



**Manitoba Child Care  
Association**

# **Early Learning and Child Care in Manitoba**



- **Main Strengths**
- **Urgent Issues**
- **Priority Areas for Moving Forward**

Manitoba Child Care Association Inc.  
2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Royal Bank Building, 2350 McPhillips St  
Winnipeg, Manitoba R2V 4J6  
[www.mccahouse.org](http://www.mccahouse.org)

April, 2016

# Introduction

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 child care workforce in Manitoba.

Our 4000+ 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 Province of Manitoba meet their goals, set priorities, plan for the future, and make decisions. We know the information we provide can help policy makers strengthen the programs and initiatives already in place and set a strong foundation for the future.

We urge all federal and provincial political parties to support the continued expansion and strengthening of early learning and child care services in Manitoba.

This document provides a brief overview of early learning and child care in Manitoba, strengths, urgent issues, and priority areas for moving forward.

Learn more about our programs and services at [www.mcca-house.org](http://www.mcca-house.org)

# Early Learning and Child Care in Manitoba

## “The Basics”

### Legislation: Community Child Care Standards Act

Key licensing standards that ensure a minimum level of quality for children:

Staff qualifications

Supervision: Staff to Child Ratio's and Group Size

Physical Space: Indoors and outdoors

Daily Program

Equipment and Furnishing

Health & Well Being

Nutrition

Record Keeping

**Number of children in Manitoba 0-12 years<sup>1</sup>:                      184,500**

Preschool children (0-5 years)                      86,000

School Age children (6-12 years)                      98,500

### **Child Care Facilities and Spaces Licensed by Manitoba Early Learning and Child Care Program, March 30, 2015**

Child care centres:    681     (30,465 spaces)

Child care homes:    430     ( 3,096 spaces)

Total number of licensed facilities:    1,111

Total licensed spaces:    33,561

Percentage of children for whom there is a regulated space:

Preschool children:                      26.1%

School Age children                      11.3%

### **Number of unique children province wide on the Online Child Care Registry as of September 30, 2015:**

Total children waiting for a licensed child care space:                      **12,729**

Learn more: [www.manitoba.ca/childcare](http://www.manitoba.ca/childcare)

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<sup>1</sup> Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey based on 2011 Census population counts.

## Main Strengths

1. With 12,000 children on the online child care registry, we know there is high public demand for licensed early learning and child care services.
2. There has been a commitment to increase base operating grant funding annually for eligible licensed child care centres and family child care homes.
3. Manitoba has regulated user fees, government subsidy for spaces and low income parents, and 95% of centres are not for profit, all of which help keep parent fees affordable.
4. There are successful initiatives to recruit, train and retain a child care workforce, such as training support for Early Childhood Educators, tuition support, a workplace program, a wage enhancement grant, and a pension plan.
5. Expansion of new spaces in schools or on school property, as well as capital funding for the development of community-based centres that are not located in schools has been highly successful in creating new spaces where they are most needed.
6. The Commission on Early Learning and Child Care has provided a comprehensive report (January 2016) on ways to redesign Manitoba's child care system and inform the development of a multi-year plan for system change.
7. The new federal government has committed to meet with provinces, territories, and Indigenous communities to begin work on a new Early Learning and Child Care Framework to deliver high quality, flexible, and fully inclusive child care for Canadian families.

## Urgent Issues

1. There is a significant shortage of licensed spaces in most areas of Manitoba. Parents face multi-year wait times to access the child care program of their choice – usually preferring one in their immediate neighborhood and local school catchment area.
2. Fee subsidy is available for the eligible families, however subsidy levels have not been indexed in years. One parent with one preschool child could qualify for maximum subsidy if their income was below \$16,420.00 per year and partial subsidy up to \$28,874.00, but would still pay \$2.00 per day not eligible for subsidy and up to an additional \$20.80 per day. A minimum wage earner working full time earns \$22,880.00 per year.
3. There is a significant shortage of the Early Childhood Educators (ECEs) required by the Community Child Care Standards Act. In 2013, 30% of centres and nursery schools were unable to recruit trained staff.<sup>2</sup>
4. Early Childhood Educator wages are 20-25% below market with a long standing reputation as a poorly paying sector where it is difficult to earn a decent standard of living independent of spouse or family. Low compensation contributes to the shortage of ECEs and to the recruitment and retention of home child care operators.
5. Child care funding from parent fees and the operating grant is intended to cover basic, minimum operating costs for staff, program, administration, occupancy. It does not recognize unique operating costs, for example higher than average rent, routine maintenance of owned premises, capital construction for new facilities, higher expenses in northern and remote locations, small centres in small communities, high population of at risk children and families.
6. New child care centres require the leadership of community volunteers with the time and talent to launch a new facility from scratch. This includes finding suitable physical space to renovate, or land to purchase and building secure the funding, oversee the renovations or construction, ensuring compliance with all licensing standards, hiring staff, etc.

