



Early Learning and Child Care

MONTHLY E-NEWS

APRIL 2024

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ECE Week Message

A Message from Sarah Whiteford, Assistant Deputy Minister

Sunday, April 28, 2024, kicks off the 33rd Annual Week of the Early Childhood Educator (ECE). This is the second ECE Week I've had the pleasure and privilege of celebrating since I re-joined the program in 2022.

This week is an opportunity to celebrate and acknowledge the profound impact of Early Childhood Educators, Child Care Assistants, and Family Child Care Providers in supporting the social, emotional, physical, and intellectual development of children from the youngest infants to school-age, and beyond.

I am fortunate to work alongside many ECEs every day, whose knowledge and experience indelibly shape how we are designing and implementing initiatives to advance the early learning and child care system. Nearly half of our team are certified ECEs, and I appreciate the perspective they bring to the table as we move forward on Manitoba's commitments.

On behalf of everyone in the Early Learning and Child Care Division, and my colleagues throughout the Government of Manitoba, **thank you and happy Week of the ECE!**



Moving Forward on Child Care Priorities

Budget 2024: Early Learning and Child Care

On April 2, 2024, the Manitoba government announced [Budget 2024](#), which commits additional funding to support families and our early learning and child care sector. Specific commitments identified include:

- Supporting new child-care spaces and associated operating costs, including one-time start-up grants for new school-age capital projects supporting 1,980 spaces.
- Increasing base operating grants by five percent for all funded child care facilities, including both centres and homes.
- Additional funding to support increasing wages for child care professionals.
- Extending \$10-a-day child care to non-school days for school-age children.

Budget 2024 further identifies support for healthy children, families and communities, including the creation of more than 40 new child care centres to be located in schools and on post-secondary campuses, as well as supporting expansion projects with community-based partners.

Informing a Wage and Benefits Framework for Manitoba

To ensure competitive salaries and equitable funding approaches, the department has partnered with KPMG to develop a comprehensive and sustainable wage and benefits framework that attracts and retains professionals in the early learning and child care sector. To kick-off this project and inform a Manitoba approach, focus group sessions with rural and northern child care providers will begin in May, followed by additional stakeholder engagement opportunities, such as an online survey that is anticipated to launch later in May. Stay tuned for more information on this initiative and how to provide your input.

Spotlight on Success

ECE Tuition Reimbursement Supports *Finding Your Right Place*

An interview with Lori Verreault, ECE II, Recipient of the 2021/2022 ECE Tuition Reimbursement, Winnipeg

The story of how Lori Verreault entered the child care sector is not uncommon. When her own children first started attending care, she got to know the staff and became interested in child care as a possible profession. What is uncommon, is her long-term commitment to the career she grew to love, having now worked in Winnipeg's child care community for close to 25 years.

"Once my children started school, I needed something that would give me flexibility," says Verreault. "There was a daycare in their school that needed me, and I could still be available for my children after school. I realized, I really liked working in childcare. I moved on to another facility and stayed there for about five years."

Verreault worked as a Child Care Assistant (CCA) in a number of facilities over the years with children of different ages. In 2020, she decided to go back to school to get her ECE II designation, influenced by her dedication to early childhood education.

"I went back in September 2020 and graduated in June of 2022. The fact is that I still enjoy working in childcare, and I enjoy working with children. I enjoy the connections and coming up with things that they like to do. I also enjoy just having those connections in being able to be there when they need somebody."

But she understands the financial challenges new graduates can face.

"I've seen a lot of people leave. Many of the people I became friends with from my graduating class—at least six—are no longer in the field. It's sad because a lot of times it just comes down to not making enough money. They have to look elsewhere to pay their bills."

"I'm staying in. Personally, I'm happy with my paycheque. Thinking about the past, this is more than I used to get paid. But it's not just the pay, it's also the additional support your centre can give you, through workshops or the Manitoba Child Care Association Conference, or other perks. Right now, I'm dealing with some important personal matters and my centre has been really accommodating and flexible with that. So, it's not just your wage, you have to look at other things."

Verreault notes that it's the most intangible, invaluable things that elevate child care from a job to a calling.

"I'm often working with toddlers and preschoolers, and you can see they value you and they appreciate what you do. They will give you hugs and, if you're gone for a while, they'll be really happy to see you when you're back. All those little moments, they help you feel like you mean something and you're in the right place."

"All in all, in all the jobs I've had, even before going into childcare, I'd rather be in childcare."

Lori Verreault is one of the recipients of the 2021/2022 ECE Tuition Reimbursement, providing eligible recipients rebates of up to \$5,000 per school-year available to help cover tuition-related costs of recognized early childhood education (ECE) programs offered at post-secondary institutions in Manitoba that lead to an ECE II or ECE III certification in Manitoba. Applications continue to be available for the 2024/2025 academic year!

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!

Meet the ELCC Team

Lisa Ludwig, ECE III, Manager, Licensing and Compliance

I graduated from the University of Manitoba with a Human Ecology degree and started in childcare in 1997. I joined the Manitoba government as a child care coordinator in 2010, so I've been in the field over 25 years.

