concerns of practitioners and the sector to the attention of government on a regular basis, or lobbied government for needed enhancements and revisions to the current system in a planned and purposeful manner. Many informants felt this was a role that could be played by AECENL.

In discussions regarding possible enhancements to systemic supports, informants offered the following suggestions:

- Increased collaboration and discussion is needed between government and colleges (both public and private) particularly as related to design, development and delivery of the certificate and diploma course.
- AECENL should have a greater presence in all regions of the province and play a more active and vocal role in advocacy efforts toward affecting positive change within the sector.
- Effort should be directed toward the creation of regional support networks for administrators and practitioners.

Does the availability of unregulated child care impact on recruitment and retention within the regulated sector?

During interviews and focus group sessions no substantive concerns were raised by informants about the impact of the unregulated child care sector on recruitment and retention in the regulated sector. Most informants were of an opinion that the unregulated sector was and would remain a part of the larger child care context and that it would, and perhaps should, remain as one possible choice for parents.

However, informants expressed concern regarding the providers who operate outside the regulations (i.e. those caring for more than 4 children) and felt that not enough was being done to curtail these types of operations. While acknowledging the government does investigate situations that are reported, most felt that there were no real consequences and that in many instances this type of child care continued.

Informants also expressed a view that a potential source of new family child providers might come from those currently providing unregulated care. Ideally the move from unregulated to regulated should be seen as a positive (e.g. can care for more children, have access to subsidy program, etc.) yet an opinion was expressed that the complexity of becoming a family child care provider, e.g. required home renovations, inspections etc. was a major deterrent to many who might otherwise want to make the transition. Most informants also expressed the view

however that they did not feel that there were a significant number of qualified ECEs providing child care within the unregulated sector.

Other comments from informants included:

- Increased information should be made available to the general public about regulations that impact on the unregulated sector (e.g. no more than 4 children) so that parents and others will be aware of what is appropriate and what is not appropriate;
- Need to educate parents on what they are choosing;
- Not seen as a major source of 'competition' but might have more impact on the family child care sector;
- Need prompt investigation of situations operating outside regulations, and then action / consequences; and
- Need to clarify the difference between unregulated care and regulated family child care.

Societal Perceptions of child care

During both the interview series and focus group sessions, informants were asked if they felt that the value attached to the sector had increased / decreased in the past decade.

Opinions as to whether the sector had increased in value in the eyes of the general public varied greatly across informants, ranging from comments such as: “no, it is still seen by most people as babysitting”, “parents who use the services as delivered by high quality centres are very appreciative and attach great value to the support they and their children receive”, “younger families are the most appreciative”, “most families do not understand what actually happens within a child care centre so it is difficult for them to attach value (or lack of) to it”, to comments such as “yes, it has improved significantly but there is still a long way to go before early learning and child care is seen as a valued profession (or early childhood educators are viewed bona fide professionals)”. Informants further commented that the value component has two parts – first the role that child care plays in enabling parents to enter the labour force and the provision of a safe and secure environment while parents are working - this component was felt to be highly valued. The second was the role that quality child care plays in the developmental growth and stimulation of children, this was felt to be less understood and thus less valued. While no consensus was evident it is accurate to state that the majority opinion among informants was that the value attached to the sector is increasing, but that there is tremendous room for improvement.

Informants were, however, consistent in their feedback that the value attached (or not) to the sector was a fundamental factor in ultimately addressing issues of recruitment and retention. Most informants indicated that until and unless society places greater value on early childhood education and the critical role played by the child care sector, it was unlikely that they would witness the type and extent of financial investment (by government) necessary to enhance sector wages and benefits; an action that most informants saw as a necessary prerequisite to addressing recruitment and retention issues. Informants indicated that key to increasing the value of the sector was undertaking more active promotion of the sector and ensuring that all components of the child care sector provide a consistent and high quality service.

Other comments related to the value placed on the sector included:

- Still negative but improving;
- The move to the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development was a positive one;
- Need more and better promotion of the sector, early childhood education, and the role and function of the early childhood educator;
- Depends of age of the person;
- Parents are appreciative;
- More centres should hold “Parent – ECE” days; to help parents better understand what happens once they drop off their child;
- There are still too many centres that do not provide a high quality service;
- The sector still does not have the needed (and deserved) respect of government; and
- The sector (government) should produce a public annual report.

8.0 Conclusion and Considerations

This report has provided extensive information and data with respect to the regulated child care sector in this province, based on both qualitative and quantitative inquiries. This information provides a comprehensive view of the current issues and challenges facing this sector related to recruitment and retention of a qualified workforce and, as was its intention, should be used to inform and influence subsequent actions in this area. It presents the advice and suggestions of practitioners and stakeholders from the child care sector, and provides a voice for their issues and concerns.

The issues faced with regard to recruitment and retention are not singular in nature. The current situation is not the result of a single cause and as such there is no one magic bullet to address and resolve the challenges being faced. Efforts to enhance recruitment and retention in this sector will require a multifaceted approach that will address the quality of care provided to children, the working conditions within child care settings, the status and value attached to this sector, education and training of early childhood educators, and wages and benefits. Each of these variables is interdependent and reciprocal effects between the variables exist. Efforts to raise the status of this sector beyond its current de-valued level will require changes to education, training and professional development to ensure that all practitioners have the qualifications and experience necessary to enable them to provide high quality early childhood education. Increased expectations with respect to level of education should be correlated with increases in remuneration.

