



**Manitoba Child Care
Association**

Early Learning and Child Care

Recommendations to the Government of Manitoba, 2012



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The Manitoba Child Care Association

The Manitoba Child Care Association (MCCA) is a non-profit, membership funded organization established in 1974. Our mission is to advocate for a quality system of child care, to advance early childhood education as a profession, and to provide services to our members. We are the voluntary professional association for the childcare workforce in Manitoba.

Our 3,700 members share the goal of providing high quality early learning programs in safe, nurturing, and stimulating environments that foster child development and include support to families.

MCCA is an active partner in the development of early learning and child care services in Manitoba. We believe ongoing communication and dialogue are important to help the Government of Manitoba meet their goals, set priorities, plan for the future, and make decisions. We know the information we provide can help policy makers address priority issues to strengthen the programs and initiatives already in place and set a strong foundation for the future.

Progress Report:

There has been substantial growth, many positive enhancements and new initiatives to stabilize and strengthen the early learning and child care system in Manitoba. Impressive progress was made on the first Five Year Plan for Child Care, 2002 – 2007, and development of new services continues through Family Choices, Manitoba's Five-Year Agenda for Early Learning and Child Care, 2008-2013.

Noteworthy examples include:

- 6,500 more funded spaces by the end of 2013
- Enhanced funding for 1,000 nursery school spaces
- Funding for \$37M Family Choices Building Fund
- Child Care Safety Charter introduced in June 2008
- Age appropriate curricula and enhanced program quality developed in 2009
- A centralized online registry for families seeking licensed care
- A pension plan and retirement supports for centre based employees and family child care providers, inclusive of long term service recognition
- A wage adjustment fund to support higher wages for ECEs and Child Care Assistants in ECE training
- New regulations for inclusive environments
- Recruitment and retention strategies for ECE students introduced in 2002, including tuition support, workplace training program, and public education campaigns
- Improved subsidies
- New operating revenue to facilities in 2012 and 2013
- Consultation to develop options for standardized wages

Moving Forward: Early Learning and Child Care in Manitoba

The Manitoba Child Care Association recommends that the Government of Manitoba continue to move early learning and child care forward by keeping and building on all the initiatives already introduced as they are essential to support and improve the infrastructure and operations.

There is much more work to be done. As of June 29, 2012 there were 10,364 individual children registered and waiting for an early learning and child care space on the online registry.¹ Clearly, the shortage of spaces is huge and must be addressed. In order to license new spaces while also ensuring the health, safety, and wellbeing of children there must be:

- an available, skilled, early learning and child care workforce
- funding for market competitive wages to address recruitment and retention issues
- province wide accessibility to affordable training and professional development to ensure practitioners have the knowledge and skills to keep up with modern philosophies and approaches
- available and adequate start up and operating funds
- affordable, purpose built, child care facilities that are easily accessible to parents
- strong, effective, governance and skilled administration

1. The Child Care Workforce:

Background: Quality early learning and child is best provided by consistent, sensitive, responsive, well trained and well compensated caregivers. There are many rewards for working in child care, but market competitive compensation not yet one of them. Unfortunately, decades of below market compensation has left child care with a solid reputation as a poorly paying sector, vulnerable to changes in government and in the economy. More than a decade after the shortage of Early Childhood Educators was first identified, even with new training and tuition support programs, around 28% of existing licensed child care centres still cannot recruit employees with the qualifications required by the Community Child Care Standards Act. Ongoing licensing of new spaces, the upcoming licensing of on-reserve programs and the hiring of ECEs by school divisions are all factors that must be considered when identifying recruitment and retention plans.

Although there has been progress on wages, compensation for most Early Childhood Educators (ECEs) has remained 20-25% below competitive rates.²

The wage consultation has generated hope and optimism that this issue will be addressed by the Government of Manitoba in the 2013-2014 provincial budget. The provincial wage scale is an important initiative that could provide a much needed solution to the recruitment and retention problem and establish confidence that early learning and care is a viable career option.

¹ Manitoba Early Learning and Child Care, Online Child Care Registry, www.gov.mb.ca

² PeopleFirst HR Services, Recommendations on A Market Competitive Salary Scale for Group Child Care Centres, February, 2007.

Therefore, MCCA cautions that introducing a mandatory provincial wage scale that falls below market competitive wages may backfire and generate anger and discouragement. The workforce is expecting a wage increase to catch up, not a rollback to a below market average, or to be frozen in place.

