

Moving Forward on Early Learning and Child Care

Manitoba's Action Plan – Next Steps

Introduction

In November 1999, the Government of Manitoba confirmed its commitment to make non-profit, community-based early learning and child care a priority. Manitoba immediately began to invest in early learning and child care by:

- fully implementing a new funding model so boards of directors could increase early childhood educator salaries
- increasing operating grants for centres and home-based providers
- providing funding to numerous existing, unfunded spaces
- extending subsidy to 40 days care for Employment and Income Assistance participants seeking employment
- increasing the Children with Disabilities program budget to accommodate additional children
- began developing Child-Care Online to improve service to parents, providers and the public

In 1999, the Manitoba government also began working with the community to establish a plan to develop the province's early learning and child care system, the first such plan in Canada.

In February 2001, the Manitoba government asked for public feedback on the Child Care Regulatory Review Committee's report, *A Vision for Child Care and Development* in Manitoba.

Over 24,000 Manitobans responded, and the majority supported the concept of an affordable, accessible, high quality, universal child care system. In 2002, Manitoba announced the *Five-Year Plan for Child Care* to fund 5,000 more spaces. The plan also includes increased wages, more trained early childhood educators and more subsidies to make early learning and child care affordable for more low-income families.



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

- maintaining and improving quality
- improving accessibility
- improving affordability

As a national leader in early learning and child care, Manitoba has already made significant progress towards the objectives determined previously and supported by in the *Five-Year Plan for Child Care*. These efforts represent progress towards achieving the shared vision of an early learning and child care system based on the QUAD principles. Achievements since 1999 include:

- funding for early learning and child care has increased by 64 per cent to \$83.3 million
- funding for the Children with Disabilities program has increased to \$9.6 million, more than double the budget in 1999

Manitoba's Commitment

Manitoba reaffirms its commitment to investing all new federal funding for early learning and child care in building and expanding the province's non-profit, regulated early learning and child care programs and services.

Through its annual progress reports to Manitobans on early childhood development and early learning and child care, the government will demonstrate how it has invested federal funds to continue to improve the quality, affordability and accessibility of Manitoba's early learning and child care system.

- Salaries for early childhood educators have increased by 18.9 per cent
- Funding for 3,500 more spaces has been provided

Manitoba has taken steps to ensure early learning and child care programs are accessible and inclusive for all children up to age 12, including Aboriginal children off reserve, francophones and children with disabilities. Manitoba's Children with Disabilities program helps parents of children with physical disabilities, developmental delays or emotional and/or behavioural problems by supporting their children's placement and integration in child care settings. Manitoba's early learning and child care system also supports inclusive environments that respect the cultural diversity of families and communities. For example, in many communities across Manitoba, licensed child care facilities provide programs in French and there is francophone

Background

On April 29, 2005, Manitoba signed an agreement-in-principle *Moving Forward on Early Learning and Child Care* with the Government of Canada. It is the first of its kind in Canada and sets out a long-term vision, principles and goals to develop regulated, early learning and child care for Manitoba children. The provincial government's specific objectives under the agreement in principle complement previous accomplishments and the goals of the five-year plan.

Manitoba's Action Plan – Next Steps demonstrates how federal funds will be

representation on the Child Care Regulatory Review Committee.

Manitoba is committed to continuing to work with First Nations communities and the federal First Nations and Inuit Child Care Initiative to support licensing of early learning and child care programs and services on reserve through the Manitoba First Nations Child Day Care Regulations and Monitoring Initiative.

invested to further develop Manitoba's early learning and child care system based on the QUAD principles (quality, universally inclusive, accessible and developmental). Manitoba's Action Plan – Next Steps will be followed by a more detailed implementation plan by December 2005.

For many years, the Manitoba government has enjoyed a strong collaborative relationship with Manitoba's early learning and child care community. Manitoba's Child Care Regulatory Review Committee, which includes key early learning



and child care stakeholders in the province, has played an integral part in shaping development plans for early learning and child care programs and services in the province. The province appreciates the ongoing participation of all its community partners, such as the Manitoba Child Care Association, in improving the quality of early learning and child care.

Manitoba will work closely with all interested stakeholders, ensuring investments reflect the diverse early learning and child care priorities throughout the province.



Francophone Communities

The Manitoba government believes support and intervention in the early years are essential to the preservation of francophone cultural and linguistic heritage and the continued success of francophone schools.

Manitoba will continue to address the needs of francophone communities in the province by expanding and enhancing early learning and child care programs and services available in French.



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(2005/06 to 2009/10)

The following outlines how the Manitoba government intends to invest new federal funds over the next five years to meet the original targets set out in *Manitoba's Five-Year Plan for Child Care* and in the 2005 agreement in principle.

Manitoba recognizes that the foundation of a quality early learning and child care system rests on qualified and dedicated early childhood educators, and that the system must be built on this premise. To ensure this, Manitoba will take steps to stabilize its existing home-based and non-profit centre-based licensed early learning and child care system. A number of key areas will be funded

to ensure existing providers can deliver high-quality, developmentally-appropriate early learning and child care services. Once a solid foundation has been established, funds will go to expand and enhance Manitoba's early learning and child care system.

