



**Manitoba Child Care
Association**

Recommendations to the Government of Manitoba

Presented to the

**Minister of Family Services & Housing
The Hon. Gordon Mackintosh**

By

The Manitoba Child Care Association

**2nd Floor – 2350 McPhillips St
Winnipeg, Manitoba
R2V 4J6**

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Introduction

Since 1999, the Government of Manitoba has worked to stabilize and strengthen the early learning and child care system. Good progress was made on the Five Year Plan for Child Care, 2002 – 2007, and development will continue through Family Choices, Manitoba's Five-Year Agenda for Early Learning and Child Care, 2008-2013.

The Government of Manitoba first announced a recruitment and retention campaign in 2002. Tuition support, workplace training, and public education campaigns have been very successful in attracting new students into Early Childhood Education (ECE) training programs.

While much attention and resources have been given to recruitment and training of new ECEs, far less has gone into retaining the ECE's already in the system and too many are tired of waiting for the elusive brighter future and have left for greener pastures.

The gap between supply of, and demand for ECE's continues to be the most significant problem reported by child care centre directors.

The availability of an educated and experienced childcare workforce is essential for ensuring reliable and high quality early learning and child services.

The Government of Manitoba cannot successfully achieve the Five Year Agenda, and meet public expectations for 6500 more child care spaces and up to 35 more sites along with enhanced safety, age appropriate curricula, improvements in quality, or effective inclusion, until the recruitment and retention issues are resolved.

Too many child care programs report they "beg, borrow, or steal" to fill staff vacancies that arise due to illness, maternity leave, resignations, recruitment by employers outside child care. In some communities, licensed child care has become an unreliable service as desperate centres have reduced enrolment, or cut hours of operation, or turned away parents arriving at drop off time due to a shortage of staff. Child care employees report for work when sick or when injured because they don't have substitutes. Employees commonly miss lunch breaks to cover ratios when the child care program is short staffed.

Due to the workforce shortage, the child care system is poorly positioned to provide services to families during a pandemic flu. Centres that are already understaffed and centres that don't have substitutes to replace employees who are ill or caring for family members, will be first to reduce hours of care or close their doors entirely, leaving parents in the lurch. Some of those parents will be the health care workers, teachers, service providers that other systems are counting on to be on the job.

As you are aware, child care wages were identified by PeopleFirst HR Services as below market by 19% – 23% in 2007. Your governments' plan to provide a 20% overall funding increase over the next five years to 2013 is too little, too slowly, and will not enable child care centres to catch up to and compete with other employers.

In August 2009, MCCA surveyed a sample of child care centres by email. There are 595 child care centres in Manitoba and 166 completed the survey. Of those:

- 52.4% reported that hiring ECEs is a major problem
- 59.1% reported that hiring substitutes is a major problem
- 30.5% of centres have a provisional license
- most programs are concerned about staffing during a flu pandemic
- 64.0% of the centres reported the majority of their employees are not on the Market Competitive Scale 2008. Centres report that employees on the scale does not mean their staff are being paid a competitive wage that reflects their level of experience and training - it simply means they are on the scale, and most often at the entry level.

The 166 centres also reported:

- on July 31, 2009 the centres needed to hire more than 135 ECEs and more than 142 CCAs
- they had 130 ECEs resign/take maternity leave between April 6 – July 31, 2009
- they had 36 ECEs resign between April 6 – July 31, 2009 because they were leaving the child care field permanently*

* Note these 36 are in addition to the 26 ECEs who left permanently January 1 – April 3, 2009 and the 120 who resigned and left the child care field in the 12 month period prior to August, 2008. This is a total of 182 ECEs who left child care in a 18 month period, as reported to MCCA by around 25% of the total number of licensed centres in Manitoba.

If 75% of the 595 licensed child care centres in Manitoba have only one ECE employee leave the child care field permanently a year, that means there could be 446 ECEs leaving annually.

Over the 5 year period 2002 – 2008, the Manitoba Child Care Program classified an average of 175 new ECEs annually.

Clearly, the gap between new classifications and exit rates is serious. Although government training supports and initiatives are commendable, they alone will not ensure the availability of enough ECEs to meet licensing standards.

On October 17, 1989, exactly twenty years ago, over 2000 child care providers, parents and supporters rallied on the steps of the Manitoba legislature. They, fed up with subsidizing the cost of child care services, delivered a loud message in support of the Mansis Report, which indicated that the starting salary for an ECE should increase to \$22,000.00 per year.

Twenty years later, there is a severe shortage of ECEs, the market competitive salary range for ECEs has increased to \$33,681.00 - \$42,101.00 and those who have stayed in the field, some now approaching retirement, are still waiting.

Others, likely many hundreds of others, are long gone.

The Government of Manitoba needs to implement an immediate retention and recruit back strategy for Early Childhood Educators that includes competitive wages, benefits, and a pension plan for all employees in all positions.

