

Conversations with Community

**STAND TALL FOR THOSE
WHO ARE SMALL ON
PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND**

Quality
Early Learning &
Child Care

Supporting a
vibrant child care
workforce



in partnership with

- CARVO GROUP -

Better Workplaces & Stronger Communities

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Why this toolkit?

Having conversations with families and the community is increasingly important to support the collective voice of children and ensure they are included in decisions that affect them. We invite you to encourage others to become involved in a variety of ways and simply being informed is a great start! You might also want to engage with others to influence key decision makers to make quality licensed early learning and child care – and specifically a well-educated workforce – an investment priority. We suggest approaching this with your unique insights and stories. Remember, this is about sharing your story and the facts, not about venting, blaming, or forcing people to agree with your position.

Facilitating the involvement of the public can help you:

Create a greater understanding of the fact-based issues or challenges you are aiming to address.	Create a broader base of support for the association goals.
Create popular interest and buy-in from the local community to generate greater leverage with decision makers.	Provide useful information through the lens of the child, the family, the employee, the employer, and the child care centre.
Inspire and engage families, politicians and the general public on topics of importance.	Create a better understanding of the impact your sector has on children, families, and the economy.
Build long-term trust and work toward reaching common goals.	Facilitate the development of stronger policies and a sustainability strategy.

Investments have been made in early learning and child care. This package is intended to draw attention to areas of member concern, which still requires investment and improvement regardless of your centre's designation. While we recognize there are several pillars to quality early learning and child care, this document focuses on the narrow element of the workforce (specifically wages).

Without supporting a high-quality workforce, the availability of a quality system is impossible!

Why the workforce?

A highly-skilled early learning and child care workforce is in the best interest of the children accessing this service and the public. Research supports the positive influence quality child care has on children's social, emotional, and academic success; in particular, improved literacy rates.

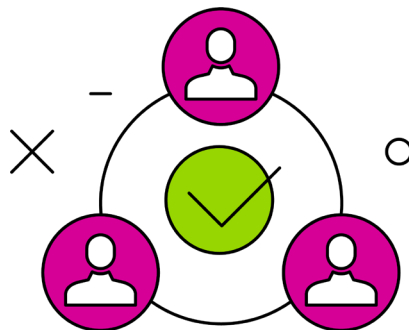
Quality center-based programs that have positive impacts on young children's development provide some combination of the following features:

- Highly-skilled staff,
- Small class sizes and high adult-to-child ratios,
- A language-rich environment,
- Age-appropriate curricula and stimulating materials in a safe physical setting
- Warm, responsive interactions between staff and children

Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University (2007). A Science-Based Framework for Early Childhood Policy: Using Evidence to Improve Outcomes in Learning, Behaviour, and Health for Vulnerable Children.

Research suggests that good quality education and care is associated with well-educated staff, low staff-child ratios, low staff turnover rates, good wages, and effective leadership.

Without access to well-educated, highly-skilled educators, sustaining a quality early learning and child care system is not possible!



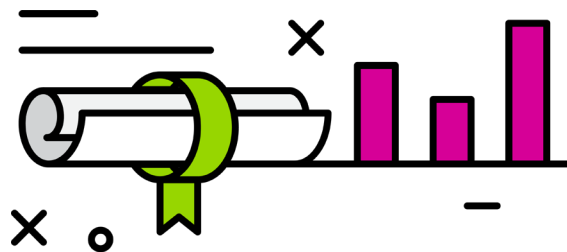
The 2017 PEI Early Childhood Educator Human Resource Survey respondents (312) reported the following as important or very important in making early learning and child care a better field to work in:

- 99% of respondents report higher wages
- 78% responded promoting more respect for those working in the field
- 93% responded having scheduled paid planning time

The ability to recruit and retain well-trained, highly-skilled educators is the foundation for creating more licensed early learning and child care spaces for Island children and families.

Did you know?

