



CHILD CARE COALITION
OF MANITOBA

CHILD
CARE
is
ESSENTIAL



Manitoba Child Care
Association



Child Care Now

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PRESS RELEASE: Province is Failing the Childcare Sector

WINNIPEG, MB - Manitoba's early learning and childcare programs urgently need increases to their provincial operating grants. This is the single most important way to meaningfully support the fragile childcare sector. Increased funding is required to cover the higher day-to-day costs of safe operation during a public health crisis, to meet COVID-related revenue losses, and to make up four years of funding shortfalls. Instead, the province has recently proposed a suite of special and one-time initiatives, rather than core support.

As of today, just 21,000 childcare spaces are operating even though Manitoba had 37,459 spaces pre-COVID, as well as a waiting list of 16,000-plus names. Barely half of all licensed childcare spaces have reopened. Parents face severe shortages – worsening access that was already well below the Canadian average. Manitoba is missing over 16,400 spaces we had just months ago. All of this spells crisis for working parents and for the childcare sector.

Provincial operating grants have been frozen since 2016. Facilities face higher costs due to COVID, and urgently need to improve wages to attract and retain qualified early childhood educators. The August 26th provincial announcement of up to \$22.7 million in spending for childcare utterly failed to provide critical financial relief to existing childcare services; a full \$9.5 million of the \$22 million announcement was previously announced plans for a Trust to fund innovation – a peculiar model in a public service. Of the remaining \$13.2 million, \$8.7 million will be disbursed to private workplaces, in a transfer of taxpayer dollars. The Manitoba and Winnipeg Chambers of Commerce, rather than the skilled civil service, will administer more than \$8.5 million – even though these business organizations have no early childhood education and care expertise.

Manitoba has recently doubled its contract with KPMG – now worth \$599,000, much more than the original fee. The international consulting company has been given a mandate “to review Manitoba’s early learning and child-care program.” Our organizations are concerned at this waste of funds, when the comprehensive recommendations of the 2016 *Commission on Early Learning and Child Care* remain unmet. Spending \$599K on consulting instead of directing funds to the sector is unacceptable. Additionally, the province is proposing a raft of troubling regulatory changes.

The province is failing the early learning and childcare field and failing to effectively support Manitoba’s children, parents and families who rely on childcare. Child care is essential - for children, for families, for women, for social justice and reconciliation, and for our economy.

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