



**Manitoba Child Care
Association**

**Manitoba Pre-Budget 2021 Submission
Manitoba Child Care Association
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The Manitoba Child Care Association (MCCA) is a voluntary professional association, not for profit, registered charity working since 1974 to promote quality child care as a service and as a profession. We are the largest provincial child care association in Canada, and entirely self-funded through membership dues and professional development events. Our 4000+ members include those who provide care and education in licensed homes and child care centres, and they keep us informed of needs, priorities, and challenges providing care, early learning, and family support in their community.

Any reference to 2020 includes the words unprecedented or essential. At a time where our Province was vying for stability and normalcy, early learning and child care (in centres and homes) remained a stable, consistent and essential service for many Manitoban children and families.

It is under this premise that MCCA is calling upon the Province of Manitoba, to prioritize adequate, reliable investments (in its 2021 Budget) into early learning and child care to ensure its existence.

In the 21st century, prior to the pandemic, child care was considered an essential public service for families. The workforce participation of mothers has continued to increase and contributes greatly to Manitoba's economy. It now includes:

- 65.1% of mothers with children 0-2 years of age
- 74.6% of mothers with children between 3-5 years of age
- 83.7% of mothers with children 6-15 years old ⁱ

In total, there are 122,600 children (0-12 years) with employed mothers in Manitoba (2019 rounded estimate) and 38,465 licensed spaces (March 2020).

In June 2020, the Childcare Resource and Research Unit, Child Care Now and the Canadian Child Care Federation, partnered to complete a national survey of child care across our nation. "The pandemic experience has created an uncertain future for Canadian Child Care Services".ⁱⁱ

Manitoba's ELCC sector is included in this. Results specific to our province include:

- 31% of centres reported that the centre's current financial situations was much worse than before COVID

- 99% of centres reported that the loss of reduced parent fees was the primary cause for financial difficulties
- 50% of family child care homes anticipated that lower enrolment will be a problem both in the short and long term

The challenges (for licensed facilities) that existed before COVID, have only been amplified since March 2020. As the self-proclaimed gatekeeper of child care in Manitoba, MCCA often hears firsthand the realities of the sector – the imperative need for consistent, adequate funding and the challenges surrounding workforce recruitment and retention.

With no increase to operating revenue in over five years, existing licensed not for profit early learning and child care programs are struggling to balance their operating budgets. The additional expenses (PPE, increased staffing, loss of parent fee revenue) and the uncertainty that COVID-19 has created, has resulted in an already fragile system being further compromised.

According to the 2016 MCCA/Probe Research Survey, the average salary of an ECE with 12 years' experience is 25% below the Market Competitive Salary Guideline Scaleⁱⁱⁱ (which is indexed and released annually). And this disparity continues to grow. The increasing shortage of trained ECEs is becoming more and more evident.

In a recent survey of its centre members, 85% of respondents indicated that they were unable to pay any of the categories or levels for any positions on the 2020-2021 scale.

Manitoba's already established early learning & child care system works. The current child care landscape is unique with facilities reporting vacancies. Some families are working from home. Some families remain unemployed. Capacity is not exhausted as it was pre-COVID. Therefore, our Government has a prime opportunity to invest in other child care priorities.

MCCA recommends the following for the provincial budget 2021:

- Ensure that there is, at minimum, a 10% annual funding increase for existing child care facilities so they can cover inflationary increases to operating expenses including staff salaries and benefits, children's programs and administration.
- Keep child care fees the second lowest in Canada by continuing to set a maximum standardized fee for centres and homes that receive a government operating grant.
- Protect Manitoba families, by encouraging not for profit child care.
- Develop a sustainable workforce strategy; ECEs have been identified as essential. A comprehensive policy is required to recruit individuals, ensure training opportunities are available and that upon graduation, ECEs are receiving the remuneration they deserve. MCCA's Market Competitive Salary Guideline Scale (recently indexed) provides the framework for adequate compensation for ECEs.
- Provide incentives to Child Care Assistants and Family Child Care Providers to upgrade their qualifications through post-secondary education.
- Revise the subsidy eligibility levels to support lower income families with the cost of child care.
- Resume the Minister's Consultation Table, which last met February 2020; as the Province moves forward with its reform plans to Manitoba's child care system, it is crucial that the voice of the sector shares its expertise with the province.

As Manitoba enters its 4th year of the Canada-Manitoba Early Learning and Child Care Agreement, MCCA looks forward to working with our government on Manitoba's Action Plan. As part of the one-year extension signed in August 2020, the Province of Manitoba introduced COVID-19 Response Grant. Many facilities welcomed this imperative funding which allowed the offsetting of incurred expenses specific to the pandemic. A continuation of this grant would be a significant support to the licensed facilities so they can continue to operate with increased financial stability.

The Fall Federal Economic Statement (November 30, 2020) committed a one-time \$420 million transfer, in addition to the bilateral funding, specific to Canada's ELCC workforce – its retention, recruitment, education and training. As a leader in our country, the Province of Manitoba will have

the opportunity to invest directly into its early learning & child care sector and set the bar for other jurisdictions.

Research continues to tell us that high quality licensed child care has a positive impact on how children learn, supports families, benefits communities, reduces poverty is key to women's equality and contributes to a strong and stable economy.

As we move forward in 2021, if Manitobans want a full, long term economic recovery from Covid-19, early learning and child care is part of the solution. Manitoba citizens are able to re-join the workforce thanks to child care.

Thanks to child care, our health care professionals can take care of Manitobans.

Thanks to child care, our first responders can go to work to keep Manitobans safe.

Thanks to child care, our teachers can continue to educate our children.

Thanks to child care, Manitoba works – both figuratively and literally.

Manitoba deserve a quality, not-for-profit, affordable, accessible system – children are our most precious resource, let's ensure that early learning and child care is a priority in the 2021 provincial budget.

ⁱ Friendly, M., Feltham, L.E., Mohamed, S., Nguyen, N. T., Vickerson, R., & Forer, B. (2020). Early childhood education and care in Canada 2019. Toronto: Childcare Resource and Research Unit.

ⁱⁱ Friendly, M., Forer, B., Vickerson, R. and Mohamed. S. (June 2020). Canadian child care: Preliminary results from a national survey during the COVID19 pandemic: Toronto: Childcare Resource and Research Unit; Ottawa, Child Care Now; Ottawa, Canadian Child Care Federation

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://mccahouse.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/MSCGS-2020-2021.pdf>