Workforce Stabilization and Development

The Manitoba government's first priority is to stabilize and further develop the province's early childhood education workforce. It is essential that challenges are addressed in attracting and retaining qualified staff. Increasing wages and providing more

Manitoba's Priority Areas for Investment

- 1) Workforce stabilization and development
- 2) Sustainability of existing non-profit centres
- 3) Affordability/accessibility of child care
- 4) Improving quality environments
- 5) Additional steps to enhance quality

post-secondary training opportunities will support the development of high-quality early learning and child care services.

To accomplish this goal, Manitoba will:

- continue to increase operating grants, so community boards can increase early childhood educators' salaries and the incomes of family child care providers can also be increased
- expand early learning and child care public education to attract more students to the field
- establish an Early Childhood Educator Recruitment Fund for

incentives to attract qualified early childhood educators back into the field

- implement a variety of training programs and supports, including:
 - mandatory 40-hour training for all existing regularly employed child care assistants and family child care providers
 - replacement grants to allow more untrained child care assistants to participate in workplace training while retaining a salary
 - forgivable tuition loans for students participating in early childhood education college training programs



- funds to expand college-based early childhood education training programs

Sustainability of Existing Non-Profit Centres

Another immediate priority is to ensure the sustainability of existing non-profit early learning and child care centres in Manitoba. Research clearly demonstrates that a system based on non-profit provision of care is a key determinant of high-quality early learning and child care. It is essential that current early learning and child care providers have the capacity to offer high-quality and developmentally-appropriate programs and services. Once considerable progress is made to ensure sustainability of existing centres, there can be further expansion in the capacity of Manitoba's regulated early learning and child care system.

To accomplish this goal, Manitoba will:

- provide operating funding for existing, unfunded spaces
- create new, licensed funded spaces
- expand existing nursery school programs for three and four year olds





- support innovative new approaches to board governance to build on existing community resources and capacity, such as the hub model approach
- establish an early learning and child care exceptional circumstances fund to provide one-time financial assistance to non-profit centres facing exceptional circumstances

Affordability/Accessibility of Child Care

The Manitoba government is also committed to making early learning and child care services more accessible and affordable for families who need them.

To accomplish this goal, Manitoba will:

- address the \$2.40 per child non-subsidized daily fee for subsidized families
- review subsidy levels so more low- and middle-income families have access to subsidies
- review parental costs to help make early learning and child care more affordable for all families in Manitoba

Improving Quality Environments

The Organization of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) states that an important indicator of quality is the level of investment in and the appropriateness of buildings and learning environments for early learning and child care programs. Manitoba will establish a capital

funding program for new and existing early learning and child care centres to ensure environments are child and family friendly, and meet the needs of children with disabilities in their design and practical use.

To accomplish this goal, Manitoba will:

- improve existing licensed, non-profit early learning and child care centres by investing in leasehold improvements and renovations
- help build new and expand existing licensed, non-profit early learning and child care centres, through a new capital funding program

Manitoba recognizes schools as the first choice for sites for early learning and child care centres, especially where surplus school space exists. Leasehold improvements and capital projects in surplus school space will be a high priority under the new capital program.

Additional Steps to Enhance Quality

Taken together, all the measures outlined in this plan reflect the Manitoba government's strong commitment to improving the quality of the early learning and child care system. Efforts to stabilize and further develop the early childhood education

workforce, to sustain existing non-profit centres, to make child care more affordable and accessible, and to improve the quality of learning environments will all contribute to a system which can offer high-quality, developmentally-appropriate programs and services to Manitoba's children.

To ensure a focus on quality, Manitoba commits to:

- establishing a quality team of service staff who will work directly with service providers to raise the quality of care in Manitoba's early learning and child care system
- developing a quality framework in consultation with community stakeholders to guide the work of the new quality team
- supporting the development of an accreditation program through the Manitoba Child Care Association
- investing in Child Care On-Line to make services accessible through the Internet
- expanding public education to promote the importance of early childhood education as a critical component of life long learning success and highlight the positive impact of high-quality early learning and child care programs and services for all children and families



Future Steps

Manitoba's Action Plan – Next Steps provides an overview of the Manitoba government's plans for investing new federal funding in early learning and child care over the next five years, based on the direction that the Manitoba government set in 1999, and the progress made since that time. A more detailed plan outlining specific targets for investments will be released in December 2005.



To fulfill reporting requirements under the 2000 *Early Childhood Development Agreement* and the March 2003 Multilateral Framework on Early Learning and Child Care, the provincial government releases an annual report on program activities and investments in early childhood development and early learning and child care. Manitoba remains committed to this annual public reporting process. Beginning with the 2005/06 annual report, Manitoba will incorporate specific comparable indicators on availability, affordability and quality of early learning and child care as outlined in the April 29, 2005 agreement in principle.

Manitoba also is pleased to enter into a multi-year early learning and child care funding agreement for 2006/07 to 2009/10 with the federal government. Manitoba appreciates the federal financial commitment to early learning and child care and looks forward to continued collaboration with the federal government and other provincial and territorial governments to ensure long-term, sustainable federal funding for early learning and child care.



Manitoba recognizes that these ambitious plans will only be achieved with the support of all key stakeholders. In addition to working with other levels of government, the provincial government will continue to consult with Manitobans and the early learning and child care community in building a high-quality early learning and child care system that is available to all families who need it.

For more information, please contact the Manitoba Child Care Program by e-mail at cdcinfo@gov.mb.ca