



Manitoba Child Care
Association

Early Learning and Child Care for Manitoba

An Agenda for the Government of Manitoba, 2011



November 2011

The Manitoba Child Care Association

The Manitoba Child Care Association (MCCA) is a non-profit, membership funded organization established in 1974. Our mission is to advocate for a quality system of child care, to advance early childhood education as a profession, and to provide services to our members. We are the voluntary professional association for the childcare workforce in Manitoba.

Our 4000 members share the goal of providing high quality early learning programs in safe, nurturing, and stimulating environments that foster child development and include support to families.

MCCA is an active partner in the development of early learning and child care services in Manitoba. We believe ongoing communication and dialogue are important to help the Government of Manitoba meet their goals, set priorities, plan for the future, and make decisions. We know the information we provide can help policy makers address priority issues to strengthen the programs and initiatives already in place and set a strong foundation for the future.

Early Learning and Child Care in Manitoba – A Snapshot

Legislation: *Community Child Care Standards Act*
Manitoba Child Care Regulations

Provincial Responsibility: Manitoba Early Learning and Child Care (MELCC)
Department of Family Services & Consumer Affairs

- Number of licensed spaces for children 3 months – 12 years: 29,382
- A licensed space available for 25.6% of preschoolers (0 to 5 years) and 10% of school age children (6 to 12 years)¹

Number of children 0 – 12 years²:

Age	Number of children
0 – 2	39,000
3 - 5	38,600
6-12	97,300
Total	174,900

Number of children 0 – 12 years with mothers in the paid labour force: 113,700

¹ Program Indicators for Early Learning and Child Care, Government of Manitoba 2009/10

² Statistics Canada, 2007

Ten Year Progress Report:

The past 10 years have seen substantial growth, many positive enhancements and new initiatives to stabilize and strengthen the early learning and child care system in Manitoba. Impressive progress was made on the first Five Year Plan for Child Care, 2002 – 2007, and development of new services continues through Family Choices, Manitoba's Five-Year Agenda for Early Learning and Child Care, 2008-2013.

Noteworthy examples include:

- 6,500 more funded spaces
- Enhanced funding for 1,000 nursery school spaces
- Funding for \$37M Family Choices Building Fund
- Child Care Safety Charter introduced in June 2008
- Age appropriate curricula and enhanced program quality developed in 2009
- A centralized online registry for families seeking licensed care
- A pension plan and retirement supports for centre based employees and family child care providers, inclusive of long term service recognition
- A wage adjustment fund to support higher wages for ECE II's and Child Care Assistants in ECE training
- New regulations for inclusive environments
- Recruitment and retention strategies for ECE students introduced in 2002, including tuition support, workplace training program, and public education campaigns

Moving Forward: Essential Components for the Next Early Learning and Child Care Plan for Manitoba

The Manitoba Child Care Association recommends that the Government of Manitoba continue to move early learning and child care forward by keeping and building on all the initiatives already introduced as they are essential to support and improve the infrastructure and operations.

This includes the:

- Operating grants to eligible facilities
- Equipment and minor renovations grants
- Building fund for new and upgraded facilities
- Enhanced nursery schools
- Wage adjustment fund
- Pension plan subsidy
- Support to students in ECE training including IEQ, the workplace training program, tuition support, annual training grant
- The online child care registry
- Curriculum Framework
- Child Care Safety Charter

There is much more work to be done. The following recommendations focus on the need for more quality early learning and child care services as well as the need to attract and retain a skilled child care workforce by improving compensation and province wide accessibility to training and professional development.

1. Accessibility to high quality early learning and child care services:

Background: The gap between demand for child care services and supply of child care services means most families are unable to access child care when they need it. Wait times range from months to years across all age groups.³

Many social programs support families but child care is the backbone of them all.

National Council of Welfare
(1999) *Preschool Children: Promises to Keep.*

Recommendations to the Government of Manitoba:

- √ The Online Child Care Registry will provide fact based information on demand for early learning and child care services by age and by community. The Government of Manitoba should use this information to plan for expansion and should disclose this information in a timely manner so community groups can establish the services parents are seeking.
- √ Address recruitment and retention in order to balance the licensing of new spaces with the availability of a child care workforce as required by the Community Child Care Standards Act.
- √ Continue to establish child care centres in all new schools and in schools that have major renovations and make capital and renovation funds available for non school based sites as well.
- √ Ensure child care facilities co-located in schools are not displaced if the school requires the space for any reason.
- √ Make start up grants and maximum operating grants available to all eligible programs at the time of licensing.
- √ Establish flexible funding policies to ensure the ongoing viability of full and part time centres, including those whose utilization is reduced by the introduction of preschool programs by school boards.
- √ Include transportation time in calculation of subsidy eligibility for 4 hours, for 4 – 10 hours, and for 10+ hours as well as flexible subsidy funding for children with additional service needs.
- √ Ensure affordability for parents by implementing annual indexing of subsidy levels and continue to make subsidy available to all eligible families.