Priority recommendations to the Government of Manitoba:

1.1 MCCAs most current Market Competitive Salary Guideline Scale for Early Learning and Child Care Centres should be the minimum salary range for full and part time Early Childhood Educators and Child Care Assistants, along with the definitions and job descriptions for ALL 9 positions and ALL 5 levels of experience. Our scale:

- ✓ Is research based
- ✓ Is made in Manitoba , inclusive of a review of the 1987 Comparative Worth Study (Mansis Development Corporation); Occupational Standards for Child Care Practitioners and Child Care Administrators (Canadian Child Care Federation; Child Care Human Resources Sector Council); Manitoba's Child Care Competency Standards
- ✓ Is competitive with jobs outside of child care that have similar responsibilities and qualifications
- ✓ Is current as of August 2012
- ✓ Provides a logical salary structure that is easy to follow
- ✓ Is established within our industry
- ✓ Is already supported by many Boards of Directors and expected by a majority of the child care workforce

1.2 ECEs and CCAs with comparable qualifications, experience, and job responsibilities should receive comparable market compensation regardless of where their child care centre is located in Manitoba, the number of licensed spaces, the ages of children served, or the occupancy costs paid by their employer.

1.3 In order to retain ECEs, compensation must be equivalent to that of other professionals that require comparable qualifications and experience, and have similar job responsibilities; therefore the province must include a review of salary ranges and benefits for members of similar professions.

1.4 The Government of Manitoba ensure that the funding formula enables all early learning and child care facilities to provide market competitive compensation.

1.5 Funding must include human resource needs and expenses in addition to the basic legislated child: staff ratios. Examples include having to pay overtime for evening staff meetings and professional development, a coordinator for the inclusion support program, secretarial, bookkeeper, and janitorial to attend to day to day upkeep and maintenance of the premises and playground.

1.6 Once established, the salary scale must be indexed annually to ensure it stays competitive and is an incentive to remain employed in early learning and child care. The province must increase funding so the scale continues to be affordable over time.

1.7 No one should experience a wage rollback when the province introduces the provincial salary scale.

1.8 Employers should be required to provide a comprehensive group benefits plan of their choosing for their employees.

1.9 In 2001, the Manitoba Child Care Association's Labour Market Strategy Report made nine recommendations to "build the career corridor". The first recommendation, that the Government of Manitoba establish an ECE recruitment and retention committee, has not been established, but would be invaluable to ensure a comprehensive human resources strategy to address the recruitment and retention issues.

Examples include:

- Develop a projections model to predict supply
- Identify needs according to planned growth
- Ensure specific annual recruitment targets are achieved
- Establish mechanisms to survey the field to identify demographics such as gender, ages, diversity, training and knowledge gaps

2. Accessibility to High Quality Early Learning and Child Care Services

Background: The gap between parents seeking licensing child care and those accessing the public system is staggering.

As of June 29, 2012 there were 10,364 individual children registered for a child care space on the online registry. Many of these are in addition to the thousands that are still on paper lists that facilities are still working through. Wait times range from months to years across all age groups.

As the public system is unable to meet market demand, the first for profit child care "chain" has now opened in Winnipeg. Only time will tell how fast the private sector will expand in Manitoba. However, the Government of Manitoba must not rely on commercial services to fill unmet need and must continue to provide support to not for profit, publicly managed services.

Many social programs support families but child care is the backbone of them all.

National Council of Welfare
(1999) Preschool Children:
Promises to Keep.

Priority Recommendations to the Government of Manitoba:

- 2.1 Address the issues that are barriers to recruitment and retention so that licensing of new spaces is possible and in balance with the availability of a child care workforce as required by the Community Child Care Standards Act.
- 2.2 The Online Child Care Registry provides information about the need for early learning and child care services by age and by region. The Government of Manitoba should not require community volunteers to undertake a separate, volunteer driven, expensive, time consuming, needs assessment in order to establish a new service or expand an existing service.
- 2.3 Continue to establish child care centres in all new schools and in schools that have major renovations and make capital and renovation funds accessible to non school based sites as well.
- 2.4 Ensure at least one child care centre in each school division that is built under the child care in school policy receive enhanced funding to offer extended hour services if demand exists.
- 2.5 Ensure that, once established in a school, an early learning and child care centre is not displaced out of the school for any reason as long as the need for the child care service continues.
- 2.6 Make start up grants and maximum operating grants available to all eligible programs at the time of licensing.
- 2.7 Provide leadership, expertise, and support to ensure the introduction of preschool programs by school divisions do not jeopardize the stability and viability of licensed child care spaces. Facilities may require flexibility in the calculation of utilization, funds to retrofit and convert spaces to suit younger children, and higher funding to cover the additional staffing costs required by ratio.
- 2.8 Include transportation time in calculation of subsidy eligibility for 4 hours, for 4 – 10 hours, and for 10+ hours as well as flexible subsidy funding for children with additional service needs.
- 2.9 Ensure affordability for parents by implementing annual indexing of subsidy levels and continue to make subsidy available to all eligible families.