In previous sections of this report detailed findings have been provided in regard to specific issues of recruitment and retention and each should be given full consideration in the development of any future approach / strategy. The intent of this section of the report is not to repeat or summarize these findings but rather to provide additional commentary on several priority issues that emerged during the course of this review. These considerations include the following:

Raising the sector profile

All stakeholders emphasized the need to raise the profile of the sector. Efforts in this regard must be treated as a foundational element to any strategy designed to address recruitment and retention. Key and positive messages must place emphasis on early childhood education as a valuable and valued profession. Public education efforts aimed at highlighting the benefits of early childhood education to the developmental growth of children, the tangible value and impact for families, the type and quality of training required by early childhood educators and the need for widespread community endorsement and support for quality child care for children will be essential to ensure that the sector is respected and viewed as a critical and important service in our communities. Further, such efforts in raising the overall profile of the sector will undoubtedly create additional interest in early learning and child care as a possible career choice. To that end, particular efforts should include a focus on students within the

secondary school system to ensure that as they make educational and career decisions, they have accurate and positive messages about the sector.

Efforts toward enhanced public awareness of the sector and its practitioners can best be achieved through the development and delivery of a coordinated, ongoing, provincial, and adequately funded promotional campaign. The campaign should speak to the important issues as identified by practitioners – love of children, desire to influence and positively impact the lives of young children – and show how pursuing a career in early learning and child care can allow one to accomplish those goals.

While needing provincial government leadership (particularly from the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development) such a campaign should be conducted with the full involvement of regional officials and organizations such as AECENL and Family Child Care Connections. The Early Childhood Human Resources Council is also quite prepared to play an ongoing leadership role in this and other areas.

Wages and Benefits

Throughout the course of this review stakeholders at all levels emphasized repeatedly that the low wage rate within the sector and the lack of (or at very least the inconsistency of available benefits to practitioners) were primary reasons for continued challenges in both recruitment and retention. While certainly there are other factors that contribute to recruitment and retention challenges, without a significant improvement to sector wages and associated benefits, it is highly unlikely that sufficient interest will be created in early learning and child care as a viable (perhaps preferred) career choice. Further, the sector will not be able to retain its practitioners given the availability of other jobs that pay more, provide greater benefits and have much less associated stress and responsibility.

As has been documented in this report, the capacity to increase sector wages, in any substantive or meaningful way, is beyond the capacity of current licensees. The only recourse available to them would be to significantly increase parent fees, which would in fact violate one of the fundamental tenets of quality child care – affordability. Addressing the wage and benefits issues will, without doubt, require additional financial investment by the provincial government.

No definitive recommended wage rate was suggested during the course of this project, but prevailing opinion was that a rate of \$22 per hour would be reflective of the duties and responsibilities of an ECE and be in accord with wages of similar occupations. While it was beyond the scope and intent of this project to conduct any detailed costing, data collected does permit some projections to be made. The current average hourly rate in the sector was determined to be approximately \$15. If the hourly rate was raised by \$7 per hour (based on a 2080 hour work year), for the estimated 1000 practitioners in the sector, the associated cost would be approximately \$14.6M per year.

The Operating Grant Program was, in general, well received by licensees. The program enabled licensees to increase wages without having to increase parent fees. More importantly the OGP served as a successful and legitimate manner by which government could invest directly in sector wages, in both the private and non-profit components of the regulated child care sector. Further and increased investment to affect wage increases should be accomplished via the OGP. Such an investment should also result in the adoption of a provincial wage scale.

Early Learning and Child Care as a Public Service

During the course of this review, particularly within the interviews and focus group sessions, many informants put forward an opinion that perhaps it was time for serious consideration to be given to the merits (and implications) of making early learning and child care a universal publicly funded system, as is the case currently with other essential education and/or health services. The suggestion was that current educational system (K – 12) should be extended to include children aged 2 years and older. While premature to comment on the viability (and perhaps affordability of such an idea) it is one that does merit further and serious exploration and research.

Cultural and/or linguistic issues

Discussions with representatives of indigenous (first nations) and francophone communities confirmed that many of the barriers faced were similar in nature and extent as that being encountered within the broader sector. Several additional challenges were, however, identified and these included: access to training and professional development opportunities, cultural sensitivity and relevance of training, and challenges in recruiting bilingual ECEs.

A first step in developing appropriate intervention strategies must be a full examination of the needs within these communities. The development of indicated strategies will require full and meaningful collaboration with individuals and agencies within these communities. Any plans developed must encompass strategies for making available culturally and linguistically appropriate and accessible educational programs in early childhood education. A good example of efforts to address unique barriers is the delivery of training (Level 1 via workshop format) in Nain. Workshop(s) will be delivered by instructors from the College of the North Atlantic.

