

## **Background**

The Community Development Department from the City of Greater Sudbury (City) met with the Manitoulin-Sudbury District Services Board (MSDSB) on January 8, 2018 to discuss areas of common interest. The MSDSB provides provincially regulated services including Children, Housing and Social Services to the areas surrounding the City of Greater Sudbury. From this meeting, a common concern from sector partners was the need for additional Personal Support Workers and Early Childhood Educators. Both organizations agreed to create a solution together and have developed a common project charter for this initiative. This work would build on other job specific skills programs that are offered through the Social Services Division. Appendix 1 – Personal Support Worker – Early Childhood Educator Project Charter

## **City Support - Personal Support Worker (PSW) Program**

In the fall of 2009, community partners from across the City met to discuss how to engage and encourage people to consider pursuing occupations in health care. The meeting included politicians, training and education providers, employers, and those who worked with adults looking for employment.

The Social Services Division formed a partnership with St. Albert Adult Learning Centre to provide PSW training for Ontario Works participants while simultaneously completing credited secondary school courses. Participants obtained six credits towards a grade 12 diploma and received a PSW certificate. St Albert's received full accreditation of the PSW skills component from the Ontario Community Support Association in January 2012.

Based on May 2018 client data, 171 Ontario Works clients had started the program since inception, of which 88 have since either exited to employment or post secondary and are no longer on the Ontario Works Program. The total cost for participants of the program is \$1,800, and is funded as an employment benefit from the Province.

## **City Support - Early Childhood Educators (ECE)**

The Children Services Section has been actively engaged in assisting with professional development of early years professionals, and continues to work with both local colleges to deliver professional development and upgrade credentials. Both Cambrian College and Collège Boréal offer the Early Childhood Education Diploma program as well as unique professional learning for those working in the sector. Through Cambrian College, the province funds an Early Childhood Alternative Delivery (ECAD) program, which provides the equivalent of a full-time Early Childhood Education (ECE) diploma to participants that have been employed in the field for one year or more. It allows them to continue to work full-time while completing their studies online and in person outside of work hours. Participants also qualify for funding which covers the cost of tuition, books, and all other related expenses.

The Social Services Division has held information sessions in the past for clients that were interested in pursuing the ECE post secondary diploma program. The last information session in 2011 took place with limited interest in the field.

Early Childhood Educators must be registered with the College of Early Childhood Educators and are being held to a higher standard than ever before. There are mandatory annual on-going professional development requirements. The Province is investing in the profession by continuing to raise the expectations and strengthen the workforce.

## **ECE Provincial Employment Strategy**

The Province released a Workforce Strategy for the Early Childhood Education field in May 2018, which identifies five action areas moving forward:

- 1) Establishing Fair Compensation – Continuing provincial work on fair compensation and establishing equity with Educators that are employed by the School Board sector.
- 2) Improving Working Conditions – Gaining a better understanding of job satisfaction and current working conditions in order to identify ways to establish a safe, responsive, and enjoyable working environment.
- 3) Enhancing Skills and Opportunities – Providing access to both pre-service and on-going professional learning opportunities and incentives to increase participation in education and training.
- 4) Valuing Contributions – Raising awareness and understanding the value of the contributions Early Childhood Educators make as regulated professionals to children, families, the early years, and education sectors, as pedagogical and system leaders.
- 5) Increasing Recruitment – Expanding interest in pursuing a career in early childhood education including career mapping in high school and supporting positive practicum experiences for students.

The Children Services Section's existing plans for program quality improvement and supporting a healthy workforce align with provincially identified action areas. The Children Services Section is currently reviewing the Provincial Workforce Strategy with community partners to move the following ongoing plans forward:

- To standardize salaries and benefits, i.e., pool resources
- To gather local data on the early years sector to assess working conditions and address collectively
- To improve student placements, i.e., further develop mentoring and supervisory skills

- To increase access to professional learning opportunities, i.e., coordinate training opportunities with education and specialized services
- To promote Registered Early Childhood Education careers in secondary schools

## **Next Steps**

The Community Development Department and the MSDSB are in the process of setting up meetings with representatives from Cambrian College and Collège Boréal to explore more about local strategies in these two fields of employment. Further partnerships may be formed with both institutions to increase recruitment for skills training. Local partners that have been working in both geographical areas will also be consulted for best practices to be implemented.

## **References**

Growing Together: Ontario's Early Years and Child Care Workforce Strategy -  
<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/childcare/growing-together-eycc-workforce-en.pdf>