

Manitoba Early Learning and Child Care Commission: Final report^[1]

Author: Flanagan, Kathleen & Beach, Jane

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Preamble

In March 2015, the Government of Manitoba established the Manitoba Early Learning and Child Care Commission in order to move towards implementing a universally accessible system capable of growing to meet the needs of all families looking for a licensed child care space, inclusive of centre and home-based child care services. In pursuing this objective, the Commission was instructed to support the highly valued community-based, non-profit model, better integrate the Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) and education systems, and maintain and improve quality of care within the ELCC system.

Following a Canada-wide competition, Manitoba contracted with Kathleen Flanagan and Associates (PEI). The work of the Commission has been carried out by Kathleen Flanagan and Jane Beach. The Commission has been supported by the Manitoba Early Learning and Child Care branch of Manitoba Family Services, as well as an appointed Advisory Committee of community and government representatives.

The ELCC system is complex, and any strategies to address long-standing issues are necessarily complex in themselves. Proposed approaches are not linear nor singular in their design. The proposed approaches themselves are complex, are inter-related, and are part of a comprehensive policy framework to guide their implementation.

The Commission acknowledges that there is no silver bullet – no single solution that is feasible, and that will address all concerns. The Commission also acknowledges that there has been an enormous amount of effort from researchers, organizations, educators, and government officials in studying, analyzing, and working toward efforts to build a quality, affordable, and sustainable ELCC system for Manitoba. The proposed plan presented in this paper builds on those efforts, and is intended to reflect informed discussion with Manitobans, especially those who have worked for decades in the ELCC sector; a review of relevant research; and discussions with officials in other jurisdictions in Canada and internationally regarding the viability of moving toward a universally accessible ELCC system.

The proposed ELCC Policy Framework and System Changes recognize the Government of Manitoba's decision in November 2015 (See Throne Speech: <http://www.gov.mb.ca/thronespeech/>^[4]) to invest in the creation of 12,000 new ELCC spaces by 2021. The proposed approaches outlined in this plan are ambitious, will require new investments, and have been carefully constructed so as not to compromise quality for expanded access.

Over the ten months of work carried out by the Commission, an October 2015 national election in Canada has significantly changed both the political landscape and public policy directions for Canada, as Canadians elected a new federal government led by the Liberal Party of Canada. In preparing this report, the Commission was aware of a federal promise for a National Early Learning and Child Care Framework supported by financial transfers to provinces and territories, but specific knowledge regarding parameters of such a national program, or the scope of funding available to Manitoba for early learning and child care, was not yet available in December 2015. Details regarding the national program may impact some of the suggested time frames in this final report, either by delaying or expediting the implementation of new approaches.

Region: Manitoba^[5]

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