1. In March 2017, there were 464 educators working in licensed programs with some level of provincial certification. Yet in January 2018, there were 764 certificates issued to qualified early childhood educators. This means 300 people are provincially certified and qualified, but choosing not to work in the licensed child care sector.
2. Holland College recruits approximately 30 ECCE students annually and graduates approximately an average of 16.
3. College de l'Isle accepted seven students between 2014-2017 into the Early Childhood Care and Education program, graduating six students with either a certificate or diploma.
4. The labour force on Prince Edward Island is reported to have expanded to an average of 81,500 people through to October 2017.
5. Prince Edward Island recorded the fastest population growth in Atlantic region at 2.2 per cent in 2017.
6. 76% of PEI women with children zero-five years spend time in the labour force, down 9% from 2014.
7. As of January 2018, there were 5119 licensed child care and spaces in EYC, Private Centres, Preschool, Family Home Centres, and School Age Licenses.
8. Despite the offer of Expansion Grants to expand spaces, some child care centre operators reported to the Early Childhood Development Association of PEI that they cannot expand the number of children they accept due to the difficulty of recruiting early childhood educators with a diploma in early childhood education.



Investing in child care

The Province of PEI has identified the following interests in the 2017 Speech from the Throne:

- Growing and engaged population,
- An increasingly diversified economy,
- Strong communities and modern infrastructure,
- A healthy population; and
- Addressing poverty

In 2017, the Conference Board of Canada reported:

- Education is a great enabler
- Children attending Early Childhood Education Programs develop strong foundation skills (e.g. literacy/numeracy).
- There are indicators that lower quality settings can cause children great stress when separating from their parents resulting in negative behaviours and outcomes.
- Children attending Early Childhood Education Programs are more likely to complete high school and more likely to attend college or university.
- Empirical analysis reveals that children who attend Early Childhood Education programs are more productive and have higher incomes later in life compared to children who did not attend.

The Conference Board of Canada also says that every \$1 spent on expanding ECE enrolment of children under five would yield close to \$6 in economic benefits. The only way to expand enrolment is to have more early childhood educators!

We know from the experiences in other provinces and countries that access to affordable, quality early learning and child care increases:

- Reduces the number of people receiving welfare assistance
- Increases birth rates
- Decreases expenditures on things like special education and crime
- The amount of tax revenue generated from labour force participation

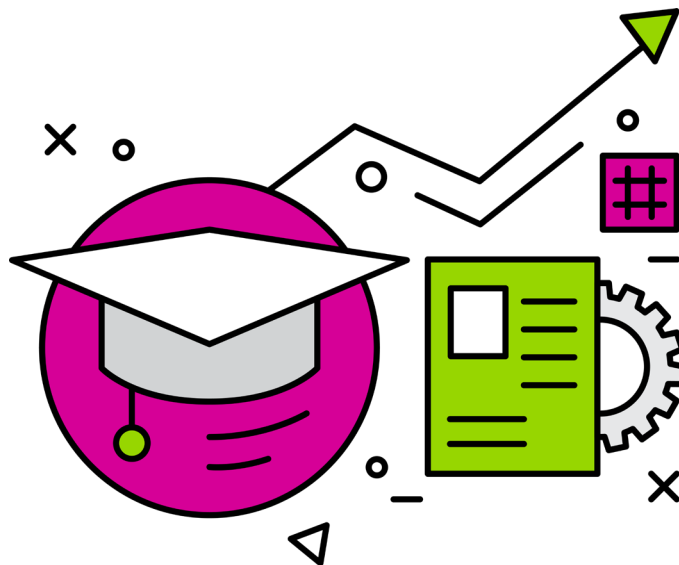
Investing in child care will impact all of these interests!

Supporting a vibrant child care workforce

Quality Early Learning and Child Care from the earliest days is crucial to the development of healthy, productive adults. However, the influence of quality early childhood educators is also a critical influence to receiving these positive outcomes.

We need to be building a workforce that will align with the continued system enhancements and quality improvements to secure the system infrastructure and provide access to affordable spaces.

Without quality educators, we will not get the results that we are seeking long-term, we need a plan that will recruit and retain quality educators.



