

MARCH  
2026

## Early Learning and Child Care

## MONTHLY E-NEWS

MOVING FORWARD  
ON CHILD CARE  
PRIORITIES

ANNOUNCEMENTS  
AND REMINDERS

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SPOTLIGHT ON  
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UPDATES

## Week of the Early Childhood Educator – Proclaimed



*The Honourable Tracy Schmidt, Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning, signs the Proclamation.*

**April 26 – May 2, 2026**

With sincere appreciation, the Honourable Tracy Schmidt, Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning, recently signed the 2026 Proclamation recognizing April 26 through May 2, 2026, as the thirty-fifth annual Week of the Early Childhood Educator.

Requested by the Manitoba Child Care Association, this long-standing annual proclamation invites all Manitobans to celebrate our early childhood educators for their dedication to caring for and educating our youngest learners. It also acknowledges the profession's vital contributions in giving children a strong start and supporting positive outcomes for families, communities, and the province.

Please read the [letter and proclamation](#). Start planning your celebrations today! Manitoba Child Care Association: [Ways to Celebrate](#)

## Supporting Manitoba's Growing Early Learning and Child Care Workforce

A Career that Matters



**Higher wages.  
Good jobs.  
More child care spaces.**

[manitoba.ca/morechildcare](https://manitoba.ca/morechildcare)

This March, the governments of Canada and Manitoba launched a new province-wide, multimedia advertising campaign, *Higher Wages, Good Jobs, More Child Care Spaces*, highlighting early childhood education as a meaningful and rewarding career choice.

With increased wages, pension supports, tuition reimbursement, expanded pathways to certification, and other workforce supports, there has never been a better time to become an early childhood educator (ECE) in Manitoba!

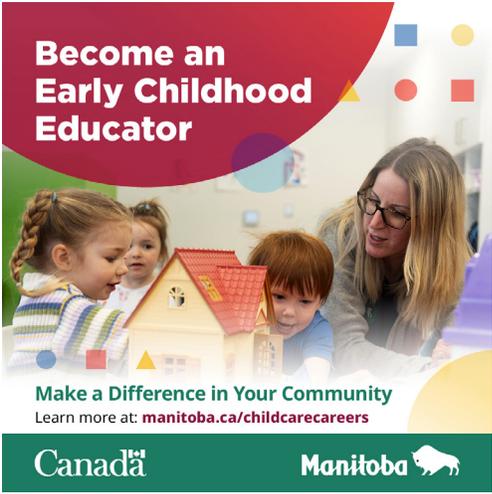
The campaign showcases photos, videos, and first-hand testimonials from Manitoba's own child care professionals working in licensed facilities across the province. These real stories showcase the dedication, diversity, and impact of the early learning and child care workforce, and the vital role educators play in supporting children's growth and development.

The [manitoba.ca/morechildcare](https://manitoba.ca/morechildcare) landing page serves as a central hub for information on Manitoba's child care priorities, pathways to becoming an ECE, and available workforce supports, including tuition reimbursement and recruit-back incentives.

Building on previous *Become an ECE* campaigns, and informed by input from the Minister's Consultation Table and sector stakeholders, this province-wide initiative reflects significant multi-year investments made through [Manitoba's early learning and child care agreements with Canada](#). These investments support key priorities including lowering the cost of licensed child care for families, expanding access to high-quality and inclusive child care, and strengthening recruitment and retention across the child care workforce.

This recruitment campaign is a key component of [Manitoba's Early Learning and Child Care Workforce Strategy](#), launched in the fall. The strategy focuses on building a strong, stable workforce so more families can access affordable, high-quality child care, and so children and educators across the province can thrive.

The campaign will run across multiple platforms, including radio, print, billboards, transit, movie theatres, digital, web, and social media, ensuring broad reach across Manitoba communities.