³ Trends and Issues, Manitoba Child Care Association survey of centre members, October 2011

2. Compensation and Retention:

Background: Quality early learning and child is best provided by consistent, sensitive, responsive, well trained and well compensated caregivers. There are many rewards for working in child care, but compensation is not yet one of them. MCCA has been lobbying for competitive wages for the child care workforce for close to 40 years. Although there has been progress on wages, compensation for most Early Childhood Educators (ECE's) remains 20-25% below competitive rates.⁴ Child care centres report the majority of their employees are on MCCA's Market Competitive Salary Guideline Scale 2007 or 2008, and are therefore three to four years behind in competitive wages. A majority of child care centres also report they did not have the funds to increase their wage scale in 2010 or in 2011.⁵

Anecdotal evidence suggests the steady decline⁶ in the number of licensed family child care homes is a direct result of the government controlled below market income providers can earn.

.....good wages and working conditions are associated with higher job satisfaction and morale, lower staff turnover, more developmentally appropriate, more sensitive, less harsh caregiving, better language development, and higher levels of appropriate play in children.

Doherty, G. (1995). Quality matters: Excellence in early childhood Programs.

The legacy of decades of below market compensation is an ongoing shortage of Early Childhood Educators. More than a decade after the shortage of Early Childhood Educators was first identified, around 30% of licensed child care centres still cannot recruit employees with the qualifications required by the Community Child Care Standards Act. Child care centres report recruitment continues to be difficult, that "want better pay" is the main reason why both ECE's and CCA's left their employment.

There is a "perfect storm" - at the same time that demand for early learning and child care continues to escalate and new spaces are opening, ECE's are leaving the stagnant wages in child care and moving to the education system where employment opportunities are increasing, the wages are higher, the work hours shorter, and working conditions are better.

Recommendations to the Government of Manitoba:

√ Address compensation and retention issues permanently by funding a provincial salary scale in 2012 that is at current market competitive rates, and applies to all child care centre employees inclusive of recognition for years of service and applies to all positions

⁴ PeopleFirst HR Services, Recommendations on A Market Competitive Salary Scale for Group Child Care Centres, February, 2007.

⁵ Trends and Issues, Manitoba Child Care Association survey of centre members, October 2011

⁶ There was a high of 591 licensed family child care homes in 2003/04 and the number has dropped annually since then. There were 468 licensed homes in 2009/10. Department of Family Services Annual Reports, 2003/04 and 2009/10.

√ Increase the funding for family child care providers as an incentive to become licensed and to remain licensed

3. Operating Funding:

Background: The two main sources of revenue to a child care program – parent fees and operating grants are controlled by government. Parent fees have not increased in over 10 years. Over the past 7 years, operating revenue to existing facilities has gone up by an average of only 1.28% per year, meaning most facilities don't have the revenue to pay competitive wages and many also struggle to make ends meet in general. Early learning and child care service providers expect the Government of Manitoba to provide enough funding, whether through federal transfers, through parent fees, or through provincial grants so facilities, whether new or established, can afford to meet all the requirements of the Community Child Care Standard Act and pay competitive wages to employees.

Recommendations to the Government of Manitoba:

√ Review the unit funding model calculation to ensure it reflects the actual costs of operating a high quality full or part time early learning and child care centre, and then adjust funding where required.

√ Operating costs increase annually and funding must also increase annually. The Government of Manitoba must consult with direct service providers to determine common and unique annual funding needs specific to each facility. The analysis and funding adjustment must reflect annual inflationary increases to all standard operating expenses, inclusive of competitive compensation rates, employer portion of benefits, children's program, and which may also include variable expenses such as rent, utilities, administration costs, special circumstance expenses and the cost of all government mandated requirements such as new legislation, quality enhancements, or minimum wage increases.

4. Ensure Quality Early Learning and Care:

Background: It is now well recognized that early years are learning years, and that the quality of relationships and experiences a child has prior to school entry will affect future outcomes. Manitoba's workforce participation rate of mothers of children under age 5 is now at 75.9%⁷. Early learning and child care is an essential public service, and accessibility must be available to all who choose to use it.

