

Province moves forward on commitment to create 12,000 spaces by funding four new child-care centres in schools ^[1]

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The Manitoba government is funding four new child-care centres in partnership with public schools as it moves forward on its commitment in the 2015 throne speech to provide 12,000 new spaces, support early childhood educators and create a universally accessible child-care system for families, Family Services Minister Kerri Irvin-Ross said today.

"We're committed to ensuring that every family who needs child care has access to an affordable, high-quality space," said Minister Irvin-Ross. "We will continue to expand child-care centres in new housing developments, schools, colleges and universities so more parents have the care they need for their children."

The four schools that will have new child-care centres for a total of up to 158 new spaces are:

- Manitoba Institute of Trades and Technology, with 74 new spaces (20 infant and 54 preschool);
- Rivers Collegiate, with 32 new spaces (eight infant and 24 preschool);
- R.F. Morrison School, with 40 new spaces (eight infant and 32 preschool); and
- Strathclair Community School, with 12 new spaces (four infant and eight preschool).

"Families must balance busy lives between their children and their jobs or furthering their own education," said Education and Advanced Learning Minister James Allum. "These new child-care centres will allow families to access affordable spaces where their children are in a safe, quality environment with well-trained staff providing their children the tools to succeed in school and in life."

"The shortage of licensed child-care spaces is a big problem for young families and I am confident they will welcome the ambitious plan to end child-care wait times in Manitoba," said Pat Wege, executive director, Manitoba Child Care Association. "We look forward to working with government to ensure this modern, bold and commendable commitment will include quality spaces, a skilled workforce and a solid infrastructure."

"MITT is dedicated to helping our students get the skills they need to succeed," said Paul Holden, president and CEO, Manitoba Institute of Trades and Technology. "With this pivotal announcement, we can take a major step forward in our campus renewal, which will include essential child-care services to help students focus on learning."

Minister Irvin-Ross said the province is also going to expand the workforce of early childhood educators with the help of its partners in post-secondary education. She also noted that on Jan. 1, 2016, child-care centres will receive a two per cent increase in operating grants to put toward higher wages and long-term workers will receive wage enhancement grants.

As well, the province is on track to fund 900 spaces in new and existing child-care centres this fiscal year, which helps centres be sustainable and allows them to invest more in wages and improving the environment for children, the minister added.

"This new funding allows Starting Blocks to provide the best possible care that we can to our community," said Brenda Kaminski, director, Starting Blocks Inc. "I am now able to provide very competitive wages, and purchase and replace equipment and toys."

In February, the province launched a commission on early learning and child care to look at Manitoba's child-care system and to provide recommendations in early 2016 to help the government reach its goal to create 12,000 new spaces, support and train staff, and further develop universally accessible child care, Minister Irvin-Ross noted.

"Our goal is to be a leader in this country, achieving universally accessible child care by 2023 or sooner," Minister Irvin-Ross said. "We will do this in partnership with the federal government while maintaining the second lowest child-care fees outside of Quebec."

Over the last 15 years, the Manitoba government has funded more than 14,000 child-care spaces, bringing the total number of funded spaces to more than 30,000, and invested in building and renovating more than 100 new or expanded child-care centres. There are

currently more than 300 child-care centres in schools in communities throughout the province.

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