**Become an  
Early Childhood  
Educator**

Make a Difference in Your Community  
Learn more at: [manitoba.ca/childcarecareers](https://manitoba.ca/childcarecareers)

Canada Manitoba

Campaign social media ad

*"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

## Increase to Child Care Wages and Operational Funding – Effective April 1, 2026

On Tuesday, March 24, Manitoba released [Budget 2026](#), which included an increase to wages and operating funding for the early childhood education sector. This includes a two percent increase to the wage grid supplement and a one percent increase to base operating funding.

A key pillar of Manitoba's early learning and child care workforce strategy, the wage grid increase builds on previous rounds of wage enhancements aimed at addressing longstanding compensation gaps in the early learning and child care sector. The base operating increase provides child care facilities with additional resources to support day-to-day operations alongside staff compensation.

The wage increase applies to licensed and funded home-based providers and to early childhood educators (ECEs) and child care assistants (CCAs) working in licensed and funded child care facilities. With Manitoba's largest historic wage increase last spring, early childhood education professionals could see a wage increase of up to \$7.06 an hour since April 2024, depending on certification level and the size of the child care facility.

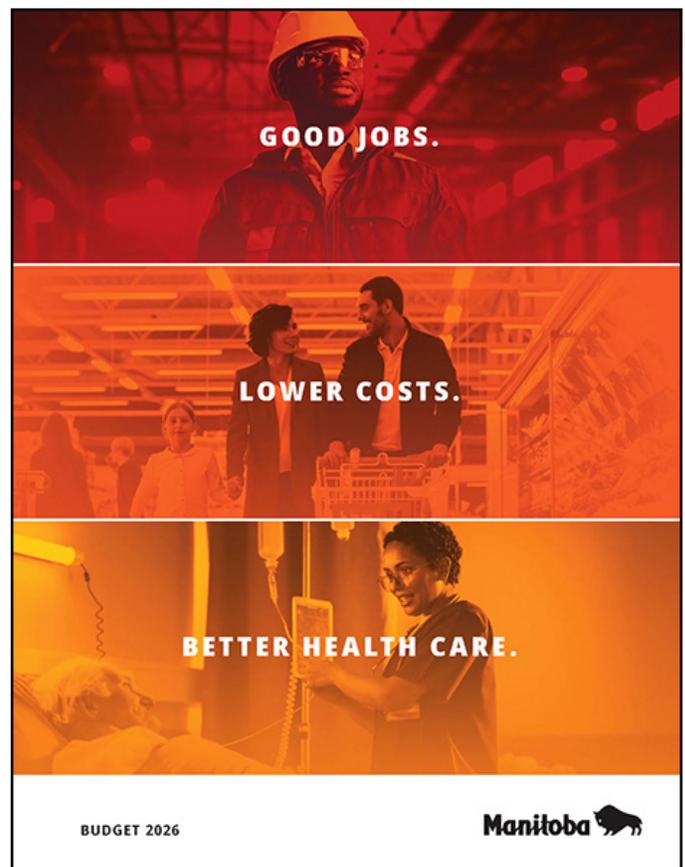
The governments of Canada and Manitoba will provide a two percent increase to the wage grid operating supplement for licensed and funded child care facilities—a \$14.3 million increase (\$13.4 million from Canada and nearly \$1 million from Manitoba). Base operating grants will also increase by one percent for an increase of \$4.7 million (\$2.5 million from Canada and \$2.2 million from Manitoba) in operating funding for all licensed and funded early learning and child care facilities.

View the 2026/2027 [Wage Grid](#), the [circular for centres](#), and the [circular for homes](#) for access to implementation resources for your facility.

### Budget 2026 Highlights: Early Learning and Child Care

On March 24, 2026, the Manitoba government announced Budget 2026, which commits additional funding to support families and our early learning and child care sector. Key areas include affordability, workforce, child care spaces, and quality.

