



MOVING FORWARD ON EARLY LEARNING AND CHILD CARE

**AGREEMENT-IN-PRINCIPLE BETWEEN
THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA
AND THE GOVERNMENT OF MANITOBA**

April 29, 2005

Preamble

The early years of life are critically important for the development and future well-being of children.

“A society that wants to have a highly competent population for the future to cope with the demands of the emerging knowledge-based world and global economy will have to ensure that all its children have the best stimulation and nourishment during the critical early years of development, regardless of family circumstances. Investments in the early period of life are as important as investments in education, post secondary education, and health care.¹”

In June 2000, the Federal-Provincial-Territorial Ministerial Council on Social Policy Renewal articulated a shared vision for children in the National Children’s Agenda. As part of this vision, governments set goals to help ensure that all children are healthy-physically and emotionally, safe and secure, successful at learning and socially engaged and responsible. Consistent with that vision, Ministers Responsible for Social Services have worked collaboratively to develop and implement a range of initiatives supportive of families with children, including the National Child Benefit, the Early Childhood Development Agreement, and the 2003 Multilateral Framework on Early Learning and Child Care.

In its October 2004 Speech from the Throne, the Government of Canada acknowledged that the time has come for a truly national system of early learning and child care (ELCC). In this Speech, the federal government committed to put the foundations in place with its provincial and territorial partners, charting a national course that focuses on results, builds on best practices and reports on progress to Canadians. Within this national framework, the provinces and territories will have the flexibility to address their own particular needs and circumstances.

At their February 2005 meeting, Ministers Responsible for Social Services recognized the urgent need to accelerate development of quality early learning and child care across the country. To address that need, Quality, Universally Inclusive, Accessible and Developmental (QUAD) principles were developed for early learning and child care.

Governments have acknowledged that some jurisdictions have already made significant investments and are recognized as leaders in establishing quality regulated early learning and child care programs. New arrangements between governments must have the flexibility to acknowledge these successes, while ensuring that concrete, incremental results are achieved and reported to Canadians.

¹ *Reversing the Real Brain Drain, 1999 - Margaret McCain and J. Fraser Mustard, Co-Chairs: Early Years Study.*

The Government of Canada and the Government of Manitoba have developed this bilateral agreement to articulate their shared vision for early learning and child care and to describe specific objectives and investments to achieve this vision. At the same time, Manitoba commits to participating with federal, provincial and territorial partners in a multilateral process to create an overarching early learning and child care framework for all Canadians, which meets the unique circumstances and priorities of each jurisdiction.

In February 2001, the Manitoba government asked for public feedback on the Child Day Care Regulatory Review Committee's report "*A Vision for Child Care and Development in Manitoba*." Over 24,000 Manitobans responded, with most expressing support for the concept of an affordable, accessible, high quality, universal child care system. In 2002, Manitoba announced the Five-Year Plan for Child Care. That plan commits to an additional 5,000 funded spaces, increased wages and training opportunities and increased subsidies.

Manitoba's plan advances three major elements over the five-year period:

- maintaining and improving quality;
- improving accessibility; and
- improving affordability.

The Plan includes specific targets in many areas and commits Manitoba to continue to engage the broader community as it develops its early learning and child care system.

The federal budget announced that the Government of Canada will join Manitoba in its strong commitment to early learning and child care, committing \$5 billion nationally over the next five years. Manitoba will be committing all additional federal money for early learning and child care to the fulfillment of the five-year plan. This further investment will build upon one of the best child care systems in the country. By making early investments in support of Manitoba's early learning and child care system, the Province has made tremendous progress. Child care funding in Manitoba has increased by 64%, with an additional 3,500 funded spaces since 1999.

Part 1 – A National Vision for Early Learning and Child Care

Canada's young children will benefit from high quality early learning and child care that is grounded in the value and respect Canadians give to children and their families.

Quality early learning and child care recognizes the unique needs of every child. It provides stimulating enriching experiences and healthy physical environments where children can develop and flourish to their full potential.

Across Canada, those parents who choose to use regulated early learning and child care in their communities can be confident that their children will experience high quality, inclusive, developmental programs and services that best meet the needs of their young children.

Early learning and child care reflects the value that parents and communities place on qualified and dedicated early childhood educators and child care providers.

Early learning and child care complements the array of supports available for children and families including other early childhood development programs and services.

Achieving this vision will require time, shared commitment, and collaboration, as well as incremental, predictable and sustained investments over the long term.

1) Principles

The principles set out below help shape a shared vision for the future, guiding investments and decisions regarding local needs and priorities under this initiative. They are reflective of, and build on, the principles for effective approaches established under the previous *Multilateral Framework on Early Learning and Child Care (2003)*. Although each of the principles is a critical component of effective early learning and child care, they are also related and need to be considered together. The following principles will help advance the shared national vision for early learning and child care.

