

# Manitoba government must commit to creating new child care spaces <sup>[1]</sup>

Opinion

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## AVAILABILITY

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## EXCERPTS

As CBC recently reported, the Manitoba government's review of capital project funding has halted several daycare construction projects in the province, despite its election commitment to invest in this sector, and left some families scrambling to find child care.

With approximately 15,000 children waiting for daycare spaces, families are unable to return to work or studies. And now with the hold on new construction, this problem will only increase. This is why the Child Care Coalition of Manitoba is calling on the provincial government to commit to funding new child care spaces.

While the province has recently announced 904 new spaces it hopes to have open by March 2017, it is our understanding those are actually the result of the previous government's work.

And a poll conducted by Probe Research in September, which was commissioned by the Manitoba Child Care Association (MCCA), shows the immediate and urgent need for more child care in our province.

According to the poll, 41 per cent of parents said they've had to delay their return to employment because of inadequate access to child care.

This situation creates hardships for families and affects our provincial economy.

Child care provisions have proven to be economic motors for our province, not only allowing parents the opportunity to return to the workforce but also creating jobs within the sector.

## Economic benefits

According to research by the Child Care Coalition of Manitoba, every \$1 invested in child care generates as much as \$1.58 of local economic activity.

That same research indicated child care is a strong job creator: every two full-time child care jobs support another full-time job.

Child care is a green and sustainable industry, which enables parent earnings and facilitates women's employment, while also providing children with early learning and care that supports their development.

Readiness for school has been associated with quality child care, facilitated by early learning and socialization experiences. There is also much evidence that early learning and child care are equalizers of condition, helping to alleviate child poverty – which is disconcertingly high in Manitoba.

It is worth noting that the MCCA survey found that parents with lower incomes (under \$60,000) were significantly more affected in their capacity to return to the workforce by a lack of child care.

## No meeting yet with minister

The Child Care Coalition of Manitoba is concerned about a refusal to support a fundamental service for families. Our goal is a fully accessible, publicly-funded, non-profit system of comprehensive and high-quality child care, with worthy wages and good working conditions for child care staff.

We support an inclusive, diverse and accessible child care system because high-quality child care is good for children, parents, women, employers and our province.

In early November, we sent a request to meet with Families Minister Scott Fielding, and have not yet received a response.

We would like to know what plans the province has for sustaining and improving the child care sector. Meeting with child care organizations would provide the opportunity to cultivate potential strategies that respond directly to needs of families.

What commitments are being made by this government? We know early learning and child care are critical components of Canada's social infrastructure and the federal government is discussing investments in this sector.

But where does our provincial government stand?

We would appreciate details on exactly which programs will not receive funding for their expansions or new projects. Many parents were counting on these new spaces and will now be forced to find alternative care arrangements for their children.

Unlicensed options

They may have to rely on unlicensed options that are unregulated, unsupervised and potentially costly.

They may also have to put off employment or educational plans, increasing financial constraints and stress for their family.

If the Progressive Conservative government wants better jobs and better education, it should start by recognizing the crucial role child care plays in both these priorities.

We look forward to meeting with the current government to determine how we can move forward together to create better and more accessible child care for all Manitoba families.

-reprinted from CBC News

**Region:** Manitoba <sup>[3]</sup>

**Tags:** spaces <sup>[4]</sup>

access <sup>[5]</sup>

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