[Learn more.](#)



# ANNOUNCEMENTS AND REMINDERS

## Centres with Fiscal Cycle April to March: Operating Budget Due April 30

Manitoba licensed and funded child care centres with fiscal cycle April to March are expected to submit their annual operating budgets by Thursday, April 30, 2026. Operating grants are provided annually to child care centres and are subject to budget allocations determined by the government for the fiscal year April 1 to March 31. To receive the operating grant, the centre annual operating budget and board meeting minutes must be submitted. To assist facilities and their boards in completing their budget, see the department website section titled [Toolkit for Boards: Annual Budget Guidelines](#).

For more information:  
[Province of Manitoba | education - Grant Funding](#)

## Home Providers – Operating Grant Applications Due April 1, 2026

Manitoba licensed and funded home child care providers are expected to submit their 2026/2027 operating grant applications by Wednesday, April 1, 2026.

For more information, visit  
[Province of Manitoba | education - Grant Funding](#).

## Important Measles Reminder from Manitoba Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care

Help Manitoba Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care spread awareness of measles risks while travelling or when attending large gatherings during spring break or holiday celebrations.

Measles can be serious, especially for young children, people with a weakened immune system, and

unimmunized pregnant people. If any of these people are exposed to measles, they may be eligible for preventative treatment within six days of exposure and are encouraged to speak with a health-care provider promptly.

For more information, visit  
[www.gov.mb.ca/health/publichealth/diseases/measles.html](http://www.gov.mb.ca/health/publichealth/diseases/measles.html).

## Keep Board of Directors Contact Information Up to Date in *Child Care Online*

Accurate board contact information helps us share important updates quickly and effectively. Please review and update email addresses for all board members in the [Child Care Online—Record of Board of Directors](#) section.

DID YOU  
KNOW?

Over 100 emails were returned during a recent measles information distribution due to outdated board contact information.

# PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Below is a non-exhaustive list of upcoming opportunities. Additional information is also available on the [department website](#).

## ECE II Assessment Program – Spring Intake Now Available for All Program Streams

The ECE II Assessment Program is a self-directed program providing an opportunity to eligible CCAs working in licensed centres to demonstrate their skills, knowledge, and judgment according to required standards. Successful completion results in an Early Childhood Educator II (ECE II) classification level.

For more information on eligibility by stream, visit [Province of Manitoba | education - Early Childhood Educator \(ECE II\) Assessment Program](#).

To apply and begin the ECE II Assessment Program this spring, contact [cdccertificate@gov.mb.ca](mailto:cdccertificate@gov.mb.ca).

## The 2026 Manitoba Nature Summit – Registration Now Open

The Manitoba Nature Summit is an experiential, outdoor education biennial conference for adults who teach children. The mission is to inspire and engage educators of children, fostering creativity and adventure in their natural environment while embracing healthy choices and sustainable living.

The Summit promotes and values land-based learning and play-based curriculum, as well as Indigenous ways of being and knowing, with a large variety of workshops offered across two full days, all held outdoors. The 2026 Summit weaves together themes of risky play, forest school, arts-based curriculum, supporting neurodiverse children through outdoor play, Indigenous curriculum, and more.

Participants can attend the entire summit (Thursday evening to Saturday afternoon) or choose one-day attendance (Friday or Saturday).

For more information, see [Manitoba Nature Summit – Rediscovering Wonder](#).

## MCCA 2026 Winter/Spring Workshops

The Manitoba Child Care Association lists more than [40 different workshops](#) and activities between February 1 and April 30. Below are a few upcoming sessions:

### Gather and Grow: A Lunch and Learn for Family Child Care Providers – April 11, 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

with FCCP Committee

Enjoy lunch while networking and learning with fellow providers, sharing ideas, and gaining valuable resources to support your daily work. Whether you're looking to build your voice, bring new energy to your program, or simply connect with others in the field, this event is for you!

### Documentation and Reflective Practice – April 18, 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

with Sue Narozniak

While documentation takes many forms and is a core component in quality care, curriculum documentation records learning experiences and weaves narratives that uncover deeper meanings. The vital role of documentation in support of meaningful curriculum planning and a reflective practice is the focus of this session.