Sector Incentives

The sector currently has a number of financial incentives that have been received positively by practitioners. However, the current approach is considered cumbersome, labour intensive and frustrating by many recipients. Efforts should be made to create more effective, streamlined approaches that would ensure that practitioners receive these benefits in a timely manner.

The availability of these various incentives was rated very highly by practitioners and was often cited as a valuable factor in increased retention. These incentives were also viewed as being a significant factor in encouraging practitioners to upgrade qualifications (ELCC) and assisting in accessing training (Bursaries).

Within the family child care sector, there was clear consensus for the need for the reinstatement of the Start Up grant, and the introduction of an Operating Grant Program specific to the family child providers.

While appreciative of the ELCC, practitioners and licensees agreed that this incentive must be viewed as method to stimulate attainment of enhanced qualifications within the sector – not as a wage supplement. It was noted by informants that in some cases positions are posted and a wage rate indicated that includes the supplement. This presents a false picture of the sector wage structure and must stop.

Any future attempt to increase wages should affect change at the base (real) income level of practitioners as opposed to a bonus or add on approach.

Creating a qualified work force

Data reveal that 151 of practitioner respondents reported as being at the Trainee level (that is, have completed an orientation course and are enrolled in distance learning). This means that nearly half of practitioners (151/317 – 47.6%) currently in the system must upgrade in order to meet the minimum required Level 1 standard. Efforts should now be directed to undertaking necessary action(s) that will accelerate the attainment of a Level 1 designation for this group of practitioners. Relying on practitioners to upgrade via enrolment in and completion of required courses via distance learning is highly unlikely to produce a qualified workforce in the foreseeable future.

The current system for the assessment of qualifications of Early Childhood Educators does not yet present as one that it is sensitive and responsive to a sector encountering significant issues in retaining qualified staff. Current requirements may be discouraging many practitioners from remaining in the field, or at the very least making it very difficult for these practitioners to upgrade to Level 1.

Additional efforts are undoubtedly required in this regard. The most obvious is the elimination of the current wait list for distance learning. Adequate resources must be provided to the College of the North Atlantic to engage additional instructors (at least over the short term) so that all practitioners can gain timely access to required courses. Additionally, this access must not be limited to a few specific courses per semester. Ideally practitioners should be able to complete any course they require in any semester. Supplemental to the distance learning, serious consideration must be given to providing additional means by which practitioners can attain the necessary qualifications. These have been identified in previous sections of this report, including delivery of Summer Institutes, workshops at the local level, elimination of the need to complete a 4 week practicum placement at a Demonstration site, increased usage of a competency based assessment process to determine level equivalency, etc. Priority must be given to those practitioners in the field who fall short of Level 1 and multiple methods must be employed, over the next 18 – 24 months, to address that gap.

Family Child Care

Any provincial strategy to address current or future recruitment and retention issues should make provision for expansion of this model throughout the province. If not already under active consideration, an independent evaluation of this model may be warranted to provide additional support for future model development and expansion. Several compelling reasons support the expansion of the FCC component of regulated child care services in this province. Perhaps the most significant being the need for more high quality, licensed child care spaces in rural and remote communities in the province. Licensed home child care, in a family-like atmosphere, has also been deemed to be an effective model for delivery of infant care, and for many parents an attractive alternative to the traditional centre based model.

Working Conditions

There was considerable emphasis given by informants and practitioners to the impact of respectful and positive workplaces as a necessary ingredient in successful retention efforts. Full and equal consideration should be given to actions (many of which have little or no financial cost) that will contribute to the development of more respectful workplaces. Focused professional development in the area of human resource management and staff supervision directed toward licensees and administrators, would undoubtedly yield positive outcomes. The creation of formal regional networks would be another mechanism through which efforts could be made to develop and enhance respectful workplaces for child care providers.

ECE Certificate / Diploma programs

To address long term sector recruitment issues, a sufficient number of individuals need to graduate with at least a 1 year certificate, to meet the known labour needs of the sector. At this point this is clearly not happening. Data would suggest that at least 100 practitioners leave each year, yet there are only about 50 or so ECE graduates. If this trend continues it will be simply impossible for the sector to secure and maintain a qualified work force. If the trend continues it can be expected that over time the sector will have to increasingly rely on hiring unqualified candidates to fill vacancies.

Discussions need to occur as soon as possible with the college system (public and private) to determine the viability of offering the ECE program in additional sites throughout the province. Doing so will increase the intake of students and undoubtedly lead to the generation of sufficient graduates to meet known sector demand.

There was also strong support among stakeholders for the need for a comprehensive review of the current certificate and diploma program.

The recruitment and retention issues facing the child care sector in this province are real and substantive. Without considerable and focused effort the sector will undoubtedly continue to be unable to recruit and/or retain a fully qualified workforce. It is difficult to envision that these issues can be fully resolved without the infusion of additional financial resources yet an increase in wages alone is not the full answer. Concurrent attention and specific action is also needed with respect to enhancing the public understanding of and appreciation for early

childhood education and the creation of a policy and practice framework that is inviting and accommodating to the needs of its current and anticipated workforce.

Appendices A, B, C and D

