

Melnick announces \$5.75 million for 3,168 child care spaces ^[1]

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AVAILABILITY

Press release and backgrounder in html ^[2]

Text of the press release:

The next major stage in Manitoba's child care action plan will see the investment of at least \$5.75 million for up to 3,168 licensed spaces this year which will help further improve quality, affordability and accessibility of child care, Family Services and Housing Minister Christine Melnick announced today.

Details of \$3.3 million for at least 1,650 licensed spaces in Winnipeg were announced today at SISTARS Child Care Centre on Euclid Avenue. The remaining 750 spaces, designated for areas of the province in high need of more spaces, will be funded next year and the exact location of the new spaces will be determined in 2006.

"We continue to build upon Manitoba's vision for early learning and child care and meet the early childhood development priorities of Manitobans," Melnick said. "We are taking these additional steps for more licensed spaces, making child care more accessible to those who need it. This also helps stabilize existing, non-profit early-learning and child care centres so they are better able to offer high-quality programs and services."

Highlights of this stage of the action plan include new, annual operating-grant support for 91 child care centres in Winnipeg.

In addition to new funding announced today, support of \$140,000 for up to 200 nursery-school spaces will also be provided in 2006. This is part of Manitoba's plan, which calls for the existing nursery-school program for three and four year olds to be expanded and more closely linked to other early childhood development initiatives. The nursery schools identified for this expanded funding will be determined next year.

The new approach will not only support 200 nursery-school spaces, but will allow for parents' fees to be reduced to no more than \$5 per session. More Manitoba families will be able to access nursery-school programs and more subsidies will be available for low-or middle-income families to help with the cost of nursery school. Families, including those with a stay-at-home parent who wish to enrol their child in a part-time nursery school program, will no longer be required to demonstrate a need for a subsidy based on work or school.

On April 29, Manitoba and Canada signed an agreement called Moving Forward on Early Learning and Child Care, the first of its kind in Canada. The total budget for Manitoba's Child Care program, including the Children with Disabilities Program, is now \$103 million.

In July, details of \$14.4 million in support were announced of which \$11.5 million was to increase wages and benefits for early childhood educators including those who care for children with disabilities, providing for annual salaries of approximately \$27,000 to \$30,000. That announcement also noted that income levels for family child care providers would be improved and funds for recruitment and training of more early childhood educators would be increased by \$2.9 million.

In total over the next five years, Manitoba's share of the federal government's support is estimated to be \$176 million. Manitoba is committed to spending all new federal funds on the child care system.

Related link: \$2.7 million to support expansion or building of new child care centres for the first time [Nov. 7, 05]

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