For many children, success in school will begin in a licensed early learning and child care program. As the early childhood environment changes, more and more child care settings are requiring educators with higher or more specialized skills to work with children with special and multiple needs.⁸

⁷ Statistics Canada, 2007

⁸ Occupational Standards for Early Childhood Educators, Child Care Human Resources Sector Council, 2010

Manitoba introduced basic, minimum standards for licensed child care programs in 1983. Standards include training requirements, ratio's, and group sizes - all iron triangle variables for quality. Twenty eight years later, many child care facilities, especially in rural areas, are unable to meet the minimum standards. Facilities can be licensed and operate for extended periods of time with conditions, ranging from those for trained staff but also for space, first aid certification, record keeping, fire/health inspections, etc⁹

As an example, of 26 full time preschool centres located in Eastman region, 17 did not meet licensing standards for trained staff on October 14, 2011, including 4 that did not have a Director whose qualifications meets minimum standards.

It is unfortunate that the chronic shortage of trained staff has become normalized within the industry. Over the years, government introduced several changes to the calculation of proportion of staff in order to reduce the number of facilities in non-compliance. It has now been observed that a centre with an approved staffing plan may be recognized as a centre that meets trained staff requirements and issued a regular license. This is disappointing to those who advocate for quality and deceiving those who use the system.

Recommendations to the Government of Manitoba:

- √ Ensure public policy and funding align with early learning and child care services as the first tier of public education. Build a solid foundation inclusive of the funds, resources, and supports so facilities can open and operate in compliance with the best and highest research based standards, employ the highly skilled, well trained educators, provide a developmentally appropriate, play based program, in purpose built indoor and outdoor learning environments.
- √ Review and upgrade the competency standards for ECE's and Family Child Care Providers, classifications for ECE's, and early learning and care training options to ensure they reflect current skill and educational requirements.
- √ Make available in Manitoba post-secondary Early Childhood Education programs at the Bachelor's, Master's, and PhD levels.
- √ Require all Early Childhood Educators, Child Care Assistants, and Family Child Care Providers to participate in 24 hours of professional development annually and allow licensed facilities to close without loss of income for three professional development days annually.
- √ Introduce a professional development support grant in the amount of \$300.00 for each eligible ECE, Child Care Assistant, and Family Child Care Provider.
- √ Establish an enhanced funding model for family child care providers participating in ECE training that ensures an increase in income as milestones are achieved.
- √ Introduce developmental screening for children at 18 months and again at age 3 as part of Manitoba's healthy child strategy.

⁹ Trends and Issues, Manitoba Child Care Association survey of centre members, October 2011

- √ Review funding policies for the Inclusion Support Program so facilities can afford to hire a person with the knowledge, skill, and ability to ensure the health, safety, and well being of the child(ren) with additional support needs.
- √ Establish a goal that by 2013, no conditions will be allowed related to staffing.
- √ Enhance consumer protection by providing more resources and easy access to information for parents who seek quality early learning and child care services, whether licensed or privately provided in facilities that are not licensed, regulated, or monitored.

5. Administration and Governance:

Background: The multiple demands of managing and leading an early learning and child care program in the 21st century requires extensive knowledge in child development along with program management, organizational management, financial management, human resource management, and public relations expertise.

Every licensed full and part time not for profit child care centre is required to have a Board of Directors, of which a minimum of 5 must be parents of children who attend the facility. These volunteers are totally responsible for overall governance and many struggle to establish new programs, hire staff, develop policies and procedures with minimal to no access to assistance, support, training, support, nor mediation if problems arise.

When the child care facility requires professional expertise that employees or volunteers do not have, the next challenge is that current funding levels do not include additional money to hire a project manager, a human resource specialist, a lawyer, a conflict mediator, etc. This leaves management and board members to figure out problems as best they can. The legal and personal risk to employee and employer is huge.

Recommendations to the Government of Manitoba:

- √ Require all licensed full and part time child care centres to have Directors & Officers liability insurance.
- √ Make available province wide accessible and affordable training, education, resource, in-servicing and ongoing support to the Boards of Directors of licensed full and part time child care programs.
- √ Manitoba's best plan for the future is a strong and equal partnership between the early learning and education systems that recognizes child care as an important part of the education process. The Government of Manitoba must ensure decisions made by Manitoba Education and/or provincial school boards regarding full day kindergarten or nursery school programs are made in collaboration with Healthy Child Manitoba, the Department of Family Services & Consumer Affairs and direct service providers.

√ The procedure MELCC will follow during an investigation of allegations or complaints against a licensee or anyone classified and employed in a licensed facility be communicated in writing to all licensed child care facilities. That respect for need for urgency during the investigation, timelines, compensation to minimize disruption to the life of the individual must all be transparent.

Change the First Five Years and You Change Everything
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GbSp88PBe9E>

If we invest in programs, that promote learning,
beginning at birth,
the statistics will change, our stories will change,
our future will change.