This workshop explores which documentation approach—or combination of approaches—best fosters a richer educational environment, and makes learning visible and curriculum planning engaging.

### Unpacking Unconscious Bias – April 28, 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

with Melenie Olfert

Unconscious bias influences how we perceive, interact, and make decisions—often without realizing it. Left unexamined, these biases can impact workplace culture, relationships, and opportunities for growth. This interactive workshop provides a safe space to explore the roots of unconscious bias, understand its effects, and practise strategies to reduce its impact. Participants will gain tools to foster greater self-awareness, challenge assumptions, and create more inclusive environments where everyone feels valued.

Visit the [full list and registration](#).

## Blooming Words® Training for Child Care Staff – No Cost in 2026

Blooming Words® is a standardized, evidence-informed early language stimulation program for children from birth to Kindergarten age. It was developed by speech-language pathologists in Quebec in partnership with the non-profit organization API-Enfance and is now being offered province-wide through the [Children's Therapy Network of Manitoba \(CTNM\)](#).

Blooming Words® training is currently free for licensed early learning and child care centres (including nursery schools) in Manitoba.

New Blooming Words® Training Dates for Facilitators (Train the Trainer):

- English: April 16, 1 to 4 p.m. (CST)
- French: April 22, 12 to 3 p.m. (CST)

Can't make these dates? Sign up for the [Facilitator Training wait-list](#).

To learn more, visit [Blooming Words® Program](#) or view the [program newsletter](#).

### Dates at a Glance

DATE	TITLE
Various Dates	<a href="#">MCCA 2026 Winter/Spring Workshops</a>
Various Dates	<a href="#">ECE II Assessment Program Spring Intake</a>
April 1	New 2026/2027 <a href="#">Wage Grid</a> and Operating Grant Increase Take Effect
April 1	<a href="#">Home Providers – Operating Grant Applications Due</a>
April 16	<a href="#">Blooming Words® Training for Facilitators</a> (English)
April 22	<a href="#">Blooming Words® Training for Facilitators</a> (French)
April 23	Early Learning and Child Care at <a href="#">River East Transcona School Division Career Fair</a>
April 26 to May 2	Week of the Early Childhood Educator
April 28 and 29	Early Learning and Child Care at <a href="#">Future Now Expo 2026</a>
April 30	Centres with Fiscal Cycle April to March: <a href="#">Operating Budgets Due</a>



## ELCC Question Corner

### This Month's Question

Should registered pension plan contributions be recorded as revenue or an expenditure in your centre's budget?

### Answer

Only the employer contributions made to the registered pension plan should be recorded as an expenditure. This may include the mandatory minimum 4% contribution or a higher amount, depending on the centre's pension policy. However, a maximum of 4% of regular wages paid by the centre is reimbursable by the Manitoba government and should be recorded as revenue in the budget.

For example,

- If employee contributions total \$2,000 (4% of regular wages) and employer contributions also total \$2,000 (4% of regular wages), record \$2,000 as an expenditure and \$2,000 as revenue in the budget.
- If employee contributions total \$3,500 (4% of regular wages) and employer contributions total \$4,375 (5% of regular wages, with the centre expecting \$3,500 of the \$4,375 to be reimbursed by ELCC), record \$4,375 as an expense and \$3,500 as revenue in the budget.

As a reminder, there are three kinds of retirement supports available:

1. **Registered pension plans:** for full- and part-time child care workers in licensed, non-profit centres and nursery schools
2. **Matching Registered Retirement Savings Plan contributions:** for licensed, home-based family and group child care providers
3. **A long-term service recognition retirement benefit:** for long-term workers in centres and nursery schools and for home-based family and group child care providers

To learn more about retirement benefits, review the department website section: [Province of Manitoba | education - Registered Pension Plans and Retirement Supports](#) or see [Child Care Worker Retirement Benefits Regulation, M.R. 20/2011](#).

