

**Submission to
Manitoba Child Care
Association**

August 19th, 2019

1. *If elected, what will your government do to develop an inclusive approach that meets all the elements of the system—affordability, accessibility, and quality?*

Our comprehensive plan for child care will focus on improving availability, affordability, quality and sustainability of child care in Manitoba.

To improve availability, we will make legislative changes to authorize the payment of capital grants to private sector child care centres, continue to fund existing and new licensed centres through existing and new bilateral agreements, open new child care centres at every school we build, continue to fund the Child Care Centre Development Tax Credit, and continue increasing supports for home-based child care.

To make child care more affordable for those who need cost-relief, we will extend a new subsidy of up to \$500 per month to 3,000 eligible lower-income families.

Finally, to ensure the quality and sustainability of child care in Manitoba, we are committed to a funding model review to make child care centres are resourced appropriately to retain skilled staff and remain open. We're confident that ongoing activities to increase training opportunities for ECEs, continued workforce development, and more supports to help centres to meet staff training requirements will ensure quality child care for more Manitoba families.

We also recognize that the perspectives of parents, ECEs and the MCCA are valuable to consider as we develop policy in this important sector, and will continue to consult with all of these stakeholders going forward through the Ministers Consultation Table described in more detail below.

2. *If your party is elected, how many additional spaces will be licensed and funded for each child care centres and home-based programs? Will your party commit to funding the existing 2,691 unfunded spaces?*

To date, our PC government has taken real strides to increase the availability of child care. Through the 2018 Canada-Manitoba ELCC agreement, we have invested \$47 Million in 3,100 new and newly funded child care spaces. We've also increased funding to home-based care providers, and introduced a Child Care Centre Development Tax Credit, through which we will continue investing \$2 million annually in new spaces for employees of participating companies and the families within the communities where new centres are established.

Moving forward, we will continue to increase child care availability for Manitoba families with more than 1,500 new and newly funded child care spaces—with the help of federal partnership on a new bilateral agreement—and 1,500 school-based spaces. In total, this commitment will add 3,000 new spaces over and above the 3,100 created through the last bilateral agreement.

Through the ongoing process of improving the reliability and usability of the Online Child Care Registry, we've learned more than 1,100 registrations are for unborn children due within 9 months, and more than 3,600 children are already enrolled in child care but are waiting for an alternate space. We will work to determine the reasons for such registrations to identify gaps in the system, and by creating more child care options for families, our government will do more to address child care demand in Manitoba.

3. Will your government commit to A) implementing a workforce strategy that supports current initiatives and B) ensuring ECEs are compensated by their employers at a level that reflects their education and years of service?

We have heard from advocates and child care centre directors that staff retention issues and wages are some of their top concerns, which is why we will undertake a thorough funding model review to ensure we are resourcing the sector appropriately. Child care centre directors want to compensate ECEs at a level that reflects the important work they do, and we want to modernize the funding model to ensure they can do so. With the help of the newly established Ministers Consultation Table, which involves the participation of the MCCA, child care centre directors, and parents, we will keep listening and collaborating to address the shortage of ECEs, and help child care centres meet staff training requirements.

In addition to staff replacement grants, increased funding to ECE training capacity, and annual training grants, our government is also supporting ECEs and increasing training opportunities for these important frontline workers through a new Competency Based Assessment (CBA) program that has been re-designed and expanded to meet the needs of these rural and northern communities, and by providing students and professionals with free access to the Science of Early Child Development, a globally recognized research and resource tool. The online living textbooks and modules will help increase professional development opportunities, encourage independent study, and continue to develop Manitoba's child care workforce.

4. What will your party do to ensure child care fees remain affordable to all Manitoba families?

We are committed to increasing child care options for Manitobans, and recognize child care spaces and funding models are not one-size-fits-all.

A re-elected Progressive Conservative government will develop a new funding program to help 3,000 families with up to \$500 per month in child care cost relief in our second term. The new *Portable Child Care Benefit* will offer flexibility by being applicable to both new child care centres and home-based programs.

Under our government, Manitoba will also continue to pay subsidies directly to licensed child care facilities on behalf of parents based on a formula that includes net annual household income, allowable family deductions, the number and ages of children and the fees charged for child care services.

We are also committed to a funding model review to ensure child care centres are resourced appropriately. We have listened to the MCCA's recommendation that government should leave all options on the table in order to provide centres with much-needed revenue, and will carefully examine those options in order to support child care centres and ECEs. Manitoba has amongst the lowest child care fees in the province—we want to keep them low while ensuring centres are able to retain skilled staff and remain open.