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September 2009**

1. Funding for Early Learning and Child Care Programs:

The combination of parent fees and government operating grants must increase to, and remain at, a level that will cover the cost of high quality in early learning and child care services in all spaces licensed by the Government of Manitoba including:

- enough revenue so programs can afford to meet all the requirements of the Community Child Care Standards Act
- enough revenue so full and part time programs can afford to adopt MCCA's research based Market Competitive Salary Guideline Scale for Group Early Learning and Child Care Programs 2009 as the minimum wage base for all positions for all full time centres and part time nursery schools, effective April 1, 2010
- enough revenue so the promised pension plan can be implemented in 2010. Government must ensure licensed programs can afford to make meaningful contributions to a retirement plan of 3-5% annually. The pension plan must include recognition for past years of service so those caregivers who have been loyal to child care, who personally subsidize the cost of the service to parents and to governments, are recognized for their contributions and have the opportunity to retire outside of poverty
- enough revenue so the incomes of licensed family child care providers is at least competitive with the unlicensed sector, and high enough to be an incentive for unlicensed caregivers to become licensed and existing providers to remain licensed
- enough revenue so family child care providers enrolled in ECE training receive an increase in wages as milestones are achieved
- enough revenue so the operating grant to all eligible licensed nursery schools is the same as full time programs, but pro-rated to reflect actual hours of service as per current policies for enhanced nursery schools
- enough revenue so programs can afford to give employees paid release time to work on all the new initiatives such as curriculum development, safety planning, and to cover extra overtime for staff meetings, board meetings, parent meetings, etc.

- enough revenue so programs can afford to provide employees with an annual professional development allowance of 1% of gross income
- enough revenue so Executive Directors can hire or contract additional employees to assist them in absorbing new requirements into their workload. Since 2007, at the same time there is a workforce shortage and few substitutes, substantial additional work was generated by workplace safety and health, employment standards, whistleblower act, curriculum framework, inclusion policies, the safety charter, pandemic plans, etc. While the Manitoba Child Care Program has increased its human resources to oversee and roll out these initiatives, the expectations all fall onto the back of the one Executive Director in full time centres and a volunteer Board of Directors in nursery schools.
- enough revenue so programs can afford to use professional and essential services often required by their program, such as legal, consulting, accounting, janitorial
- enough revenue so employees and parent volunteers are not required to fundraise for, nor personally guarantee expenses for employee wages and benefits, or for capital costs related to expansion, construction, major repairs and maintenance which can range from thousands to millions of dollars, or for any expense required due to Regulations or enhancements to Regulations.

2. Federal Funding for Early Learning and Child Care Programs:

- the Government of Manitoba must aggressively lobby the Government of Canada to earmark and increase the funds it provides to provinces & territories for the development of early learning and child care services
- the Government of Manitoba must aggressively lobby the Government of Canada to lead the provinces and territories in the development of a pan-Canadian system of high quality, not for profit, accessible, and inclusive early learning and child care system
- all federal funds for early learning and child care, whether earmarked, or through transfer payments, must be used by the Government of Manitoba to enhance, develop, and expand our early learning and child care system. Federal funds should supplement, not replace existing provincial spending

3. Licensing:

The Manitoba Child Care Association expects that our licensed early learning and child care system will be built on a foundation of high standards and accountability. However, around 30% of centres operate with a provisional

license, which means the facility does not meet minimum standards. Most often, it is because the program doesn't meet trained staff requirements, but licenses show other reasons are related to record keeping, inspections, and children's program. The percentage of provisional licenses has not changed substantially over the past 10 years, even though efforts to recruit and retain ECEs are in place. And some centres have had a provisional license for so long no one can remember the last time the program had a regular license.

MCCA believes a quality early learning and child care system must include well-educated, adequately paid caregivers. We are concerned that licensing of new spaces continues even though the Government of Manitoba is well aware there aren't enough Early Childhood Educators to enable existing programs to meet the requirements of the Community Child Care Standards Act.

We recommend that:

- the Government of Manitoba do the research to identify the actual entry and exit rates of the ECE workforce to ensure the availability of training programs, the incentive programs, and the volume of graduates is sufficient to catch up to the needs of the current and expanding system
- workforce planning must identify the implications of upcoming baby boomer retirees from the workforce, including CCAs, ECEs, Directors, College Instructors, and Child Care Coordinators.
- The Government of Manitoba must balance the licensing of new spaces with the availability of a child care workforce as required by the Community Child Care Standards Act. By the end of 2011, the Government of Manitoba must ensure there are enough Early Childhood Educators available to meet the needs of all the licensed child care programs in Manitoba
- The Government of Manitoba should provide start up grants, and full operating grants for all eligible programs it licenses
- to maximize health and safety for children, all family child care homes should be inspected by professional fire and health personnel

