



Manitoba Child Care
Association

Our mission is to advocate for a quality system of child care, to advance early childhood education as a profession, and to provide services to our members.

March 3, 2009

Hon. Gord Mackintosh,
Minister of Family Services and Housing,
Room 357, Legislative Building,
450 Broadway Ave
Winnipeg, Manitoba
R3C 0V8

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Dear Minister Mackintosh:

The Manitoba Child Care Association (MCCA) appreciates the time and attention you have given to the concerns and suggestions from our members in recent months. Our members have spoken loud and clear - the majority of existing child care centres all over Manitoba that need to recruit employees find it nearly impossible to hire Early Childhood Educators (ECEs) and skilled Child Care Assistants (CCAs) to fill vacant positions.

As you know, the consequences of funding an additional 6500 spaces when people with the knowledge, skills, and abilities are already in critically short supply cannot be overlooked in an industry responsible for the health, safety, and wellbeing of children.

I am writing in response to your announcement regarding the first downpayment on competitive wages – the wage adjustment fund. This fund is available to boost some Early Childhood Educators and Child Care Assistants in Training closer to a starting salary that is competitive, and I know those who are eligible are pleased to receive a wage increase.

From February 24 – February 27, 2009 MCCA offered our centre members an opportunity to complete an online survey to gather opinions and comments about the wage adjustment fund. One hundred and twenty five centres responded, which represents about 21% of the child care centres in Manitoba.

The 125 centres reported:

- 192 CCAs currently in ECE training are eligible for the wage adjustment fund
- 110 CCAs currently in ECE training are not eligible for the wage adjustment fund
- 353+ ECEs are eligible for the wage adjustment fund
- 660+ ECEs are not eligible for the wage adjustment fund
- 35.2% believe the wage adjustment fund will be an incentive for CCAs to enroll in ECE training
- 46.4% believe the wage adjustment fund will be an incentive to keep CCAs in ECE training

- 35.2% believe the wage adjustment fund will help recruit ECEs
- 26.4% believe the wage adjustment fund will help retain ECEs
- 1.6% believe the wage adjustment fund will motivate ECE IIs to upgrade training to an ECE III

Centres were asked to comment on the impact the wage adjustment fund will have at their program, and a few were positive:

- *we are a new facility so the wage adjustment works well for us because all our ECEs were hired around the same time*
- *we will be able to offer our ECE II and in training staff a more competitive wage*

However, many more were angry because there is no funding increase to boost wages and help retain their long term and experienced ECEs:

- *although an increase is welcome, the delivery is problematic*
- *we like the standardized wage levels, but would have liked it better if it was applicable to all staff, not just a few*
- *demoralizing and deflating to ECEs*
- *presents a problem what to do with longer term & management staff*
- *the ones who have been in the field for a lengthy time are feeling they are not recognized – those who have left the field and return get rewards – those who have just entered the field have gained leaps and bounds they feel – now someone who has just entered the field will be eligible to get a larger starting wage. The staff that have been in the field for two years right behind those who have been in the field for 15 years?*
- *my Board of Directors has decided not to apply for the wage adjustment fund as there are still far too many questions surrounding it. Will it be there in a year or will we be stranded paying these new wages with no funding?*
- *in January we increased salaries to the 07 wage scale and because we did that we are only entitled to the wage adjustment until January even though we budgeted a huge deficit to do so*
- *with the adjustment fund, we will now have our most junior staff making one cent less than staff members who have been with us for 10 years. I am not sure the province has factored in the additional hidden costs to the centres in terms of increased benefits that will need to be adjusted with higher salaries – group insurance, RRSP contributions, and overtime.*
- *the suggestion that we reassess the wage scale for all staff is ridiculous. If there were funding to pay the competitive scale we would. To consider remunerating the 26 staff who have been in the centre as long as 20+ years the 6% increase these staff are going to receive would cost the centre in excess of \$50,000.00. I am not a magician and unable to pull that kind of money out of a hat.*

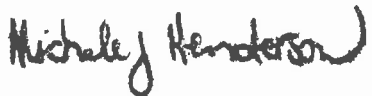
- *our whole salary scale needs a 20% increase to pay market competitive wages, and this fund provides for a VERY small portion of what is needed – in fact one person out of 18 will get that full increase.*
- *very unfair to all the ECEs who put in years of service, suffered through low wages, cutbacks, kept the system going, and now get nothing*

A starting salary of \$15.50 an hour for a new graduate of an ECE training program is close to competitive and definitely an improvement. But the consequences of not addressing compression, leaves the experienced ECEs feeling more frustrated, more discouraged, and more angry at a time when Manitoba can hardly afford to lose more ECEs out of the system. These are the same people who have been told year after year and time after time and decade after decade and government after government that competitive wages will take “time”. It is now 35 years since the child care program began in Manitoba, and there have been many steps, plenty of time, and still the issue remains unresolved.

Therefore, The Manitoba Child Care Association once again calls on the Government of Manitoba to adequately fund the programs it regulates and licenses so child care wages for all employees are fair and competitive and enable employers to recruit, retain, and fairly compensate the personnel required by the Community Child Care Standards Act.

On provincial budget day, March 25, 2009, The Manitoba Child Care Association expects to hear that the Government of Manitoba will increase the operating grant to support the research based Market Competitive Salary Guideline Scale for Group Child Care Centres 2008 as the minimum wage base for full and part time child care centres, along with the definitions and job descriptions for ALL 9 positions and ALL 5 levels of experience, and that the funding increase will be effective on April 1, 2009.

Sincerely,



Michele Henderson, President

cc by email:

Martin Billenkoff, Deputy Minister
Carolyn Loepky, Assistant Deputy Minister
Lois Speirs, A/Director, Manitoba Child Care Program
Manitoba MLA's
Child Care Centres