



Higher Wages, Good Jobs, More Child Care

Manitoba's Early Learning and
Child Care Workforce Strategy

November 2025

Land Acknowledgement

We acknowledge that Manitoba is located on the Treaty Territories and ancestral lands of the Anishinaabeg, Anishininewuk, Dakota Oyate, Denesuline and Nehethowuk Nations. We acknowledge Manitoba is located on the National Homeland of the Red River Métis. We acknowledge northern Manitoba includes lands that were and are the ancestral lands of the Inuit.



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A Career that Matters

Early Childhood Educators (ECEs), Child Care Assistants (CCAs), and home-based providers are at the heart of what makes a high-quality early learning and child care program. ECEs have expertise in early childhood development, and support our children during the most critical years of brain development. Alongside CCAs, these professionals implement an emergent play-based curriculum that supports the social, emotional, physical and cognitive development of children.

Research and experience have demonstrated the positive impact of high-quality early learning programs for children, including improved health, well-being and school readiness, providing a strong foundation for the future. As these benefits are even greater for the most vulnerable children, child care serves to advance equity through early intervention.

Early learning and child care drives economic growth and is the 6th largest job-creating sector in Canada. Access to child care supports parents in being able to work or go to school, with research demonstrating that for every \$1 spent, child care generates \$2.30 in economic return.



A Career in Demand

The Manitoba early learning and child care workforce includes over 9,500 ECEs, CCAs and home-based providers as of March 31, 2025, but more are needed to support Manitoba families.

Manitoba, in partnership with the government of Canada, has committed to adding more child care spaces for children under the age of seven and building child care centres across the province that families can rely on now and into the future, partnering with public school divisions, post-secondary institutions, regional health authorities, municipalities and Indigenous governing bodies.

To meet increasing demand, Manitoba has already begun the work to grow the number of ECEs in the sector, and is showing a trend in the right direction. However, to meet the commitment for new spaces, as well as to support existing programs, the Manitoba government anticipates that over 2,000 more ECEs are needed.

The sector faces additional recruitment challenges including turnover and gender imbalance, and recruitment challenges tend to be amplified for cultural and language programs for under-served populations, including First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities and francophone communities.

In order to expand access to early learning and child care, we must ensure that child care professionals have training opportunities, fair compensation, support in their professional practice and have pathways to grow in their careers. The *Higher Wages, Good Jobs, More Child Care Strategy* sets out our plan to recruit, retain and recognize child care professionals, so we can meet the demand for affordable, accessible child care in Manitoba in the years to come.



It's not babysitting. We offer activities daily that promote or foster physical, cognitive, social, emotional development. So for people who think we are just daycare, there's so much more to the career than that.

– Louane Vielfaure-Trudeau, ECE III, La Broquerie



Staffing up in Child Care

The Manitoba government has supported high quality early learning and child care for over 40 years, including key workforce measures. Manitoba has had longstanding certification requirements for ECEs and offers a variety of college, university and competency-based training pathways. In 2010, Manitoba became the second jurisdiction in Canada to fund pension and retirement benefits for ECEs and CCAs. Under the Canada-Wide Agreement, Manitoba has introduced a provincial wage grid, expanded post-secondary education and training seats, established a tuition reimbursement program and introduced professional development days. Most recently, in May 2025 the province announced in partnership with Canada the biggest increase to wages for front-line ECEs in Manitoba’s history.

Our Commitment

- Improve recruitment, retention and recognition of the early learning and child care workforce
- Continue to engage with partners in advancing this work
- Publicly report on our progress

Key Highlights

RECRUIT	RETAIN	RECOGNIZE
Support Fair Wages Training Expansion and Tuition Supports	Five Professional Development Days Pension Supports	Manitoba Early Childhood Educator Awards of Excellence



Now is a good time to get into early childhood education, not as a job, but as a career. There’s support and incentives from government, your community and from other early childhood educators. It’s magic right now. It’s definitely a good time to be an early childhood educator.

– Adele Petri, ECE II, Stonewall





Recruit

Goal: Recruit more people into careers in early childhood education, especially in rural, northern, francophone and Indigenous communities, to support the opening of more childcare spaces across the province.

