



# **CANADA COUNTRY BACKGROUND REPORT – QUALITY IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE**

Employment and Social Development Canada

Report prepared as part of the 2019 OECD Policy Review: Quality beyond Regulations in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC)

**Canada Country Background Report –  
Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care**

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**PDF**

Cat. No.: Em20-151/2021E-PDF  
ISBN: 978-0-660-39489-3

**ESDC**

Cat. No.: SP-1242-07-21E

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## List of Common Acronyms

CMEC: Council of Ministers of Education, Canada

ECE: Early childhood educator/s

In Canada, the term “teacher” is protected by legislation in almost all jurisdictions and may only be used for those individuals who meet the requirements for certification or licensure as a “teacher”. The term Registered Early Childhood Educator is protected by law in Ontario, reserved for members of the College of Early Childhood Educators.

ECEC: Early childhood education and care

ELCC: Early learning and child care

ELCC in Canada refers to all programs that are not part of the formal education system. Kindergarten is not included, but is captured under the ECEC terminology. Despite some differences in the types of educational content in different ELCC programs, ELCC and child care are used interchangeably throughout the report.

ESDC: Employment and Social Development Canada

FPT: Federal, Provincial, Territorial

OECD: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

PT: Provinces and territories / provincial and territorial

Canadian provinces and territories:

Newfoundland and Labrador – NL

Prince Edward Island – PE

Nova Scotia – NS

New Brunswick – NB

Québec – QC

Ontario – ON

Manitoba – MB

Saskatchewan – SK

Alberta – AB

British Columbia – BC

Yukon – YT

Northwest Territories – NT

Nunavut – NU

## Executive Summary

In recent years, there have been ongoing efforts to understand the concept of quality in early childhood settings, and to better design policy and program initiatives that enhance quality. A growing body of evidence suggests that “process quality, that is the children’s everyday social, emotional, physical and instructional interactions with staff and other children, is the primary driver of gains in children’s development.”<sup>1</sup> Process quality suggests that policies and practices that support relationships with children and families, opportunities for professional development, mentoring and coaching contribute more to quality than the structural elements typically outlined in regulatory frameworks, including group size, child to staff ratios, or space requirements.

In 2018, Canada welcomed the opportunity to participate in an international comparative review of process quality in early childhood education and care (ECEC) settings. In the OECD’s “Quality beyond Regulations” project, the Government of Canada, along with provincial governments in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Quebec and Alberta engaged in peer learning activities with other countries in order to explore policy frameworks and decisions that support and enhance elements of process quality.

To understand how early childhood education and care is organized and managed in Canada, it is important to note that Canada is a federation consisting of 10 provinces and 3 territories. As such, Canada shares responsibilities of governance across federal, provincial and territorial authorities. These levels of government work with Indigenous governments, organizations and communities in serving the needs of Indigenous peoples. Within the federation, provinces and territories have exclusive jurisdiction over education and responsibility for early learning and child care programs, with the exception of those that fall under the scope of Indigenous governments.

The Canada Country Background Report provides descriptions of Canadian policies in place at all levels of government that support process quality in ECEC. Information presented in the report is representative of policy contexts and efforts as of early 2021. Initial data collection occurred through the 2019 OECD policy review questionnaire, with updates and content development occurring throughout 2020 and early 2021. Specific attention is given to the policy context for ECEC, along with descriptions of early learning curriculum frameworks, pedagogical practices, and policies, programs, and initiatives to support workforce development. While examples of policy decisions and initiatives shared in the report focus primarily on ECEC in the 4 provinces that participated in the Quality beyond Regulations initiative, information is also shared from other provinces and territories in order to give a more comprehensive understanding of ECEC in Canada. Furthermore, because provision of the kindergarten portion of ECEC services is distinct and considered a part of the formal schooling system in Canada, the report focuses heavily on policies and initiatives found in non-kindergarten settings. Non-kindergarten ECEC provision in Canada is less standardized and varies from one province/territory (PT) to the next. As such, it presents more varied challenges and initiatives related to quality which this report aims to present. Kindergarten, which children typically enter at either 4 or 5 years old, is referenced in the relevant sections to provide clarity and an overview that aligns better with ECEC categories found in many other OECD countries.

The report begins with an historical overview of the evolution of policies, legislation, intergovernmental agreements and initiatives that have supported ECEC. This history demonstrates that the concept of quality in ECEC across Canada has been a priority of governments, professional organizations, advocates, researchers, early childhood educators (ECEs), and parents since the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. By the late 1940s the availability of early childhood education programs was growing with an increasing emphasis on the quality of the child’s

experience. It was not until the 1970s and 1980s that all PTs introduced legislation to address matters expected to contribute to the quality of the program.

The first recommendation for a national child care program in Canada was made in 1970 by the Royal Commission on the Status of Women, only to see similar recommendations in subsequent years, along with multiple efforts to create a national policy on ECEC. In the past 20 years, several intergovernmental agreements focused on children were put in place, including the First Ministers Early Childhood Development Initiative (2001); both the 2003 and the 2017 Multilateral Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) Framework Agreements; and the 2017 Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care Framework. These agreements have supported process quality through a variety of innovative mechanisms and have provided a foundation for current (2021) Federal-Provincial-Territorial (FPT) discussions to develop an ELCC workforce strategy as well as a Canada-wide child care system.

Since 2000, there has been significant progress across Canada in the development and implementation of early learning curriculum frameworks for regulated ECEC programs, along with new initiatives for monitoring and enhancing quality in regulated programs. By 2021 all PTs are either implementing, piloting, or developing early learning frameworks, and supporting both professional development and in-service training for pedagogical practices. The Council of Ministers of Education in Canada have concluded that there is intrinsic value and importance of play in its relationship to learning. Canada's Country Background Report describes the consistency in pedagogical practice across PTs, including emphasis on play, inclusion, and the important role of families and communities. PTs recognize that in Indigenous communities, it is the Elders' responsibility to guard sacred knowledge and to maintain the ceremonial oral tradition of knowledge transmission. Overall, the PT frameworks highlight the rich diversity of the country, evident in each framework's representation of unique cultures and languages in communities across the country.

The concepts of inclusion and diversity are woven throughout curriculum frameworks, as well as in policy surrounding access and affordability to encourage participation in early childhood programs. Inclusion, however, is generally recognized as more than the child's presence - it ensures active, meaningful participation by every child in the daily program and with one another. The Report describes the range of approaches taken in various PTs to support inclusion and diversity, as well as initiatives taken to support all families with the financial cost of participation in regulated ELCC programs.

Although financial subsidies have been available for families since the mid 1970s to lower the cost of child care, in recent years a number of PTs have indicated their intentions to move toward more universally available access to child care for all children. As of 2021, there are several new PT initiatives in place to establish set fees for parents with one reduced fee for all age groups, as well as provision of significant PT funding to regulated centre and home based programs to reduce the cost for all parents. In addition, the federal government announced in 2021 significant new investments to work with provinces, territories as well as Indigenous governments in ensuring that all families have access to high-quality, affordable and flexible early learning and child care no matter where they live. As more PTs focus their attention on quality, there is an increasing emphasis on the importance of the workforce – the early childhood educators who are responsible for curriculum implementation, design of learning environments, observation, documentation, and establishing relationships with children, families, and their communities. Almost all PTs have legislated requirements for early childhood educator (ECE) qualifications, and 9 PTs also issue levels of professional certification. Professional certification is required in all jurisdictions for Kindergarten teachers.

Pre-service study, professional development and in-service training have all been recognized as being instrumental to ensure that the ECE workforce is well qualified, with ample opportunities for reflective practice while engaging with other ECEs. Some PTs have taken steps to influence the completion of specified hours of professional development or have specified particular content. Several PTs have introduced standards for pre-

service post-secondary programs. Typically, professional development is coordinated and delivered by ECE professional organizations with funding from governments. However, currently the most pressing workforce challenge in Canada is related to the ability to recruit and retain qualified ECEs. The ECEC sector is not immune to labour shortages experienced in other occupations across Canada. Workforce shortages have had a negative impact on efforts to expand access to ECEC programs across Canada.

As the OECD's 2004 Canada Country Note remarked, "Early childhood policy development in Canada is ably supported by a vibrant research community and stakeholder constituency." (OECD, 2004, p. 70)<sup>ii</sup> Following a period of significant research supported by the federal government (2003—2013), in 2017 the federal government announced further investment to support child care data, research and innovative services. As well, all PTs are continually engaged in processes to review and modernize their approaches to ECEC. Issues related to quality, affordability, access, and human resources have dominated PT discussions in recent months and years, and ongoing investments from governments give indications of long term planning in all jurisdictions.

The need for ongoing research and data collection/analysis has been recognized. In 2019, the federal government convened an "Expert Panel" of researchers and academics from across Canada to advise on a long term research agenda and data strategy focused on the ELCC sector. Continued stakeholder engagement has involved national organizations, researchers, academics, Indigenous groups, and parents. At the same time, federal, provincial, and territorial governments are beginning discussions to establish a national ELCC advisory council as a feature of the Canada-wide child care system. New PT initiatives continue to unfold, with increased attention to affordability and access, with growing interest in universal approaches; improved wages and benefits for ECEs; and universal access to ECEC programs for 4 year olds. As intergovernmental discussions continue, continued progress is expected.

Overall, Canada's participation to the OECD Quality beyond Regulations project indicates that Canada is well placed to build on existing knowledge and efforts from across the country to improve the quality of ECEC services. As is outlined throughout the report, PTs continue to advance their systems by refining existing quality initiatives, and developing new ones. Continued improvements in workforce development, efforts toward monitoring aspects of quality, and better understanding of important process quality factors through continued research and participation in projects such as Quality beyond Regulations will help to identify gaps and challenges and aid progress.

## Introduction

1. The Government of Canada recognizes that the early years of life are critical in the development and future well-being of children. During this period, children's experiences influence rapid development and create the foundation for supporting competencies, including but not limited to the ability to regulate emotions and enjoy positive interactions with others. These foundational skills in turn impact children's learning, behaviour and health today and in the future. Quality Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) is recognized as an essential component of the social, emotional, physical and cognitive development of young children, especially for less advantaged children and families.
2. Provincial and territorial (PT) governments have primary responsibility for the design and delivery of ECEC programs and services in Canada. Across Canada, these systems aim to be respectful of language and culture and recognize the unique needs of French and English linguistic minority communities, and of Indigenous peoples. The Government of Canada provides support to Canada's 13 PTs in the provision of regulated ECEC programs and services for children under age 6.
3. ECEC in Canada is split between 2 main categories:
  - early learning and child care (ELCC) for children under age 6 (before a child enters the formal education system)
  - kindergarten (the age at which a child enters the formal education system varies by PT but is typically the year before attending primary school)
4. Governance and provision of ECEC in Canada differs across its 13 PTs. ECEC exists through a mix of:
  - public, private for-profit, and private not-for-profit
  - centre-based care, home-based care
  - regulated and unregulated
5. ECEC quality in Canada is a key feature that is influenced by PT regulations, investment decisions, and the workforce. In addition, the sharing of experiences, knowledge, and best practices between Canada's PTs contributes toward continued improvements in the sector. This includes developments of curriculum frameworks, licensing regulations, training programs, and more.
6. This report was created as part of Canada's participation in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) project, Quality beyond Regulations in ECEC. The aim of the report is to capture the key aspects of quality in Canadian ECEC systems. Information is presented at a pan-Canadian level where possible, with sub-national information and specific examples featured throughout the report to supply a more in-depth overview of the unique ECEC services available across Canada. While the aim is to provide as comprehensive of an overview within the OECD guiding themes, it was not possible to feature all key initiatives found across Canada. Four PTs, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Québec and Alberta participated financially in the OECD project and are featured more prominently throughout. Nevertheless, a variety of other initiatives and perspectives are also presented from across Canada to ensure richness of information and maximize benefits of the report to an international audience.
7. The report is divided into 4 chapters: an historical overview of ECEC quality development, the current policy context, curriculum and pedagogy, and workforce development.



8. Chapter 1 provides an overview of some of the main federal, PT, and non-governmental efforts toward improving the quality of ECEC systems in Canada over the years. The various initiatives show an evolving vision and increased efforts to advance the ECEC sector over time, as well as some of the challenges faced. Chapter 2 outlines the current policy context, including responsibility of governments, the current vision and priorities of quality ECEC across Canada, and a summary of regulations as they relate to structural and process quality.
9. Pedagogies and curriculum frameworks are presented in Chapter 3, particularly on how they are intended to impact the quality of ECEC. Specific PT examples are provided throughout, to highlight examples that may be somewhat representative of the national picture, or are interesting due to their uniqueness. Chapter 4 provides examples of aspects of workforce development regulations, challenges and trends. As with Chapter 3, a pan-Canadian picture is provided in each section summarizing the main themes found across the country, and a variety of PT-specific initiatives are used to highlight less common, but interesting efforts in areas related to workforce development.

## Chapter 1: ECEC Quality in Canada – An Historical Overview

### 1.1 Introduction

10. The concept of quality in ECEC across Canada has been a priority of governments, professional organizations, advocates, researchers, early childhood educators (ECEs), and parents since the early 19th century. Canada's history notes the early emergence of community-led programs for young children, including the early days of infant schools (Montreal, 1828; Halifax, 1832; Québec City, 1834<sup>iii</sup>); private kindergartens (Charlottetown 1870; Saint John, 1878<sup>iv</sup>); to the first public kindergarten in Toronto in 1883<sup>v</sup>. Such early programs were often based on charitable concerns for safety of children, religious beliefs, or advocates of “progressive” education.
11. By the late 1940s, the popularity and emergence of different types of early childhood education programs was growing across Canada, and with it a widespread focus on the quality of the child's experience. Programs often reflected the values of the sponsoring organization, whether community based, charitable, or religious. It would be another few decades until parents and policy makers began to recognize that goals for quality and children's development were identical whether the program was a half day nurse/preschool or full day child care.

### 1.2 Legislation

12. It was not until after World War II that early childhood education programs began to be more widely available across Canada. While early versions of PT legislation were found in the 1940s (Ontario, British Columbia), it was the period during the 1970s and 1980s that saw all PTs introduce legislation to ensure the health and safety of young children in ECEC, and to address matters expected to contribute to the quality of the program, such as educator qualifications, group sizes, behaviour guidance and program content statements. These regulatory frameworks continue to guide practices for licensing and monitoring centre and home-based programs for young children. In 2003, PTs collaborated in developing a best practices framework for licensing and identified the roles of both government regulation and “sector self-regulation”, which included professional standards to enhance quality<sup>vi</sup>. The licensing framework defined the regulatory system as the part of the child care sector that “applies collective standards to the quality of programs for young children”.
13. In Canada, the *Constitution Act* (1867) gives PTs legislative authority for child care services. Since the 1980s, the federal government has supported PTs in their efforts to enhance the quality of ECEC (for example, quality improvement grants) through various types of cost sharing or financial transfer initiatives. The federal government has also directly funded some ECEC programs for Indigenous children to support greater access to culturally appropriate provision.

### 1.3 National Research and Innovation Initiatives 1980s – 2018

14. Since the 1980s, the federal government has supported research and innovation to further develop concepts of quality in ECEC with funding programs specifically targeted to professional ECEC organizations, researchers, and academic / post-secondary institutions. Between 1988 and 2002, national research initiatives such as the Child Care Initiatives Fund and Child Care Visions supported research and development for projects with a national scope. Child Care Visions was advised by a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) which included child care researchers, service providers and experts from

non-governmental organizations, universities, PT governments and Indigenous communities<sup>1</sup>. The TAC worked closely with federal officials to identify priorities for a Canadian ELCC research agenda.

15. Issues related to human resources in the ECEC sector have also been the focus of research and innovation in Canada. In 1998, the Government of Canada facilitated the Child Care Sector Study<sup>vii</sup> to investigate human resource challenges in the sector. In that same year, the national You Bet I Care!<sup>viii</sup> study<sup>2</sup>, found a definitive link between human resources and quality.
16. In response to the recommendations of the 1998 Child Care Sector Study, the Child Care Human Resources Sector Council (2003 to 2013) was established to bring together ECEC sector representatives to provide leadership and coordination on human resource issues in the sector. The Council researched and analyzed workforce shortages and recruitment strategies, created effective management tools, and focused on the development of a skilled ECEC workforce in order to further enhance the quality of child care across Canada.
17. More recently, the ELCC Innovation Fund (2018) supports innovative approaches to ELCC that improve children's and families' life outcomes. The intent is also to share best practices that may be replicated in other locations, and to gain a better understanding of the changing nature of the sector.

