

November 9, 2009

Dear MLA:

RE: Manitoba Budget 2010

I have enclosed a copy of the recommendations provided to the Minister of Family Services & Housing, September 2009 by the Manitoba Child Care Association (MCCA). As there are many licensed child care centres and family child care homes located in your constituency, I urge you to review our recommendations and keep them in mind when plans for early learning and child care are developed in the coming months.

Since 1999, the Government of Manitoba has worked to stabilize and strengthen our early learning and child care system. Good progress was made on the Five Year Plan for Child Care 2002-2007 and development will continue through Family Choices, Manitoba's Five Year Agenda for Early Learning and Child Care 2008-2012. However wait times are long, there is a critical shortage of Early Childhood Educators. Our first priority is the recommendation that the combination of parent fees and government operating grants must increase to, and remain at, a level that will put an end to the critical child care workforce shortage in Manitoba. We once again ask for a funding level that provides no less than market competitive wages and benefits for the child care workforce including:

- the Market Competitive Salary Guideline Scale for Early Learning and Child Care Centres 2009, as the minimum wage base for all positions for all full time centres and part time nursery schools effective April 1, 2010
- funding to ensure the incomes of licensed family child care providers can be at least competitive with the unlicensed sector and high enough to be an incentive for unlicensed caregivers to become licensed and existing providers to remain licensed

The gap between the supply of, and demand for Early Childhood Educators (ECEs) continues to be the most significant problem reported to MCCA by licensed child care centres. It is more than a decade since the child care workforce shortage began. Over the past 10 years, around 30-40% of existing licensed centres have been unable to recruit the Early Childhood Educators required by your governments own legislation – The Community Child Care Standards Act.

Directors of licensed child care centres are terrified of the next resignation. In a competitive job market a lower paying employer, like child care, has a serious challenge attracting and retaining workers. These days a child care centre with a job vacancy is "lucky" to receive any applicants at all, never mind those from qualified Early Childhood Educators.

Directors of licensed child care centres are also terrified every time they hear government announce new spaces. The shortage of ECEs grows with each new facility that is licensed or each existing program that expands.

The Child Care Human Resources Sector Council has recently published a report titled the **Estimates of Workforce Shortages In Early Childhood Education and Care**. Across Canada, 4,802 workers were still needed to fill available ECEC positions in 2007. Manitoba is identified as having a shortage of 325 ECEC workers in 2007.

The report also states that wages have remained below the level needed to meet demand. At the wage employers are willing or able to pay, not enough ECEs are interested in filling the vacancies.

In August 2009, MCCA surveyed a sample of child care centres by email. There are 595 child care centres in Manitoba and 166 completed the survey:

- 52.4% reported that hiring ECEs is a major problem
- 59.1% reported that hiring substitutes is a major problem
- 30.5% of centres have a provisional license
- most programs are concerned about staffing during a flu pandemic
- on July 31, 2009 the 166 centres needed to hire more than 135 ECEs and more than 142 CCAs

Since Family Choices was announced in April 2008, Manitoba has committed funding to 1,077 new spaces – good news for parents on waiting list, but a problem for the existing centres trying to recruit employees. We applaud Manitoba's tuition support and workplace training strategy to boost ECE graduates. It has been successful in recruiting new ECE students. Unfortunately, compensation is a barrier to remaining in child care as a long term career.

October 17, 2009 marked the 20th anniversary of the Day of Demonstration when 2000 supporters, fed up with subsidizing the cost of child care services, rallied on the steps of the Manitoba legislature to protest the shortage of funding for competitive salaries. In 2009, parents of all income levels enjoy the second lowest fees outside of Quebec while ECE wages are 19%-23% below market according to *PeopleFirst* HR Services. In 2009, the Government of Manitoba provided a 3% funding increase to support salaries.

We do recognize that paying competitive wages won't solve all of the recruitment and retention challenges in the child care workforce, but we do believe compensation is at the heart of the problem. We have often been told that these things take "time" but more than two decades of short changing the child care workforce has gone on long enough.

The Manitoba Child Care Association continues to call on the Government of Manitoba to aggressively deal with the child care workforce shortage by adequately funding the programs it regulates and licenses so child care wages are fair and competitive and enables employers to recruit, retain, and fairly compensate the personnel required by The Community Child Care Standards Act.

Sincerely,

Michele Henderson, President

Encl: Recommendations to the Government of Manitoba, September 28, 2009
Market Competitive Salary Guideline Scale for Early Learning and Child Care Centres 2009