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<sup>2</sup> Office of the Auditor General Report on Manitoba Early Learning and Child Care Program, January 2013

# Priority Areas for Moving Forward

- 1. There must be a strong plan, complete with benchmarks and timelines to eliminate the shortage of licensed child care spaces in all areas of Manitoba, including urban, rural, remote, and on reserve.**

Most child care facilities have multi-year waiting lists across all age groups. Without accessible and affordable child care, parents are unable to work, attend school or language training. When parents do not have the choice whether or not to be employed, the shortage of child care affects children who may be bounced around to various patchwork arrangements and unlicensed home babysitters where there is no monitor on health, safety, or wellbeing. It places enormous stress on the entire family, is a barrier to successful integration of newcomers, affects employers, and provincial and federal economies that rely on tax dollars paid by persons employed outside the home.

- 2. Child care fees in Manitoba must remain affordable to families.**

Manitoba is one of few provinces in Canada that regulates the maximum fee and provides an operating subsidy for spaces. The majority of child care centres are not for profit. All these help keep user fees reasonable for Manitoba families, when compared to other cities.

Infant care, City of Toronto, 2015:	\$1,736.00 a month <sup>3</sup>
Infant care, City of Winnipeg, 2015:	\$ 600.00 a month
Preschool care, City of Toronto, 2015:	\$1,033.00 a month
Preschool care, City of Winnipeg, 2015:	\$ 451.00 a month

Why the difference in fees?

Ontario, along with most other Canadian provinces, does not have a ceiling on fees, there is no government subsidy, and there is a large percentage of private, for profit operators.

Child care subsidy levels should be indexed so eligible families living below the poverty line receive a full subsidy for the cost of child care and more low and middle income families are supported.

- 3. There must be an available, well compensated early learning and child care workforce.**

Doherty (1999) states that the “*best regulations in the world are useless unless monitored by people with Early Childhood Care and Education training and experience...*” (Toward a Best Practices Framework for Licensing Child Care in Canada.)

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<sup>3</sup> They Go Up So Fast, Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, December 2015

In 2016, Manitoba should introduce a province wide market competitive salary scale for child care centres, which is competitive with the salary ranges and benefits for employees in similar occupations such as school divisions. Incomes for licensed home child care operators should reflect education and experience. ECE training programs must continue to be funded to attract new students and to expand across the province to ensure graduates for all the common employers of ECEs, such as child care centres, government departments; community colleges, school divisions, child minding programs, and on reserve programs.

**4. We need to modernize the child care funding model.**

A new funding model must include both base funding and categorical support similar to the way schools are funded for line items such as occupancy. Operating costs increase annually and funding must also increase annually at or above the rate of inflation, inclusive of all standard operating expenses including wages, as well as start up, capital, and renovation costs.

**5. We need to establish strong governance with skilled administration.**

Identify a strategy to ensure skilled leadership, and centralized planning and governance for the development of new not for profit early learning and child care services in response to community needs across the province.

**6. We need to convene and legislate a Ministers Advisory Committee on Early Learning and Child Care**

Representatives who are direct service providers, from post-secondary ECE training programs, the provincial government, MCCA, and other community partners such as education and health, with a mandate to advise and guide the development, implementation, and evaluation of Manitoba's early learning and child care system.

**7. We must continue Manitoba's reputation as a leader in early learning and care**

The federal government has committed to develop a child care framework and work with provinces, territories, and Indigenous community to deliver high quality, flexible, and fully inclusive child care for Canadian families. Manitoba should push federal officials to uphold this commitment and move forward quickly with an action plan based on the priority areas in our province.