



**MEDIA RELEASE**

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**PROVINCIAL BUDGET 2020 – RELIABLE EARLY LEARNING & CHILD CARE IS ESSENTIAL IN MANITOBA**

It has been over four years since Manitoba had an early learning & child care strategy. The Manitoba Child Care Association (MCCA) has shared its pre-budget recommendation with the Province – provide adequate funding for a high quality early learning and child care system. MCCA is anticipating the provincial government’s 2020 budget to include a balanced investment which supports accessibility, affordability and quality, which at the core, is the workforce.

The mounting shortage of Early Childhood Educators (ECEs) and Child Care Assistants (CCAs) has continued. Programs across the province report the persistent challenges of recruiting and retaining qualified staff to work in programs. Funding in this year’s budget must support the wages and benefits to attract and retain a skilled, knowledgeable workforce to preserve the viability of the sector.

In 2019, over 26,000 Manitobans signed a general petition to increase funding for existing licensed not for profit early learning and child care programs. “The outcomes of investing in child care are irrefutable”, said Tracy Cossar, President of MCCA. “They include, lifelong academic and social benefits for children, more parents being able to access education and employment, poverty reduction and economic growth.”

In 2019, there were 34,173 spaces in licensed child care centres and 3,586 spaces in licensed home child care programs. However, accessibility continues to be a problem with over 16,000 children on the online child care registry waiting list on June 30, 2018.

Key recommendations required in a strategy are:

- An immediate increase to operating funding to licensed child care facilities whose funding has been frozen since January 2016
- A province wide market competitive wage scale which recognizes ECE training and experience
- Improved accessibility for children with additional support needs
- Increased spaces to meet the growing needs of Manitoba families

The Manitoba Child Care Association is a membership funded organization that advocates for a quality system of child care and works to advance early childhood education as a profession.