



Early Learning
and Child Care

MONTHLY
E-NEWS

Message from Assistant Deputy Minister, Sarah Whiteford



Asian Heritage Month is celebrated during the month of May across Canada, and this year the celebration in Manitoba is particularly poignant as it is the first since Bill 212, The Asian Heritage Month Act, became law, in June 2024. Asian Heritage Month recognizes the long and rich history and present-day contributions of Asian Canadians.

I had the opportunity of attending the opening ceremony for Asian Heritage Month at the Manitoba Legislature. It was a powerful experience being surrounded by the diversity of cultures and languages, and hearing from advocates like Art Miki who secured government reparations and a formal apology for Japanese-Canadians subjected to internment during World War II. As a Korean-Canadian and public servant, it was a privilege to witness this ceremony in the “people’s building”, which, throughout its history, has not always been a place of inclusion.

If you would like to learn more about Asian Heritage Month, the department has a page linking to [educator resources](#), and the Government of Canada has a site that includes [further information and a toolkit](#).

Raising Wages and Base Operating Grants: A Historic Wage Increase for Frontline ECEs

2025/2026 ELCC Wage Grid—Effective April 1, 2025

On May 23, 2025, the governments of Manitoba and Canada were thrilled to announce the largest wage increase to date in Manitoba for the recommended wages of early childhood education professionals. The 2025/2026 ELCC Wage Grid will go into effect retroactively to April 1, 2025. This announcement also included a two percent increase to base operating grants that licensed and funded child care facilities receive annually, and which will also be provided retroactively to April 1, 2025.

This joint funding investment, supported under the Canada-Manitoba Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement, will provide an additional \$60.4 million to licensed and funded child care facilities through the Wage Grid Operating Supplement to support the wage increase. Additionally, a total of \$4.55 million will support investments for the two percent increase to base operating grants for all licensed and funded early learning and child care facilities.



Centre: Education and Early Childhood Learning Minister, Tracy Schmidt

“Child care professionals are at the heart of providing exceptional care to our children and need to be paid accordingly. This historic increase reflects the invaluable work that frontline early childhood educators do for our children and for our province.”

— Education and Early Childhood Learning Minister, Tracy Schmidt

These increases to the 2025/2026 Wage Grid are a key pillar in Manitoba’s broader workforce strategy and are designed to improve recruitment and retention efforts for a qualified child care workforce, thereby supporting our commitment to expand the system by 23,000 spaces by 2026.

For more information, read the [News Release](#). View the [2025/2026 Wage Grid](#), the [circular for centres](#), and the [circular for homes](#) for access to implementation resources for your facility.

Minister Announces Five Professional Development Days

On May 23, 2025, the Honourable Tracy Schmidt, Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning, also announced Manitoba’s commitment to increasing the number of professional development days for the early learning and child care (ELCC) workforce to five (5) days per year by 2028, aligned with Manitoba teachers.

Starting in 2026, professional development days will be phased in as follows:

- 2026: Three (3) professional development days
- 2027: Four (4) professional development days
- 2028: Five (5) professional development days

Facilities may choose to close for the allocated number of professional development days per calendar year, without a loss of fee revenue from parents, the Child Care Subsidy Program and the Reduced Parent Fee Revenue Grant. These days are provided to support professional development opportunities for Early Childhood Educators, Child Care Assistants, and home-based providers. The department will provide further detail in the annual closure days letters each year.

Leap of Faith Sticks the Landing in River Heights

In November 2024, representatives from Early Learning and Child Care spoke with Karen Ohlson, Director, K.I.D.S Inc. about Prairie Roots, the organization's newest project taking shape at École Sir William Osler School on Grant Avenue in Winnipeg. Ohlson was optimistic, but her and her team still faced a daunting amount of work ahead.

"The key is that it has to be a wonderful place for families and an excellent place to work," said Ohlson. "It's a leap of faith, but I'm very proud of the work that's been done."

Roughly six months later, Ohlson and Site Manager Robyn Liddle provided an update to Early Learning and Child Care from their office at Prairie Roots, K.I.D.S. Inc.'s new 6,276 square foot facility providing spaces for 74 children (20 infant, 54 preschool), from 0 to 6 years of age.

"We had our first group of children in on April 14," said Ohlson.

"There were so many delays, we could have probably waited until September to get it perfect. It all came down to the wire. But it all came together eventually and everything worked out."

"Everybody we worked with was bang-on. Early Learning and Child Care was very helpful and did as much as could be done. The new staff we hired in January took the extra time to learn about the standards and core values of our organization. They got to know each other, and that was a positive. We have to view that time as a gift."