I lived in Neepawa for seven years and worked in different facilities within the region, as well as in Winnipeg, so I've had the best of both worlds. I've worked in centres, family child care, and nurseries, with preschoolers, infants, and school-age children. I've worked in inclusion support, in pilot programs, and in mentorship. I've had different opportunities and different roles, so it's been kind of a roller coaster, but it's been fun.



Lisa Ludwig, Manager, Licensing and Compliance

It was towards the end of 2020, during COVID, when I first stepped into a supervisory role. COVID was really, really challenging. It exhausted people. As a manager now, I'm having conversations with directors and staff, working through issues, and providing support and mentorship to facilities, coordinators, and supervisors. It's a lot of problem-solving and helping to work through whatever comes up. I really want to be supportive and engaged with the sector, to listen to their concerns and feedback, and hear about their struggles.

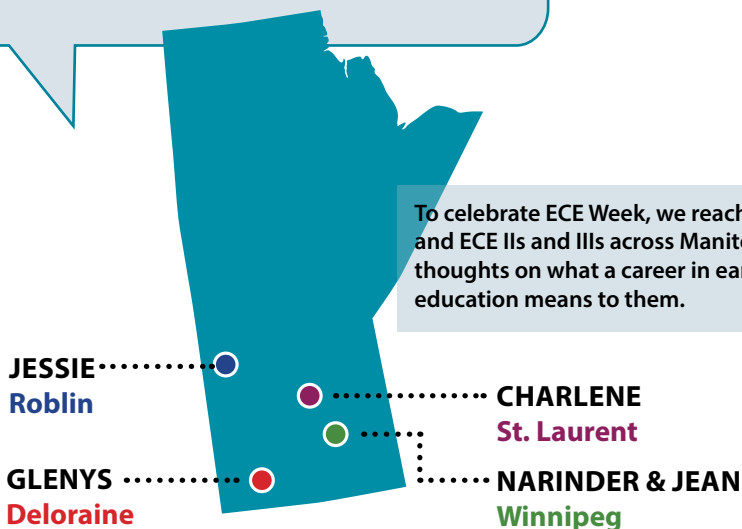
Susan Emerson* and I went on what we called our "Listening Tour" this past year, which we're continuing with this year. We went out to different rural facilities and spent time out there and we're doing some in the city right now. I'm listening and having conversations and just seeing the programs. I really love building the relationships and that engagement with the sector. When we make changes, we want to get all perspectives so we have a better understanding of how it could affect facilities or family providers, or the whole sector. I have to say, when we go into facilities and we see those little faces, it reminds me why we're doing what we do. It's all about them.

Some days you go home and things can kind of make your heart hurt because we deal with centres, facilities and families, and we hear how people are struggling or about things that have happened; however, most days, I feel really good about where I am. We have such a good team at ELCC. As crazy and hectic as things get at times, this is where I want to be. I don't want to be anywhere else. I think I'm here for life.

This ECE Week, I want every CCA and ECE to know that the work that they do is incredibly valued. It's appreciated, valued, and challenging, but it's extremely rewarding. Families need to work, and if they don't have care for their children, how can they earn a living? It's keeping businesses and organizations open. The passion they have for what they do, and how they enrich children's and families' lives makes them a pillar of society. Their role is so incredibly important to so many people, and it should be celebrated and respected.

* Susan was featured in our [March edition](#).

Listening to MANITOBA'S EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS



Glenys, ECE III, Wee R Special Inc. Daycare, Deloraine, Manitoba

"When I started 34 years ago, it was not a planned career. The satisfaction of helping and witnessing young children grow and develop has been worth every minute. Living in a rural community, this career has also allowed me to work and connect with many families. As an ECE, all this will be in my heart for a lifetime!"

Jessie Laroche, ECE II, Roblin Children's Center Inc., Roblin, Manitoba

"I love being an ECE because, each day, I can make a positive impact in a child's life, and build meaningful, unique relationships with all of the children in my care."

I was inspired to become an ECE because I've always had a passion for working with children and enhancing their quality of life. This started early on, as I grew up alongside my brother with Asperger's Autism. The education system in our community was not supportive of his needs, and I wanted to ensure that I could help children like him thrive.

I furthered my passion for childcare by becoming a CCA at our local Nursery School and School Age Program after I graduated high school. I am now the Assistant Director at my centre, and I'm currently taking classes to obtain my ECE III."

Narinder, ECE II, YMCA-YWCA of Winnipeg Highbury ELCC, Winnipeg, Manitoba

"I love being an early childhood educator as it allows me to witness the wonder and excitement of children as they explore the world around them. Guiding them through their early development years, I feel fulfilled knowing that I am making a positive impact on their lives. The opportunity to connect with parents and caregivers from various backgrounds enhances my understanding of different cultures, making my work even more meaningful."

Charlene Filz, ECE III, Li Pchi Pwayson, St. Laurent, Manitoba

"Kindness and caring are what an ECE is! My inspiration and strength come from my family, in particular my uncle who taught me that 'we're all the same.' That led me to become an ECE III and to work with children with additional needs. It's my goal to support each child and help them find their own strengths, growth, and achievements. I love being an Early Childhood Educator!"