#### 1.4 PT Government Quality Initiatives

18. As PT governments hold legal responsibility for early childhood programs and education, emphasis on the quality of early learning environments has been a strong focus of government policy. Over the past fifty years, the growing body of evidence regarding quality in early childhood settings and scientific advances in the study of human development helped to inform the evolution of both regulatory and policy frameworks at the PT government level. Although PT funding for child care during the 1970s primarily focused on child care subsidies for eligible families, by the 1980s PT governments began to offer operating grant funding, in order to support higher quality services for all children. Regulatory frameworks, informed by national and international research, were continually revised to introduce requirements intended to support child care quality, the most notable being the introduction of staff qualifications.
19. In the 1990s, PT governments launched various initiatives<sup>3</sup> to enhance quality in the ECEC sector, some of which involved multi-governmental partnerships. By 2000, all jurisdictions were implementing quality measurement tools, usually in conjunction with accreditation, on-site coaching, licensing and monitoring practices. Québec, which is seen as a leader in ECEC established a low-fee child care system (introduced in 1997), which had a significant impact on increasing access for all children and improved labour market participation of mothers. These important steps in accessibility further highlighted the need for additional investments and work on quality, particularly as more children began to enrol and new spaces were created.
20. To support pan-Canadian discussion and coordination, the PT Directors of ECEC (PT Directors), a committee of senior officials responsible for ECEC, was established in the early 1980s by Deputy Ministers responsible for social services. In 2005, PT Directors established a standing committee on quality, with a mandate to provide support and coordination in matters related to research, knowledge exchange, and approaches to the enhancement and measurement of quality in ECEC policy, systems, and

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<sup>1</sup> Members of TAC were appointed by the Minister of Human Resource Development Canada.

<sup>2</sup> You Bet I Care! was funded by Child Care Visions.

<sup>3</sup> Examples include accreditation (AB), on-site consultation (NL, PE, NS, NB, Sk), and multi-year plans to enhance quality.

practice. This committee has led collaborative work related to children's environments, curriculum frameworks, inclusion, school age child care, human resources, and system quality. In 2015, there was an agreement to focus on defining key elements of a policy framework that would support a quality ECEC system.

21. In 2008, Canada's education ministers, through the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC), released "Learn Canada 2020", a joint vision for education in Canada that underscored early childhood learning and development as one of the 4 pillars of lifelong learning. It marked a shift in the approach to early learning in Canada, as education ministries shifted focus to support quality learning opportunities in the early years, with the goal that all children should have access to high quality early childhood education. Since then, education ministers and officials assemble on a regular basis through CMEC to focus on early childhood learning and development.
22. For almost 20 years, PTs have been engaged in the development and implementation of early learning curriculum frameworks to guide pedagogical practice in early childhood settings. By 2020, all jurisdictions are either implementing, piloting, or developing such frameworks. All frameworks start from the premise of children as active and capable learners, and partners in co-constructing their learning. All frameworks emphasize the importance of relationships, intentionality, diversity, family and community, and children's experiences. More information on the status and details of current curriculum frameworks across Canada is presented in chapter 3.
23. By 2020, the PT Directors committee includes representation from ministries responsible for social and community services, child and family services, and education. The committee's work continues to focus on quality, including monitoring mechanisms; curriculum; inclusion; human resources, certification, and labour mobility; post-secondary ECE training; data and research; affordability and funding; and Indigenous child care. Members work closely with senior officials in the federal government (for example, Employment and Social Development Canada and Statistics Canada), particularly with respect to the development and implementation of the 2017 Multilateral Framework on Early Learning and Child Care.

#### 1.5 Joint Federal-Provincial/Territorial Initiatives

24. In 1970, Canada's Royal Commission on the Status of Women, noting that child care was essential for women's equality, recommended a national universal child care program. In 1984, Canada's Royal Commission on Equality of Employment made the same recommendation, as did the 1986 National Task Force on Child Care. Between 1984 and 1995, there were 3 attempts by successive federal governments to develop a national approach to child care that included an emphasis on quality; none of these were successful.
25. In December 1997, Canada's First Ministers asked the Federal/Provincial/Territorial (FPT) Council of Ministers on Social Policy Renewal to engage the public in developing a shared vision for enhancing the well-being of Canada's children. The 2 year consultation resulted in the National Children's Agenda (2000), which was immediately followed by a First Ministers' Early Childhood Development Initiative (September 2000), the first of several subsequent FPT agreements which provided for federal financial transfers to PTs to improve access to and quality of ECEC services.
26. Follow-up agreements included the 2003 Multilateral Framework Agreement on Early Learning and Child Care, and the 2005 agreements with a focus on quality, universality, affordability, and development. Federal funding was transferred to PTs, and commitments were made for regular reporting on progress. These agreements were replaced in 2006 with federal funding provided through the Canada Social Transfer.

27. By 2017, FPT Ministers most responsible for ELCC agreed on a new Multilateral Framework on Early Learning and Child Care with a long-term vision where all children can experience the enriching environment of quality ELCC that supports their development to reach their full potential. The 2017 Framework outlines 5 principles: high quality; accessible; affordable; flexible; and inclusive. As in other FPT agreements, federal funding transfers to PTs support the goals outlined in bilateral agreements and action plans.
28. In September 2018, the Government of Canada, the Assembly of First Nations, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami and the Métis National Council jointly released the co-developed Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care Framework. The framework reflects the unique cultures, aspirations and priorities of First Nations, Inuit and Métis children across Canada. It is a guide for all actors in the ELCC sphere, complements the Multilateral ELCC Framework and includes distinctions-based Frameworks to address unique priorities of First Nations, Inuit and Métis children and families.
29. In 2021, federal, provincial, and territorial governments began discussions toward the development of a Canada-wide child care system to ensure that all families have access to high-quality, affordable, flexible and inclusive early learning and child care no matter where they live.

## 1.6 Sectoral Quality Initiatives

30. In the OECD's 2004 Canada Country Note, authors noted that "Early childhood policy development in Canada is ably supported by a vibrant research community and stakeholder constituency."<sup>x</sup> The past number of decades has seen researchers, advocates, and policy makers partnering on numerous studies, projects, and initiatives to enhance the level of quality in child care centres, homes, post-secondary courses of study, regulatory requirements, and public policy. Some examples of significant sector led initiatives include:
  - the National Statement on Quality Early Learning and Child Care<sup>x</sup> developed by the Canadian Child Care Federation (CCCF: 1992; 2007 revised) was the result of significant consultation and engagement with Canada's early childhood sector including ECEs, post-secondary ECEC faculty, researchers, advocates, and representatives of PT governments. The National Statement identified national consensus on 9 elements of quality that include leadership, administration, relationships, intentional teaching, children's rights, human resources, qualifications of educators, learning environments, and system infrastructure
  - Partners in Quality<sup>xi</sup> (2000) was a research and development project sponsored by the Canadian Child Care Federation and its affiliates to explore how child care providers, parents, and other partners could work together to support and improve quality in child care. The bi-lingual resources and professional development series included Standards of Practice (including partnerships with children's families, colleagues and other community services); a Code of Ethics for child care practitioners; and a Guide for Self-Reflection on practice
  - Quality by Design<sup>xii</sup> (2005) involved a partnership between researchers and provincial government officials. Four provinces participated – PE, MB, SK, BC.<sup>4</sup> The project involved direct observations on program quality elements, focus groups and a literature review<sup>xiii</sup>. The final report outlined 8 components of system level quality including Ideas; Governance; Infrastructure; Planning and Policy Development; Financing; Human resources; Physical Environment; and Data, Research and Evaluation

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<sup>4</sup> These 4 provinces had recently participated in the OECD's Thematic Review of ECEC and hosted the international review team.

## 1.7 Summary and Conclusion

31. The past 50 years have demonstrated the importance of ongoing collaboration and mutual respect between and among researchers, educators, policy makers, and funders in the ongoing work to better understand the concept of quality in early childhood. The interplay between federal funding, research, and intersectoral collaboration to inform public policy and PT regulatory frameworks has created a broad-based commitment to a high quality ECEC system. Across Canada, all partners recognize that quality must be inherent in children's learning environments, pedagogical practices, system design, and public policy frameworks. These experiences underscore the importance of a robust research agenda to continue to build on current understanding of all aspects of ECEC quality.

## Chapter 2: Policy Context

### 2.1 Roles and Responsibilities for ECEC

32. As a federation consisting of 10 provinces and 3 territories, Canada shares responsibilities of governance across federal, and PT authorities. In addition, governments work with Indigenous governments, organizations and communities in serving the needs of Indigenous peoples.
33. Generally, the federal government is responsible for matters concerned of national interest. This includes areas such as citizenship, defence, regulation of trade/commerce, and foreign policy. Provincial, and to an increasing extent, territorial governments are responsible in matters of a local nature, including property and civil rights, housing, health and social services, to name a few. The provinces thus have exclusive jurisdiction over education and, by virtue of the federal acts that created them, the 3 territories have comparable powers. While provincial and territorial ministries or departments of education have responsibility for early learning (for example, Kindergarten), licensed/regulated ECEC programs that precede Kindergarten (for example, centre-based) may fall under the responsibility of one or more ministries and departments, including education, health, family, and/or social services.
34. At different times and at varying levels, the federal government has supported areas that have typically fallen within the administrative authority of PT governments, such as healthcare, education, and social services.<sup>xiv</sup> The federal government has also directly funded some early learning and childcare programs for Indigenous children to support greater access to culturally appropriate programs.

### Ministries/departments responsible for ECEC across Canada

Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Education		
Prince Edward Island Department of Education and Lifelong Learning		
Nova Scotia Department of Education and Early Childhood Development		
New Brunswick Department of Education and Early Childhood Development		
Québec Ministère de l'Éducation		Québec Ministère de la Famille
Ontario Ministry of Education		
Manitoba Education		Manitoba Families
Saskatchewan Ministry of Education		
Alberta Education		Alberta Ministry of Children's Services
British Columbia Ministry of Education	British Columbia Ministry of Children and Family Development	British Columbia Ministry of Health
Northwest Territories Department of Education, Culture and Employment		
Nunavut Department of Education		
Yukon Department of Education		

### 2.2 Recent Developments in ECEC

35. Although there have been multiple attempts to develop a national child care program over the years, historically, Canada has had limited federal policy pertaining to ECEC. In 2015, the Government of Canada re-engaged with PTs in negotiations on ELCC. This resulted in an agreement of a Multilateral Early Learning and Child Care Framework, which promotes cooperation between the federal government and the PTs. It states that governments agree that the further development of ELCC systems is one of the best investments that governments can make to strengthen the social and economic fabric of our country.<sup>5</sup>
36. In September of 2018, the Assembly of First Nations, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, the Métis National Council and the Government of Canada jointly released the co-developed Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care Framework. This Framework is a guide for all actors in the ELCC sphere to work towards achieving a shared vision that all Indigenous children have the opportunity to experience high-quality and culturally strong ELCC.
37. Early funding commitments regarding ELCC were outlined in the 2016 and 2017 federal budgets and include federal investments totalling \$7.5 billion over 11 years to support and create more high-quality, affordable child care across the country. By fiscal year 2026 to 2027, the Government of Canada's ELCC funding is on course to reach \$870 million annually. The Framework specifies that PT use of the federal funds be prioritized toward helping families more in need including lower-income families; Indigenous families; lone-parent families; families in underserved communities; those working non-standard hours; and/or families with children with varying abilities.
38. Since fiscal year 2017 to 2018, the federal government has been entering into bilateral agreements with each PT (for a total of \$1.6 billion from fiscal year 2017 to 2018 to fiscal year 2020 to 2021). Spending under the agreements is aligned with the Multilateral Early Learning and Child Care Framework's 5 guiding principles, with high-quality provision being one of those principles. As a result, PTs have invested these funds to further enhance the quality of their ELCC systems. In support of the Indigenous ELCC Framework, the Government of Canada is investing \$1.7 billion over 10 years to strengthen ELCC programs and services for Indigenous children and families starting in fiscal year 2018 to 2019. This funding is distributed from the Government of Canada through Canada's First Nations, Inuit and Métis national organizations.
39. More recently, the COVID-19 pandemic has made access to early learning and child care a universal issue that is resonating across Canada's sectors, regions, and income brackets. Child care is considered to be an essential social infrastructure and investing in early learning and child care provides jobs for workers, the majority of whom are women; it enables parents, particularly mothers, to reach their full economic potential; and it creates a generation of engaged and well prepared young learners.
40. In response, the Government of Canada announced in 2021 significant investments to support a Canada-wide child care system to ensure that all families have access to high-quality, affordable, and flexible early learning and child care. More specifically, the Government of Canada will work with provincial, territorial, and Indigenous partners to bring fees for regulated child care down to \$10 per day on average within the next 5 years. To support this vision, the Government of Canada Budget 2021 proposes new investments totaling up to \$30 billion over the next 5 years, and \$8.3 billion ongoing for Early Learning and Child Care and Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care. The Government of Canada will be working with provincial and territorial, and Indigenous partners to support quality, not-for-profit child care, and ensuring the needs of early childhood educators are at the heart of the system. The Government

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<sup>5</sup> While the Government of Québec supports the general principles of the Early Learning and Child Care Framework, it does not adhere to the Framework as it intends to preserve its sole responsibility in this area on its territory. Quebec is seen as a leader in child care having established its own fully funded ELCC system since 1997.



of Canada also announced investments to support families that have children with disabilities, as it is often challenging to find affordable and accessible child care spaces that meet their needs.

41. These recent developments provide an overview of collaborative efforts by Indigenous organizations, federal, and PT governments at a pan-Canadian level. However, as ECEC programming is delivered sub-nationally in Canada, PT governments continue to invest significantly in their own systems, including for quality, access, and regulatory initiatives (many of which are highlighted in the sections and chapters to follow).

### 2.3 Stated Goals and Purposes of ECEC

42. In 2017, as part of the Multilateral Early Learning and Child Care Framework, Canada's federal, provincial and territorial ministers most responsible for Early Learning and Child Care agreed on a path toward improving ECEC across Canada. They recognized quality ECEC as important in promoting the social, emotional, physical and cognitive development of young children, especially for less advantaged children and families. According to the Multilateral Framework, high quality ECEC means providing rich early learning experiences and environments. It means viewing children as capable, competent learners who are full of potential, valuing relationships that support optimal learning, and it recognizes the importance of proper qualifications and training for those working in the ECEC field. In addition, inclusive ECEC was included as one of the guiding principles, meaning that ECEC systems should respect and value diversity, and should support families and children who are vulnerable, including families that are from lower-income households, Indigenous, located in underserved communities, or families supported by lone parent or those working non-standard hours.
43. The Framework outlines a set of key priorities that all governments in Canada share. Indicators of high quality that are outlined in the Multilateral ELCC Framework include:
  - number and proportion of providers with Early Childhood Education (ECE) certification<sup>6</sup> and/or participating in professional development or training
  - number and proportion of providers adopting innovative new tools, such as an evidence-based curriculum framework for early learning and child care
44. Additional indicators were identified in PT bilateral agreement action plans, which reflect the specific needs of each PT.<sup>7</sup> Further PT-specific goals are represented in their respective early learning frameworks. While common themes can be found throughout, these documents differ from one another in order to serve the unique populations of each region, which is an important aspect of ensuring quality ECEC across Canada. Specific goals found in early learning frameworks are described in more detail in Chapter 3 on curriculum and pedagogy.

### 2.4 Inclusion and Gender Equality

45. Inclusive child care spaces are important to ensure equality of opportunity between children from different socio-economic backgrounds, including Black and other racialized children and Indigenous children as well as children and parents/guardians with cognitive and physical disabilities. For example, a disproportionately higher number of Indigenous children have a disability compared to other Canadian children, making

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<sup>6</sup> While the term “certification” will be used in this document to describe the recognition given to early childhood educators who meet PT standards for education and experience, other terms used across Canada, include “classification” and “registration”.

<sup>7</sup> While the Government of Québec does not have an outlined Action Plan as part of their agreement with the Government of Canada, it has received its share of the federal funding and continues to invest toward programs and services for families and children.

inclusivity of programs and services an important consideration. Access to quality and culturally appropriate care varies significantly between communities.