Quality

High quality early learning and child care supports optimal child development, by demonstrating evidence-based quality practices, including provincial/territorial regulation and monitoring, and an appropriate complement of staff and child care providers qualified in early learning and child care.

Universally Inclusive

Universally inclusive early learning and child care is open and responsive, without discrimination, to young children, including children with special needs, Aboriginal children, and children with various cultural and linguistic circumstances. Diversity is respected and valued.

Accessible

Accessible early learning and child care is broadly available to children and parents. It is also affordable to all parents who choose to use it.

Developmental

Developmental early learning and child care demonstrates quality and contributes to improved lifetime outcomes for children by supporting social, emotional, physical and cognitive development and parents' knowledge and involvement. Developmental early learning and child care is child centred, reflects family and community contexts and encourages meaningful partnerships between parents and child care providers.

2) Goals

The following goals will help advance the shared national vision for early learning and child care.

Quality

Improve the quality of early learning and child care across Canada by investing in evidence-based quality practices that could include²:

- Support developmentally appropriate programs for children;
- Develop training, education and supports for early childhood educators and child care providers;
- Support recruitment and retention strategies for qualified early childhood educators and child care providers;
- Strengthen and enhance Provincial/Territorial regulation and monitoring of early learning and child care; and,
- Promote community engagement and partnerships.

Universally Inclusive

Increase the responsiveness of early learning and child care across Canada to respond to the diverse needs of children by investing in evidence-based practices that could include:

- Develop and strengthen programming and supports for children's cultural, linguistic and/or special needs; and,
- Support the development of education, supports and resources for early childhood educators and child care providers which recognize children's cultural, linguistic and/or special needs.

² Actions could address more than one goal.

Accessible

Increase the availability and affordability of early learning and child care across Canada, reflecting the needs of each region, which could include:

- Develop innovative approaches to service provision in rural and underserved areas;
- Enable flexible approaches that address a range of family and employment circumstances;
- Enhance operational funds and/or fee subsidies; and,
- Increase early learning and child care opportunities.

Developmental

Strengthen the learning and developmental component of early learning and child care across Canada to meet more fully the cognitive, physical, emotional and social development needs of children by investing in evidence-based practices which could include:

- Support developmentally appropriate early learning and child care for children;
- Support the development of appropriate child-centred activities;
- Support the engagement of parents in their children’s early learning and child care; and,
- Strengthen safe, secure, nurturing and stimulating early learning and child care environments.

Part 2 – Objectives and Investments

1) Objectives

Over the next five years, Manitoba, with the financial support of the Government of Canada, will develop and enhance its early learning and child care system towards achieving the following objectives:

- Measurable and demonstrable improvements in the *quality and developmental component* of early learning and child care programs through:
 - stabilizing and developing the workforce by attracting and retaining a qualified workforce through improved salaries and enhanced education and training opportunities;
 - enhancing quality learning environments by supporting the further development of existing and new early learning and child care centres through measures such as supporting the improvement of infrastructure;
 - supporting the development of an accreditation system for early learning and child care centres;
 - undertaking public education campaigns about the importance of early learning and child care experiences;
 - piloting hub model projects to support community-based, efficient and cost-effective governance approaches; and,
 - developing a best practices framework and Service Quality Team to enhance developmental opportunities for children in early learning and child care settings.
- Better *access* to early learning and child care, which is *universally inclusive*, by:
 - increasing the availability of funded regulated early learning and child care spaces;
 - enhancing the affordability of early learning and child care for low-income parents;
 - meeting the special needs of children with disabilities by improving the accessibility and availability of appropriate early learning and child care opportunities;

- working with the Government of Canada and Aboriginal people to find practical solutions to address the early learning and child care needs of Aboriginal children; and,
- continuing to address the needs of the francophone communities in Manitoba by expanding and enhancing early learning and child care programs available to them in French, consistent with their representation in the general population in the province.

The French Language Services policy of the Government of Manitoba recognizes the fact that the French-speaking population of Manitoba is a constituent of one of the fundamental characteristics of Canada. The policy's purpose is to allow this community and the institutions serving it to access comparable government services in the language of the laws of Manitoba. The services provided by the Government of Manitoba are offered, to the extent possible, in both official languages in areas where the French-speaking population is concentrated.

Manitoba will achieve these objectives by making investments in its community-based non-profit early learning and child care sector.

2) Areas for Investment

Manitoba agrees that funds provided by the Government of Canada under this initiative will be invested in regulated early learning and care programs and services for children under age six.

- Regulated programs and services are defined as those that meet quality standards that are established and monitored by the Government of Manitoba.
- Early learning and child care programs and services are defined as those supporting direct care and early learning for children in settings such as child care centres, family child care homes, preschools and nursery schools.

Types of investments could include: capital and operating funding, fee subsidies, wage enhancements, training, professional development and support, quality assurance, and parent information and referral. Programs and services that are part of the formal school system will not be included in this initiative.