4. Early Childhood Education Training

- a high quality early learning and child care system requires a range of knowledge and expertise, right from those to care and educate children, to administrators, to researchers and educators. Post-secondary Early Childhood Education programs must be made available in Manitoba, at the Bachelor's, Master's, and PhD levels and support and incentives to enrol provided

- The Government of Manitoba should undertake a review and upgrade of Manitoba's Competency Standards for Early Childhood Educators and Family Child Care Providers

5. Governance:

Child Care Regulations require the Board of Directors of a child care centre receiving government funding to establish goals and objectives; to establish personnel policies, wage scales, and job descriptions; to oversee financial operations; to handle complaints; to liaise with the Manitoba Child Care Program; and generally to be responsible for the operation of the centre. Regulations stipulate that there must be a minimum of 5 people on the Board of Directors and 20% of those must be parents of children enrolled in the centre.

- The Manitoba Child Care Program must provide province wide training, education, resource, in-servicing, and ongoing support to the Boards of Directors of licensed full and part time child care programs in the same way that Healthy Child Manitoba has provided training, resource, and support to the parent-child coalitions.

Families who use early learning and child care services must not be unduly burdened by unrealistic expectations as a consequence of government funding policies. For example:

- volunteers in licensed nursery schools are expected to take on responsibilities such as fee collection, banking, accounting, etc. Although well intentioned, funds have disappeared, bills not been paid, and programs placed in financial turmoil.

6. Relationship with the Education system:

A. For now:

As more child care programs share space in a school, the collaboration and communication between the groups does not always happen naturally or harmoniously after the programs are established. For example, there are many situations when the child care program finds out about decisions and plans after they have been made, and must then respond to minimize unintended consequences. These often have financial implications, but also program changes, hours of operation, health and safety issues, etc.

The Manitoba Child Care Association recommends that the Manitoba Child Care Program designate at least one employee to forge linkages with Education, Citizenship, and Youth and the various decision making and stakeholder organizations affiliated with the school system. For example, encourage child

care and school staff to form a joint safety committee, as required by Workplace, Safety, & Health. Child care would benefit from a third party to be the “ombudsman” to ensure opportunities, issues, and pressure points that arise in the various child care centres using space in any of the provinces 38 school divisions are mediated and resolved. For example, ensure rents charged to centres operating in surplus school space do not exceed that of cost recovery, as per the Frame Agreement.

B. For the future:

The Manitoba Child Care Association supports:

- the recommendations of the Organisation for Economic Community Development:
 - to build bridges between child care and kindergarten
 - that integration of kindergarten and child care would bring real advantages
 - to conceptualize and deliver care and education as one seamless program
 - that provinces should have a single responsible department
- the full report by Dr. Charles Pascal, *With Our Best Future in Mind*, who envisions a universally accessible, high quality, publicly funded comprehensive child and family service system under strong provincial leadership.

The Manitoba Child Care Association is willing to be a partner in exploring the feasibility of a formal relationship between the licensed child care system and the education system in the Province of Manitoba:

We believe the following principles will provide a solid starting point on which to build:

- that the Manitoba Child Care Program be included in the Department of Education, Citizenship and Youth, as the Early Childhood Division
- that the Government of Manitoba establish a Minister of Early Childhood Care and Education to facilitate planning, communication, collaboration, and consistency between all partners and stakeholders
- that as the new Early Childhood Division, the Manitoba Child Care Program continue its current role and manage its own budget
- that the integrated system begin with The Community Child Care Standards Act as the legislation wherein licensed services are governed,

and in particular that standards for ratios, group sizes, training requirements for full and part day programs not be amended

- that early learning and child care centres and family child care homes not located in schools be linked to a school to facilitate communication, collaboration, and consistency
- that all human resource personnel from child care and school administration be expected to, and assisted to establish procedures to communicate and collaborate in decision making in areas of joint interest
- that strategies are identified to foster the eventual establishment of shared goals and complimentary plans for a common programming framework, which provides a child centered, play based curriculum that integrates learning across all developmental domains, inclusive of all children to age 6.

I urge the government to commit itself not simply to an extension of hours but to the introduction of a comprehensive play-based curriculum that brings professional early-childhood educators into the school system to work alongside teachers.

(Clyde Hertzman, President, Council for Early Child Development, Vancouver Sun, Tuesday, September 8, 2009)

- that Early Childhood Educators be included as part of the staff team in all full day learning programs located in schools
- that services ensure children and parents experience a seamless day
- that the opinions and needs of working parents be included in policy development
- that wrap around services be available from 6:00 pm to 7:00 am, as needed within neighbourhoods
- that provincial funding of full day preschool programs in schools be in addition to and not instead of the funding increase to support competitive wages and the ongoing development and enhancement to licensed child care services

A working group made up of provincial and local government members, education and early childhood department officials, as well as stakeholders and leaders from the current early learning and child care system and the public education system be struck to further explore the feasibility of blending systems, and guide and develop the implementation and integration