

Canada-Saskatchewan Early Childhood Workforce Agreement

2021-2022 Annual Report

Funded by the Government of
Canada through the Early Learning
and Child Care Agreement

Canada 

Saskatchewan 

Background

On June 12, 2017, Saskatchewan signed the Multilateral Federal-Provincial/Territorial Early Learning and Child Care Framework with the federal government and the other provinces and territories. The Multilateral Framework provides the overarching principles that guide federal investment into regulated early learning and child care. A three-year funding agreement was signed on March 16, 2018, and a one-year extension was signed on June 29, 2020, which provided more than \$56 million over the four years. On August 13, 2021, the *Canada-Saskatchewan Bilateral Early Learning and Child Care Agreement* was extended until 2024-25 providing for continued investment in Saskatchewan for children under the age of six.

Saskatchewan will receive over \$85.7 million between 2021-22 and 2024-25. This includes one-time \$17.2 million workforce development funding in 2021-22. This workforce development investment supports child care centres to address compensation of Early Childhood Educators (ECEs), enhances qualification levels in the sector and develops professional learning opportunities. Investment of these funds serve as a foundation for addressing compensation of ECEs in the province.

Investments made through the federal agreement were in addition to provincial investments and worked to build on existing strengths and priorities in Saskatchewan.

Research identifies ECEs as the most important factor in influencing children's well-being, development and learning in early years settings. Quality experiences in child care are associated with improved cognitive, language and behavioral outcomes.

The Ministry of Education has been engaging in ongoing conversations with the Ministries of Advanced Education and Immigration and Career Training with respect to the federal workforce funding and labour market issues. The general consensus among the three ministries is that the primary labour market issue is retention of ECEs in the regulated child care system. In the absence of addressing retention issues, the Ministry of Education will continually be engaged in a process of training ECEs only to have these educators transfer to different professions. Providing a competitive wage is a significant strategy to increase retention in regulated child care centres.

With regard to the one-time workforce development funding, Saskatchewan has focused on three main components:

1. **Supporting compensation of Early Childhood Educators** – Investments to support compensation of ECEs that take into consideration ECE certification level.
2. **Building a qualified workforce** – Investments in formal education.
3. **Continuous professional learning and skills enhancement** – Building upon a culture of continuous learning and professional growth.

Activities, Expenditures and Results of the Agreement

Component #1: Supporting Compensation of Early Childhood Educators

The first component of Saskatchewan's investment plan is supporting compensation of early childhood educators. Initiatives included a wage enhancement grant and a workforce enhancement grant.

Wage Enhancement Grant

Saskatchewan funded an increase of up to \$1 per hour, \$2 per hour and \$3 per hour for ECE certification level I, II and III respectively. This increase was capped at \$1, \$2, or \$3 above the March 31, 2021, provincial mean wage for each certification level and position type. This approach provided enhancements based on ECE certification level, with higher certification level corresponding to increased levels of pay. This approach also begins to address the disparity in wages across the province.

Position Type	Mean hourly wage as of March 31, 2021*					
	ECE I	<i>ECE I Threshold**</i>	ECE II	<i>ECE II Threshold***</i>	ECE III	<i>ECE III Threshold****</i>
Director	\$19.93	\$20.93	\$24.75	\$26.75	\$27.03	\$30.03
Assistant Director	\$19.94	\$20.94	\$21.25	\$23.25	\$24.12	\$27.12
Supervisor	\$16.90	\$17.90	\$20.19	\$22.19	\$21.57	\$24.57
Early Childhood Educator	\$15.56	\$16.56	\$18.06	\$20.06	\$20.43	\$23.43

*All March 31, 2021, hourly wages were adjusted by \$0.18 to reflect a CBO increase in 2021-22 of \$30 per staff:ratio unit [\$30 / (21 days x 8 hours per day)].
 **\$1 increase, up to the hourly threshold by position type for ECE Is
 ***\$2 increase, up to the hourly threshold by position type for ECE IIs
 ****\$3 increase, up to the hourly threshold by position type for ECE IIIs

Wage enhancements supported the retention of certified ECEs and encouraged educators to become fully certified which contributes to high quality programs. Increasing wages of ECEs also helps attract new workers to the sector.

Certified front-line ECEs, supervisors, assistant directors, directors, educators working with children of exceptionally high needs and cooks who have a role in the delivery of child care services were eligible to receive the wage enhancement. Executive directors and other management staff of multi-site organizations were not eligible.

