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Planning for the future: Public consultation on early learning and child care in Manitoba [1]

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Description:

We're moving forward

With the conclusion of the Family Choices agenda, the Manitoba government is committed to moving forward with early learning and child care in the province. We will continue to build on past accomplishments and improve our system for Manitoba families. Public input is very important at this stage as we plan for the future of licensed early learning and child care.

We want to find out what is working well and learn where we can best direct our efforts to strengthen Manitoba's early learning and child care system. To do this, we are asking you to provide comments about the current system and share ideas and suggestions for the future.

The Importance of Quality Early Learning and Child Care

We know that finding high-quality child care is a major concern for Manitoba families. The availability of childcare is a major factor in the choice families make about employment and education. It is an important part of a family's quality of life.

The process of locating and securing a child care spot for a child of any age can be stressful for families who require care to work or attend school. In many cases, expectant parents begin their search for a child care spot long before a child arrives.

We know that the cost of child care can be challenging for both families and providers. Whether parents seek care through a child care facility or in a private home, the cost of child care can be a major household expense. Parents who opt for home-based care also want to know that their child is safe and well cared for. Families are also concerned that child care is located close to home, available at a variety of hours during the work week and that it is co-ordinated with children's school attendance.

The Manitoba government is committed to supporting Manitoba families seeking child care by creating more spaces and centres, strengthening the child care workforce and improving the quality of care across the province.

Looking Back

Over the past decade, the Manitoba government has made early learning and child care a priority. The past two provincial plans set goals to successfully strengthen and expand Manitoba's licensed child care system.

The first multi-year plan, our Five-Year Plan for Child Care (2002-2007), resulted in:

- over 5,000 more funded child care spaces
- new child care subsidy levels
- more affordable part time nursery school programs
- more Early Childhood Education graduates
- higher salaries for Early Childhood Educators
- higher revenue for family child care providers

Following on the success of this plan, another ambitious agenda to improve early learning and child care in Manitoba was launched. In Family Choices: Manitoba's Five-Year Agenda for Early Learning and Child Care in Manitoba (2008-2013), 12 points of action were highlighted, which included:

- funds for 6,500 more child care spaces
- increased nursery school enrolment
- significant new investments in capital projects for new or renovated child care facilities
- improved curricula and program quality
- a new province-wide central online registry for parents needing child care
- a stronger child care workforce due to higher wages, a new pension plan and improved

- recruitment and retention efforts

Child Care in Manitoba Today - Did you know?

As of March 31, 2013:

- Manitoba has 31,634 licensed child care space for infants, preschool and school age children, including children with additional support needs. Since 1999, the Manitoba government has increased the number of funded spaces by over 80 per cent, providing more licensed care for children in centres, homes and nursery schools across the province.
- There are over 650 licensed centres across the province and almost half of them are located in schools. Manitoba also has over 400 licensed family child care homes located in communities throughout the province.
- Manitoba maintains the second lowest regulated child care fees across the country and continues to provide subsidies for child care fees to eligible families.
- The Family Choices Building Fund is supporting over 100 new and expanded capital projects.
- The 2013/14 budget for child care in Manitoba is $147.2 million - growth of over 174 per cent, almost triple what it was in 1999. Over half of this budget supports the operation of licensed child care spaces. The other half goes to subsidies for lower income families, support for children with additional needs and training for the child care workers.

Region: Manitoba [3]

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