



Early Learning and Child Care

MONTHLY E-NEWS

MARCH 2024

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Celebrating the Return of Spring

Spring offers countless learning opportunities for young minds as the snow and ice begin to thaw. Children can explore nature; witness the return of birds and insects, budding plants, and leaves; and engage in hands-on activities like planning the summer garden. Spring brings renewed energy and excitement and fosters a healthy environment for play-based learning. And, of course, ECE Week is just around the corner!

To all early childhood educators and caregivers:

Happy Easter, Ramadan Mubarak, Chag Purim Sameach, Happy Holi, and Sláinte!

Moving Forward on Child Care Priorities

April 28 to May 4, 2024, Proclaimed as Week of the Early Childhood Educator

With profound appreciation, the Honourable Nello Altomare, Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning, recently signed the [2024 Proclamation](#) declaring the week of **April 28 through May 4, 2024**, as the thirty-third annual Week of the Early Childhood Educator. Requested by the Manitoba Child Care Association, the signing of this long-standing annual Proclamation is an opportunity for all Manitobans to celebrate our Early Childhood Educators for the dedication to care and education they provide to our youngest learners. It also recognizes the profession for its invaluable contributions that provide children with a strong start in the early years resulting in positive outcomes for families, communities, and the province.

Start planning your celebrations today! [Manitoba Child Care Association: Ways to Celebrate](#)

Federal Early Learning and Child Care Legislation Passed

[Bill C-35, an Act respecting early learning and child care in Canada](#), received Royal Assent on March 19, 2024. This Act reinforces the federal goal, vision, and principles for a Canada-wide early learning and child care system where families have access to affordable, high-quality, flexible, and inclusive programs and services no matter where they live.

Supporting the Workforce

With momentum in the areas of early childhood educator workforce, training, and program expansions, we are making considerable progress to support access to quality child care, including:

- Two annual professional development days with no loss in revenue
- A wage grid to promote wage equity across the sector and additional funding to support increased wages
- A work initiative to develop a new comprehensive wage and benefits framework
- Expanded training opportunities at post-secondary institutions
- The introduction of [Bill 18, The Community Child Care Standards Amendment Act](#) providing legislation to expedite grants that support increased child care training at post-secondary institutions
- [ECE Tuition Reimbursements](#) provided to over 560 applicants in 2023/2024
- Consultations currently underway to refine the competencies and certification standards

Early Learning and Child Care Survey—Competencies and Certification—Closes April 15, 2024

In partnership with MNP, the department is seeking input from a variety of stakeholders to inform the Early Learning and Child Care Workforce Competencies and Certification Review project, an important initiative under Manitoba's Early Learning and Child Care Agreements with Canada to ensure ongoing quality and inclusivity of child care services throughout the province.

Your feedback is important! Complete the [survey](#).

Child Care Subsidy Program Joins Early Learning and Child Care Division—Effective April 2, 2024

While funding and administration of the child care subsidy program has been a function of Early Learning and Child Care and Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning, Manitoba Families, Community Service Delivery has remained responsible for its program delivery and client services.

This exciting upcoming transition will bring together all areas of our program to better support child care facilities in meeting the needs of children and families.

The Child Care Subsidy team will continue to be located on the first floor at 114 Garry Street in Winnipeg.

Spotlight on Success

Toybox Program—Learning Outside the Box

Founded in 2018, [ToyBox Manitoba](#) is a literacy, numeracy, and wellness activity support program for parents and caregivers of two to eight-year-olds, including child care facilities. The idea came as Sheri-Lynn Skwarchuk played with her children at the park, overhearing folks chat about things they did to stay well, and activities to keep their children busy.

“That’s the beauty of ToyBox,” says Skwarchuk, the program’s executive director, “This project started and continues to grow because we want every child in Manitoba and beyond to have the best foundation for learning and life.”

ToyBox Manitoba offers hundreds of free, easy-to-follow activities developed by educators, caregivers, and high school and university students, all supported by peer-reviewed research. Recognizing that children have unique interests and develop at their own rate, the goal is to help families and educators have fun practicing literacy, numeracy, and wellness, regardless of age, gender, and ability. The University of Winnipeg-based program currently has over 1,000 users.

Each activity has three levels: Beginner, Intermediate, and Experienced, allowing children to enjoy the activity in a way that suits their individual growth. New activities are posted on the website every month and connect directly to the Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning curriculum. It is not, however, a one-size-fits-all kind of approach—individual visits with child care centres and classrooms often lead to new activities tailored to a specific need or environment.

“There is something in here for everybody,” says Cynthia Black, researcher with ToyBox, “One of our biggest goals is developing activities you will want your child to be working on. If there’s something you need and it’s not developed, we will develop it.”