Increased compensation support for ECEs working in regulated child care centres through the wage enhancement grant covered the period of July 1, 2021 to March 31, 2022.

Program Initiative	Indicators	Targets	Funding Allocated (2021-22)	Funding Spent (2021-22)	Results (2021-22)
Wage Enhancement Grant	Percentage of current certified child care staff supported	78%	\$7.3M	\$4.756M	78.4% of certified ECE staff benefited from the grant

Workforce Enhancement Grant

On March 14, 2022, the province released a one-time Early Learning and Child Care Workforce Enhancement Grant for regulated child care centres.

Child care centre operators could use the funding at their discretion to respond to recruitment and retention needs of their facilities. Funding could be directed to activities to recruit and retain qualified ECEs, such as:

- strengthening advertising and promotion efforts, such as attending career fairs;
- incentives to support peer mentoring by pairing a certified and experienced ECE with a newly hired ECE or ECE in-training;
- one-time investments into benefit or pension funds;
- signing bonuses for certified ECEs;
- bonuses for currently employed staff upon completing an ECE certification level;
- rewarding certified ECEs after employment for a period of time; and,
- incentives for certified ECEs who have left the sector who return to the profession.

This grant was provided at a rate of \$145 per regulated child care space, for children up to the age of six, with a total of \$2.3 million allocated to this initiative.

Program Initiative	Indicators	Targets	Funding Allocated (2021-22)	Funding Spent (2021-22)	Results (2021-22)
Workforce Enhancement Grant	Number of facilities that receive a grant payment	359	\$2.3M	\$2.315M	355 out of 359 facilities made application for and received a grant payment

Component #2: Building a qualified workforce

The second component is building a qualified early learning and child care workforce through investments in formal education which will support prospective and current early childhood educators to achieve a higher ECE certification level. Initiatives include formal ECE training, grants to support participation in training and developing a blueprint to strengthen a qualified workforce.

The Ministry of Education engaged with Saskatchewan Polytechnic, Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies (SIIT) and Collège Mathieu to deliver formal early childhood education training opportunities within 2021-22 which support individuals to achieve an ECE certification level.

The formal training opportunities planned for delivery are provided in the table below:

Training Opportunity	Activity in 2021-2022
Accelerated ECE certificate or diploma training	Delivery
Cohort-based, entry level ECE I training	Delivery
Dual-credit ECE I training for high-school students	Delivery
Essential skills learning with an ECE I focus for adult learners	Delivery

ECE training opportunities were offered tuition free. Courses were available starting in November 2021.

Training opportunities were also tailored to Francophone early childhood educators to respond to the training needs of educators working with children in official language minority communities.

Formal ECE Training

Program Initiative	Indicators	Targets	Funding Allocated (2021-22)	Funding Spent (2021-22)	Results (2021-22)
Accelerated ECE certificate or diploma training	The number of full-time equivalent ECE students who are currently employed that go through accelerated ECE certificate or diploma training to achieve an ECE II or ECE III.	90	\$2.876M	\$3.738M	Saskatchewan Polytechnic – 33 students \$555K SIIT – 61 students
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cohort-based entry level ECE I Supporting high-school students participating in dual-credit ECE I training Essential skills learning with an ECE I focus for adult-learners 	The number of prospective ECEs and currently employed individuals that achieve entry-level ECE training (ECE I), including high-school dual-credit participants and adult learners	294			Saskatchewan Polytechnic – 150 students \$422K Collège Mathieu – 8 students \$56K Saskatchewan Polytechnic – 90 courses (equivalent to 30 high-school students) \$58.5K SIIT – 84 adult learners

Bursaries for Students in Full-Time, In-Person ECE Certificate or Diploma Programs

Program Initiative	Indicators	Targets	Funding Allocated (2021-22)	Funding Spent (2021-22)	Results (2021-22)
Bursaries	Number of bursaries provided	150	\$0.750M	-	No bursaries were provided prior to March 31, 2022

Training Support Grant

The Training Support Grant is intended to support costs for a substitute or alternate child care provider while an educator pursues studies leading to an ECE I, II or III. In this way, educators can maintain their current wage levels while they are provided time-off to pursue formal education, and the facility will be supported with wage replacement costs (e.g. hourly wage and employer deductions) for substitutes or alternate child care providers. This grant is intended to support participation in training opportunities.

