

# Manitoba's child care legislation overlooks financial needs of day care workers, association says <sup>[1]</sup>

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## AVAILABILITY

Access online <sup>[2]</sup>

## EXCERPTS

The Manitoba government introduced legislation Thursday that it says would make child care and early-learning programs more flexible and better meet the needs of families, but the director of a Winnipeg daycare centre says the plan doesn't take into account the needs of centres themselves.

Lois Coward, executive director of Niigaanaki Day Care Centre, told 680 CJOB the proposal for daycare centers to provide longer hours of operation, including the potential for Saturdays, would be impractical, at least for her operation.

"We're right in the middle of downtown, in the Central Park neighbourhood. There's no way that we could have extended hours. Weekends possibly, but that would be an on-demand thing, and we can't really open up our centre for one or two children — it has to be worthwhile."

Coward said she's also disappointed the legislation, which aims to freeze parent fees for three years, includes no wage hikes for daycare workers. She said she already has a shortage of funds and staff, and that to increase hours would be difficult.

"Really, there hasn't been any raise in parent fees for quite a long time," she said.

"So we're expected to do the same job, we're supposed to have the same amount of people, the same amount of trained staff, the same amount of programming — and still only do it with the same amount of money."

In a statement Thursday, the Manitoba Child Care Association (MCCA) said a funding increase for Manitoba daycares is essential to their continued survival.

"Affordability is important to families. Manitoba has long touted the second lowest (cost) in the country. However, nearly 60 per cent of a facility's revenue comes from parent fees," the organization said.

"Without a direct investment into the existing early learning and child care system, facilities are unable to attract and retain the highly-skilled, knowledgeable, trained ECEs to provide quality early learning and care. This devalues parents' expectations for the type of care their children deserve.

"A year after the onset of the pandemic, our ELCC sector has been there for the province, for Manitobans. It is critical that existing programs receive increased funding so they can continue to exist. There will be no economic recovery without child care and there will no child care without the funding it needs."

Families Minister Rochelle Squires said Thursday the proposed legislation would allow for more equitable child care, and would update provisions that were introduced more than 30 years ago to meet the needs of families now.

"Our government is committed to modernizing Manitoba's child-care system to ensure that options for care are available when parents need them," she said.

"Bill 47, the early learning and child-care act, would create more equity in the system and expand supports that better meet the diverse needs of families, especially those most in need of early learning and child-care services."

**Related link:** MB release: Province introduces legislation to ensure early learning and child care meet the diverse needs of families <sup>[3]</sup>

**Region:** Manitoba <sup>[4]</sup>

**Tags:** legislation <sup>[5]</sup>

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