In closing

As you communicate with parents or community members on issues that are of concern, it is essential to frame the conversation in your mind by first asking “what’s in it for them?” Understand how your issue will benefit or impact the individual(s). Unbiased, factual information will help people to become knowledgeable on the topic; however there is no guarantee they will become supportive of your position on the matter(s).

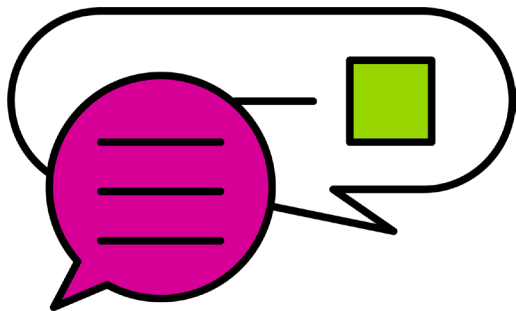
Parents and community members can only provide effective support if they have appropriate information. Don’t make assumptions about what people know without asking them first. Frame conversations in such a way that you express the importance of them as key players in the delivery of quality childcare. Parents and community members often wish to become engaged. Consider including them on ad-hoc or steering committees, submitting letters of support, or becoming champions for the cause. Capitalize on opportunities such as upcoming municipal and provincial elections, community meetings about social or economic matters, or general conversations with the community.

This toolkit has been created and distributed to the entire Early Childhood Development Association membership. It includes handouts about what we propose (specific requests for the Government of PEI) and fact sheets related to compensation for several of the job classifications in the Early Learning and Child Care field.

The fact sheets will provide the research and documentation to support your conversations! You have permission to print and share them.

We invite you to encourage others to join the conversation at www.qualitychildcare.ca!

Together we Stand Tall for Those Who are Small!





Conversations Toolkit

- × TIPS FOR TAKING YOUR MESSAGE PUBLIC
- × FINDING YOUR AUDIENCE. FINDING YOUR ZONE.
- × BROADER COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS
- × POLITICAL CONVERSATIONS

Tips for taking your message public

As the Early Learning and Child Care system continues to evolve and expand in PEI, much focus and discussion has been placed on creating spaces, providing flexible and affordable access, as well as consideration to improve access for more vulnerable children. Sufficient child care spaces require ongoing access and availability to a stable workforce.

Planning, developing and supporting a high quality licensed system can only be achieved through the recruitment and retention of well-educated, highly-skilled educators.

The information presented in the following pages will demonstrate the need for immediate investments into wages for early childhood educators and the development of an actionable strategy to support a sustainable, high-quality workforce for years to come!

Communicating Effectively

Whether your audience is one person or a group, you should keep in mind the following:

1. Be professional and confident in your approach.
2. Keep in mind that your audience will have varying levels of education, interest in the topic(s), and ability to influence change directly.
3. Not everyone will agree with your statement(s) so resist the temptation to engage in highly confrontational interactions. It's equally important to listen to what the other person has to say.
4. Be mindful of others who may be impacted by your external communications. Be clear about who you do, and do not, represent.
5. Frame your message to answer the question, "So what?" or "What can be done next?"
6. Plan and practice your message.
7. Present a clear and compelling message; less is more.
8. Remember that sometimes stories are more compelling than statistics.
9. Be clear about who you are representing (you/your centre).

When beginning to have conversations with the community, it is essential to recognize that they may have already formed opinions based on their current understanding of the issue. Do not be discouraged if they are not interested in what you have to share.

A goal for your conversations could be to move individuals up even one rung on this ladder:

- An advocate publicly supports or recommends a cause or policy
- A supporter approves of and encourages a cause or policy
- Being neutral means neither supporting nor opposing a cause or policy
- Being opposed means disapproving or disagreeing with a cause or policy

Finding your audience. Finding your zone.

Island families, community members, and employers are central partners in developing a quality, affordable early learning and child care system for PEI's children and families. These are people that you regularly see at your centre, or while out in the community. Building on these relationships and building on conversations you already engage in can be an essential step in the continued development of a shared vision for a sustainable quality early learning and child care system across PEI.

The simple first step in having conversations with the community is to start with small talk with people with whom you already have a relationship. Listen for your opportunity to bring child care into the conversation and seize the moment to articulate your key message.