“It’s also built so that families and educators can access, understand, and deliver it without too much planning and preparation,” says Skwarchuk. Beyond Winnipeg, ToyBox has come to families and facilities in Brandon, Little Grand Rapids, Swan River, Cross Lake, Peguis, Emerson, and Austin, as well as Ottawa and at international conferences. ToyBox has recently trained early childhood educators at a centre in La Broquerie to run the program.

“We seem to be bringing in a lot of centres really fast,” says Black, “We’ve had great success in the amount of community outreach the program has had since the beginning. It’s a huge project and we’re just starting to get going.”

To learn more about the value Toybox brings to communities, to read their blog, or to sign up for their monthly newsletter, visit the [Toybox](#) website.

If you would like to share some of your facility’s success stories, email us at CDInfo@gov.mb.ca with the subject line “Success Story.” We will continue to feature some of the interesting and innovative projects in future editions!



Listening to Manitoba's Early Childhood Educators

Meet the ELCC Team: Susan Emerson, Executive Director, Provincial Operations Branch, ECE III

I was Vice-President of Community Programs at the YMCA-YWCA of Winnipeg overseeing child care programming in roughly 30 centres, as well as intergovernmental relations, strategic oversight and a number of community programs. I've only been with the Manitoba government since September 2022, so I'm still on my white belt in government... maybe yellow belt.

I started out as an Inclusion Support Worker in 1989, so I have been in the sector for about 35 years. Ironically, I started at the YMCA on Ellice Avenue. I had some fantastic mentors and leaders that were part of that program. Quite honestly, the people I would credit for me continuing my education would have been two supervisors there: Karen Howgate—she just retired last year—and Marla MacGregor.



Susan Emerson, Executive Director, Provincial Operations Branch, ECE III

One of the biggest challenges for the sector right now is all the change and transformation that's happening. It's positive change, but I recognize the amount of work it entails and the expectations we are putting on the sector to move those initiatives forward. Another piece is ensuring quality across the sector, where we as a department can provide more support and guidance for those facilities who may be struggling. No matter where a family chooses to go, regardless of where someone might be in the province, they should receive affordable, quality care.

There are two ways I like to spend my time. One is baking. It's quick, it's easy, and it makes people happy. And the other thing I love doing, full disclosure, is pottery on the wheel. When you're at the pottery wheel you cannot think of anything else, it's an escape. I tried hand-building, but found it is not my cup of tea. In fact, I could not even make a cup for tea!

I acknowledge I bring that 'front line' knowledge and hands on capacity, but there are other components I'm very appreciative of that the rest of the senior leadership team brings. That blend of skills and backgrounds is critical to moving the work forward we are doing right now.

Announcements and Reminders

Safe Sleep Week—March 11 to 15

Access information and resources on ensuring the health and safety of young children sleeping in your facility. Visit [Manitoba Regional Health Authority](#).

Solar Eclipse—April 8, 2024

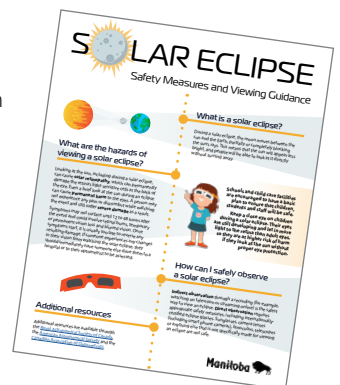
View [solar eclipse guidelines for child care facilities and schools](#) developed in collaboration with Manitoba Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care on our website.

Reduced Parent Fee Revenue Transition Grant

One-time transition grant payments will be issued to all funded facilities in late March to help bridge the gap to a new automated payment process for the Reduced Parent Fee Revenue Grant. Calculations are based on a funded facility's total licensed spaces and facility type. Further information is available in our [circular](#).

New Monthly Automated Payments: Reduced Parent Fee Revenue Grant

Begins April 28, 2024, for the reporting period of March 31 to April 27, based on enrolment (including days attend/days absent) and space/care type in a funded facility via Child Care Online Facility Reporting. More information is available in our [circular](#).



Monthly Attendance Reporting/Facility Reporting

Reminder that all funded facilities are required to submit Facility (Child Attendance) Reports within 30 days of the end of each 28-day reporting period.

- Include the days attended and absent days for all children (subsidized and non-subsidized) on your *Facility Reports*.
- To see a listing of reporting periods, visit [Reporting Periods](#) or look for the **Subsidy Reporting Period Calendar** in Child Care Online under Facility Report.
- Submit your facility reports in Child Care Online. To access, visit our [Child Care Online for Centre and Home Providers](#) page.

