

## MEDIA RELEASE

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### **PROVINCIAL BUDGET 2021 – EARLY LEARNING & CHILD CARE Should be a Manitoba Priority**

With more than five years since Manitoba's last early learning and child care strategy on the table, the Manitoba Child Care Association (MCCA) is looking to the Province's 2021 Budget to include a robust investment into early learning and child care.

Over the last year, it has become increasingly evident that early learning and child care is integral to maintain and stabilize Manitoba's economy. Child care is playing an enormous role in getting Manitobans back to work by offering families an environment that is safe and conducive to learning while meeting the workforce's ever-changing demands during the ongoing pandemic.

Families rely on trained, knowledgeable Early Childhood Educators (ECEs) to work in partnership to raise healthy children and set them up for future success. Centres across the province are reporting an increase in the ongoing challenge of attracting and retaining qualified staff to work in programs -- and ultimately ensuring the quality-of-care children need to thrive. "We know that quality early learning and child care is best provided by consistent, responsive, skilled and well remunerated educators. There must be consideration into supporting the workforce as part of Budget 2021 to meet any expansion needs in Manitoba," said Caryn LaFleche, President of MCCA.

In the March 2021 Probe Research Omnibus Survey, 82% of respondents strongly agreed that a well-funded child care system is critical to the province's recovery. And nearly 80% of Manitobans broadly support increasing funding for child care centres to boost staff wages. The respondents included Winnipeggers, women, younger Manitobans and university graduates as well as 75% of rural Manitobans who answered.

Key recommendations required in a strategy are:

- An immediate increase to operating funding to licensed child care facilities whose funding has been frozen since January 2016
- A province wide market competitive wage scale which recognizes ECE training and experience
- Improved accessibility for children with additional support needs
- Increased spaces to meet the growing needs of Manitoba families

The Manitoba Child Care Association is a membership funded organization that advocates for a quality system of child care and works to advance early childhood education as a profession.

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