3. Operating Funding:

Background: Early learning and child care service providers rely on the Government of Manitoba to ensure the funding formula, whether through federal transfers, through parent fees, or through provincial grants, can cover the cost of a quality care and learning environment for children and a competitive wage and benefit package at a level likely to attract and retain a child care workforce in sufficient number to meet legislated training requirements.

The combination of increases to operating grants and new maximum parent fees in 2012 and 2013 provided much needed new revenue to enhance caregiver wages and to help offset increases in operating grants.

However, funding increases are inconsistent and uncertain from year to year, even though operating costs are guaranteed to annually and the money to cover those costs must come from somewhere. The unit funding model was established for child care centres in 2000 based on a rough estimate of typical operating expenses at that time. Centres incur operating costs in 2012 that did not exist when the unit funding model was calculated. Some are related to Employment Standards, such as overtime for staff meetings held after hours; some arise directly from government initiatives such as licensing with ECERS; others due to changes in safety procedures, such as the recent requirement to provide direct supervision for infant naptime.

In addition, regular increases to the provincial minimum wage, new taxes added to services such as insurance, rent charged by school divisions or other landlords, inflationary increases to all operating expenses all require a reliable, stable, and predictable funding formula.

Priority Recommendations to the Government of Manitoba:

3.1. Ensure operating funding will attract and retain a skilled child care workforce.

3.2 In consultation with direct service providers, review the unit funding model calculation to identify current operating costs that must be factored into the funding formula, whether child care centre or family child care home.

3.3 Operating costs increase annually and funding must also increase annually at or above the rate of inflation, inclusive of all standard operating expenses, such as market competitive compensation rates, employer portion of benefits, children's program, and which may also include variable expenses such as rent, utilities, administration costs, special circumstance expenses and the cost of all government mandated requirements such as new legislation, quality enhancements, or minimum wage increases.

3.4 In the same way that the Manitoba Rent Guidelines provide "fairness for renters and property owners", child care funding must provide fairness, neither charging unaffordable fees to parents, nor expecting employees to subsidize the cost through lower compensation or fundraising. Landlords can apply for an increase beyond the allowable minimum if they can show the increase will not cover costs; a similar option must be developed for child care centres if their maximum allowable revenue cannot cover operating costs.

3.5 The Government of Manitoba should regulate the maximum fee child care centres must charge. Leaving it up to the Board of Directors, a majority of whom are parents having to decide on a fee increase for themselves, is an obvious conflict of interest. .

4. **Ensure Quality Early Learning and Care:**

Background: It is now well recognized that early years are learning years, and that the quality of relationships and experiences a child has prior to school entry will affect future outcomes.

For many children, success in school will begin in a licensed early learning and child care program. As the early childhood environment changes, more and more child care settings are requiring educators with higher or more specialized skills to work with children with special and multiple needs.³

A child care program will be only as good as the skills of the people that work there. The two year ECE diploma, introduced in 1983, is both the minimum requirement and maximum amount of child care training held by the majority of ECEs classified in Manitoba.⁴ Enrollment in post diploma training programs that lead to an ECE III is low and will likely lead to a critical shortage of ECE IIIs qualified to be centre Directors.

Once classified, there is no ongoing professional development requirement to ensure the practitioner's knowledge and skills keeps up with modern philosophies and approaches. Funding may not stretch far enough to able employers to cover the cost of additional training nor that for the substitute or overtime. The education system recognizes that a certified teacher must engage in lifelong learning, and allows for 10 professional development work days per year. There is no such equivalent for the child care educator unless the facility remains open on one of the designated holidays observed by the provincial government and gets permission to take another day in lieu of. No allowable professional development days for educators of children during the most critical time of human development is very out of step with current research and expectations.

In 2012, a majority of the practicing child care workforce in Manitoba are Child Care Assistants (CCAs). A CCAs role should be to assist the Early Childhood Educator. However in the absence of ECEs, many CCAs are expected to take on the role and responsibility of the ECE. A 40 hour course requirement for all new CCAs and Family Child Care Providers was introduced in 2003. The intention was to ensure all entry level caregivers had a basic orientation in child development, guiding children's behavior, and child care regulations.

As there is an unresolved shortage of ECEs, the majority of the child care workforce in Manitoba has no more than 40 hours of orientation training in early learning and care – a significant

³ Occupational Standards for Early Childhood Educators, Child Care Human Resources Sector Council, 2010

⁴ Information on classifications provided by Manitoba Early Learning and Child Care.

weakness in a province with a healthy child strategy and a strong interest in ensuring the best possible outcomes for Manitoba's children.

Manitoba has full participation of 37 school divisions in Early Development Instrument (EDI) data collection (2005/2006 school year). Distribution of the EDI data has largely focused on schools and school divisions. It is used by them to inform planning and implementation of initiatives that help children to prepare for successful school entry⁵. However, the early learning and child care facilities have daily contact with close to 20,000 preschool children and their families and are an obvious partner in early learning prior to school entry. They too could use EDI data to strengthen their curriculum if an equivalent effort to distribute data to them was introduced.