46. Affordable and accessible ECEC has been identified as a major barrier for full economic gender equality for women. In the 2020 Speech from the Throne, the Government of Canada committed to a feminist, intersectional response to the COVID pandemic and recovery. Research shows that child care availability and cost strongly impact mothers' decisions to enter or remain in the labour market or school. This is especially true for racialized women, single mothers, and mothers of pre-school age children. A concrete example in Canada is with the province of Québec that implemented a low-cost child care system. At the time the *Québec Educational Childcare Act* was instituted in 1997, women's labour force participation rate in Quebec was 4 percentage points lower than the rest of Canada. In 2021, it is 4 points higher. And Québec women with children under 3 have some of the highest employment rates in the world. Furthermore, studies show that child care alone has raised Québec's GDP by 1.7%. Studies have also shown that for every dollar spent on early childhood education, the broader economy receives between \$1.50 and \$2.80 in return.
47. The COVID-19 pandemic has amplified existing inequalities, disproportionately affecting women, immigrants, visible minorities and persons with disabilities. The pandemic has also underscored the essential role that child care plays in the economy and society, including its benefits for children and enabling parents to participate in the labour force, education and skills training.
48. As in the PT focus box below, all PTs across Canada have their own unique inclusion initiatives aimed at underserved or vulnerable populations of need.

PT Focus: Nova Scotia

*The Canada–Nova Scotia Early Learning and Child Care Agreement sets out a shared vision for supporting parents, families and communities in their efforts to ensure the best possible future for their children. The agreement identifies a commitment to work toward the achievement of broad long-term goals for an ELCC system based on principles of high quality, accessibility, affordability, flexibility, and inclusion. A key area of focus under Priority 3 is the establishment of the Inclusion Support Grant (ISG). The purpose of the grant is to provide financial support to licensees who commit to the provision of high quality inclusive programs and assume full responsibility in promoting the social, emotional, physical and cognitive development of young children, which leads to positive lifelong benefits for children, families and communities.*

*Grant funding must be used to imbed inclusion in the ELCC environment using the following defining features of inclusion:*

- *Access: Child care environments are inclusive when:*
  - *leaders support inclusion*
  - *staff believe and support the inclusion of all children*
  - *inclusion policies and practices are anti-discriminatory and support equitable access and full participation of children and families in their community*
- *Participation: Child care environments are inclusive when:*
  - *the program is individualized to maximize each child's participation in all activities; supports are embedded within the program and daily routines, and*
  - *there is a focus on promoting social-emotional and behavioural competence in young children that will maximize their participation and success*

- *Supports: Child Care programs are inclusive when:*
  - *the principles of natural proportions and natural environments are imbedded in the design*
  - *ongoing professional development for staff is provided to support their acquisition of dispositions, knowledge and skills to implement inclusive practices*
  - *resources and policies are in place to promote communication and collaboration between families, program staff and professionals, and*
  - *quality frameworks (for example NS Early Learning Curriculum Framework, Quality Matters, professional standards, the Pyramid Model pilot framework) that reflect and guide inclusive practices for children and families are implemented*

49. As another example, Québec offers subsidies to educational child care providers to encourage participation in higher quality child care and provide better support for children with special needs and for children from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds. To ensure better inclusion of children with special needs, the province has an allowance to finance the required increased working hours of staff working with children with special needs, to fund added resources, and support for time required in designing individual intervention plans.
50. Other PTs are also piloting new and innovative policy mechanisms to improve similar supports. Saskatchewan’s Early Learning Intensive Support pilot program provides access and support through additional staffing and specialized services to children who require intensive support and cannot access pre-kindergarten.
51. Collectively, through CMEC, PTs also develop documents to share advice and guidance from a pan-Canadian perspective to support the development of individual PT curriculum frameworks. For example, CMEC’s Early Learning and Development Framework (2014)<sup>xv</sup> presents a pan-Canadian vision for early learning that can be adapted to the unique needs and circumstances of each PT. It was designed to serve as a resource to support the development of policies and initiatives by ministries and departments of education and their partners that enhance the quality and continuity of the learning experience in the early years and beyond. CMEC’s 2020 Statement on Fostering Lifelong Learning in the Early Years is intended to encourage lifelong learning starting in the early years, for families, schools, and communities. It identifies the early years as a critical learning period for children to develop the foundational competencies, attitudes, skills, strategies, and knowledge that they will need to be lifelong learners.<sup>xvi</sup>

## 2.5 Policy Context for Process Quality

52. The broader ECEC goals described above impact ECEC investment through both direct supports for families, as well as policy initiatives directed at quality improvements through support to ECEC providers. Particularly relevant to process quality is the goal to increase the opportunity for children to experience enjoyment of positive interactions with others, and the development of associated foundational skills such as self-regulation and executive functioning, recognizing the impact on learning, behaviour, and health.
53. More concretely, process quality is supported through a variety of mechanisms, including, for example, the impact that funding for qualified workforce training and professional development has on the quality of interactions children can experience with staff. Some initiatives undertaken in the first year of the bilateral agreements by PTs toward greater quality are presented in the first National Progress Report on Early Learning and Child Care 2017 to 2018, intended to track and report on the progress and

implementation of the Multilateral Framework . At a national level, investments in quality have resulted in 1,780 ELCC educators and staff across Canada participating in or getting increased access to ECE post-secondary education and/or professional development opportunities in fiscal year 2017 to 2018. In Fall 2020, the Government of Canada emphasized the importance of qualified ECEs and announced its intention to work with PTs to develop a national ECE workforce strategy.

54. As part of federal investments in ECEC, \$95 million over 10 years is being used to close data gaps, track progress and better understand child care challenges across the country and support reporting on the progress made. In addition to engaging PT governments, the Government of Canada has engaged key stakeholders, experts and academics, and Indigenous partners on a number of initiatives. These initiatives are meant to inform the decisions that impact quality, along with government engagement to develop common quality indicators, which could include considerations of mechanisms to monitor process quality.
55. Federal investments also focus on quality in Indigenous child care settings. Funding is available for proposal-based Indigenous-led Quality Improvement Projects, to advance the goals of the Indigenous ELCC Framework. The Quality Improvement Projects will advance foundational elements of Indigenous ELCC and could support: cultural and languages resources; professional capacity; centers of excellence or networks; needs assessments; data, research, reporting or evaluation; or links to PT service delivery.
56. PTs also engage in regular consultation processes for a variety of ECEC initiatives, including on quality. For example, in Saskatchewan, the Ministry of Education holds biannual meetings with school divisions and First Nations and Métis stakeholders to discuss topics related to early learning, particularly in pre-kindergarten and kindergarten settings. In addition, the Ministry meets with provincial child care associations and centre directors from across the province to discuss topics relevant to the child care sector, which can include quality in ECEC.
57. Over the past 5 years, Nova Scotia’s government has consulted on a provincial review of regulated child care, child care needs, and their funding model. Consultations included ECEs, parents, ECEC operators (owners and directors), early intervention groups, and training institutions. For example, in 2018, Nova Scotia’s Department of Education and Early Childhood Development announced a review and redesign of Nova Scotia’s child-care regulatory and licensing framework. A set of recommendations resulted from the Regulatory Review, including the overall goal to streamline the current regulations, implement a collaborative and relational approach to licensing, and create conditions that allow for greater flexibility, while maintaining a focus on health and safety for children.
58. Three other jurisdictions have introduced a model of “designation” over the past 10 years that recognizes adherence to additional centre quality and management criteria. Although there are differences from one jurisdiction to another, the overall model plans for quality through requirements for staff qualifications, professional development, parental engagement, implementation of curriculum, continuous quality improvement practices, and inclusive programs; plans for affordability by controlling parent fees; and provides enhanced operational funding.
59. In 2010, Prince Edward Island introduced its “publicly managed, community based” system of “Early Years Centres” – a designated status that reflected the province’s planned approach to identify the number of centres needed in specific geographic locations across the province, based on the population of children from birth to 5 years of age. Early Years Centres have provincially established parent fees and are required to implement a provincially established wage grid that recognizes both certification levels and job responsibilities. Parents are able to apply for a subsidy based on family income; maximum per diem subsidy rates are matched to the mandated parent fees. Operational funding is calculated based on revenue from parent fees and cost for wages/benefits, and controls for a small profit margin (10%) to allow for additional expenses. The province utilizes some of the bilateral agreement funding to support

access for underserved populations and for vulnerable children, focusing on ensuring consideration is made for children in need through support to newcomer families. It also has targeted programs to newcomer children and their families to address vulnerabilities. This includes creation of culturally appropriate guidelines and providing for cultural sensitivity training.

60. In 2018, New Brunswick introduced its designation model as a voluntary application process for licensed early childhood centres and homes. The model controls for parent fees by defining a “market fee threshold” and “maximum market fee” for different areas of the province, including urban large, urban small, and rural. Subsidies are available for parents based on family income, and operational funding is calculated based on the type of facility (centre or home) and the licensed capacity. New Brunswick is focused on removing barriers to families in accessing affordable, high quality and inclusive early learning and child care, with a particular focus on families more in need. It is also working to improve each Early Learning Centre in the province, by providing a better representation of services needed in each community. This includes supporting children of varying abilities and various backgrounds, and support for minority language settings. These centres aim to improve their ability to support children with disabilities and unique needs through the implementation of an inclusion policy.
61. In 2020, Yukon introduced an initiative to enhance the sustainability of rural child care programs by designating 2 non-profit centres to participate in a 2 year pilot project. The project has introduced mandated parent fees and a wage grid that considers level of staff certification, supervisory responsibilities, and provides a benefit package. Operational funding is provided based on consideration of revenue from parent fees, and budget projections that also include wages and benefits. The pilot has an ongoing evaluation to determine its impact on human resources, program quality, affordability and access.

#### PT Focus: Québec

*A Survey on the quality of educational child care services (Growing Up in Quality) was conducted in 2003 and in 2014 in Québec. It aimed to describe the quality of regulated child care services offered to children aged 0 to 5, and to better understand the associated factors. The topics covered by the survey were: physical space, structuring of activities, staff interactions with children and parents, staff characteristics (education, development, experience, knowledge of the educational program, satisfaction, etc.) and provider information (number of years in operation, number of children enrolled, proportion of qualified educators, etc.).*

*This survey made it possible to identify certain strengths and weaknesses of the different types of child care services in Québec, and was useful in maintaining and improving the quality of services offered to children 0 to 5 years old. Several groups were interested in the results of the survey:*

- *educational child care providers (child care managers, educators, heads of a home child care service)*
- *child care groups and associations in Québec*
- *policy makers*
- *college and university professors and researchers*
- *public health agencies*
- *the general public and the media*

*To follow up on the results of the survey and support the improvement in the quality of practices favourable to healthy eating, active play and motor development in educational child care services, the Ministère de la Famille has encouraged use of the results by, for example, creating educational tools for educators according to the different orientations of the Gazelle and Potiron reference framework for areas of physical and motor development. Other frames of reference, related to cognitive, language as*

*well as social and emotional domains are also being developed in order to support educators and promote educational quality.*

*In addition, as part of Québec's more recent educational quality assessment and improvement measure, an advisory committee with members from the ECEC field (ex: university researchers and daycare associations) was formed. The mandate of this committee is to advise the Ministère de la Famille on issues related to the implementation of this measure. Their advice has enabled the ministry to better define the guidelines for this approach and to ensure that the operators subscribe to it.*

*\*For further detail on Québec's educational quality measures, please refer to links provided in endnote xviii.*

## 2.6 Distribution of Responsibilities

62. As indicated, governance of ECEC systems falls predominantly under the responsibility of Canada's PTs, with the federal government supporting the PTs, but also providing direct funding for Indigenous ECEC programs and services as a matter of policy. Various process quality measures are decided at the level of PT governments, typically aimed at affecting the interactions children experience through indirect structural policy measures. Financing decisions are also made by the respective PT governments. These decisions depend on the geography, demography, history, culture, and the existing ECEC system of each PT.
63. PTs regulate licensed providers through child care licensing and regulations which govern the operation of child care services. These regulations include a wide range of structural and physical requirements, such as physical space, group sizes, staff-child ratios for different age groups and settings, and workforce composition. While not identical, these regulations are similar across Canada.
64. Beyond the regulated structural characteristics, many administrative decisions are generally made either at the centre or the home based provider level, and include decisions regarding hours of operation, staff recruitment and job descriptions, employment decisions, wages and benefits, budget allocations, curriculum implementation, and other similar tasks. In Ontario, ECEC centres may also be operated by municipal governments, and such decisions are made at that level. Across Canada, a growing number of non-governmental organizations hold multiple licenses for child care, or may include child care as one of a number of child and family services. In these cases, administrative decisions are made by the organization's management structure.
65. However, in some cases PTs have an impact on these decisions indirectly through funding arrangements, as in jurisdictions with designation (PE, NB, YT), Ontario's Early ON centres, Québec's centres de la petite enfance (CPEs) and subsidized child care (publicly subsidized provision), or in PT initiatives that manage parent fees (NL, NS, BC). In Kindergarten settings, responsibility for these types of decisions are more centralized, and typically negotiated through collective agreements, or are made by school boards and/or departments of education.
66. Sub-national funding directed at quality in ECEC, through curriculum and pedagogy, as well as workforce development is covered in subsequent chapters.

## 2.7 Monitoring, Accountability and Evaluation

67. Monitoring of quality ECEC in Canada is split between PT governing bodies and individual centres. As was referenced in the previous section, monitoring is regulated at the PT level through licensing inspections, which occur at regular intervals (annual or biannual). While process quality is not monitored directly and at regular intervals in most PTs, certain key structural aspects important for process quality are. For example, most PTs have requirements for a minimum amount of in-service training for ECEC staff. This typically includes a minimum number of hours of professional development, and while the subject content can be broad, it is generally expected to improve the quality of staff interactions in ECEC settings.
68. In addition to minimum requirements found in licensing regulations, which are typically monitored through inspections and check lists, PTs across Canada have used a variety of monitoring tools at varying times. These include observational tools/scales like the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale Revised (ECERS-R), Infant Toddler Environment Rating Scale (ITERS), Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS), Collaborative Assessment Tool (CAT), “Outil d’indicateurs”, or the LOVIT Way Program Evaluation Process.
69. In the past, most Canadian PTs have not regulated or enforced additional monitoring such as observations or quality scales. As a result, the majority of non-inspections-based monitoring occurs at the providers’ level, and is voluntary. Some recent, regional developments in several PTs, however, show a trend toward increased and varied quality monitoring, with several introducing mandatory monitoring (NB, NS, PE, and QC), including legislative requirements which were passed in Québec.
70. Recent government-run and funded pilot programs, such as those in Alberta, British Columbia, and Ontario, have experimented with additional monitoring to ensure quality and measure effectiveness of the programs. Alberta, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Québec are also undergoing, or have recently conducted reviews of their regulatory frameworks, in which aspects of quality are assessed as part of the licensing systems. In some, additional monitoring is included in this process. For example, Québec, a long-time leader in ECEC system reforms in Canada, completed a pilot project in 2016 aimed at testing an approach to assess and improve the quality of education. This pilot project resulted in a legal obligation for all ECEC providers to participate in a new quality improvement and evaluation process. The implementation is gradual, with the first phase of implementation initiated in 2019 with the centres de la petite enfance (CPEs) and daycare centres welcoming groups of children aged 3 to 5 years. This process focuses both on structural and process quality.<sup>xvii</sup>
71. The Government of Canada has committed to jointly develop distinctions-based results frameworks with First Nations, Métis and Inuit partners to tell an Indigenous-led results story focused on performance indicators related to access to, availability of and quality of culturally-relevant early learning and child care programs and services.

