

Métis federation wants inclusion in child care ^[1]

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Excerpt

The Manitoba Métis Federation is calling on the provincial and federal governments to be more inclusive after the organization was omitted from an ongoing child-care project.

Manitoba and Ottawa are partnering on a program to establish new daycare spaces in the province, including 1,670 new spots in ready-to-move facilities that are being delivered to participating communities, including some in Westman.

The MMF said it's unacceptable that it was left out of the consultation and planning process.

"What I'm not understanding is why wouldn't the provincial government contact us and work with us?" Frances Chartrand, MMF minister of early learning and child care, told the Sun. "We want to be in partnership with everyone, and we want to continue to grow Manitoba."

Ignoring the MMF when it comes to plans for daycare or other infrastructure is tantamount to snubbing the federal and provincial governments' commitment to reconciliation, Chartrand said in a press release Friday. It's also a form of discrimination, she added.

"They keep excluding us from programs designed to support all Indigenous people."

To date, the MMF has created 250 child-care spaces across Manitoba. But due to a shortage of workers in the child-care industry, Chartrand feels as though the MMF is competing with the province to staff these spaces, instead of working together.

This is why the MMF will be drafting a letter to Karina Gould, federal minister of families, children and social development, and Wayne Ewasko, provincial education and early childhood minister, to ask for a meeting where, hopefully, they can find some common ground, Chartrand said.

Last year, the province announced the joint program with Ottawa to bring more child-care services to Manitoba. It's part of the provincial government's plan to develop 23,000 new regulated, not-for-profit daycare spaces for children under age seven, by 2026.

Construction is underway on sites that were announced last November during the first phase of the project, and construction is slated to begin at other sites in late spring.

All communities were welcome to apply for the ready-to-move child-care project, Ewasko said in a statement Friday, and the province continues to strive for open dialogue with the MMF and all Manitobans.

"We remain steadfast in our effort to explore potential ways to collaborate, and support all children in Manitoba," the minister said.

Ewasko met with members of the MMF on Jan. 19 to discuss shared and emerging priorities in education and early learning, including the Canada-Manitoba Canada-Wide Early Learning and Childcare Agreement, he said. The agreement, which was signed on Aug. 9, 2021, will provide \$1.2 billion in federal funding over five years to reduce licensed child-care costs for families to an average out-of-pocket cost for parents of \$10 per day and to expand access to more quality, inclusive child-care spaces for children up to six years old.

Ottawa has worked with Indigenous leadership across Canada to develop a number of other strategies on child care, including the Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care Framework and the Métis Nation Early Learning and Child Care Accord, said James Cudmore, director of communications for Gould.

"Our Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care system will ensure that all families have access to high-quality, affordable, flexible, and inclusive early learning and child care no matter where they live," Cudmore said.

"This is a plan to drive economic growth, to increase participation in the workforce — especially among mothers, and to offer each child in Canada the best possible start in life."

Cudmore said Gould looks forward to meeting with the MMF to continue dialogue on child care in the future.

Region: Manitoba ^[3]

Tags: Indigenous child care ^[4]
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