

## **What's Going On?**

The Government of Manitoba has launched an online consultation to implement regulatory changes in support of Bill 9, The Community Child Care Standards Amendment Act. Bill 9 received Royal Assent (i.e. became law) in June 2018. The Bill has now been posted with the regulations to work towards proclamation.

In “regular” language, the government is proposing changes to the child care regulations to “reduce burdens on child care providers and streamline other requirements.”

## **Why is this important?**

There are a number of proposed changes that could affect the future of early learning and child care in Manitoba, including the workforce, children and families. This is an important opportunity to share your feedback and comments with the Province of Manitoba.

## **What has MCCA done?**

MCCA gathered a group of advocates and stakeholders to review the 30-pages of proposed amendments to the regulations. These documents are not easy to understand, particularly amidst a pandemic when we are focusing on many new and unfamiliar things.

As a result, a formal letter has been written to Minister Stefanson, Minister of Families, seeking clarification on certain proposed amendments, as well as highlighting questions and concerns. This has also been submitted to the government’s online portal where comments are being received.

To support MCCA members and the early learning and child care sector (and to save you time), we have summarized the proposed amendments that we have identified as needing clarification or are concerning.

## **What should you do?**

1. Visit the following page: <https://reg.gov.mb.ca/detail/2937833>
2. Review the proposed changes by comparing *Draft Instrument: Regulation: Child Care Regulation* to the current child care regulations. Or...
3. Read MCCA’s summary to gain an understanding of some of the significant proposed changes.
4. Share your comments with the Government of Manitoba about the proposed changes. Click on the “Make a comment” button on the right hand side of the page. You will need to register to share comments.



## Highlighted Summary of Proposed Regulatory Changes

### 1. Repealing of the enhanced nursery school funding

- This proposed amendment indicates that the current operating grant for enhanced nursery school be revoked. A revised Schedule of Grants for child care centres is proposed but not included. We have asked to see a copy of the proposed revised schedule.
- This would result in a significant decrease of revenue to these programs and make many nursery programs non-viable.
- *Background:* The enhanced nursery school funding was Manitoba's first step towards a truly universal quality child care system that is accessible and affordable for families. In addition, it offers choice and flexibility to families who do not require full time child care. For many children, these programs are their first introduction to formalized early learning opportunities and impact the most pre-Kindergarten children in Manitoba.
- To see this funding cancelled would be disheartening and would be a regression for Manitoba's child care system.

### 2. Fees for unapproved spaces

- This proposed regulation would formally allow programs with unfunded (unapproved) spaces to charge more than the maximum daily rate to families.
- The proposed fees for unapproved spaces will promote a two-tiered system among families, thus limiting affordability and access for Manitoba families. Manitoba has been looked upon as an example by other jurisdictions with its set fees for parents. While a set maximum daily fee does not always equate with affordability for all, it does provide predictability and consistency. Among other benefits, set fees mean that parent-run boards of directors (the not-for-profits that own and operate 95% of Manitoba's childcare centres) don't have to deliberate over how much to charge themselves.

### 3. Replacing the term "child care assistant" or "early childhood educator II" to "child care worker"

- This proposed change insinuates the replacement of Child Care Assistant or Early Childhood Educator II to Child Care Worker. This is an antiquated term that was previously used.
- The early learning and child care sector has strived to be recognized as professionals. A change in position title would be detrimental to this growth.

### 4. Addition of "child with exceptional additional support needs"

- This is recommending that in addition to the current definition *child with additional support needs*, there would be a new definition of *child with exceptional additional support needs*.

- There is concern that a child designated as ‘exceptional’ must be diagnosed with a *minimum* of two of the conditions described to be eligible for funding.
- By streaming children into two categories, there is further concern that a two-tiered and two-response system will evolve. This could result in barriers to accessing funding for many programs and consequently many children and families. Increased funding, not less, should be invested into the Inclusion Support Program.

#### **5. Allowing exemptions (to licenses) for School-Age and Nursery School programs or any program that may be limited to community standards**

- This proposed regulation change suggests a number of clauses where programs would be exempt from licenses or regulations (i.e. a third-party operating a child minding program in a school).
- It is concerning that the integrity and quality of some programs will be compromised. All children, in all parts of Manitoba, deserve the same quality and safety standards of licensed high quality child care that, at minimum, meets the regulations.
- This regulation review is an opportunity to preserve the quality of the regulations that have served Manitoba children and families for nearly 40 years, not compromise them.

#### **6. Extending Relicensing of programs to every three years**

- For facilities that have no conditions cited on their license and are without licensing orders, they would be permitted to be relicensed every three years instead of every year.
- It is essential that Licensing Coordinators maintain regular communication with all licensed facilities and perform a minimum of at least annual quality assurance observations. Further, in the event, that there is a change in management at a facility or increased turnover in staff, re-licensing will be required earlier than the three-year period.
- Without these protections, a longer licensing period could pose risks to children and families.
- With these protections, a longer license might function as an incentive for facilities and may allow department staff to prioritize their support of the early learning and child care system.

#### **7. Group Child Care Homes**

- This section is ambiguous and has raised a number of questions.
- Specifically, the definition of *who* is the license holder; explanation of the terminology of “assistant” (Is this a new category of an individual working in a group child care home; what training requirements are required for classification); and definitions of “resident license holder”, “staffing plan” and “overnight staff person”.

#### **8. Emergency Evacuations**

- This is proposing to decrease the frequency of evacuation procedures from once a month to once every six months. Seeking clarification if this includes fire evacuation

procedures. Young children learn through repetition are not developmentally able to effectively learn skills with such minimal and inconsistent exposure.

**9. Removing of Recruitment Incentive Grant and Wage Enhancement Grant**

- Seeking clarification of why these are being removed. Is there less public funding available?
- As the ELCC field is chronically under-funded, these grants should be maintained and distributed to the sector.

**10. Grants for Additional Support or Exceptional Additional Support: staff enhancement**

- There are concerns surrounding a reduction in funding for enhanced staffing to support the needs of children. Prior, the grant was based on actual cost for extra staffing. In the proposed regulation, it is to *“subsidize additional staffing costs associated with providing child care...”* The proposed changes to this grant do not appear to be commensurate with the actual staff cost.
- This could mean that these changes could download costs onto programs (centres and homes) that cannot afford them.
- The question that has been posed (to the provincial government) is: how will this proposed regulatory amendment to the inclusion support grant better accommodate children with exceptional support as indicated as one of government’s goals?