PT Focus: New Brunswick

*The 2010 decision to transfer responsibility for all early childhood programs and services to the newly created Department of Education and Early Childhood Development laid the foundation for fundamental change. Putting Children First: Positioning Early Childhood for the Future (2012) established the policy context for building a continuum of learning, starting from birth expanding the definition of early childhood to focus on children from birth to age 8. Integration of the early childhood and education sectors presented the opportunity to create a developmental and learning continuum that begins at birth and has a positive, long-term impact.*

*Linguistic duality is a legal requirement under New Brunswick’s public education system and has been replicated (although not legislated) within early childhood, whereby 2 streams of leadership for early*

*childhood services delivery, one for each linguistic sector were created consistent with the 7 school districts. This has provided greater opportunities for linkages between the early childhood regions and school districts supporting the focus on a learning continuum from birth onward.*

*New Brunswick's Education Plans "Everyone at Their Best" and "Donnons à nos enfants une longueur d'avance" (2016) continued to build upon the importance of a continuum of learning from birth. For the first time in New Brunswick's history, early childhood is imbedded in both education plans - a long term strategy that recognizes the value of early learning in the first years of a child's life and its crucial impacts on development. As in the case with the province's ELCC curriculum frameworks, NB has 2 distinct education plans reflective of the priorities and realities of each sector. The same year following extensive consultation with parents, ELCC operators, educators and stakeholders, the report of the Child Care Review Task Force's "Valuing Children, Families and Childcare" set out 30 recommendations to outline a path to create the right conditions for quality ELCC that are accessible, affordable and inclusive and that support parents' participation in the workforce.*

*The proclamation of the Early Childhood Services Act and Licensing Regulations (2018) set the context for modernizing the requirements for the licensing and monitoring of ELCC service. This, together with the requirements of the NB Early Learning Centre (NBELC) designation has created the conditions for increased attention to the monitoring of process quality and child development, namely those elements related to the implementation of the chosen curriculum frameworks and curriculum specific professional learning opportunities focused on reflective practice and pedagogical leadership, inclusion policy and quality improvement criterion.*

*A stated objective under the NB Early Learning and Child Care Action Plan is to introduce requirements for annual quality improvement plans for all ELCC facilities. The Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale Revised (ECERS-R) and the Infant Toddler Environment Rating Scale (ITERS) were introduced and administered over 2 consecutive years. Based on their individual results the NBELC's are guided to develop their annual quality improvement plans.*

*To fully address both structural and process quality, the use of these environment rating tools is complemented by the Collaborative Assessment Tool (CAT) of the Anglophone curriculum framework, including the addition of the CAT Reflective Guide intended to support reflective practice, and the recently piloted Outil d'appréciation of the francophone curriculum, whereby educators were invited to complete a reflection of their practices related to the content of their training.*



## Chapter 3: Curriculum and Pedagogy

### 3.1 Curriculum Development and Design

72. Since 2000, there has been significant progress across Canada in the development and implementation of early learning curriculum frameworks for regulated ECEC programs. By 2020, all jurisdictions have either several years of experience in the implementation of such frameworks (NS, PE, NB, QC, ON, MB, SK, AB, BC); have reviewed and revised their original framework (QC, ON, BC); have recently released or soon to be piloted draft frameworks (NL, NT); or are in early days of developing such a framework (NU, YT).
73. New Brunswick, the only officially bilingual (English/French) province in Canada, is also the only jurisdiction in Canada that incorporates “duality” in their system of education. As such, New Brunswick has an English curriculum framework (*New Brunswick Early Learning and Child Care Curriculum Framework - English*) and a French curriculum framework (*Curriculum éducatif – Services de garde francophones du Nouveau-Brunswick*).
74. The development of curriculum frameworks in Canada has been strongly influenced by similar work undertaken internationally, and particularly in New Zealand and Australia. Nova Scotia acknowledges the influence of Australia’s Being, Belonging and Becoming curriculum framework. In developing New Brunswick’s *Early Learning and Child Care Framework-English*, authors travelled to New Zealand, England and Sweden to better understand the pedagogical trends in those countries, as well as to observe first-hand the implementation of such practices in early childhood settings.<sup>8</sup>
75. Across Canada, PTs have often defined common goals in their curriculum frameworks, and there is broad commonality in recommended pedagogical practices. Alberta, for example, credits New Brunswick’s strong influence on the Alberta Flight curriculum.

#### 3.1.2 Collaboration and Consultation

76. All jurisdictions have used collaborative approaches to the development of curriculum framework documents. In some cases, the work was led by post-secondary faculty who in turn worked with advisory groups (NB, SK, AB). Some PTs engaged curriculum specialists who in turn worked with advisory groups with representation from the broad ECEC sector (PE, NS, YT). In other cases, governments led the process, and consulted with other branches of government with responsibility for children’s services and sectoral representatives (NL, QC, ON, MB, BC).
77. Regardless of the specific process used to develop the curriculum framework, all jurisdictions have facilitated broad consultation as part of the developmental phases of creating their curriculum frameworks, particularly in Indigenous and multi-cultural communities. In Yukon, consultation was held with First Nations communities across the territory, including remote fly-in only locations.

#### PT Focus: New Brunswick

*New Brunswick was Canada’s earliest adopter of a social pedagogical approach to early learning for its English early learning framework. In 2005, the Department of Social Development contracted with the*

<sup>8</sup> New Brunswick specifically notes the influences from Starting Strong papers and Early Childhood Country Profiles, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD); Scholarship disseminated by the Child Care Resource and Research Unit, Toronto, Ontario; Te Whāriki, New Zealand Curriculum; Essential Learnings and Essential Connections, Tasmanian Curriculum; The Practice of Relationships, The New South Wales Curriculum; Curriculum for Pre-School, The Swedish Curriculum.

*University of New Brunswick to develop the curriculum framework. The development and implementation of the curriculum framework included a literature review, consultation, and stakeholder feedback. The work was overseen by a Curriculum Advisory Committee made up of sector representation, government officials, colleges and universities. Twenty foundational papers were developed drawing on contemporary research that highlighted aspects of each of the 4 broad based goals. Exemplary curricula identified included those in Italy, New Zealand, Finland, Tasmania, Sweden, the United States and New South Wales, all of which were found to emphasize the diverse personal, social, and cultural contexts of children's lives and the importance of warm and caring relationships. (NB, p.184)*

*Influential research included that of John Bennett whose work suggested the current format of curriculum frameworks and that of Finnish researcher Eeva Hujala (2002) who proposed a curriculum model based on a conception of children as active participants in their own learning, the quality of the children's interactions with others, and the role of the teacher as the designer of an active growth environment for children.*

*Le curriculum éducatif des services de garde francophone du Nouveau-Brunswick s'appuie sur sept convictions inspirées de la pédagogie du jeu et de l'unicité d'apprentissage de chaque enfant. Le cycle d'intervention qui guide le rôle de l'éducatrice et se retrouve dans la formation en ligne sous cinq modules. L'évolution de la mise en œuvre du curriculum éducatif se poursuit et son évaluation par l'entremise de l'outil d'application vient illustrer les forces et les améliorations à apporter afin de continuellement surpasser les critères de base et ainsi offrir des services de qualité. Chaque formation et accompagnement offert auprès du secteur par les agentes pédagogiques dans les régions font un lien avec le cycle d'intervention, les convictions ainsi que les pratiques exemplaires.*

### 3.1.3 Kindergarten and Pre-Kindergarten Curriculum

78. Curriculum in publicly funded Kindergarten programs is always developed by the relevant PT ministry responsible for public education. CMEC reports that all jurisdictions have dedicated curriculum documents for Kindergarten. Generally, the kindergarten curriculum is linked to or consistent with a series of learning outcomes for the K-12 education system. Some provinces (NL, PE, ON, SK, AB) have clearly defined "Kindergarten" curriculum documents, which draw heavily on early childhood pedagogy. In Nova Scotia, a curriculum has been developed for "primary<sup>9</sup> to Grade 3". In Newfoundland and Labrador and British Columbia, the early learning curriculum framework is intended to be used as a companion document in the public school system for K-3. Manitoba's kindergarten resource document is aligned to early learning framework documents and provides pedagogical guidance to kindergarten teachers as they implement K-4, K-8 and K-12 curriculum documents in their play-based classrooms.
79. In jurisdictions with school-based pre-kindergarten (pre-K) programs<sup>10</sup> (NS, ON, SK, NT), curriculum may be developed by ministries responsible for public education and consistent with pedagogical practices in early learning centres (SK) or the pre-K program may follow the same curriculum framework as all licensed ECEC programs (NS). Ontario's full-day kindergarten for 4 and 5 year old children is guided by its own "Kindergarten Program" as a curriculum to support learning and teaching.

<sup>9</sup> In NS, kindergarten is referred to as "grade primary", and pre-K is referred to as "pre-primary".

<sup>10</sup> There are pre-K programs offered in selected geographic areas of QC, MB, and YT. NL is exploring the feasibility of introducing a universal pre-K program. Prince Edward Island has announced that a universal half day pre-K program will be available for 4 year olds, delivered through the province's ECEC centres. Nova Scotia began the implementation of universal publicly delivered early childhood education for 4-year-olds in public schools beginning in 2017. The program has been accessible in all school communities since September 2020.

The Kindergarten Program is consistent in its goals and pedagogical practice with those identified in “How Does Learning Happen?” – Ontario’s curriculum framework for early childhood centres.

80. Since PTs have constitutional authority for both ECEC and Education, Canada does not have a national curriculum for either ELCC or Kindergarten.

### 3.2 Goals, Pedagogy and Process Quality

81. The early learning curriculum frameworks in Canada typically describe broad learning goals or pathways rather than normative developmental or academic goals. Across Canada, these goals generally fall into categories of well-being and belonging; play, discovery, and experimentation; language, literacies, communication, and expression; and personal and social responsibilities. Based on a shared image of a child, educators are encouraged to engage with parents, participate in critical inquiry, and to prepare learning environments that recognize diversity, promote inclusion, and allow children the freedom to make their own choices. Learning is viewed as happening within the context of relationships with other children, adults, families and community.

#### PT Focus: Alberta

*Flight: Alberta’s Early Learning and Care Framework notes that “An early learning and child care curriculum framework is different than a traditional curriculum. In early childhood, curriculum is focused on broad holistic goals rather than specific outcomes for each subject area. Early learning and child care curriculum frameworks embrace children’s everyday experiences as the sources of curriculum meaning making. Early childhood educators use the goals in the curriculum framework to describe and interpret children’s everyday experiences. In early childhood, curriculum content is integrated, emerging from children’s fascination with the world. When educators notice children’s interest in exploring nature, people, places, and objects as well as print, stories, numbers, shapes, and patterns, and when they name the connections between these experiences and early literacy, mathematics, science, social studies, music, and art, they are co-constructing early learning curriculum with young children and making the curriculum visible to others.”*

82. In all jurisdictions, the curriculum frameworks set out an integrated approach to children’s learning, rather than age specific activities and developmental expectations. There are differences, however, in the ages identified as a focus to the frameworks. Some (PE, NB, QC, AB) focus on programs for children from infancy to preschool years (that is, 0 to 5 years), while others (NL, NS, ON, MB, SK, BC, YT, NT) consider the early years to span the period from infancy to early school years (that is, 0 to 6 or 0 to 8 years).

83. Two provinces have developed distinct curriculum frameworks for different age groupings of children. Manitoba has a curriculum framework for infant programs that include children aged from 12 weeks to 2 years, and a second framework document specific to children aged from 2 to 6 years old. Saskatchewan has developed an infant and toddler curriculum framework for children aged up to 3 years old; a second curriculum focuses on children from 3 to 6 years old. All PTs have a separate curriculum for kindergarten.

84. Pedagogy in ECEC is guided by the early learning curriculum frameworks. Pedagogical practices include play based learning; intentional teaching; reflective practice; creation of indoor and outdoor learning environments; and observation and documentation. Frameworks across Canada emphasize the

importance of early learning environments that recognize a child’s strengths, capabilities and interests, and that celebrate family, community, and culture. Relationships and experiences are considered key to a child’s development and learning.

85. PTs have primarily adopted a social pedagogical approach to early learning experiences. PEI notes that “social pedagogical approaches to early education are grounded in constructivist theories of learning.”<sup>xviii</sup> New Brunswick explains that “A social pedagogical approach recognizes the context of children’s learning and the importance of attending to the today-ness of children’s lives and their diverse personal, social, and cultural experiences. A curriculum grounded in this approach has the simultaneous effect of promoting overall well-being and capacity for learning.”<sup>xix</sup>
86. All frameworks acknowledge multiple theoretical influences for child development and learning. PTs agree that the curriculum framework is intended to be implemented by ECEs who have had specific post-secondary education in topics related to child development and early childhood pedagogy.

### 3.2.1 Pedagogical Practices

#### 3.2.1.1 Play Based Learning

87. ECEs in Canada have long held a strong belief in the value of a play-based approach to early learning, and this is reflected in the pedagogy promoted by the curriculum frameworks in place. All frameworks identify children’s play as key for early learning. Manitoba notes that “play provides for unlimited possibilities for learning and development.”<sup>xx</sup>
88. Ministers of Education in Canada have concluded that there is intrinsic value and importance of play in its relationship to learning in both the CMEC Statement on Play-Based Learning (2012), and the CMEC Learning and Development Framework (2014). Ministers have stated that “*Educators should intentionally plan and create challenging, dynamic, play-based learning opportunities. Intentional teaching is the opposite of teaching by rote or continuing with traditions simply because things have always been done that way. Intentional teaching involves educators’ being deliberate and purposeful in creating play-based learning environments – because when children are playing, children are learning.*”<sup>xxi</sup>
89. Many frameworks acknowledge developmental stages of play (solitary, parallel, social), and also describe different types of play, including pretend (dramatic) play, rough play, quiet play, and socio-dramatic play<sup>11</sup>. Prince Edward Island’s *Early Learning Framework: Relationships, Environments, Experiences* notes that “Complex socio-dramatic play gives children opportunities for language development, conflict resolution, negotiation skills, social skills, problem solving, inquiry based learning, logic and reason, and opportunities to explore emotional responses to experiences. The ability to converse, explain, and think in stories helps children to develop the foundation for reading comprehension and indirectly prepares children for social studies, history, and an appreciation for literature.”<sup>xxii</sup>

#### PT Focus: “Dizzy Play”

*New Brunswick’s Early Learning Framework has coined the term “dizzy play” and describes the activity as children taking pleasure in being on the edge, engaging in rough and tumble play, experiencing*

<sup>11</sup> Socio-dramatic play occurs when 2 or more children engage in pretend play, acting out different roles and scenarios. It is considered one of the highest forms of children’s play, providing children with opportunities for language development, problem solving, and understanding the perspectives of others.

*exhilarating physical release, clowning around, and taking pleasure in sharing the joy of laughter. Alberta's Flight Curriculum notes that dizzy play demonstrates "the important learning and development that happens for children when they create disorder and reorder within playful experiences", and that children "revel in their power to turn the world upside down, playfully confident that they can restore it. Educators recognize and accept this kind of play, valuing it for what it provides for the children: a release of physical energy, a sense of power, and often an expression of pure joy. It also requires tolerance, as this can be a noisy and seemingly senseless activity. Educators, aware of the resilience of children, must also assure that they are safe as they push their physical limits."*

90. According to Ontario's *How Does Learning Happen? Pedagogy for the Early Years* (2014)<sup>xxiii</sup> children succeed in programs that focus on active learning through exploration, play, and inquiry. When children can explore the world around them with their natural curiosity and exuberance, they are fully engaged. Through this type of play and inquiry, they develop skills such as problem solving, creative thinking, and innovating, which are essential for learning and success in school and beyond (ON, 2014). This philosophy continues into Ontario's Kindergarten program where play-based learning is used every day to develop the skills and competencies that children will need in order to thrive in the future, including the ability to engage in innovative and complex problem solving and critical and creative thinking; to work collaboratively with others; and to take what is learned and apply it in new situations in a constantly changing world (ON, 2016).<sup>xxiv</sup>
91. British Columbia's *Early Learning Framework (2019)*<sup>xxv</sup> reimagines early childhood programs as co-learning spaces, where learning is a holistic process that happens within the context of quality relationships. It was redeveloped in consultation with Indigenous groups to acknowledge and combat the historical and on-going marginalization of Indigenous peoples. It emphasizes the need for inclusive spaces and practices for all children, including children with diverse abilities and needs. The Framework offers new ways of thinking about the complexities of early care as well as the thinking, doing, and learning that happens as children, educators, materials, and ideas interconnect. It identifies play as vital to children's learning, growing, and making meaning. Educators are encouraged to observe, reflect and build on children's interests and play themes through the addition of materials and ideas that provoke deeper learning.
92. Manitoba's early learning and child care framework, *Early Returns: Manitoba's Early Learning and Child Care Curriculum Framework for Preschool Centres and Nursery Schools*, defines early childhood curriculum as all the interactions, experiences, activities, routines and events, planned and unplanned, that occur in an environment designed to foster children's learning and development. The guiding principles of early childhood learning support learning through play; view children as competent learners; build positive relationships; prepare a stimulating environment; support diversity and inclusion; and provide an intentional program where engaged ECEs balance child-initiated play with more focused experiential learning (MB, n.d.). Similarly, play-based learning is the recommended pedagogical approach to the province's Kindergarten curriculum.

