

Manitoba child-care workers, advocates gather outside legislature to demand sector upgrades ^[1]

Children are the future, but their educators need living wages to get there too: worker

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Excerpts

Early childhood educator Kris Mateo was one of more than 100 child-care workers calling for more support from the provincial government at a rally outside the Manitoba legislative building on Tuesday evening.

Mateo said he often struggles to make ends meet despite working two jobs. And he said he's not alone. His whole family works in the field out of passion, but they need living wages, he said.

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The Manitoba Child Care Association held the rally, which proceeded down Broadway, to call for more investment in the early learning and child-care sector ahead of October's provincial election.

There were 16,605 children on Manitoba's online child-care registry wait list in 2018, the association said. And that grew to 18,903 in 2020, according to Department of Families documents obtained by the NDP and released on Tuesday.

'We all rely on child care'

Thanks to a federal-provincial agreement, Manitoba families began to pay a maximum fee of \$10 a day at regulated non-profit child-care centres last April. Both governments committed \$180 million to fund 3,700 new licensed child-care spaces in July.

But Jodie Kehl, executive director of the Manitoba Child Care Association, said more work is needed from the province to build and retain the workforce.

The province currently has a shortfall of 1,000 early childhood educators, and improved wages and working conditions would attract and retain workers, she said.

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"We all rely on child care, and that's something that Manitobans need to think about when they go to the polls on Oct. 3."

About 35 per cent of Manitoba child-care facilities are operating with an exemption of their licence due to inadequate staff levels, Manitoba Child Care Association president Lynda Raible said, speaking outside the legislative building.

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'We need more help'

She said the association has been pushing the province to fund a salary scale for all Manitoba child-care workers since 2011.

"Here we are in 2023 — 12 years later — and our recommendations are still the same," Raible said in her speech.

"Although the federal agreement has moved child care to the forefront, we are urging all Manitobans to make child care a priority this election."

Related link: NDP vow to make \$10-a-day child care available over summers, holidays for school-age children ^[3]

Manitoba Child Care Association hopes to make child care priority in provincial election ^[4]

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