Actions

- ✓ Investing in **fair wages**, supporting ECEs in being compensated for their professional qualifications.
 - In May 2025, Manitoba and Canada jointly announced the biggest increase to wages for front-line ECEs in Manitoba's history, retroactive to April 1, 2025. Increases were applied to all classification levels and positions on the Wage Grid, providing closer alignment to the Manitoba Child Care Association (MCCA) Market Competitive Salary Guidelines Scale, and providing greater incentives to engage in education and career development opportunities.
- ✓ Launching a **Recruit-Back Incentive** to encourage ECE professionals to return to this rewarding career.
 - In partnership with Canada, Manitoba will introduce a Recruitment Incentive Grant that will provide a \$5,000 grant to ECEs who have not worked in the sector for at least two consecutive years who choose to return to working in the licensed and funded early learning and child care sector on a full-time basis for at least two years.
- ✓ Enhancing **pathways and opportunities for certification**, in partnership with Canada, with flexible and local options, including through:
 - A multi-year expansion plan with universities and colleges that was launched in 2023, creating almost 1,000 new ECE and CCA education and training seats.
 - Expanding the capacity of the ECE II Assessment Program, a pathway for CCAs employed in licensed child care facilities to obtain their ECE II certification while continuing work.
 - Funding targeted training opportunities for partners like the Manitoba Métis Federation and Urban Circle Training Centre.

- ✓ Extending the **Tuition Reimbursement Program**, in partnership with Canada, until the end of academic year 2027/28.
 - A reimbursement of up to \$5,000 per school year is available to help cover the tuition-related costs of recognized early childhood education programs offered at post-secondary institutions in Manitoba that lead to an ECE II or ECE III certification in Manitoba. This program was set to expire in March 2026 but is now extended for an additional two years.
- ✓ Working with **post-secondary institutions to recognize credits earned** by graduates of the Senior Years Technology High School Diploma in Early Childhood Education.
 - Manitoba has developed an industry-recognized high school technical vocational early childhood education curriculum that provides students with foundational knowledge of early childhood education, successfully laddering into the ECE II competencies.
 - The Manitoba government will be working with post-secondary institutions to identify opportunities for graduates of this program to receive credits at the post-secondary level, providing a non-duplicative pathway to completing a diploma in early childhood education.
- ✓ Establishing **Early Childhood Education Learning Labs** at Manitoba's universities and colleges
 - Manitoba, in partnership with Canada, has committed to developing up to eight Learning Labs in on-site child care facilities at Manitoba public post-secondary institutions.
 - Learning Labs allow for child care centres to be used as a demonstration site to teach students, allowing in-class instruction to become hands-on practice. Learning Labs include applying innovative methods, technologies and equipment that can be used to enhance learning outcomes for students and on-going professional development for current centre staff.
- ✓ Consulting on actions to enhance **diversity in the early learning and child care workforce**, to achieve greater representation of gender, language, culture and abilities.
 - Manitoba has funded Urban Circle Training Centre to support training of Indigenous students to become ECEs.
 - Additional initiatives will be identified through ongoing consultation with the Minister's Consultation Table, the Manitoba Métis Federation, the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, and other organizations and groups invested in the growth and diversification of the child care workforce.

Retain

Goal: Promote long-term careers in Manitoba's early learning and child care sector, with support for professional and leadership development.

Actions



Increasing the number of **professional development days** to five by 2028, aligned with Manitoba teachers, and supporting learning and development opportunities for those in the field

- Currently, licensed and funded child care facilities may choose to close for two professional development days per calendar year, without a loss of fee revenue from parent fees, Child Care Subsidy payments and the Reduced Parent Fee Revenue Grant.
- Beginning in 2026, additional professional development days will be phased in as follows:
 - 2026: Three professional development days
 - 2027: Four professional development days
 - 2028: Five professional development days



Continuing to invest, in partnership with Canada, in **fair wages and pension supports** to keep pace with wage increases, as well as flexibility in the retirement benefit.

- Fair wages not only support recruitment, but also play a significant role in retaining qualified professionals in the field.
- Manitoba was the second jurisdiction in Canada to fund pension supports for the child care workforce in 2010. These investments supporting registered pension plans and Registered Retirement Savings Plan contributions continue to grow as wages increase.
- Manitoba also provides an additional Retirement Benefit, which provides a one-time payment to eligible child care professionals based on years of service. In 2024, changes were made to the policy for this benefit to make more individuals eligible.