# SPOTLIGHT ON SUCCESS

## Elizabeth 'Liz' Dryden

### 2025 Early Childhood Educator Awards of Excellence Outstanding Early Childhood Educator Award Recipient

My journey started at age 18 working at a pre-school over the summer. A mentor told me I had a natural ability to work with young children, so I took their advice and enrolled in the two-year Early Childhood Educator program at Red River College Polytechnic (RRCP). I received my diploma as an ECE III in the 1980s. It was a great decision, and many of my instructors were some of the most influential people in the field, including Margaret Ferniak, Joan Kunderman, and Judi Neufeld. I've worked in child care for 35 years in many different centres in a variety of roles throughout my career. I was a supervisor, assistant director, director, and an instructor at RRCP, but my passion was always to remain working with the children. The last 17 years have been in a nursery school program, which has suited me very well. I absolutely love my job, my team, the families, and all the wonderful children I've been blessed to spend time with.

My message to those considering a job in the early learning child care sector would be to first understand how important your role will be. You will be caring for the most vulnerable humans: young children. Their families will be trusting you. A child care job is not an easy job. It is a high-energy environment, where burnout is real. You need to practise self-care. It is not babysitting, nor is it parenting. Centres need committed, mature employees dedicated to their profession and who stick around. Of course, you must love children, but that is not enough!

Virtues such as kindness, caring, compassion, and empathy are necessary. A pre-school environment needs to be a safe, secure, loving, joyful place. ECEs need good organizational skills and effective communication skills. You will need to be patient, skilled at guiding behaviour, flexible, creative, and dedicated. This job can be exhausting and emotional, but also rewarding and purposeful. You will meet people from all walks of life, learn about many different cultures, and experience others in the field that share your passion. These are all wonderful parts of this profession. But again, your priority will be the children.

*"My message to those considering a job in the early learning child care sector would be to first understand how important your role will be."*

– Liz Dryden

The biggest tip I can share would be to self-reflect. Ask yourself, "Am I the right person for a career in child care?" Do you know enough about this field to decide? If the list above empowers you and does not discourage you, my advice would be to do your due diligence, find out all you can about this field, get your education, get some experience, and go for it! The field of early childhood education needs you!



Elizabeth 'Liz' Dryden at the 2025 Early Childhood Educator Awards of Excellence

# Elmwood Day Nursery Turns 50

## Another Golden Jubilee in Manitoba's Child Care Sector

Elmwood Day Nursery celebrated 50 years on March 1, 2026. Nestled in one of Winnipeg's oldest neighbourhoods ([circa 1881](#)), the centre has operated continuously with the same Executive Director at the helm, Lucille Leclerc, since it first opened its doors in 1976. The nursery has planned celebrations and fundraising events throughout the year to mark the occasion.

Lucille was the founding director of Munroe Day Nursery in 1974, and Cobourg Day Nursery in 1976. Lucille's 1976 application for a Community Improvement Program Grant funded by three levels of government led to the construction of a brand new facility at 75 Brazier Street.

In 2025, Lucille received a [King Charles III Coronation Medal](#) recognizing her achievement as an ECE for more than 50 years.

The nursery is one of several child care organizations across the province celebrating 50-year milestones over the last few years, including Care-A-Lot Nursery, the University of Winnipeg Students' Association Day Care, Winkler Day Care, West End Daycare Centre, the Manitoba Child Care Association, and more.

Congratulations to Lucille and her team at Elmwood Day Nursery for their service to children and families in our community.



*The Honourable Wab Kinew, Premier of Manitoba; Lucille Leclerc, Executive Director, Elmwood Day Nursery; The Honourable Anita Neville, Lieutenant Governor of Manitoba; and Jim Maloway, Member of the Legislative Assembly for Elmwood*

# DIVISION UPDATES

## Early Learning and Child Care Connecting with Community Across Manitoba

The department recently participated in career fairs at Sturgeon Heights Collegiate on March 4 and at the [Brandon Career Fair on March 17 and 18](#), connecting with students and job seekers looking to build a career in child care.