### 3.2.1.2 Observation, Reflection, Intentionality

93. ECEs facilitate children's explorations, inventions, research and investigations by observing children in their play and then reflecting on those observations – what has sparked interest, what concepts did the children learn, or what was not of any interest at all? ECEs create and re-create learning environments based on these observations and reflections, to be intentional in the design of the learning environment and in guiding children's learning.

94. Nova Scotia's *Educators' Guide to Capable Confident and Curious – Nova Scotia's Early Learning Curriculum Framework* describes professional judgement as a key component of early childhood pedagogy, and central to facilitating children's learning. It requires educators to be reflective and intentional, to consider what they do, why they practice as they do, and how their actions impact children and their families. Professional judgement is driven by a vision of children's potential.

#### 3.2.1.3 Early Learning Environments

95. Early learning environments may be indoor or outdoor areas where children gather. Learning environments are not just physical spaces, but also include indoor and outdoor activities, children's schedules, transitions, and the organization of groups of children. The learning environment invites children to engage with it, and with each other. It is dynamic, exciting, and intriguing. The learning environment reflects the children – as it is designed based on the educator's observations of children's interests, explorations, and abilities.

96. Newfoundland and Labrador's *Navigating the Early Years: An Early Childhood Learning Framework* views the learning environment as “the physical space and materials, instructional practices, daily routines, expectations, and the inter-relationships between children, adults, and all of these elements. Children's learning environments influence what they learn, how they learn, who they learn from, and when they learn.” (NL Framework, 2018, p.17) The framework states that a quality learning environment should foster a sense of belonging in children, allowing them to feel free to choose from a variety of learning opportunities which interest them. Environments should reflect a child's individuality, family, culture, language, and community and they should ensure there are multiple ways for children to learn (p. 18).<sup>xxvi</sup>

97. Early childhood pedagogy, however, is not focused on merely providing experiences for children. It also encourages ECEs and teachers to observe children, engage in conversations, and guide children's activities based on what they learn. By responding positively, and supporting children's ideas, ECEs support learning. In this way, the curriculum is co-constructed by children and educators. At the same time, educators explore and learn from families and communities, which helps to inform the construction of curriculum.

#### 3.2.1.4 Documentation

98. All early learning frameworks in Canada call on ECEs to document children's learning – to make the learning visible for parents, and to be able to monitor children's developmental progress. Saskatchewan refers to pedagogical documentation, while New Brunswick refers to “learning stories”. British Columbia uses the term “pedagogical narration” to describe critically-reflective practice. Pedagogical narration is cyclical and intentional. It involves observing and recording ordinary moments, reflecting on what has been observed, sharing this description with others, collectively building new meanings so as to make children's learning visible, linking these lessons to the Framework, and incorporating this learning into the educator's planning process. The BC Framework also emphasizes that parents, grandparents and other family members are central in sharing interpretations of children's behaviours in unique ways, adding to the process of documenting and understanding children's ways of learning. Québec uses personal education files for children, which aim to collect information on the child's development in various areas in order to strengthen communication with parents, to support the detection of difficulties and facilitate transitions.

### 3.3 Family and Community

99. All curriculum frameworks in Canada emphasize the important role of family and community in children's learning and development. One of the principles of Newfoundland and Labrador's *Navigating*

*the Early Years: An Early Childhood Learning Framework* states that it is through early experiences with parents and caregivers that children learn about developing relationships for the rest of their lives. Ontario’s framework states that “The web of family and community is the child’s anchor for early development.”<sup>xxvii</sup> In Québec, the role of parents as the first educators of their child is clearly stated in the basic principles of the educational program, as the first principle states that the partnership between the child care centre and the parents is essential for the harmonious development of the child. Each child care centre takes responsibility for introducing and implementing different ways of listening and integrating parents into the program.

100. The framework in Prince Edward Island describes early learning centres as “social ecological learning environments”, emphasizing the importance of educators’ relationships with parents, as well as with each other. British Columbia’s Early Learning Framework notes that every family should feel welcomed and supported to contribute in early learning programs. Alberta’s Flight curriculum explains that the framework is deeply grounded in theories of learning that recognize the significance of family, social and cultural practices, and traditions. It focuses educators’ work on the integrated nature of children’s play and active learning, building inspiring curriculum content that relates to children’s and families’ experiences.<sup>xxviii</sup> The Flight curriculum framework encourages educators to find opportunities to learn from elders and community leaders that can provide authentic and meaningful experiences that connect curriculum to living and life. Educators are thus encouraged to seek and build relationships with community members to enhance and extend children’s learning experiences.

PT Focus: New Brunswick

*New Brunswick’s Curriculum Framework for Early Learning and Child Care emphasizes the family as the child’s first and most influential teacher. Educators work together with families to foster respectful relationships. Consistent and trusting relationships between families and educators are considered critical to the well-being and early learning and development of young children. In New Brunswick, educators value families by representing and using children’s home and heritage languages in their environment, building responsive, reciprocal and respectful relationships with families and documenting how relationships with families and children’s home environments are valued.*

### 3.4 Inclusion and Honouring Diversity

#### 3.4.1 Supports for Children with Additional Needs

101. The concepts of inclusion and diversity are woven throughout curriculum frameworks, as well as in policy surrounding access and affordability to encourage participation in early childhood programs. In both Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick, centres with provincial designation are required to provide inclusive programs for children who apply. Early Years Centres (PE) and Early Learning Centres (NB) must have inclusion policies. The *New Brunswick Human Rights Act* clearly articulates the duty to accommodate and in both provinces, funding is provided for the hiring of support staff to strengthen inclusionary practices. Training and funding is provided to early learning and childcare facilities to support inclusive practices for all children. The Diversity and Social Responsibility Goal of New Brunswick’s two Early Learning and Childcare Curriculum frameworks provides educators with a framework to guide their practice.
102. Most PTs dedicate resources, programs or staff in order to support children who have special needs or who may need additional supports in order to participate in the early childhood program. Children who require additional supports in order to be able to participate in ECEC programs may include those with developmental challenges, learning disabilities, behavioural challenges, or medical conditions.

103. Inclusion is generally recognized as more than the child's presence - it ensures active, meaningful participation by every child in the daily program and with one another. In order to do this, all PTs provide funding for regulated child care centres to provide for wages for additional staff, approved professional development and/or approved education or resource materials directly related to the delivery of the inclusive program. In Yukon and in Newfoundland and Labrador, funding can be used to purchase a number of spaces to reduce the number of children in the group. When appropriate, Newfoundland and Labrador and Prince Edward Island encourage the use of funding for additional staff to lower the child-staff ratio in the group, rather than to assign individual staff to each child. In some cases, support to the centre on behalf of the child would also include on-site consultation from other professionals such as speech language pathologists, occupational therapists, pediatric physiotherapists, social workers, children's mental health specialists, or others who may be involved with the child and family. In recent years, such professionals have shifted practice to be able to observe, assess, and consult on the child's program at the centre, rather than in an office visit. These on-site consultations allow the centre to integrate the child's supports into the curriculum and learning environments. In British Columbia, the Supported Child Development Program and the Aboriginal Supported Child Development Program are community-based supports that offer a range of consulting and support services for children, families and child care centres so that children with support needs can participate in fully inclusive child care settings.<sup>xxix</sup>

PT Focus: Alberta

*In Alberta, the Ministry of Children's Services (formerly known as Alberta Human Services) funded a non-profit community program in fiscal year 2013 to 2014 named Getting Ready for Inclusion Today (GRIT) to provide staff support at 5 ELCC centres in order to foster inclusive practices for children with additional needs and better enable meaningful participation for all children. Since then, the Ministry has continued to invest in GRIT's Access, Support and Participation program (ASaP), extending support to 162 licensed and approved child care programs across Alberta, including the 122 ECEC Centres for the duration of the 3-year pilot. Participating programs strengthen inclusion through professional development and on-site, practice-based coaching to provide them with the skills, knowledge, and confidence to provide equitable access and support participation of all children within quality, inclusive environments. In fiscal year 2020 to 2021 ASaP is included as an element of a new Inclusive Child Care program, given its success in improving the capacity of child care programs to intentionally teach social and emotional development and respond effectively to challenging behaviours.*

104. The 2020 to 2021 Nova Scotia Action Plan, under the bilateral agreement with the Government of Canada, continued to allocate funding for Inclusion Support Grants, which provided regulated child care centres with capacity building support for the provision of inclusive programming for children with complex needs and from diverse backgrounds. Funding supports centre investments in the acquisition of resources and additional staffing to support developmental, social and physical inclusion for vulnerable, low-income children who require specialized supports. As part of a strategy to imbed inclusion within the early childhood education system, the Province started providing grants to early childhood education (ECE) training institutions to develop bursary opportunities focusing on representatives from these communities. Grants of up to \$5500 per year for tuition, books, and fees were made available to enroll in a 2-year ECE diploma program. In 2019, 32 individuals (7 Indigenous, 11 African Nova Scotian, 5 Acadian and Francophone, 9 newcomers) had completed their first year. In addition to providing, Africentric ECE Bursaries, some programs have been tailored to be more culturally representative. For example, NSCC's [Akerley Campus](#) is now offering [Early Childhood Education](#) in an entirely Afrocentric learning environment delivered online and in-person.

3.4.2 Financial Supports for Families



105. All PTs provide some type of full or partial subsidy to assist with the cost of licensed child care for parents who meet financial eligibility criteria based on family income. In some jurisdictions, social eligibility criteria may also be in place, including such factors as parental employment or family circumstances. Some provinces (NL, PE, QC, MB) have set fees for parents (in Québec this results in reduced parental contribution for subsidized educational services as well as tax credits for child care fees for non-subsidized child care).
106. In January 2021, Newfoundland and Labrador introduced a set fee for all children regardless of age. This \$25/day fee is for full-day child care. NL continues to provide subsidy for those who need additional support.
107. The Northwest Territories does not have an independent child care subsidy, but instead has consideration of child care fees built into their Income Assistance Program. Nunavut provides a subsidy for young parents who are completing their middle school or high school studies, and for youth in post-secondary studies under 18 years of age. The purpose of the program is to support and encourage Nunavut parents to reach their full potential, and to encourage the development of their children.
108. In Québec, in addition to reduced fees for many parents, parents receiving certain social assistance and employment integration programs are eligible for free access to part time child care for up to 5 days. An additional allowance is also granted to early childhood centers and subsidized daycare centers which receive children whose parents benefit from the exemption from parental contribution in order to take into account the higher expenses that may be necessary to integrate children from disadvantaged backgrounds in ECEC services.
109. Yukon has introduced initiatives to support children who may come from low-income families, cultural minorities, migrant children and/or children with special needs in accessing licensed child care programs. These programs cover the cost of licensed child care and include the Grandparent Grant, which is available to grandparents who are the primary caregivers of their grandchildren; the Teen Parent Grant for young parents under the age of 24 who are completing their high school diploma; and the Intensive Treatment Spaces program, for children whose parents or guardians are accessing support for addictions.
110. British Columbia has replaced their child care subsidy program with the Affordable Child Care Benefit - a monthly payment to help eligible families with the cost of child care. Factors such as income, family size, and type of care determine the level of support for each family. One of the features of the new initiative resulted in an increase in the amount of available support offered under the Young Parents Program, which supports parents under the age of 25 with the cost of child care while they finish high school, through a child care space near their school. British Columbia has also introduced the Child Care Fee Reduction Initiative to further enhance affordability by offering funding to eligible, licensed child care providers to reduce parents' monthly child care fees. And finally, British Columbia is now piloting a policy initiative to offer child care spaces for parents at significantly reduced cost (\$10/day). In doing so, the province has converted selected spaces (with priority given to infant and toddler spaces) into low-cost spaces at existing child care facilities across the province. The initiative is evaluating what is described as one of the largest social policy changes in British Columbia's history by testing funding and operational models that may move the province toward a universal child care system. While initially approved until March 2020, the initiative has been renewed until March 2022, with some modifications to eligibility criteria and administrative funding as the province continues to gain a deeper understanding of what contributes to quality care, a sustainable and engaged workforce, a viable funding model, and effective organizational structures.

### 3.4.3 Cultural and Linguistic Diversity

111. Across Canada, there are examples of ECEC programs and approaches that support cultural and linguistic diversity. Nova Scotia’s Early Learning Curriculum Framework highlights the community, cultural, and linguistic contributions of the province’s 4 “founding cultures” including Indigenous people, the Acadian/Francophone population, African Nova Scotians, and the Gaels. Nova Scotia’s framework suggests that respecting cultural and linguistic differences is more than celebrating different holidays—it involves a deep understanding of the culture’s values, the experiences of its members, and their ways of knowing.<sup>xxx</sup>
112. Many PTs have specifically focused on Indigenous communities. In British Columbia, the *Aboriginal Supported Child Development Program* specifically supports children and families with Indigenous ancestry, with services delivered within a cultural model that upholds Indigenous tradition, language, and protocol to ensure supports are provided in a culturally relevant and meaningful way.<sup>xxxi</sup> The province has also expanded Indigenous ELCC programming through the expansion of the Aboriginal Head Start (AHS) program. AHS is an evidence based Indigenous-led ELCC program committed to developing and delivering quality culturally based programming. Research demonstrates the AHS model successfully reaches Indigenous populations and effectively supports children facing adversity to achieve similar health and education outcomes as their peers not faced with the same adversity.
113. The *Manitoba First Nations Education Resource Centre Inc.* (MFNERC) has developed resources to support early learning and development that help provide Indigenous students who attend schools located in First Nations with a strong foundation in their early years for optimal growth, development, and lifelong learning. MFNERC also promotes parents as their children’s first teachers and assist First Nations families in supporting their children’s literacy development from birth, throughout the school years.<sup>xxxii</sup>
114. Manitoba Education collaborated with Alberta and Saskatchewan in developing a common Curriculum Framework for Bilingual Programming and for Aboriginal Languages and Culture under the auspices of the Western and Northern Canadian Protocol (WNCP) for Collaboration in Basic Education. These common curriculum frameworks have been the basis for the development of all bilingual curricula in Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba.<sup>xxxiii</sup>
115. Consequently, several school boards in Manitoba offer Ojibway/English or Cree/English Bilingual programs, which begin in Nursery or Kindergarten with a goal to “shape our students into language and knowledge keepers who ensure the stories and words of yesterday and today are shared for generations to come.”
116. In the Northwest Territories, the curricula for Junior Kindergarten and Kindergarten are reflective of Indigenous culture and begin with what children already know, including recognizing their past experiences, cultures, and languages. For instance, children in the Northwest Territories learn about the value of the land through activities led by Indigenous Elders and knowledge holders.<sup>xxxiv</sup>

PT Focus: Saskatchewan

*In order to address inclusion in the early years to ensure that diversity, cultural sensitivity and supports for children with special needs are built into all aspects of the early years, the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education funds the Early Childhood Intervention Program (ECIP), a network of community-based supports for families of children aged 0 to 6 years who experience developmental delays or are at risk of delay. This program supports inclusive ELCC opportunities for young children requiring additional supports by referring families to Early Learning Intensive Support (ELIS) pilots. The pilots build on the strength of existing Prekindergarten programs by expanding access for children who require a significant*

*level of support (SK, 2016). Information from this program may be used to develop an Inclusion and Intervention Plan (IIP) in Kindergarten. An IIP is a flexible planning document that supports the learning needs of a student. It is developed by a collaborative team; is adjusted for each child; and describes the supports and strategies needed to optimize learning in an inclusive setting. Parents and guardians are members of the support team and are encouraged to be involved in developing and reviewing the IIP for their child. Team members help the student understand and participate in the IIP process (SK, 2017).*

### 3.5 Implementation and Monitoring

117. PTs have taken various approaches to pilot the implementation of their early learning curriculum frameworks. Smaller jurisdictions have often included all centres in the pilot implementation, while larger provinces have typically invited a percentage of centres that are representative of the geography of the province, cultural and linguistic characteristics, size of centre, and other agreed upon criteria to form a cohort for a specified period of time. Some jurisdictions (NL, AB) have provided specific in-service training for post-secondary ECE faculty, in order that faculty are able to integrate the curriculum framework in post-secondary ECE courses, as well as to provide in-service training for educators, particularly when frameworks are being introduced. Other PTs have created communities of practice comprised of ECEs and based on geography. As a small jurisdiction, Prince Edward Island involved all centres in the pilot implementation phase, and supported them with early childhood coaches and in-service training sessions.
118. In Nova Scotia, centres voluntarily applied to participate in the pilot implementation. The pilot phase was one year in duration, and involved provincial, regional, and on-site in-service training. Provincial early childhood consultants supported centres throughout the process. The pilot evaluation considered centres' self-assessment on a 4 stage process, ranging from information gathering to integration of the new framework in daily practice. The multi-dimensional aspect of the pilot was effective, with a follow up survey with the pilot centres suggesting that a majority of centres were utilizing the framework in their planning or that the framework was already integrated in their daily practice.
119. Implementation of the curriculum frameworks is mandatory in several provinces (NB, QC, ON, MB, and in NS for pre-primary settings), and linked to provision of public funding or criteria for designation in others (PE, NS, AB). In jurisdictions where the introduction and/or pilot implementation of the framework is somewhat recent (NL, NT), the current focus is on in-service training for educators, faculty, and consultants.
120. PTs have introduced various mechanisms to ensure process quality in the implementation of their curriculum frameworks. In Alberta, the professional development model and external pedagogical support is intended to support and promote process quality. In some PTs (NL, PE, NS, NB) continuous quality improvement processes are in place.