"We are about two-thirds open right now. By the end of June, we'll have all the spaces accounted for. It's a big amount of work; staffing, scheduling, coordinating, all the things going on behind the scenes that you don't always think about. But I think it has worked out overall because of the efforts of everybody to support everyone."

K.I.D.S.'s 'leap of faith' has seemed to have paid off. The response from families has been enormously positive.

"Parents are very excited," says Liddle, "It was recently ECE Week, and we had a bulletin board covered with shout-outs from parents. 'We have a wonderful place for our children to come!' In the last two weeks, I've probably received 20 emails from parents—it's been really great feedback."



Prairie Roots is the fourth program Ohlson has opened during her 35-year career with K.I.D.S. Despite the hard work and unexpected setbacks, she considers the success of Prairie Roots as a template for launching a stand-alone centre based on the levels of cooperation between the staff, board, school division, builders and government. That said, is she ready to open another location?

"No, I am not!" jokes Ohlson. She says she's looking at retirement in the next few years and will leave further expansion to someone down the road. Despite the administrative workload, she still takes time to appreciate what matters most.

"The paperwork just keeps coming, but sometimes I'll go into the program rooms and hang out with the children and I feel so much better at the end of the day."

"Except when they say, 'How old are you?' And I tell them, and they say, 'My grandma is two years younger than you.'"

Ohlson and Liddle both break into laughter. "Sweet, sweet children."

Funding for this project was made possible under the Canada-Manitoba Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement and Manitoba's Child Care in Schools Policy that requires the consideration of new child care spaces as part of the construction of all new schools, or those undergoing a major renovation.

For more information on ELCC's child-care space creation efforts and/or grant funding that may be available for a space expansion project, visit [Manitoba Early Learning and Child Care: Space Creation](#).

Meet the ELCC Team

Carmen Zubin, ECE III, Supervisor, Licensing and Compliance

For as long as I can remember, I have wanted to work with children.

I wrote a note when I was in Grade 3 that read, "I am 9½-years-old. When I grow up, I want to be an elementary school teacher."

It was sealed in an envelope and written with, "Open in 15 years." It's all yellowed now, but I still have it. I think I actually specified what grade I wanted to teach, in my fancy, 9-year-old bubble-writing.

When I was in college, I knew a lot of people who had completed their education degree but were unable to find work because education wasn't hiring. The teaching jobs weren't there, and I wanted to work. That's when I looked into child care.

I think for many people, especially in the 80s and 90s, and for people who were never in child care themselves, it didn't occur to them that child care could be a vocation. I'm not even sure how it came up, but I just knew this pathway was an opportunity to work with children and be employed right away.

I completed my ECE II at Red River College Polytechnic and graduated in 1995. I was a frontline floor staff, then eventually earned a supervisor position at an infant, preschool and school age facility with two sites. There was a lot of room for growth. In 2004, I graduated from the Advanced Diploma in Early Childhood Program Management at Assiniboine College, earning my ECE III by distance while working. Then I moved from acting director to executive director.



Carmen Zubin, ECE III,
Supervisor, Licensing and
Compliance

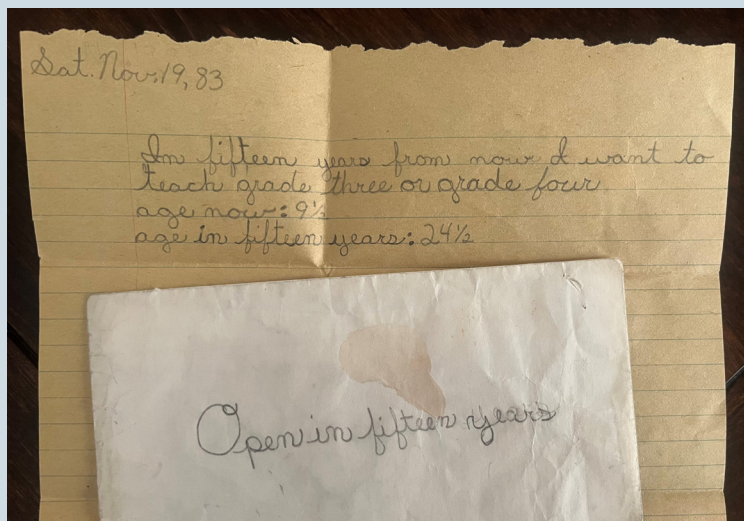
I joined government in Early Learning and Child Care in December 2010. I had grown in my centre as much as I could, and I was looking for a change. I started as a child care coordinator in the Seven Oaks community area, worked as a coordinator in risk management and enhanced licensing teams, and then worked as a policy analyst with the workforce development unit, mainly overseeing the ECE II Assessment Program. In 2023, I returned to the licensing and compliance team as a supervisor. It's been almost 15 years.