- ✓ Investing in **leadership, mentorship and succession planning**, supporting the professionalization and stability of the sector into the future.
 - Manitoba, in partnership with Canada, has worked with partners to provide management training for rural and northern directors and has funded ECE III programs to be launched in northern Manitoba and at Université de Saint-Boniface.
 - Further initiatives are in development to support leaders in the sector.
- ✓ Reviewing the **certification framework**, in partnership with Canada, to better support pathways to entry and career laddering.
 - Manitoba is committed to designing a robust and supportive career pathway for child care professionals, contributing to a sustainable and high-quality early learning and child care system for all Manitobans.
 - Some consultations have been conducted and further research and analysis is underway to inform the path forward.
- ✓ Extending **Staff Replacement Grants**, in partnership with Canada, for full-time coverage, to provide greater flexibility for facilities when supporting multiple staff in ECE training.
 - The Staff Replacement Grant reimburses a licensed non-profit child care centre for the staffing costs for a substitute CCA to allow an existing employee or home-based provider to attend classes two days per week in an approved Early Childhood Education Workplace Program, while continuing to work the other three days.
 - In response to sector feedback, the Manitoba government will expand the grant in early 2026 to cover the cost of a replacement staff for five days for every two workplace students to make it easier to fill substitute positions.



Recognize

Goal: Elevate the profession of Early Childhood Educator and transform public perception.

Actions

- ✓ Launching the **Manitoba Early Childhood Education Awards of Excellence**
 - The first annual Early Childhood Educator Awards of Excellence will be hosted in November 2025. The awards celebrate ECEs who exhibit standards of excellence in early childhood education and recognize home-based providers for their contributions to enhancing children's growth and development.
- ✓ Enhancing **data and research**, in partnership with Canada, to continue supporting the ECE workforce, including a workforce satisfaction survey.
- ✓ Recognizing, in partnership with Canada, the professional work of ECEs through government communications and online.

The recognition that means the most to me is the smiles on the children's faces. Those smiles are what keeps me in the field.

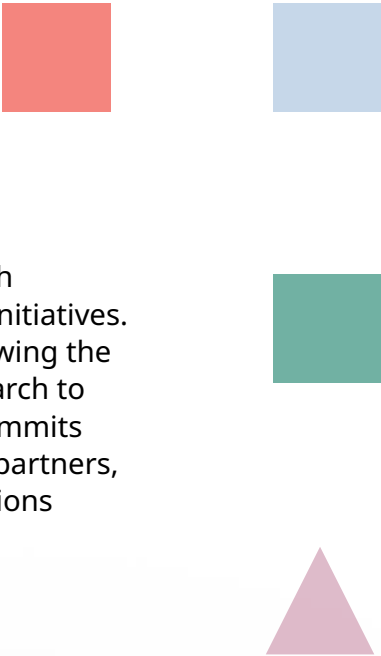
– Troy Nelson, ECE III, Stonewall

Commitment to Ongoing Engagement

The *Higher Wages, Good Jobs, More Child Care Strategy* has been informed by research, public feedback, sector survey and focus groups, engagement with other provinces and territories and guidance from the Minister's Consultation Table on Early Learning and Child Care.

Given that this strategy exists within the context of broader systemic changes underway in early learning and child care, it must be responsive to the outcomes of further consultation and engagement on related priorities. This includes Manitoba's commitment to review its Curriculum Framework, as well as to develop a First Nations, Métis and Inuit Policy Framework for Early Learning and Child Care.





We acknowledge that the implementation of this strategy must be both province-wide, as well as provide opportunities for targeted and local initiatives. We recognize the need to create more spaces for diverse voices in growing the early learning and child care system, as well as Manitoba-specific research to better understand the local landscape and opportunities. Manitoba commits to continuing to build relationships with First Nations, Métis and Inuit partners, equity-deserving communities and francophone community organizations in advancing this strategy, its actions and implementation.



The future of early childhood education is looking a lot brighter than it has in the past. We've seen a really big improvement in early childhood education and opportunities that are there. If you're choosing a path in this career, it's so rewarding.

– Emily McGregor, ECE II, Stonewall



November 2025