#### PT Focus: Nova Scotia

*Quality Matters (QM) is a province-wide initiative in Nova Scotia that is being used to improve and assess quality in licensed child care centres. It is based on the concept of Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) whereby quality improvements are made over time through reflective and meaningful engagement. QM evaluates a centre's success in meeting specific goals with respect to the following components: compliance with provisions of Nova Scotia's Day Care Act, Day Care Regulations, policies, and standards; accountability for provincial funding; and program quality, which includes implementation of the Early Learning Curriculum Framework and a commitment to improving quality through a CQI process. This process requires the completion of a self-assessment tool, which is used as a basis for*

*developing goals for quality improvement in one of 4 key areas leadership (professional, pedagogical, and administrative); staffing (qualifications, professional development, human resources, and compensation); learning environments (high quality, inclusive); and relationships (interactions and partnerships with children, parents and families, staff, other professionals, and the community).*

*The self-assessment involves staff, families, management, and the children, and describes the centre's strengths and challenges with respect to the 4 key elements of quality. Once the centre has completed the self-assessment process, the centre is to develop a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP), which specifies the goals that centre will meet, which of the 4 elements of QM the centre focuses on, strategies the centre will use to achieve the goal, the indicators to measure success, timelines and the relevant roles and responsibilities. Provincial ECE consultants support centres in developing their QIP and in carrying out the identified tasks for reaching their goals.*

121. In other PTs (BC, NB, NS, QC), monitoring tools are used to evaluate quality based on questions that reflect concepts from their respective frameworks. For example, in New Brunswick's Anglophone sector, the Collaborative Assessment Tool (CAT) highlights practices that describe the curriculum framework in action; and is intended to support reflective practice and help educators articulate and provide examples of ways they are interacting with and co-constructing learning with young children. In the French-speaking community, the Évaluation de l'application du Curriculum éducatif allows ECEC providers to self-assess and then be evaluated to identify gaps and best practices. Quality improvement plans can then be developed to ensure quality and to adapt professional development tools accordingly.

#### PT Focus: Québec

*Québec has recently introduced legislation to ensure ongoing quality assessment in licensed child care centres, with plans in place to eventually include family child care homes. Since 2017, all child care providers have a legal obligation to participate in the process of assessing and improving educational quality. The initiative is being phased in, with the first phase including an evaluation of the educational quality of the services offered to children aged 3 to 5 in early childhood centers (CPEs), subsidized and non-subsidized daycare centers.*

*The evaluation focuses on the quality of the processes, that is, interactions between educators, staff, and children; the physical structure and materials; the nature and variety of the activities offered to children; and the interaction between educators, staff, and parents. The measuring instruments used are the CLASS tool, along with interviews with educators and managers, as well as a questionnaire intended for parents. These tools were created by the Université du Québec à Montréal as part of this initiative.*

*\*For further detail on Québec's educational quality measures, please refer to links provided in endnote xviii.*

### 3.5.1 Flexibility

122. Given that the PT frameworks are not prescriptive, there is an inherent flexibility that allows and encourages ECEC facilities and staff to be able to adapt the curriculum framework to further reflect process quality. Each of the frameworks promotes the concept of reflective practice, which by its very nature encourages staff to reflect and respond to those reflections and understandings of their work.

Educators are encouraged to be responsive to children’s interest and capabilities. In Québec<sup>xxxv</sup>, each child care service provider applies the principles of the curriculum framework in a way that takes into account the context, resources and the opportunities offered by the child’s environment. Drawing on their professional skills and expertise, ECEs guide the children's learning activities and through observations, collect essential information to support the children in their activities, and to adapt the curriculum’s content to their needs. Similarly, in Nova Scotia, the framework allows for ECEC providers to implement the goals and strategies in their own way, integrating interests of educators and children, which are influenced by their cultures and traditions.

### 3.5.2 Post-secondary Curriculum Content

123. Curriculum framework implementation is a compulsory component of content of ECEs pre-service training in Nova Scotia and Ontario, as outlined in provincial training standards for post-secondary ECE curriculum. In Québec, the Ministry of Education is responsible for producing the specifications for the Early Childhood Education curriculum. The implementation of the curriculum framework’s principles is key to those specifications. In Ontario, it is also common practice to include curriculum framework implementation as part of the content of pre-service training programs for assistants.

124. In many other jurisdictions, post-secondary ECE programs acknowledge that many of their students may be employed in different PTs, and therefore focus on pedagogical practices (for example, play based learning, reflective practice, documentation) that would be consistent from one jurisdiction to another. Further training specific to each PT early learning curriculum framework would be provided through in-service and professional development sessions. For example, New Brunswick has embedded a program of professional development specific to the curriculum that a designated centre is implementing<sup>12</sup> as part of entry-level requirements for all staff employed in licensed ECEC centres across New Brunswick.

### 3.6 Challenges

125. Due to the varied systems and types of provider settings in many PTs, several challenges can be found in maintaining pedagogical relevance. The capacity to understand pedagogical theory and translate into practice, as well as the time available for continued learning can be a barrier for some providers and their staff. This can be due to time management, workload, and relevant leadership training. Nova Scotia’s comprehensive review and tracking of new training and quality improvement efforts has resulted in important lessons for Canadian settings, as described in the box below.

#### PT Focus: Nova Scotia

*Throughout the delivery of trainings and through consultations with programs, there have been some challenges with respect to professional learning on the curriculum framework in Nova Scotia. These included differences in educator experience, training and completion of professional learning. Professional development sessions have been built around communities of practice with a focus on having program leaders/directors attend training prior to staff. This model is intended to build capacity in leaders allowing them to build skills in coaching and mentoring their staff. Due to time constraints and workload pressures, this model has been more effective in some programs than others. The time available for program leaders to engage in leadership training specific to mentoring/coaching or post secondary training, impacts the efficacy of the model. Some leaders and educators have been able to develop a deep understanding of the concepts and translate theory into practice whereas others have not had sufficient time to do this.*

*Additionally, it has been a challenge to reach all classroom educators, even though the courses are now offered online. Changing demographics and efforts to attract more early childhood educators have led to*

<sup>12</sup> In NB, centres may select either the anglophone or francophone curriculum framework for implementation.

*an awareness on the importance of sustaining strong leadership to continue to mentor and coach newly trained staff as they enter the sector. With this, the early learning and child care sector has become increasingly diverse, which has increased the conversations on building capacity around equity and inclusion.*

*With all the challenges noted, this is leading to unique and innovative solutions that are providing opportunities to develop professional development and training that is designed to create a shared understanding of the concepts presented in the framework, specific to building relationships, communicating with families, and designing welcoming and engaging play-based learning environments. Additional key success factors identified from program leaders and educators, included hands-on activities, networking, group work/discussions, and the appreciation of local facilitators delivering the professional development modules.*

126. Other PTs have also noted the challenges in continuing to offer in-service training for new staff. In 2015, New Brunswick addressed this issue by creating a program of professional learning, including an initial 30 hour on-line course focused on curriculum, and a further 60 hours expanding on this initial on-line component. The full 90-hour Introduction to Early Childhood Education is embedded in the Early Childhood Services Act, Licensing Regulation as the minimal training requirement for all untrained educators. New Brunswick continues to focus on process quality, with particular emphasis on reflective practice, supporting pedagogical leadership and narrative documentation. Several resources have been developed including a Reflective Practice Guide accompanied by videos of indoor and outdoor play environments to guide reflection; Pedagogical Documentation support guide; and Learning and Caring with Our Young Children. Pedagogical documentation workshops and local communities of practice continue across the province.

### 3.7 Summary and Conclusion

127. Across Canada, there is a growing recognition of the connection between early childhood education and primary education. There are numerous efforts to connect ELCC programming with primary (K-3) curriculum to inspire both early childhood educators (ECEs) and teachers working with children in these primary grades so that the transition from early childhood to kindergarten is seamless.

128. For example, Manitoba's early learning curriculum framework and Kindergarten provincial support document are both play-based and developmentally appropriate, include responsive interactions and relationships, and incorporate diversity and inclusion. They are founded on nurturing and observing the curiosity of children and creating a condition for those interests to flourish. Educators develop secure, respectful relationships with children and their families and work in a collegial manner with other teachers in the school system and in the larger early childhood development community. They enhance and extend children's play through their interactions and are cognizant of the many ways through which children communicate and represent who they are (MB, 2015a).

129. Saskatchewan's Kindergarten framework states that the distinguishing features of an early childhood education program are the environment, conversations, and play. These concepts represent best practice in early childhood education, guide educational decisions, and reflect the importance of relationships. Teachers plan in response to children's interests and concerns, and curriculum expands into genuine inquiry, as children and teachers together become participatory co-learners who attempt to understand some aspect of real life (SK, 2010).

130. In British Columbia, the Ministry of Education has supported initiatives that foster the professional development of K-3 teachers and ECEs in learning circles for reflective practice. Based on powerful

research results from an earlier reading intervention program, the model was expanded to address social-emotional learning. Changing Results for Young Children is a collaboration between school and child care programs where educators create bridges of pedagogy and practice and develop a common language that ultimately supports the social emotional well-being of young children (BC, 2020a).

131. Influenced by early learning curriculum frameworks and supported by Canada's Multilateral Framework on ELCC, ECE training and professional development across the country is increasingly focused on high process quality initiatives of inclusion, play-based and holistic learning. PTs have also made this the focus of Kindergarten teacher training. Training that is focused on inclusion, play-based learning, and holistic learning prepares educators to engage stakeholders in teaching and allows participants to discover ways to partner with families to create engaging programs for early learners. It recognizes that children's learning is enhanced through strong family and community connections and emphasizes the importance of building strong relationships between families and educators, adults and children, and children and their peers.

## Chapter 4: Workforce Development

### 4.1 ECEC Staff Roles and Career Pathways

#### 4.1.1 ECE Roles and Responsibilities

132. Within regulated early childhood centres, staff roles are similar across PTs. Each centre is led by a “Director” (leader) who is responsible for pedagogical leadership, human resource management, often including recruitment of new staff for replacement or expansion; overall centre financial management and funding applications; community relationships; regulatory compliance, including financial reporting for public funding; and communication and relations with parents and/or a board of directors. In centres that are part of a multi-service organization, some of these administrative duties may be carried out by organizational management. Across Canada, approximately half of all centres are affiliated with organizations that hold multiple licenses that may range from 2 to more than 100, and/or operate other types of child and family programs in addition to licensed child care<sup>xxxvi</sup>. In these cases, there is often an Executive Director position to manage the network of child care centres across a city or region.
133. ECEs are usually responsible for implementation of the PT curriculum framework, preparing learning environments, guiding children’s behaviours, engaging with parents and families, and documentation and assessment. In larger centres, some ECEs may also have supervisory responsibilities, or may supervise student practicum placements. Early childhood assistants primarily support ECEs in carrying out their responsibilities, but also interact with children on a regular basis.
134. All PTs provide funding supports to encourage inclusion of children with additional needs. Funds are typically used to employ dedicated staff provide one to one support for specific children or to participate in a group setting so as to lower the child:staff ratio. These staff may also be responsible for observation, documentation, and participation in meetings with parents and other professionals as required. All jurisdictions provide support for children with autism; in some jurisdictions (PE, AB), these intensive behavioural programs may be carried out in licensed early childhood centres.

#### 4.1.2 ECE Consultant Roles

135. ECEs in centre or home based programs have direct contact and responsibility for children enrolled in those programs. Across Canada, there are also opportunities for ECEs to be employed in a number of different roles focused on providing curriculum support and mentorship or for monitoring adherence to regulatory requirements.
136. In Canada, there are 2 models for delivery of licensed family home child care. In some PTs, each home is licensed as an individual facility (NL, PE, NB, MB, SK, BC, YT, NT, NU). In 5<sup>13</sup> jurisdictions, (NL, NS, QC, ON, AB) home child care is managed by family home child care agencies<sup>14</sup>, which are licensed by the province. In agency models, home visitors are employed to provide both program support and supervision to home child care providers.
137. Many PTs employ early childhood consultants to work with centres to enhance elements of quality. In Québec, for example, most child care service providers in the regulated sector can count on the support of a pedagogical and technical support adviser whose role is to prepare and facilitate meetings, develop educational and technical tools, define and respond to training needs, and maintain links with

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<sup>13</sup> Newfoundland and Labrador offers both individual licenses and agency based home child care.

<sup>14</sup> Home child care agencies are licensed by the province; the agency is then responsible to recruit and “approve” family home child care providers and facilities.



the community. In Nova Scotia, early childhood consultants work with centres on curriculum matters, and also support the development and implementation of centres' ongoing Quality Improvement Plans.

#### 4.1.3 Career Pathways

138. In Canada's 1998 Child Care Sector Study, it was noted that in child care, "opportunities for mobility and advancement can be limited"<sup>xxxvii</sup> In the same report, however, it was noted that opportunities for other types of employment for individuals with ECE post-secondary credentials was growing (p.88), and post-secondary faculty reported that the regulated ECEC sector "continues to offer as many or more job-entry opportunities for recent ECE graduates as other caring and education occupations (for example. nurses or public school teachers)." (p.88)

139. Over the past 2 decades, opportunities for employment for ECEs with an early childhood credential have continued to increase. Officials in many jurisdictions report that ECEs are consistently recruited by the public education system as education or classroom assistants (PE, YT, MB, AB, NL, NS) or as pre-K teachers (NS, NT). A 2019 workforce survey in Prince Edward Island found that 75% of centre directors reported that competition from the school system was a "very relevant" challenge to their recruitment efforts. Increasing employment opportunities for ECEs, combined with other factors, including working conditions, have contributed to a nationwide shortage of ECEs qualified to work in the regulated child care sector..

140. In Ontario, ECEs are now employed in full day kindergarten programs. The Ontario College of ECEs reports that of their approximately 54,000 members, only 57% of registered ECEs are employed in regulated child care centres; 35% are employed in Education or in full day Kindergarten programs. In NS and PE<sup>15</sup>, ECEs are employed in universal Pre-K (4 year old) programs. In other jurisdictions, ECEs are also employed in family resource centres, hospital based child life programs, as school based education assistants, or in early intervention programs. Those with more experience have additional employment options such as licensing staff, consultants, or as post-secondary faculty teaching in ECE subject matter.

### 4.2 ECE Requirements for Qualifications, Professional Certification and Licensure

#### 4.2.1 ECE Requirements for Qualifications

141. PT requirements for academic qualifications of centre directors (leaders) and ECE staff are in place in almost all (12 of 13) jurisdictions. While the required percentage or number of staff with different types of qualifications varies across jurisdictions, the most widely recognized credential is a 2 year early childhood education diploma from a PT-recognized post-secondary institution. PTs often allow for a mix of staff with 2 year diplomas, one year certificates, or a specified number of hours of ECE post-secondary courses that satisfy PT requirements for "entry" or "trainee" levels. Some jurisdictions will recognize related courses of study as "equivalent". However, this often means that the individual granted such equivalency must also complete a specified number of post-secondary courses specific to early childhood development and learning. In Yukon, any person whose qualifications were recognized as equivalent is required to complete ECE courses on an annual basis.