As a supervisor, there are a lot of meetings, but there's also a lot of mentoring, problem solving, and working with the sector. I really enjoy onboarding new coordinators and sharing my experience. Providing the best guidance and the best opportunity for them to learn: that's my role, my duty.

The biggest challenge, I think, is attracting people to the field and keeping them here. We're working to get the word out and really stress the importance of the career and how rewarding it can be.

Experiencing the joy of childhood. Seeing them light up when they see you. Imagine being the inspiration for a 9-year-old today, writing a letter to their future self:

"When I grow up, I want to be an Early Childhood Educator."



Each month, the division will answer a common inquiry received from facilities in a question-and-answer format.

This Month's Question

Why is continuous learning important and how can I access training?

Answer

Investment in continuous learning is critical for the early learning and child care sector. It helps to empower the workforce and provide the necessary skills and knowledge to support high-quality care for children. Through workshops, conferences, seminars and scholarly reading, CCAs and ECEs can stay ahead on the latest research, best practices and regulations in the field.

The best practice is for each employee to participate in at least 24 hours of personal development courses each year. Some courses might qualify to be reimbursed up to \$400 through the training grant. [Read more about the training grant.](#)

Additionally, facilities are allowed to close for up to two days to attend professional development opportunities between January 1 and December 31, 2025. [Read more on closure days.](#)

To learn more about continuous learning opportunities and how to access training, visit manitoba.ca/education/childcare/resources/pd.html.



The Public Sector Compensation Disclosure Act Declaration— May 30, 2025

The [Public Sector Compensation Disclosure Act](#) requires annual information about funding received from Government, including funding provided to support wages. Eligible facilities are required to comply with the provisions of the Act, including the Declaration form, which must be signed and returned to the Department of Education and Early Childhood Learning by May 30, 2025.

For details of this requirement, view the [circular](#) or download the [declaration form](#).

Expression of Interest: ECE II Assessment Program Advisors

Deadline: June 27, 2025

Join a group of ECE III Advisors who annually support the ECE II Assessment Program—a unique pathway, leading highly skilled Child Care Assistants to ECE classification through the demonstration of skills and knowledge as assessed by an Advisor. Advisors play an integral role in the success of participants by providing them with invaluable mentorship experience fostering growth, development and connections as an educator.

ECE II Assessment Program Advisors are paid positions up to a maximum of 40 hours per year, per participant.

For additional details about this opportunity, including information about the program and eligibility requirements, visit our [website](#).

Summer Safety Resources

With summer around the corner, facilities are encouraged to review the early learning and child care summer safety information on supervision, field trips, water safety, and sun safety, as well as enhancing their program and neighbourhood outings. Distribute these information sheets to staff and/or post them as a reminder and for quick reference throughout the summer:

- [Count Your Children Information Sheet \(PDF\)](#)
- [Sun Safety Information Sheet \(PDF\)](#)
- [Water Safety Information Sheet \(PDF\)](#)
- [Experiences and Outings Information Sheet \(PDF\)](#)
- [Field Trip Information Sheet \(PDF\)](#)

Please refer to all health and safety regulations and remember that proper planning and supervision are critical to ensuring everyone's safety. If you have any questions, please contact your child care coordinator.



Membership Opportunities Available: Early Learning and Child Care Minister's Consultation Table (MCT)

The Early Learning and Child Care Minister's Consultation Table (MCT) Committee is currently seeking nominations to appoint additional members from licensed rural and/or home child care facilities. The expertise and insights from a diverse MCT membership who deliver and/or support the regulated early learning and child care sector are vital to informing advancements in Manitoba's early learning and child care system.

Learn more and download a nomination form at www.manitoba.ca/education/childcare/resources/committees.html.

EARLY LEARNING AND CHILD CARE DIVISION UPDATE

Week of the ECE, April 27 to May 3, 2025—Visit from Minister Tracy Schmidt

On Friday, May 2, 2025, the Honourable Tracy Schmidt, Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning, visited the Early Learning and Child Care Division office at 114 Garry Street to meet with department staff in recognition of the Week of the Early Childhood Educator (ECE Week).

Minister Schmidt attended along with Tyler Blashko, MLA for Lagimodière and Legislative Assistant for Education and Early Childhood Learning.