A Training Support Grant may be provided for up to \$500 per month for each course an educator is enrolled in, to a maximum of \$1,500 per month per educator.

Program Initiative	Indicators	Targets	Funding Allocated (2021-22)	Funding Spent (2021-22)	Results (2021-22)
Training Support Grant	Monthly average number of educators supported	Up to 500 educators (on average) per month	\$1.830M	\$0.223M	In March 2022 105 educators were supported in 153 courses. From November 2021 to March 2022 the monthly average number of educators was 74 in 111 courses.

Tuition Reimbursement Grant Top-Up

Child care facilities with educators who are pursuing an ECE I, II, or III, but who are not participating in a tuition free cohort-based ECE I or an accelerated ECE II or ECE III program offered by a Saskatchewan post-secondary institution, may be eligible for a Tuition Reimbursement Grant top-up to cover the complete cost of the course (tuition and required books).

Program Initiative	Indicators	Targets	Funding Allocated (2021-22)	Funding Spent (2021-22)	Results (2021-22)
Tuition Reimbursement Grant Top-Up	Number of individual courses	1,000 individual courses	\$0.150M	\$0.025M	Tuition reimbursement top-up grant was provided for 220 courses

Develop a Blueprint for Strengthening a Qualified ECE Workforce

On March 22, 2022, the Ministry of Education posted a Request for Proposals (RFP) competition on SaskTenders for Option Development for an Early Learning and Child Care Workforce Strategy. The deliverable will be one written report, which provides the Pan-Canadian and Saskatchewan current state, best and promising national and international practices and options with respect to key issues in:

- 1) Early childhood educator qualifications, with emphasis on early childhood educator certification, educational pathways and aligning certification with quality service provision.
- 2) Early learning and child care staffing models, including structures incorporating front-line educators and leaders.
- 3) Recruitment and retention approaches in early learning and child care.
- 4) Wage grid/compensation philosophies and approaches.

Program Initiative	Indicators	Targets	Funding Allocated (2021-22)	Funding Spent (2021-22)	Results (2021-22)
Blueprint	A research-informed blueprint for strengthening a qualified workforce is developed	Completed blueprint	-	-	\$50K from carry forward is allocated in 2022-23 for this work

Component #3: Continuous Professional Learning and Skills Enhancement

The third component is investment in professional learning and skills enhancement responsive to the interests and needs of the early years sector, which builds upon a culture of continuous learning and professional growth. Saskatchewan supported post-secondary institutions to deliver an autism certificate of achievement, including the development of delivery of a Francophone option. Saskatchewan worked with a provincial post-secondary training partner to develop and deliver an Early Childhood Educator Leadership Skills Certificate of Achievement. Several micro-credentials and professional learning opportunities were developed which will address Indigenous early learning and child care, home-based business management, infant-toddler care and other topics pertaining to the provision of quality early learning and child care.

The Ministry of Education engaged with Saskatchewan Polytechnic, Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies (SIIT) and Collège Mathieu to:

- deliver professional learning opportunities within 2021-2022; and,
- develop professional learning opportunities within 2021-2022 which will be made available in future years.

The training opportunities planned for delivery or development are provided in the table below:

Training Opportunity	Activity in 2021-2022
ECE Leadership Skills Certificate of Achievement	Development and delivery
Autism Certificate of Achievement	Delivery
Training for early childhood educators to support children with autism (Francophone)	Development
Micro-credential or other professional learning opportunities	Development

The early years sector is being offered professional learning opportunities that build knowledge of Indigenous early learning and child care, enable educators to support children with additional needs and build highly-capable child care centre administrators.

Program Initiative	Indicators	Targets	Funding Allocated (2021-22)	Funding Spent (2021-22)	Results (2021-22)
Develop and deliver an ECE leadership skills certificate of achievement	Number of child care centre administrators that achieve certificate	200	\$2.012M	\$0.399M	Saskatchewan Polytechnic – 150 students
Deliver an autism certificate of achievement	Number of ECEs that complete the certificate of achievement in autism	60			Saskatchewan Polytechnic – 60 students
Develop and deliver a Francophone training option focusing on autism	Francophone training options is made available	Training is available			Collège Mathieu – 6 students
Develop online micro-credentials	Number of micro-credential or other professional learning opportunities developed	25			Saskatchewan Polytechnic – 16 micro credentials have been developed SIIT – 12 professional learning opportunities developed