An opportunity lies within comments such as:

“How was your day at the child care centre?”

“Where are you working?”

“Are your children attending a child care facility?”

“Child care seems to be hard to find in PEI.”

Choosing your transition in the conversation is based on your audience. The direction you take in this next phase will depend on your relationship with the person. For instance, your approach will be different if it is a friend seeking child care, an employer, a neighbour discussing a news article that was on social media, or a new acquaintance at a local market.

Depending on your relationship with the individual you can keep the conversation focused on child care with statements such as:

“How does the availability of quality licensed child care impact you/your business/your co-workers?”

“What does quality child care mean to you?”

“What would you do if child care was not available for you/your business/your co-workers?”

“What was the last news article you read about child care?”

Possible comments & responses

“We were not able to find licensed child care when we needed it.”

Did you know despite Expansion Grants being available in PEI some centres have declined the opportunity to expand their spaces due to the challenge in recruiting early childhood educators with a two-year diploma in early childhood education.

“Too much money is being spent on child care.”

Although it might seem like a lot of money is being invested, access to child care is what keeps our economy thriving as it allows people to access the workforce. Did you know Statistics Canada reported in 2014 that 85% of Island women with children 0-5 years of age were participating in the labour force, and in 2017 it was 76%? If we want to continue to grow our economy, quality child care is essential!

“I cannot extend my business into the shoulder season due to my employees not being able to find child care.”

That is very unfortunate. The challenge centre operators have is in recruiting early childhood educators with a two-year diploma in early childhood education to provide the programs needed. A recent survey of the ECDA of PEI indicates wages as being the biggest barrier to recruiting highly-skilled educators.

“Centres should be able to hire anyone they wish to fill these positions since child care is in such high demand.”

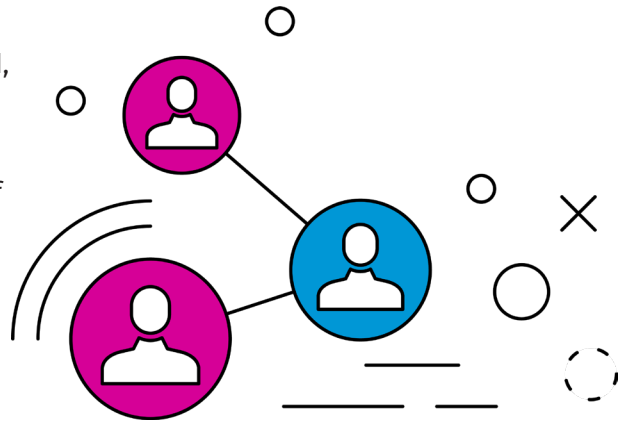
Early Childhood Educators come to the job with a specialized bank of skills that include an in-depth knowledge of child development, guiding children’s behaviours, and how to scaffold children’s learning through play. Wouldn’t you want your child with the most skilled and knowledgeable educator?

Broader community conversations

You might be comfortable with the small talk and pleasantries previously outlined, but now you may wish to take your advocacy to another level. Sharing fact sheets with families, community groups, employers, and working with the ECDA of PEI to provide community presentations can be a compelling next step in the advocacy pyramid.

Engaging in conversations with community groups such as Lions Club, Rotary Club, Women's Groups, and Employer Organizations can bring a new group of participants to this conversation. Work in collaboration with the ECDA of PEI to arrange a 15-30 minute presentation with a local organization. The ECDA of PEI has a community presentation prepared and would be willing to join you in presenting the realities of early learning and child care across PEI.

Facts sheets and the Did You Know one-pager also provide facts to jump into a more in-depth conversation on quality early learning and child care.



Keep the conversation going with comments such as:

“How important is the availability of quality licensed child care to your organization?”

“Does your organization have a formal position on child care?”

Be prepared with your key messages and have a copy of the fact sheets close at hand!

Possible comments & responses

“Child care does not affect our organization.”

Child care impacts more than 5000 PEI households. Child care might or might not be what keeps people attending your monthly meetings, but I am certain your members are impacted by child care either as employers in possibly not being able to hire staff when needed or as grandparents that are now providing child care full time in their retirement.