142. Although both Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick require all staff in provincially designated centres to hold a minimum level of certification or qualification, it is possible that non-designated centres would be able to employ individuals without any type of ECE post-secondary credentials. This is also true in QC, ON, SK, AB, NT, and NU. All jurisdictions have legislation in place to allow for an

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<sup>15</sup> PE's universal 4 year old program begins in September 2021 following a one year delay due to global pandemic.

exemption to the licensing requirements for qualified staff. Such exemptions are often defined as a “condition” or “variance”. These may be issued if the licensed centre can demonstrate that it is not possible to recruit educators with the required type of qualifications. Exemptions are generally time-limited and require that a training plan is submitted to demonstrate how the individual will complete the required ECE post-secondary studies. Given the widespread challenges to recruitment of qualified ECEs across Canada, many PTs have had to issue such exceptions in recent years.

143. Specific requirements for centre directors (leaders) are in place in 10 of Canada’s 13 PTs. In most PTs the specific requirement is not an “addition” to other levels of certification, but that the director must hold the highest level of certification or qualification in that jurisdiction (NB, SK, YT, NT). In Nova Scotia, a centre director or acting director must hold either Level 2 (ECE diploma) or Level 3 (ECE degree) classification.

144. In other cases, additional requirements generally include the highest level of ECE professional certification issued by the PT, combined with a required number of years of experience in the regulated ECEC sector. In Manitoba, requirements for directors also include either completion of a post-diploma specialization (with required course content to include leadership and administration, recognized by the Manitoba Child Care Qualifications and Training Committee<sup>16</sup>. Additional requirements for directors to hold an ECE degree credential are pending in Prince Edward Island<sup>17</sup>, along with requirements for significant experience in regulated child care.

145. There are no specific legislated qualifications required for centre directors (leaders) in Québec, British Columbia, or Nunavut.

146. Across Canada, there are either minimal (20 to 60 hours of study relevant to early childhood development) or no requirements for family home child care providers. There are no post-secondary credentials either required or offered with a focus on family child care.

#### 4.2.2 ECE Professional Certification<sup>18</sup>

147. In addition to the academic qualifications noted above, professional ECE certification is required in 9 jurisdictions (NL, PE, NS, ON, MB, SK, AB, BC, YT). Each jurisdiction assigns its level of certification depending on the type of ECE post-secondary credential earned, and PT regulatory requirements. In Newfoundland and Labrador, ECEs must be certified based on their level of education and classified by completing additional training relevant to the age group where they will be employed. The certification/classification process is managed by the Association for Early Childhood Educators of Newfoundland and Labrador (AECENL) and is funded by the provincial government. In addition to Child Care Services Certification, AECENL provide for the orientation courses that may be necessary for a person to achieve certification in a particular classification. Ontario is the only jurisdiction with a legislated non-governmental body (College of Early Childhood Educators) to review and approve ECE applications for registration.

148. In those jurisdictions that do not issue professional ECE certifications (NB, QC, NT and NU), regulatory requirements for staff qualifications are adhered to by the centre and assessed during the licensing process.

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<sup>16</sup> In Manitoba, the Child Care Qualifications and Training Committee is mandated to establish ECE program standards and guidelines for all ECE programs offered at recognized post-secondary institutions throughout the province; and to regularly review and make recommendations for approval of such programs by the Minister or Director of the licensing authority. As such, the committee does shape both content and modes of delivery. In 2019, program standards were significantly updated to respond to the calls to action of the Canadian Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

<sup>17</sup> These requirement are in legislation but have not yet been enacted.

<sup>18</sup> Depending on the jurisdiction, “professional certification” may also be referred to as classification, registration, or licensure.

## PT Focus: Ontario

*Ontario is the only jurisdiction with a self-regulating College of Early Childhood Educators. The College was established under the Early Childhood Educators Act, 2007 (ECE Act), and came into existence in February 2009. The College is one of the largest professional self-regulatory bodies in Ontario and is the only professional self-regulatory body for early childhood education in Canada.*

*The College has a mandate to establish and enforce:*

- *Registration requirements*
- *Ethical and professional standards for Registered ECEs*
- *Requirements for continuous professional learning*
- *Complaints and discipline process for professional misconduct, incompetence and incapacity.*

### 4.2.3 Kindergarten Teachers

149. Professional certification is required in all jurisdictions for Kindergarten teachers. In 6 PTs a Registrar or Commissioner of Certification is responsible for teacher certification. There are 5 PTs where the Minister is charged with this responsibility and in the remaining 2 PTs, independent, non-government groups are responsible (the Ontario College of Teachers and the Saskatchewan Professional Teachers Regulatory Board). Certification of Professional School Personnel is a PT responsibility, and therefore the requirements and the process for certification vary from one PT to another. For example, Alberta's Teaching Quality Standard requires that all teachers engage in career-long learning (Competency #2) and demonstrate a professional body of knowledge (Competency #3), including effective planning, instruction, and assessment practices. These competencies must be met in order for a teacher in Alberta to maintain certification.

150. Kindergarten teachers can improve their certification level in some PTs by participating in professional development programs or completing university graduate programs in education. An increase in certification level most often results in a salary increase.

### 4.2.4 Labour Mobility

151. The labour mobility provisions of the Canadian Free Trade Agreement (CFTA) enable any worker certified for an occupation by a regulatory authority of one PT to be recognized as qualified for that occupation by all other PTs<sup>xxxviii</sup>. In other words, if a person holds a current, valid, unrestricted early childhood certification or a teaching certificate from one Canadian province or territory, they will qualify for a professional certificate in every Canadian province or territory. The certification level is determined by the PT where the educator is employed.

152. It is possible, however, for a PT to specify specific training required in order to carry out the expectations of the work specific to that jurisdiction. For example, New Brunswick has identified that ECEs must have completed the 90 hour course of study for the province's early learning curriculum framework in order to be considered qualified to work in that province.

## 4.3 Professional Development and In-service Training

### 4.3.1 Requirements

153. In Canada, the terms “professional development” and “in-service training” generally refer to 2 different and distinct activities for educators and teachers. For example, the British Columbia Teachers’ Federation defines professional development as a continuous and career long process. It includes experiences that provide educators with learning opportunities designed to enhance their professional practice.<sup>xxxix</sup> In-service training, on the other hand, is organized or mandated by the employer in order to introduce new requirements or practice that is intended to be consistent in all settings. Professional development may address topics such as “engaging families and communities” or “outdoor play with infants and toddlers” while in-service training may address “introduction of nutritional guidelines” or “protocols for reporting child abuse”. In-service may also address specific expectations for curriculum implementation, for example, “documentation”.
154. While many PTs have regular (typically annual) minimum requirements for professional development, these differ across the country. Requirements focus on the number of hours of professional development, rather than the content. In Newfoundland and Labrador, Prince Edward Island, and British Columbia, ECE certifications expire after a specified period (NL, PE: 3 years; BC: 5 years); after that period of time, the ECE must demonstrate successful completion of professional development or in-service training (NL: 30 hours; PE: 45 hours; BC: 40 hours) for renewal. In NS, ECE certification does not expire, but in order to maintain certification the individual must have completed 30 hours of professional development in the previous 3 year period.
155. In New Brunswick, all educators employed in the province’s designated Early Learning Centres must complete 30 hours of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) over a 3 year period. All approved CPD hours must align with the New Brunswick Curriculum Framework for Early Learning and Child Care ~ English or the *Curriculum éducatif des Services de garde francophones du Nouveau-Brunswick*. Delivery modes may include conferences; institutes; communities of practice; and/or workshops/seminars. British Columbia also requires that all ECE Assistants continue to work towards their ECE credential by completing a minimum of one course in a recognized early childhood development program within their 5-year certificate period. Yukon requires the same annual requirement for those who achieved certification through an equivalency process.
156. In Ontario, the College of ECEs requires through regulation that all registered ECEs participate in continuous professional learning. The content of this learning is determined by individuals in their professional learning plans which are based on the Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics as set out by the College of ECEs. In addition, the Ontario Ministry of Education provides funding to municipal system managers to develop and deliver training that supports the ECEC sector in implementing the provincial pedagogical framework.
157. As mentioned, requirements for pre-service training for home based child care providers are minimal as compared to those required for ECEs employed in centre based programs. Even so, some jurisdictions also require a specified amount of professional development for home based child care providers. Nova Scotia, for example, requires that family home child care providers participate in online training.

PT Focus: Québec

*Home child care providers must comply with the regulatory requirement to complete six hours of professional development per year on any of the topics listed below:*

- *the role of a person responsible for a home child care service*
- *the development of the child*
- *safety, health and food*
- *the educational program provided for by law*

*However, at least three of those six hours must be devoted to the development of the child and the educational program prescribed by law. To do this, providers have the opportunity to take training developed by the Continuing Education and Development Committee for those responsible for a home childcare service. The Ministère de la Famille sits on this committee, whose mandate is to oversee the development of training for home childcare providers from an annual budget approved by the Government of Quebec. Home child care providers can also take a refresher training through family child care coordination offices, national associations and educational institutions.*

#### 4.3.2 PT Supports for Professional Development

158. Although PT governments typically do not “present” or mandate the content of professional development sessions, they provide considerable support to professional organizations and/or post-secondary institutions to do so. Such support may be financial, in-kind, or in the form of policy developments or funding to centres. In Alberta, for example, funding is provided to child care programs to assist eligible staff with the costs of approved post-secondary tuition and textbooks as well as approved conferences or workshops. The funding is intended to support paid staff to pursue further training and professional development opportunities to obtain higher levels of certification and strengthen leadership, management, pedagogical leadership, administration, and early childhood education skills and knowledge.

##### PT Focus: Alberta

*Licensed child care programs in Alberta have access to the Alberta Child Care Grant Funding program that supports the recruitment and retention of certified staff through wage enhancements and professional development funding. The professional development funding provided assists certified early childhood educators with the costs of approved post-secondary tuition and textbooks as well as approved conferences and workshops. Professional development activities and training are conducted by a number of child care stakeholder organizations and private consultants situated throughout the province.*

159. Québec provides a subsidy directly to licensed child care centres, based on a percentage of the centre’s payroll; the centre then determines the most appropriate type of professional development to meet the needs of the educators working in the centre.

160. Professional development for regulated home child care providers in Quebec is developed collaboratively by a committee of representatives from government and from national organizations that represent regulated home child care providers. For example, the committee has recently developed a series of training capsules on various topics of interest in family home child care. These online training courses are available at no charge to regulated home child care providers represented by associations.

161. Prince Edward Island requires all certified staff to complete 45 hours of professional development in every 3-year period in order to maintain/renew their ECE certification. To support this effort, the government provides funding to the province’s professional ECE organization to identify needs, plan a series of either person to person or online sessions, and to coordinate 2 provincial conferences each year.

As well, the government has built 2 days per year into the funding agreement for designated “early years centres”<sup>19</sup> so that staff are able to attend sessions as part of their weekly work schedule.

162. In other cases, provinces have used their resources to develop tools that facilitate access to professional development. Manitoba recently developed Manitoba Access – an online portal allowing free access to the Science of Early Childhood Development, which has 2 regularly updated living textbooks and 3 modules. All Manitobans, including centre staff and home-based providers, now have access to current research, training and resources in a convenient on-line platform that is accessible by computer, tablet, or smartphone.<sup>xl</sup>
163. Participation in a network of leaders is common practice across PTs (for example, PE, NS, ON, AB, BC) and nationally. These groups are usually facilitated and coordinated through non-governmental professional ECE organizations<sup>20</sup> rather than through government. For example, the national Canadian Child Care Federation’s “Member Council” brings together leaders from all PTs. The Council ensures that sector leadership at the national level is wide and diverse, yet responsive at the local level. In British Columbia, 4 organizations<sup>21</sup> have collaborated to establish the BC Early Years Professional Development Hub. The Hub members are working together to increase access to professional development through the creation of on-line learning opportunities. Their goal is to build a shared asset that goes beyond traditional course-based learning.
164. As another example, the Ontario Ministry of Education, in partnership with the Government of Canada, has recently established 3 Centres of Excellence for Early Years and Child Care<sup>xli</sup> - Indigenous, Francophone and Provincial, to support ongoing professional learning through pedagogical networks. The Centres develop professional learning resources that are responsive to the needs of the ECEC sector and are accessible online.
165. In most PTs, the content of professional development sessions does not require accreditation. However, the content of professional development for ECEs and assistants is quite comprehensive. Elements such as facilitating play, curriculum implementation, and facilitating learning in literacy is common in most PTs as part of professional development content. In Nova Scotia, professional development and in-service ECE Leadership training is approved for delivery by a provincial ECE Leadership Committee. In that province, these types of training need to provide ECEs with consistent learning opportunities for reflection, discussion and application of principles and practices promoted in Nova Scotia’s curriculum framework.

#### PT Focus: New Brunswick

*The Centre of Excellence initiative (2017 to 2020) has focused on strengthening the knowledge, skills and competencies of early childhood educators through partnerships with post-secondary institutions, the early learning and child care sector, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and the school districts.*

<sup>19</sup> PEI designates “early years centre” status to selected child care centres that are located in areas deemed essential for child care access, and that adhere to a set of quality criteria that exceeds those for licensed centres. Such criteria is set out by Ministerial directive and is matched with its own funding policies.

<sup>20</sup> Non-governmental professional ECE organizations exist all provinces and one territory, and several exist at the national level. These organizations are membership based, and generally set out a code of ethics that members adhere to. They typically design and coordinate professional development for members, facilitate networking, and organize leadership sessions for centre directors. Depending on the jurisdiction, government may provide funding to the sector through the professional organization for course subsidies, bursaries, or other types of quality initiatives.

<sup>21</sup> Members include the BC Family Child Care Association, Early Childhood Educators of BC, Westcoast Child Care Resource Centre, and the Early Childhood Pedagogy Network.

*The objective under the Centre of Excellence initiative (Anglophone) is improved process quality by supporting the growth of reflective practice, strengthening educator skills and understanding of reflective practice through opportunities for reflection, questioning and collegial conversation and supporting the development of pedagogical leadership, communication and engagement through the establishment of Communities of Practice within the 4 Anglophone districts.*

*Le Centre d'excellence (francophone) vise l'offre de perfectionnement professionnel et de ressources répondant aux besoins des éducatrices et éducateurs à la petite enfance en lien et en collaboration avec les 3 Communautés d'excellence des districts scolaires francophones. Cette approche respecte la diversité et les besoins des différentes régions afin d'offrir du développement professionnel et bonifier la qualité des services. La stratégie de valorisation et de développement professionnel Éducatrices/Éducateurs + Savoirs = Qualité vise à accroître la professionnalisation des professionnels des éducatrices et éducateurs en éducation à la petite enfance. Cette stratégie inclut une liste de ressources de perfectionnement professionnel qui a été établie pour soutenir le développement professionnel et la croissance du secteur.*

166. Ongoing professional development is also available for primary (K-3) teachers throughout the country through PT ministries and departments, school districts, and teacher federations/associations. For example, the British Columbia provincial government provides resources to educators interested in self-guided professional development, including videos and webcasts, guides, newsletters and other materials.<sup>xiii</sup>

#### 4.4 Pre-service Training Focus on Family and Community Engagement

167. ECE and Kindergarten teacher training throughout the country recognizes that children's learning is enhanced through strong family and community connections. Training emphasizes the importance of building strong relationships between families and educators, adults and children, and children and their peers by maintaining frequent positive interactions based on respect and open communication. Parents are the most important teachers in children's lives and families and communities are their most significant support, and educators are trained to honour and respect families as the centre point of children's lives. This understanding deepens relationships, allowing for the development of partnerships that support the needs of children and families. Training recognizes that family values, beliefs and composition often come from the family's unique racial, ethnic, cultural and spiritual backgrounds, which may differ from the values and beliefs expressed in early learning programs. In acknowledgement of these differences, ECEs and Kindergarten teachers are trained to be inclusive, and to welcome and respect all family members. Family diversity is respected by learning about cultures and providing opportunities for learning about different cultural heritages in a respectful, holistic, positive way. ECEs and Kindergarten teachers are trained to develop meaningful relationships with parents and consider how to build regular and active parent participation into programs for young children. They are trained to offer a family-centered approach and encourage capacity building through family-to-family connections.

