

Manitoba implementing \$27.6-million plan to support child care for essential workers ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

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MANITOBA IMPLEMENTING \$27.6-MILLION PLAN TO SUPPORT CHILD CARE FOR ESSENTIAL WORKERS

The Manitoba government is investing \$27.6 million to help provide child care to essential front-line workers who need it as they support the province's COVID-19 response, Families Minister Heather Stefanson announced today.

"This pandemic requires all Manitobans to change how they live their daily lives, but it is clear that we are all willing to work together to find solutions," said Stefanson. "Our government is following through on our commitment to parents who must provide essential front-line health and other services and who need help securing child care. In this time of uncertainty and challenge, we are working in partnership with child-care providers to find creative solutions in the community."

To ensure dedicated child-care spaces are available and prioritized for health-care and other essential front-line workers while also following public health recommendations for social distancing, the Manitoba government will:

- establish a new \$18-million grant program to help early childhood educators affected by the suspension of child-care services in centres to have access to immediate funds to begin independently offering child-care services at their homes or in the community;
- continue to provide licensed child-care centres with their full operating grants and subsidies, totaling up to \$7.6 million provincially, so that they can provide care for up to 16 children with first priority given to children of health-care and other essential workers;
- invest \$2 million to create a trust that will provide capital grants to child-care providers to ensure safe, quality care; and
- encourage all centres to reimburse prepaid fees to parents for child care they can no longer access during this difficult time.

"Manitoba's child-care providers have clearly demonstrated their dedication, caring and willingness to work together as we respond to an unprecedented situation," said Stefanson. "Our government is taking concrete, immediate steps to help ensure child-care options continue to be available when they are needed most."

The province is partnering with the Manitoba Chambers of Commerce and the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce to administer the \$18-million grant program. Further details, including on how to apply, will be available online at www.manitoba.ca/covid19 ^[3]. Eligible early

childhood educators would each receive up to \$3,000 to provide care to children at their homes or at other appropriate spaces. Early childhood educators would also be able to individually apply for the grants and to choose to work together to provide care in the community for up to a maximum of 12 children.

The \$2-million fund will be administered by The Winnipeg Foundation and will provide grants to child-care providers with 16 or fewer children and to home-based providers with 12 or fewer children. The grants can be used to purchase supplies for meeting health and safety requirements, such as a fire extinguisher or first aid kits, or to undertake minor upgrades to physical spaces or to provide quality learning and care items such as high chairs, mats or books.

Further information on all of these programs will be provided online at www.manitoba.ca/covid19 [3].

The Manitoba government recommends that all parents continue to try to make their own alternate arrangements for child care. These interim options should be used only when parents cannot make other child-care plans. Parents who use these options will continue to pay daily parent fees.

Child-care centres are expected to reimburse or offer credits on parent fees that have been collected for dates when care will no longer be offered. Unless care is being provided, parent fees should no longer be charged as of April 1.

Essential, front-line workers who need child-care options should call 204-945-0776 or (toll-free) 1-888-213-4754, or e-mail cdcinfo@gov.mb.ca [4].

Manitobans are reminded to visit www.manitoba.ca/covid19 [3] for more information on COVID-19 and for updates on the province's response.

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