“Our organization is not in the business of providing child care.”

No of course not, we want to leave that to the experts. But what you can do is influence the necessary investments needed to provide a wage and benefit structure that makes early childhood education an attractive career choice increasing recruitment. This would open more spaces and support your members, or their employees to access quality child care. Without proper remuneration, recruitment of highly-skilled professionals is challenging.

“Given child care is so expensive, why are educators wages so low?”

Quality early learning and care is costly, with wages being the largest expense. Licensed centres must follow legislated ratios of children to staff. Let's take for instance infant care. For every three infants, a centre is required to employ one educator. In PEI, those three infants generate \$106 of revenue a day. That would mean a wage of \$13.25/hr for only an 8 hour day (most children need 9 hours a day) with no allowance for the centre to cover expenses such as food, rent, equipment and supplies, heat or insurance.

Political conversations

We are currently in a unique position with municipal elections currently underway and a provincial election expected in the near future. Having a conversation with your local candidate at your door or at a rally could help you to understand their position as well as potentially inform and inspire their support toward a highly-skilled early childhood education workforce – resulting in a quality early learning and child care system for PEI.

Gain ground on your doorstep with these questions:

“In your party’s opinion, what is the appropriate percentage of children that should have access to affordable licensed quality child care across PEI?”

“How does your party plan to address the staffing crisis the early learning and child care is currently experiencing?”

“Would your party pass legislation requiring that people who are working with children with special and unique needs hold an early childhood education diploma?”

“Is your party committed to the development of a competitive wage scale for Early Childhood Educators?”

Be prepared with your key messages and have a copy of the fact sheets close at hand!



Possible comments & responses

“Of course ensuring our most vulnerable children have access to the services they need is a priority of our party.”

Given that many people experience periods of vulnerability, does this then mean that your party supports a policy that 100% of children should have access to high-quality, affordable child care?

“Child care, although publicly managed for a large portion of the system, it is still free enterprise. We do provide investments into child care subsidy, early years designation, federal family benefits, and grants to support operators.”

Child care for one infant for one year on PEI costs a family more than a student attending the University of Prince Edward Island as a full-time student.

Infant Care: \$8,840.00 *approx.* vs UPEI Tuition: \$7,355.00 *approx.*

Students also have access to grants such as the George Coles bursary, academic scholarships, and debt reduction grants. As such, parents are paying a significant portion of their income on child care.

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“What is a fair wage for an early childhood educator?”

In the Collective Agreement between the Education Negotiating Agency and the Canadian Union of Public Employees (Union Local 3260) effective April 1, 2016 – March 31, 2018, the pay band for Educational Assistants, in the public-school system, begins at \$22.74 and caps at \$27.07.

Casual Educational Assistants earn \$18.19 per hour. Educational Assistants have the same education requirement as Early Childhood Educators, and the job is comparable!

An Early Childhood Educator holding a two-year college diploma starts at \$15.61/hr and Special Needs Assistants earn minimum wage!

PEI Directors have consistently reported that qualified early childhood educators are being recruited to Educational Assistant positions. Although educators report working fewer hours, the increase in salary more than compensates for this difference.

“Our party recognizes and respects the work of early childhood educators, however, where would the money come from to pay these salaries?”

Investing in quality education for PEI’s children must be a priority if our kids are going to be successful in school, and if you, or your adult children, or your employees are going to be able to go to work. This is only possible with highly-skilled educators leading the system. PEI’s children and families deserve and need access to an affordable, high-quality system.

We know from the experiences of other provinces and countries that access to affordable, quality early learning and child care results in:

- Reduced number of people receiving welfare assistance
- Increased birth rates
- Decreased expenditures on things like special education and crime
- Increased tax revenue generated from labour force participation

Reinvesting these revenues would be a start!

The Conference Board of Canada says that every \$1 spent on expanding ECE enrolment of children under five would yield close to \$6 in economic benefits. The only way to expand enrolment is to have more early childhood educators!

Encourage others to join the conversation at
www.qualitychildcare.ca