3) Action Plan

In 2002, Manitoba announced a Five-Year Plan for Child Care, which commits to more funded spaces, increased wages and training opportunities and increased subsidies for children in low-income families. Manitoba's plan advances three major elements, including maintaining and improving quality; improving accessibility; and improving affordability. Consistent with the key elements in this plan and the goals it sets out and subject to availability of new federal funding, Manitoba agrees to further develop and release by December 2005, an updated Action Plan on ELCC covering the five years of federal funding. The Action Plan will:

- Identify specific priorities for investment, based on an assessment of progress to date in establishing quality, universally inclusive, accessible and developmental (QUAD) early learning and child care;
- Identify measurable targets for tracking progress in relation to the objectives of this Agreement;
- Demonstrate that federal investments will be incremental, and will not displace existing provincial spending; and
- Describe how services to the francophone community in Manitoba will be developed.

Manitoba will continue to consult with parents, child care providers, experts, Aboriginal peoples, official language minority communities and other interested Canadians. As committed in Budget 2005, the Government of Canada will work with First Nations organizations and communities to meet the early learning and child care needs of First Nations people living on reserve.

4) Public Reporting

Under the existing 2003 Multilateral Agreement on ELCC, the Government of Manitoba releases an annual public report that includes descriptive and expenditure information on all early learning and child care programs and services, as well as broad indicators of availability, affordability and quality. Building upon that commitment, beginning with the 2005-2006 Annual Report, to be released by November 2006, Manitoba will incorporate the following specific comparable indicators in its annual reports:

- Availability: changes in the number of funded regulated early learning and child care spaces by type of setting, language of delivery, age group and changes in the number of children with disabilities accessing regulated early learning and child care.
- Affordability: changes in the number of families and children receiving subsidies and changes in fee and subsidy levels, including maximum fees and subsidies.
- Quality: changes in salary levels, training requirements and investments, and child to caregiver ratios and group size in regulated programs.

Manitoba may also include additional indicators as appropriate and as governments develop other comparable indicators, Manitoba will incorporate these indicators into its annual reports to the extent to which data are available.

5) Funding

Manitoba and Canada agree that further investments in early learning and child care should be incremental, predictable and sustained over the long term. New federal funding provided under this initiative is in addition to funds already committed under the previous Multilateral Framework on Early Learning and Child Care. The Government of Canada will transfer the following amounts to the Government of Manitoba, for the purpose of implementing its updated Action Plan:

	Funding under existing ELCC Agreement (CST) (\$million)	New ELCC Funding (\$million)	Total (\$million)
2005-2006	\$8.2	\$26.0	\$34.2
2006-2007	\$11.0	\$24.0	\$35.0
2007-2008	\$12.8	\$42.0	\$54.8
2008-2009	\$12.8	\$42.0	\$54.8
2009-2010	\$12.8	\$42.0	\$54.8

Exact per capita amounts are to be more fully defined in a detailed multi-year funding agreement. The \$26 million indicated for 2005-06 is in recognition of amounts put in trust for Manitoba, which the province may draw in either 2004-05 or 2005-06. Parliament of Canada approval is required before federal funding is available and may be disbursed.

6) Working Together on Knowledge and Information

Research, knowledge and information are the foundations of evidence-based decision-making and are critical to informed policy development, strong accountability and program

planning. In this context, and to support the development of strong systems of early learning and child care, the Government of Manitoba will work over time with the Government of Canada and other interested provincial and territorial governments to:

- Develop a National Quality Framework, which will identify best practices in quality, developmental early learning and child care, and provide the basis for research and development of guidelines and forward-looking, evidence-based benchmarks to guide future programming.
- Adapt and finalize the Evaluation Framework initiated under the previous Multilateral Framework on Early Learning and Child Care, to serve as a tool and guide to assess program effectiveness.
- Develop and implement an enhanced knowledge, information and data strategy, including data to support comparable program indicators.
- Develop additional comparable program and child outcome indicators.
- Undertake a review of this initiative, to be completed by March 31, 2009, to take stock of progress towards the realization of the national vision, consider any adjustments, and establish next steps.

With respect to each of the above activities, the Governments of Canada and Manitoba will move forward in consultation with experts and other interested parties.

7) Fair Treatment

Amendments to this Agreement-in-Principle may be made if the Government of Canada and the Government of Manitoba mutually agree that changes are required to ensure fair treatment of participating provinces and territories.

8) Next Steps

Manitoba will complete a preliminary Action Plan covering the timeframe for new federal funding by July 1, 2005.

Manitoba and Canada will work together to conclude a multi-year funding agreement by July 1, 2005 for the period 2006-2007 to 2009-2010.

Signed on _____ at _____

For Canada,

The Honourable Ken Dryden
Minister of Social Development

For Manitoba,

The Honourable Christine Melnick
Minister of Family Services and Housing and
Minister Responsible for Persons with Disabilities