Priority Recommendations to the Government of Manitoba:

- 4.1 Quality caregivers are key to quality care and learning environments. Address the issues that are barriers to the recruitment and retention of Early Childhood Educators and a disincentive for ECE IIs to acquire an ECE III.
- 4.2 Ensure public policy and child care funding align with early learning and child care services as the first tier of public education. Build a solid foundation inclusive of the funds, resources, and supports so facilities can open and operate in compliance with the best and highest research based standards, employ the highly skilled, well trained educators, provide a developmentally appropriate, play based program, in purpose built indoor and outdoor learning environments.
- 4.3 Review and upgrade the competency standards for ECEs and Family Child Care Providers, classifications for ECEs, and early learning and care training options to ensure they reflect modern skill and educational requirements.
- 4.4 Review the competencies required for the Director of an early learning and child care centre, and establish a post-diploma training requirement that reflects the knowledge, skills and abilities required for managers
- 4.5 Make available in Manitoba post-secondary Early Childhood Education programs at the Bachelor's, Master's, and PhD levels.
- 4.6 Introduce a continuous professional learning requirement of 24 hours per year for all Early Childhood Educators, Child Care Assistants, and Family Child Care Providers.
- 4.7 Allow licensed facilities to close without loss of income for three professional learning days annually.
- 4.8 Introduce a professional learning support grant in the amount of \$300.00 for each Early Childhood Educator, Child Care Assistant, and Family Child Care Provider.

⁵ The EDI Teacher Newsletter, Healthy Child Manitoba, Winter 2012

4.9 Establish an enhanced funding model for family child care providers participating in ECE training that ensures an increase in income as milestones are achieved.

4.10 As recommended by the Early Years Task Force of the Canadian Paediatric Society, introduce an enhanced well baby visit at 18 months as part of Manitoba's healthy child strategy.

4.11 Engage the child care community in a review of the Inclusion Support Program to identify strengths and areas for improvement related to inconsistencies, accessibility, funding, reporting, and staffing needs for successful inclusion. .

4.12 Enhance consumer protection by providing resources and easy access to information for parents about quality early learning and child care services, whether licensed or privately provided in facilities that are not licensed, regulated, or monitored.

4.13 Distribute EDI results to all child care programs so they too can make informed decisions about how to support the development of their children.

5. Administration and Governance:

Background: The multiple demands of managing and leading an early learning and child care program in the 21st century requires extensive knowledge in child development along with program management, organizational management, financial management, human resource management, and public relations expertise.

Every licensed full and part time not for profit child care centre is required to have a Board of Directors, of which a minimum of 5 must be parents of children who attend the facility. These volunteers are totally responsible for overall governance and many struggle to establish new programs, hire staff, develop policies and procedures with minimal to no access to assistance, support, training, support, nor mediation if problems arise.

Priority Recommendations to the Government of Manitoba:

5.1 Require all licensed full and part time child care centres to have Directors & Officers liability insurance.

5.2 Make available province wide accessible and affordable training, education, resource, in-servicing and ongoing support to the Boards of Directors of licensed full and part time child care programs.

5.3 Require that a minimum of one elected representative from each child care centre participate in the board governance workshop offered by Manitoba Early Learning and Child Care.

5.4 Add to the Community Child Care Standards Act, that every child care centre must establish a code of conduct that applies specifically to members of the board of directors.

5.5 Ensure decisions made by Manitoba Education and/or provincial school boards regarding full day kindergarten or nursery school programs are made in collaboration with Healthy Child Manitoba, the Department of Family Services & Labour and direct service providers.

5.6 The procedure MELCC will follow during an investigation of allegations or complaints against a licensee or anyone classified and employed in a licensed facility be communicated in writing to all licensed child care facilities.

6. Into the Future

There has been great strides and commendable progress made in providing early learning and child care services for Manitoba families. However, the capacity of volunteers, however well intentioned, to respond to the growing chorus of parents and stakeholders calling for more and expanded services is doubtful. It is time to entrench early learning and child care within a strong foundation that enables the establishment of a range of timely and responsive services across the province, skilled leadership, strong governance, stable funding, modern legislation, and a trained, well compensated and supported early learning and child care workforce.

Priority Recommendations to the Government of Manitoba

6.1 Initiate a re-design of the child care system into one more likely to successfully establish and provide the volume of high quality, accessible, and coordinated early learning and child care services parents are waiting for.

6.2 The re-design should lead to a true and equal partnership between the education and child care systems, which includes child care within the learning continuum from birth forward.

6.3 The distinct knowledge, skills, abilities, and contributions of Early Childhood Educators must be included as equal partners.