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Early Childhood Community Development Centre and Niagara College partner on accelerated Early Childhood Education program to support Niagara's educators in upgrading credentials and skills

The Early Childhood Community Development Centre (ECCDC) and Niagara College (NC) have received close to \$2 million in funding through the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development to design and deliver an accelerated Early Childhood Education diploma program for educators currently employed within Niagara's early learning programs.

The Skills Development funding will enable 100 educators currently working within licensed child care programs and EarlyON programs to participate in a year-long program through NC, while maintaining their current employment. Upon successful completion of the program, participants will earn an Early Childhood Education diploma and the necessary credentials to become a Registered Early Childhood Educator (RECE), through the College of Early Childhood Educators.

The new program comes at a time when staffing support is desperately needed within Niagara's early learning programs, which have been experiencing a serious staff shortage. The proposal was supported by over 25 early learning programs who have staff currently working in assistant positions to support RECEs. These childcare professionals are ready to build on their career experiences to upgrade their credentials and be eligible to take on RECE positions to help fill the demand within local licensed child care programs. Having additional RECEs employed within these programs will also meet the growing child care needs of Niagara's families to support their full participation in the labour market.

"As Niagara's population grows, we need to ensure parents have access to affordable, high-quality childcare," said Monte McNaughton, Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development. "That's why our government has partnered with the ECCDC and Niagara College to prepare the next generation of young people for rewarding careers as Registered Early Childhood Educators."

"The ECCDC is grateful to the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development for recognizing the importance of ensuring licensed child care programs are staffed by Registered Early Childhood Educators



*A day of learning, exploration and play at
A Child's World Woodlawn licensed
child care centre in Welland*

who have the qualifications, skills and knowledge so critical for their important work with children; especially as a national child care plan rolls out,” said Lorrey Arial Bonilla, Executive Director of the Early Childhood Community Development Centre “We are thrilled to be partnering with Niagara College on this new program, which will support Niagara’s early learning programs for years to come.”

The accelerated program will be delivered over 46 weeks and will fulfill all academic requirements by giving participants credit for their previous work experiences within childcare settings. Participants will start the program with credit for two field placements (levels 1 and 2), or the equivalent of 250 employment hours, and will fulfill the remaining two field placements (levels 3 and 4) at their current place of employment. Overall, participants will complete 600 employment hours, just like students in NC’s current ECE programs.

The program, supported by NC faculty, as well as a field placement officer and academic advisor designated specifically for the new program, will be delivered online through asynchronous learning to provide the greatest flexibility for participants who will continue working throughout their studies. Tuition, textbooks and other program-related fees are also fully funded for participants.

“Niagara College looks forward to training more aspiring RECEs through this community partnership with ECCDC,” said Carol Phillips, Associate Dean of NC’s School of Community Services. “Thanks to funding from Minister McNaughton and the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development, this accelerated Early Childhood Education program will allow us to further support our community partners in filling the demand for skilled child care professionals whose contributions are invaluable in the care of children across Niagara.”

The accelerated Early Childhood Education program will begin on May 9. Applications are being accepted through NC’s Community Employment Services for candidates who have been identified by local childcare centres.

The ECCDC is a charitable organization inspiring excellence in early learning and child care through thought leadership, cutting edge training, innovative resources and coaching services highlighting best practices and emerging trends. The ECCDC exists so that early learning professionals are supported in offering exceptional opportunities for children to grow, learn and develop. In the 28 years since its creation by local volunteers, the ECCDC has become Canada’s leading early learning training, resource and referral organization.