Jean Sangalang, ECE II, Winnipeg, Manitoba

"As a family child care provider and early childhood educator, I know that compassionate, positive words and kindness have the power to impact not only children but also other co-providers and educators in the field so that they can empower themselves and have the courage, strength, and confidence to develop and discover their skills and achieve successes."

Announcements and Reminders

ECE Week Celebrations

Would you like to share some of your facility's ECE Week photos? Email us at CDCInfo@gov.mb.ca with the subject line "ECE Week 2024" and you could be featured in our next edition!

New Monthly Automated Payments: Reduced Parent Fee Revenue Grant

Payments begin April 28, 2024, for the reporting period of March 31 to April 27, 2024, 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](#).

Facility Orientation Sessions: Child Care Subsidy Program and Facility Reporting

On April 24 and 25, 2024, the department held orientation sessions providing an opportunity for new and existing providers to become familiar with the child care subsidy program, receive updates, and improve their understanding of processes and reporting requirements, including Child Care Online.

For those unable to attend, session resources will be available [on our site](#).

Allowable Absent Day Policy

Effective March 31, 2024, the Allowable Absent Day Policy has been reinstated, and the maximum number of allowable absent days must be indicated on subsidy approval letters for children receiving subsidy. More information is available in our [circular](#).

Emergency Preparedness Week: May 5 to 11, 2024—Be Prepared, Know Your Risks

Everyone has a role to play in an emergency. Emergency Preparedness Week (EP Week) is a national event supported by [Public Safety Canada](#) and is an opportunity for you to take action to ensure you are prepared to protect yourself, your family, and your community during an emergency. This year's theme encourages Canadians to understand the risks in their area and learn what actions they can take to protect themselves and their families.

Additional Resources:

- [Emergency Preparedness for Children](#) (getprepared.gc.ca)
- [Safety Tips](#) (getprepared.gc.ca)
- [Publications](#) (getprepared.gc.ca)

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 Public Sector Compensation Disclosure Act Declaration—May 31, 2024

[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 31, 2024**.

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

Nominate an Early Childhood Educator for Indigenous Educator of the Month

Indigenous Excellence celebrates Indigenous educators through its [Indigenous Educator of the Month](#) series. This series aims to promote both Kindergarten to Grade 12 and early childhood education as career choices amongst students and youth.

Beginning in 2024, the Indigenous Educator of the Month series has been expanded to include Early Childhood Educators. Please contact Wanda Spence at 204-945-4653 or by email at wanda.spence@gov.mb.ca if you are interested in either nominating someone or if you would like to put your own name forward.

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. Late March and April events included the Westwood Collegiate Career Fair on March 21, 2024, and the Brandon Career Symposium on April 23 and 24, 2024.



Mario Gordon, Director, Workforce Development; Monique Lubkiwski, Child Care Coordinator; Robyn Frost, Child Care Coordinator

Ready-to-Move Child Care—Awarded Project of the Year

The [Ready-to-Move Child Care Project](#) has been named 2024 Project of the Year, by the Project Management Institute of Manitoba. This initiative is the result of the creativity of public servants from across five government departments, building partnerships with industry and other levels of government including the leadership and passion of the early learning and child care capital team: Pam Wever, Janelle Blaikie, Larissa Zacharuk, Kelly Punzalan, and Lily Mallard PMP®.

On April 25, 2024, department staff and project partners gathered at The Leaf to accept this prestigious award for project management excellence at the 30th annual Project Management Institute gala event.

As the winning project, a donation of \$1,000 was made on behalf of the Government of Manitoba to the United Way of Winnipeg.

Read more on the [Project Management Institute](#) website.



Members of the RTM Team

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:

Brigitte A'Bear has returned as the Manager, Child Care Subsidy, effective **April 15, 2024**, having previously served as both Bilingual Child Care Subsidy Advisor and Acting Manager in a span of 12 years. Most recently, Brigitte worked as Associate Registrar within the Department of Families. She brings extensive knowledge of the Manitoba's subsidy program and a wealth of prior experience in public service.

Nahla El Bawab has joined Child Care Subsidy as Bilingual Child Care Subsidy Advisor as of **April 15, 2024**, reporting to Brigitte A'Bear. Nahla has been a Clerk with the Employment and Income Assistance program in the Department of Families for over a year now and has worked in several customer-centric and office administration roles for over ten years. Nahla is fluent in English, French, Portuguese and Arabic.

Olufemi Adedeji has joined the Quality Enhancement and Program Development team as a Policy Analyst on **April 22**. Femi has worked with the Department of Families as an Employment Counsellor for more than five years, and brings over 15 years of teaching and research experience to our Division. His rich educational background and Post Graduate Diploma in Education and Computer Science will be a welcome addition to ELCC.

Farewell to **Kelly Punzalan**, acting policy analyst with the Capital and Space Development Branch who has accepted a new position as Legislative Analyst with the Department of Economic Development, Investment, Trade and Natural Resources. Her last day was **April 19**. Kelly has been a great asset to ELCC since she started in September 2013, having taken on and succeeded in a variety of challenging roles in both IT and capital development. We wish her the very best in her new role!

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 CDCInfo@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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