"As a minister, and as a mother, thank you for everything you do." said Minister Schmidt. "Your contributions to our province are invaluable."



Top, Left to Right: Tyler Blashko, MLA for Lagimodière; Minister Tracy Schmidt; Carmen Zubin, Supervisor, Licensing and Compliance; Marci Sul, Child Care Coordinator; Suzanne Pazdor, Child Care Coordinator; Dylan Strike, Child Care Coordinator; Jessica Brosch, Child Care Coordinator; Ruth Hiebert, Child Care Coordinator; Sandy Manchulenko, Child Care Coordinator; Neera Barber, Inclusion Support Program Supervisor; Jon Bitton, Supervisor, Licensing and Compliance; Jeannette Slate, Child Care Coordinator; Taryn Bennett, Inclusion Support Program Coordinator; Daniel Jebb, CL4 Clerk; Kari Cook, Child Care Coordinator; Sherrie White, Child Care Coordinator; Shuang Qi, Child Care Coordinator

Bottom Left, Left to Right: Minister Tracy Schmidt; Lily Mallard, Portfolio Manager; Oliver Barham, Policy Analyst; Temitope Alimson, Leaders in Training Program Intern; Elizabeth Olorunfemi, Policy Analyst; Terry Smith, Facility and Capital Development Analyst; Larissa Zacharuk, Senior Capital Projects Manager; Shelley Jonasson, Space Expansion Program Coordinator; Pam Weaver, Director, Capital and Space Development; Signe Hanson, Executive Director, Capital and Space Development

Bottom Right, Left to Right: Diann Dunbar, Senior Policy Analyst; Carla Kernersted, Senior Policy Analyst; Annabelle Konan, Policy Analyst; Paige Mason, Policy and Program Analyst; Maria Cleilo-Dhaliwal, Data Scientist; Yang Shang, Senior Data Scientist; Minister Tracy Schmidt; Matthias Rust, Director, Strategic Policy and Intergovernmental Relations; Anaïs Ratte, Engagement Specialist; Charles Odum, Senior Business Analyst; MLA Blashko; Lisa Rivest, Systems Clerk; Carissma Cyra, STEP Student

Early Learning and Child Care Connecting with Communities Across Manitoba

Department staff have had a busy May, attending five different events in Winnipeg and the Interlake. On Tuesday, May 6, representatives from the Early Learning and Child Care Division participated in a career fair at Oak Park High School, followed by the Powerview Career Fair in Powerview-Pine Falls on May 8. On May 21, participation also included the Winnipeg Career Fair and Training Expo at RBC Convention Centre, rounding out the week at the 47th annual Manitoba Child Care Association Conference (The Brilliance of Play: Adventure Awaits) at the Victoria Inn in Winnipeg on May 22 and 23.



*ELCC Multi-Highlighter—
Don't leave home without it!*



Left to right: Carla Fleury-Charles, Policy and Program Analyst; Shelly Marques, Workforce Curriculum Consultant; and Lindsay Ortlieb, Policy Analyst, at the 47th Annual MCCA Conference.



Left to right: Ann Gable, Inclusion Support Program Child Development Worker; Melissa Shapiro, Policy Analyst; and Nahla El Bawab, Bilingual Subsidy Advisor, at the Winnipeg Career Fair.

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.

Matthew McConnell joined the Provincial Operations Branch, Quality Enhancement and Program Development Unit, as an MPA co-op student at 210 Osborne on Monday, April 28. Matthew will graduate in October with a Master of Public Administration (MPA) degree. This co-op position will be his second MPA placement, following a 2024 position with the Office of the Auditor General of Manitoba. Matthew is committed to harnessing both his educational background and recent work experience to improve the childcare experience for Manitoba's youth.

Pamela Altasin joined the Funding and Financial Assistance Branch, Child Care Subsidy Unit, as Child Care Subsidy Advisor on May 5, 2025. Pamela has

served with the Government of Manitoba for 18 years and brings valuable experience from the department of Environment and Climate Change—Canada Maps and Air Photo Library.

Faosiyat Olajide-Adedamola has joined the Policy and Planning Branch, Strategic Policy and Intergovernmental Relations Unit, on May 7, as part of her first internship with the Master of Public Administration (MPA) degree program. Faosiyat holds graduate degrees in Agricultural Extension and Rural Development along with professional certifications in accounting and taxation. She brings over a decade of experience in public administration to the Division.

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 CDCInfo@gov.mb.ca with the subject line "ELCC Newsletter" and you could be featured in our next edition.

For general inquiries 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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