The Brandon Career Symposium, held at the Keystone Centre, has been running for over 35 years and is the largest career fair in Manitoba. Each year, it welcomes 80+ exhibitors and hundreds of students, newcomers, and career changers. Many visitors stopped by the Become an Early Childhood Educator booth to learn more about a rewarding career in the child care sector.

Look for our booth next at the River East Transcona School Division Career Fair on April 23, and the Future Now Expo 2026, April 28 and 29, at the Red River Exhibition Grounds. We're always excited to share pathways, possibilities, and the rewarding impact of a career as an early childhood educator!



Anais Ratté, Engagement Specialist (left), and Sreekumar Kodyath, Workforce Engagement Coordinator, attended the Brandon Career Symposium on behalf of ELCC.

MEET

the

TEAM



**SHUANG QI**

Inclusion Support Program  
Coordinator

## Meet the ELCC Team

**I first joined ELCC in December 2024 as a Licensing Child Care Coordinator in a term position and later made the move to the Inclusion Support Program (ISP) program as a full-time ISP Coordinator.**

Inclusion support has always been something in which I'm genuinely interested. My background is in psychology. I completed my bachelor's degree in China, where I also worked in a research lab doing eye tracking experiments to understand how people with additional support needs interpret visual cues. I also had co-op experience working with children diagnosed with autism, which helped shape my interest in child development and inclusion. After moving to Canada in 2013, I completed my Early Childhood Educator II at Red River College Polytechnic and ECE III through Professional Applied and Continuing Education at the University of Winnipeg. My first job here was as a Child Care Assistant, and I've been in the field ever since.

In my day to day role as an ISP Coordinator, I visit different facilities to help educators better understand children's behaviour and strengthen their capacity to support diverse needs. When a centre identifies a child who may require enhanced support, they send me a request for an assessment. My work involves learning about each child, getting to know each facility, and figuring out how I can provide the most meaningful support.

What I enjoy most is working alongside educators to create inclusive classrooms. Every centre and every child is different, and I value the conversations we have as we try to understand each child's needs and find practical strategies that make a real difference. I also learn a lot from my colleagues—our team is very experienced and professional. Even though I've worked in this field for many years, becoming an ISP Coordinator has made me think, *"Wow, I can do this now!"* Their support makes my work feel meaningful and enjoyable.

I love seeing how small changes like adjusting the environment, adding visual supports, or offering a new strategy can help a child feel more comfortable and engaged. Watching educators grow more confident and seeing children thrive is very rewarding.

My own schooling in China influenced how I see children's emotional needs. In high school, I had a teacher who really understood different personalities and helped me build my confidence. That experience inspired me to study psychology and eventually support children myself.

For educators, my advice is to approach this work with patience, curiosity, and collaboration. Supporting children with diverse needs doesn't mean having all the answers—it means observing carefully, being open to learning, and working together with colleagues, families, and other professionals. Early childhood educators play such an important role, and when we build strong, inclusive environments, every child has a chance to grow successfully.

### A Division by Any Other Name...

**English:** Manitoba Early Learning and Child Care

**French:** Apprentissage et garde des jeunes enfants au Manitoba

**Portuguese:** Manitoba Aprendizagem Precoce e Creches

**Chinese :**

早期教育与儿童托育



## We Want to Feature You!

Celebrating a milestone? New program working out well? Great idea you want to share? If you have content ideas or a story you would like to include in our next edition, email [CDInfo@gov.mb.ca](mailto:CDInfo@gov.mb.ca) with the subject line "E-NEWS" to share your thoughts!

**For general inquiries about the Early Learning and Child Care Division**

**Website:**

[www.manitoba.ca/childcare](http://www.manitoba.ca/childcare)

**Email:** [cdinfo@gov.mb.ca](mailto:cdinfo@gov.mb.ca)

**Phone:** 204-945-0776

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