



March 16, 2020

The Manitoba Child Care Association (MCCA) believes that early learning & child care (ELCC) services should be suspended, at minimum, in correlation with the schools' suspensions in the province of Manitoba.

MCCA cares about the health and well-being of its 4000 members, the child care workforce and the 37,000 children (and their families) that are enrolled in licensed ELCC across the province.

Dr. Theresa Tam, Canada's chief public health officer has publicly stated that the "...the window to flatten the curve of the epidemic is narrow." And that we, "All need to act now. COVID-19 is a serious public health threat."

Public health decisions affecting children must include all children in Manitoba. There is an extreme level of fear and uncertainty at this time. The vulnerability of the ELCC workforce, the children in their programs and their families must be considered. Although child care is a regulated system, the mitigation of risks is far too great. The safety and well-being of Early Childhood Educators (ECEs) must be prioritized as is the health of other Manitobans. The ECEs have had no extensive training for this pandemic. In addition, there is currently a shortage of supplies (toilet paper, cleaning products) available to perform the required sanitizing in an ELCC environment.

The federal and provincial public health authorities have recommended social distancing to prevent the further spread of germs. This is not a feasible nor realistic expectation within an early learning & child care environment. And although, there are legislated staff to child ratios, many programs have upwards of 45+ children in one open space room. This contradicts the recommendations being communicated by the authorities. The essence of our sector is to care. How do we care for young children at a time when we are being required to physically distance ourselves from others? Many programs have developed pandemic business continuity plans, however, the health, safety and well-being of children and adults must not be compromised in the execution of these plans.

As we look at other jurisdictions (Quebec, PEI, Nova Scotia, Alberta, Newfoundland, Labrador), ELCC has been included in the suspension of services. All children, ECEs, ELCC programs and families in Manitoba must be regarded as well.

Stay well. Stay healthy.

Jodie Kehl
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