168. Since curriculum frameworks are generally reflected as key components in most pre- and in-service training, it is reasonable to expect that building personalised mutually responsive relationships with families is part of the training received by ECEs in Canada. Working with parents from diverse backgrounds is a mandatory component of pre-service training in 5 PTs (AB, BC, MB, NS, ON). As for in-service training, this component is mandatory in New Brunswick, and is common practice in Ontario. For example, educators in New Brunswick plan for children's participation in the community by attending community events, caring for local landmarks, inviting community contributions and participation, appreciating, sharing, and engaging with other educators and community members.

Ontario's *The Kindergarten Program 2016* encourages teachers to invite parent and family involvement and supports them in this endeavour with best practices and online resources, as well as providing teachers with resources to share with parents.

169. In Indigenous communities, it is the Elders' responsibility to guard sacred knowledge and to maintain the ceremonial oral tradition of knowledge transmission. Manitoba's *A Time for Learning A Time for Joy: A Resource for Kindergarten Teachers*, encourages teachers to invite Elders into classrooms to share traditional knowledge. To support teachers in this endeavour, the resource document appendices include protocols and best practices for inviting Elders into classrooms.

PT Focus: Nunavut

*The Early Childhood Education Applied Certificate Program is designed to educate current child care workers in Nunavut communities with minimal disruption to their work schedule. The program is a blended delivery model: students study in the classroom, by distance and in their workplace setting with experts in early childhood development and Inuit culture. The program provides students with workplace application of skills and community-based study that involves culturally relevant teaching approaches and course content. Inuit knowledge is integrated into all aspects of the Applied ECE Program as the curriculum integrates Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit Guiding Principles through outcomes which form the foundation of each course.*

*Inuit elders, cultural and linguistic experts and knowledgeable community members are an integral part of the program delivery team; as teachers in specific courses, student mentors and as guest instructors and advisors. A significant part of the program content is delivered by experts in Inuit culture and language, including teachings in traditional Inuit child development, Inuit values, storytelling, games, songs, nutrition, food and toy-making. Local and visiting Inuit educators, artists and cultural specialists are integrated into course development and delivery. The ECE Program integrates Inuit early childhood development research from the knowledge of Inuit elders and cultural experts.*

170. In British Columbia, pre-service training for ECEs highlights the importance of educator knowledge about the community in which they work. Examples include the cultural composition of the community, significant development plans for the community, and community resources that are available. This local knowledge supports engagement with children, families and caregivers, and promotes understanding of the broader context that impacts the well-being and learning of young children.

171. Manitoba's Kindergarten Support document recommends that "Kindergarten teachers honour children's families and communities, recognizing that children interact with and learn in a variety of contexts and that family engagement in children's learning is a critical support for their school success. The continuity of children's past, present, and future learning is best supported through coordinated home, school, and community approaches." (*A Time for Learning, A Time for Joy*, 2015. P.305). All kindergarten in-service training offered by Manitoba Education includes family centred engagement practices.

172. Lastly, almost all PT early learning curriculum frameworks set out goals for personal and social responsibility. Aspects of this goal include respect for diversity, and an emphasis on children learning to be responsible and responsive members of their own communities and the world they live in.

#### 4.5 Post-Secondary Standards



173. Most PT governments (AB, BC, MB, NL, NS, ON, QC) provide standards to post-secondary institutions, which then develop their own content. Such content is then reviewed and approved, or accredited, by the department responsible for ECEC or for post-secondary education.

PT Focus: Nova Scotia

*Nova Scotia's Standards of Practice for Early Childhood Education Post-Secondary Programs (2018) outlines a Scope of Practice for early childhood educators and presents 4 standards:*

1. *learning outcomes*
2. *practicum*
3. *program characteristics*
4. *instructor qualifications*

*The learning outcomes are directly linked to the Scope of Practice, which is informed by "Capable, Confident and Curious – Nova Scotia's Early Learning Curriculum Framework", and specifically include:*

- *child development*
- *relationships*
- *diversity and inclusion*
- *pedagogy*
- *health and safety*
- *observation and documentation*
- *program evaluation*
- *professionalism*

174. Although the mechanism is similar in these PTs, the body that is officially responsible for accreditation may vary. In Manitoba, a Child Care Qualifications and Training Committee is responsible to provide recommendations, at the request of ministers or directors, on any matter relating to the qualifications and training of staff for facilities and plays a key role in shaping curricula standards. This committee is the official body responsible for recommending approval of ECE training programs. In Ontario, pre-service training institutions must be approved by Ontario's College of Early Childhood Educators in order for graduates of these institutions to register with the College and be recognized as qualified staff in licensed ELCC settings. In Newfoundland and Labrador, the standards outline a scope of practice, set out minimum expectations in terms of content and hours of study, as well as qualifications for faculty, demonstration sites, and practicum placements.

175. In Alberta, the mechanism for developing curricula content varies by educational institution. Curricula of public post-secondary ELCC programs (Certificate, Diploma and Degree) are accredited by Alberta Advanced Education, the department responsible for post-secondary education, while ELCC programs (Certificate and Diploma) offered through private vocational institutions are developed by the institution based on provincial standards and approved by Alberta Children's Services.

176. In other PTs (NB, NT, NU, PE, SK, YU), post-secondary curricula are the responsibility of educational institutions themselves and there is no formalized accreditation process in place. For instance, the Yukon Government does not accredit any post-secondary institutions or training programs. However, it is common practice for these post-secondary institutions to have sectoral advisory committees in place for consultation on curriculum and learning objectives.

#### 4.6 Workplace Mentoring and Training

177. As noted in section 4.1.2, many PTs (NL, PE, NS, NB, QC, ON, MB) employ early childhood pedagogical officers to work with centres to enhance elements of quality. These officers use a variety of intervention models and may use standardized quality assessment tools in their work. In Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia, designated and/or funded centres are required to participate in such mentoring programs as a condition of their designation/funding. The role of these pedagogical officers is typically seen as different than the role of licensing officers. Consultants may be involved in continuous quality improvement processes, may offer support on curriculum implementation, and may also support centres in a range of aspects of their centre’s operation, such as board-staff relations, parent engagement, inclusion support, or design of learning environments.

PT Focus: Manitoba

*Manitoba supports a workplace training model that focuses on pre-service training. Eligibility is based on current employment in a regulated child care centre, and a minimum of 2 years of employment in the regulated child care sector. The Manitoba government provides funding to the centre for staff to be hired to temporarily allow the candidate to attend class in person for 2 to 3 days per week, while the candidate maintains their employment and regular wage for the week. The candidate then works in their typical place of employment for the rest of the week and is able to immediately integrate their studies into practice. The program has been highly successful and has demonstrated a significantly higher retention rate of qualified staff than for those who participate in a 2 year full time program. Faculty and centre directors have also noted that the knowledge transfer to other staff, as well as the on-site support and consultation from faculty in the centre, has provided mentoring for other staff at the centre and enhanced the quality of the overall program, in addition to the mentoring and guidance provided to the candidate in the ECE college program.*

#### 4.7 Stakeholder Engagement

178. PTs have regularly engaged in multi-stakeholder consultations regarding the development of public policy and funding initiatives for the early childhood sector. Some of these efforts have been coordinated on a national level, including several task force studies (Cook et al, 1986)<sup>xliii</sup> on ELCC. At a PT level, some recent consultations have included New Brunswick’s Child Care Review Task Force 2015, with a mandate to provide recommendations for “a path for creating the right conditions for *quality* ELCC that are *accessible, affordable* and *inclusive*, and that support parents’ participation in the workforce.”

179. At a local level, PTs have taken different approaches to network with stakeholders in order to consider the design, content, and delivery of pre-service and in-service training. For example, in Alberta, ELCC faculty from publicly funded post-secondary institutions throughout the province meet quarterly to network and collaborate. This has enabled the alignment and collaboration of ECE faculty to support various initiatives related to quality in ECEC such as the Flight curriculum, and communities of practice. The challenge, however, is that private colleges and institutions are not part of the network.

180. In Yukon, consultation with First Nations and community partners identified the mode of delivery was a barrier for individuals who wished to access pre-training courses in early childhood education, particularly in rural areas. Based on these findings, funding was allocated to bring Yukon University educators to communities to offer early learning and childcare coursework as well as to increase the availability of online course offerings. This has resulted in increased successful completion of coursework in rural Yukon.

181. Other jurisdictions have focused on formal arrangements for ongoing stakeholder consultation. These include Prince Edward Island’s Early Years Advisory Committee with representation from Indigenous groups, post-secondary institutions, parents, regulated child care, family resource centres, labour, ECE organizations, and other provincial government departments. In Nova Scotia, the Nova Scotia Provincial Early Years Partnership Committee brings together representatives from post-secondary institutions, early intervention, francophone organizations, Indigenous groups, and ECEs to review and provide feedback on new policy directions. In New Brunswick, the Provincial Leadership Committee has been established to provide a mechanism for ongoing consultation and communication with the ELCC sector.

#### 4.8 Research on Canada’s ECE Workforce

182. As the OECD’s 2004 Canada Country Note remarked, “Early childhood policy development in Canada is ably supported by a vibrant research community and stakeholder constituency.” (OECD, 2004, p. 70)<sup>xliv</sup>. From 2003 until 2013, there was a considerable amount of research conducted on the ECE workforce, led by the Child Care Human Resources Sector Council (CCHRSC).<sup>xlv</sup> One of the last research projects coordinated by the CCHRSC was *You Bet We Still Care! - a national research study on workforce issues*. (CCHRSC, 2013)<sup>xlvi</sup> Since that time, PT governments and/or non-governmental organizations have continued to conduct survey research focused on workforce issues, although these studies have been localized to a specific province or territory.

183. For example, in Newfoundland and Labrador (NL), the NL ECE Human Resources Council conducted a survey of ECEs to explore recruitment and retention issues (The Early Childhood Educators Human Resource Council, 2019).<sup>xlvii</sup> Similarly, Prince Edward Island’s Department of Education, Early Learning and Culture<sup>22</sup> funded research on workforce issues in the ECEC sector in order to inform a provincial workforce strategy (Flanagan, 2019)<sup>xlviii</sup>. In Saskatchewan, the Canadian Child Care Federation partnered with the Saskatchewan Early Childhood Association to conduct a similar study, exploring job satisfaction and other workforce issues (CCCF, 2020)<sup>xlix</sup>. As a result of a recent study in Québec and subsequent consultations that provided a portrait of the workforce, on April 26, 2021 the Government of Quebec launched an action plan aimed at increasing the skilled workforce in childcare services. In 2017, the Ontario government funded a study of workforce issues for early years and child care employees (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2017).<sup>1</sup> Research concerning workforce issues was also carried out in Nova Scotia, Manitoba, Alberta, and Yukon.

184. Although there has been considerable interest in issues related to recruitment and retention of qualified ECEs, there has also been interest in examining factors related to the delivery and design of pre-service training for ECEs. In Québec, the Ministry of Education has conducted survey research in recent years to determine the relevance of their training courses to the early childhood sector. In addition, the Ministry of the Family recently collected data from owners of regulated child care services regarding their expectations regarding pre-service training. As mentioned previously, Yukon made changes to the delivery of post-secondary ECE courses based on results of survey research that identified the need for online access to such courses.

#### PT Focus: Québec

*In order to reduce the disparities between the education and training of child care staff, a skills framework has been published by the Ministry of the Family. This is designed to reflect the needs of employers with regard to the skills to be acquired in initial pre-service training as well as the expectations regarding their ability to ensure a high quality experience for children.*

<sup>22</sup> This departmental title was used from 2016 until 2019. Currently, this Department is named Education and Lifelong Learning.

*The reference system will serve various functions, either to provide a framework for the school system for the development of training courses for child care staff focused in particular on the quality process, to assess professional paths that may lead to qualification, and/or to guide the management staff of educational child care services towards the choice of further training in line with the expectations in terms of the development of skills necessary for the implementation of a high-quality early childhood program.*

#### 4.9 Emerging Trends

185. All PTs are continually engaged in processes to review and modernize their approaches to ECEC. Action plans developed in response to the 2017 Multilateral Framework on Early Learning and Child Care give indications of long term planning in all jurisdictions. Issues related to quality, affordability, access, and human resources have dominated PT discussions in recent months and years.

186. Many PTs are engaged in processes that build on previous work. For example, in Nova Scotia the recently adopted provincial Standards for Early Childhood Education Post-Secondary Programs (Standards) have set high standards and expectations for training programs for instruction of early childhood education students. As a result, diploma program curricula have been updated to meet the new learning outcomes. Furthermore, the learning outcomes reflect the recently adopted guide to developing early learning programs, “Capable, Confident and Curious: Nova Scotia’s Early Learning Curriculum Framework.” As well, in 2019, Nova Scotia introduced a recognition of prior learning process for early childhood education. Through this initiative, the expected competencies of a diploma prepared ECE have been further clarified and solidified. The recognition of prior learning process provides individuals working in the ECEC field the opportunity to demonstrate they have acquired the necessary knowledge and skills of a diploma prepared ECE. Individuals are measured by an examination and scenario-based interview based on a competency profile developed for the initiative.

#### 4.10 Challenges

187. Over the past 10 years, there have been significant developments in ECEC that have required all involved in the sector to re-think ECE practice and pre- or in-service training. For example, the growing multi-cultural landscape across Canada brings rich cultural and linguistic diversity to communities from coast to coast to coast, providing new opportunities for learning about unique traditions, family and community characteristics, values and beliefs. These experiences allow children to be comfortable with diversity, and to recognize the humanity in all people. The vision of inclusion is stronger with the emphasis of including children with diverse abilities, needs, language and culture and recognition of the unique needs of French and English minority communities, newcomers and of Indigenous peoples. Learning is recognized as a holistic process that happens as children and adults come together in relationship with each other. The ECEC sector, however, has been challenged to recruit educators from cultural minorities, and to have the capacity to provide both pre-service and professional development opportunities - as well as printed and online resources for educator and parents - in multiple languages.

188. However, as noted by numerous researchers across Canada, the most pressing workforce challenge in Canada is related to the ability to recruit and retain qualified ECEs. The ECEC sector is not immune to labour shortages experienced in other occupations across Canada. Multiple workforce surveys<sup>li</sup> suggest that job satisfaction is high with respect to the intrinsic aspects of the work (value of the work, relationships with children, families, and colleagues) but low with respect to professional recognition, wages, benefits, and working conditions. Surveys repeated over time periods show that the workforce is

ageing, and retirements should be expected. Workforce shortages have had a negative impact on efforts to expand access to ECEC programs across Canada.

## Conclusion

189. This report was prepared as part of Canada's participation in the OECD 4-year project, Quality beyond Regulations. The project was intended to identify key aspects of quality in ECEC, and collect information and provide analysis on policy initiatives that are aimed at improving quality. The Government of Canada and provincial governments of Alberta, Québec, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick contributed to the project financially, with data, informational support and expert advice provided by policy experts from Canada's 13 PTs, CMEC, Canada's ELCC Data and Research Expert Panel, and the Government of Canada. The report was developed by policy officials at Employment and Social Development Canada, with significant content development, drafting and coordination support from Kathleen Flanagan, an external consultant on the project whose knowledge provided invaluable expertise on both the historical development of the ECEC sector in Canada, as well as the most recent developments found across the country.
190. The report shows the unique and varied landscape of Canada's ECEC sector. The unique populations, cultural and linguistic traditions, and the historically asynchronous development of ECEC services has created unique policy contexts and challenges across Canada. Nevertheless, findings from this report show that all of Canada's PTs recognize the importance of quality ECEC and continue to improve quality through developments in curriculum frameworks and pedagogy, the training of staff, workforce conditions and monitoring of quality in ECEC. Challenges remain, and improvements in areas such as quality monitoring will be needed to better understand and address these challenges. A long tradition of cross-country collaboration and sharing of best practices has also created important similarities and commitments to improved quality across Canada. Together with recent federal investments, this collaborative approach provides opportunities for continued improvements of quality of services to children and families in the future.

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