Updates to Child Care Online—For Public Users

Beginning April 2, 2024, public users will experience an updated sign-in process along with new design and navigation features within the [Child Care Subsidy Program Application](#).

Quality Enhancement Grant Reporting Extension—March 31, 2025

Further details about the extension will be sent to child care facilities in the coming weeks and will outline updated information regarding the grant expenditure and reporting requirement deadlines.

Submit mid-term and/or final reports at [Quality Enhancement Grants Report](#).

The First Canadian International Conference For Men in Early Years and Fathers and Caring: A Man For All Reasons—April 15, 2024

This empowering event will be held in Vancouver, British Columbia. Men and women from all walks of life are invited to participate and discuss opportunities to address recruitment, outdoor play, nature play, the importance of fatherhood and men in Early Years, featuring keynote speakers from England, Scotland, Wales, the United States, and Canada.

More information, including registration, is available on the [A Man for All Reasons](#) registration page.

Manitoba Métis Federation Kicks Off Historic Child Care Conference

On Saturday, March 2, 2024, staff from the Indigenous Excellence (IE) and Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) Divisions were fortunate to attend the First Annual Red River Métis Child Care Conference at the Hilton Winnipeg Airport Suites. The department team from both Early Learning and Child Care Division and Indigenous Excellence Division enjoyed a historic afternoon of in-depth learning, networking, good food, and stimulating conversation in this first-of-its-kind event.



Left to right, Panel One: (standing) Susan Emerson, Executive Director of Provincial Operations, ELCC; Helen Robinson-Settee, Director of Indigenous Excellence; the Honourable Bernadette Smith, Minister of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness; Dina Ducharme, Indigenous Inclusion Consultant, Indigenous Excellence; Sarah Whiteford, Assistant Deputy Minister of Early Learning and Child Care; and Joanna Flores, Quality Enhancement Consultant, ELCC; (seated) Justine Hutton, Inclusion Support Program Coordinator; Sydney Gerbrandt, Inclusion Support Program Coordinator; Gulkesh Rihal, Inclusion Support Program Coordinator; and Crystal Carvalho, Policy Analyst. Panel Two: The Honourable David Chartrand, President of the Manitoba Métis Federation and the Honourable Frances Chartrand, Minister of Early Learning and Child Care.

Spreading the Word at Career Fairs

The department continues to prioritize ongoing outreach initiatives as part of workforce development and recruitment efforts, spreading the word about careers in early childhood education. March events included:

- Thursday, February 29, 2024: St. James Collegiate Career Fair, Winnipeg
- Friday, March 1, 2024: Destination Canada education virtual job fair, targeting Francophone jobseekers from across Europe for work in Manitoba's child care sector
- Thursday, March 7, 2024: Government of Manitoba Career Fair, Winnipeg

Next Month:

- April 23 and 24, 2024: Brandon Career Symposium



Acting Policy Analyst Lindsay Ortlieb and Senior Policy Analyst Robyn McEvoy at St. James Collegiate

Early Learning and Child Care Division Update

Staffing Updates

We continue to welcome new staff into our division to support Manitoba's priorities for early learning and child care and support career growth and development of existing staff.

Cees de Vries joined the Programs Operations Branch on March 18, 2024, as Manager of Quality Enhancement and Program Development unit. Cees previously worked with Early Learning and Child Care from 2007 to 2011, and most recently as an Assistant Director with Children's disABILITY Services Program. Cees has 23 years of experience with the Department of Families and has an extensive background in social services policy and program development.

Lisa Rivest joined the Policy and Planning Branch on March 18, 2024, as Systems Clerk in the Continuous Improvement and Engagement unit. Lisa previously held positions within Winnipeg Child and Family Services and Manitoba Justice. Lisa holds an Administrative Assistant Diploma from Herzing College and brings with her over 15 years of government experience in the areas of customer/stakeholder relations, database/systems reporting, and training/orientation supports.

Andrew Dvorak and **Brea McMahon**, joined the Division in early March as Program Assistants, as part of the co-operative learning component of their Masters in Public Administration program. Both Andrew and Brea will be working full-time with the Division until the end of August, 2024.

For the list of key department contacts, visit: www.edu.gov.mb.ca/aboutus.html.

We Value Your Input!

Would you like to share some of your facility's ideas or tell us about a program or celebration at your facility? Would you like to share a quote about why you love being an early childhood educator? Email us at CDClinfo@gov.mb.ca with the subject line "ELCC Newsletter" and you could be featured in our next edition.

For general inquires about the Early Learning and Child Care Division:

Website: www.manitoba.ca/childcare

Email: cdcinfo@gov.mb.ca

Phone: 204-945-0776

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