

Canada-Saskatchewan Early Learning and Child Care Agreement



2018-19 Report

Funded by the Government of Canada through the Early Learning and Child Care Agreement



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Background

On June 12, 2017, Saskatchewan signed the Multilateral Federal-Provincial/Territorial Early Learning and Child Care Framework with the federal government and the other provinces and territories. The Multilateral Framework provides the overarching principles that guide federal investment into regulated early learning and child care. As a result, on March 16, 2018, the Governments of Canada and Saskatchewan announced a three-year bilateral agreement to help ensure that Saskatchewan children get the best start in life. *The Canada-Saskatchewan Early Learning and Child Care Agreement* allocates just over \$41 million, over three years, to Saskatchewan for early learning and child care investments.

Investments made through the Agreement are in addition to provincial investments and will work to build on existing strengths and priorities in Saskatchewan. *Saskatchewan's Early Years Plan 2016-20* and the *Education Sector Strategic Plan* are both provincial plans working toward the target that 90 per cent of children exiting Kindergarten are ready for learning in the primary grades by 2020. This includes initiatives that support early learning, child care, strong families, healthy children and community planning and alignment.

Over the course of the Agreement, Saskatchewan is focusing on four main priorities to be achieved by 2020. In 2018-19, Saskatchewan continued to invest in these priority areas ensuring a balanced approach that supports the province's strategic goals and aligns with the federal government's early learning and child care funding criteria outlined through the Agreement:

1. Quality – Enhance the experience of children in licensed child care by investing in training and resources for licensed child care providers to ensure high-quality programming. In 2018-19, training was made available for child care centre directors focusing on leadership skills and supporting staff to deliver quality programming. Training specific for licensed family child care providers to enhance the quality of their programs was also provided. It is expected that by 2020, up to 115 licensed family child care home providers and 188 child care centre directors will participate in training. Grants were continued to be made available to support active play and the *Play and Exploration* curriculum framework in licensed child care.

2. Accessibility – Continued expansion of access to high quality child care in both centre-based and home-based sectors. In 2018-19, Saskatchewan expanded its centre-based licensed child care spaces to 1,015, exceeding the licensed centre-based target of 950 spaces by 2020, across the province. Licensed group and family child care home spaces increased by 350 in 2018-19 to a total of 797 allocated under the agreement. By 2020, 1,500 licensed group and family child care home spaces are expected in approximately 300 homes. A grant was also provided to centres to assist with physical space improvements to support the provision of infant care, the inclusion of children experiencing disability and to assist centres to meet significant fire safety requirements. In 2018-19, Saskatchewan also invested in the development of seven new Early Years Family Resource Centres. These are places where all families with young children can access reliable information and support and participate in services like parenting programs and free early learning and literacy opportunities.

3. Inclusive – Early learning opportunities for children experiencing disability through innovative pilots continues to expand throughout the province. The Early Learning Intensive Support pilot became fully operational in Regina and Saskatoon in fall 2018, and was expanded to four additional communities by the end of winter 2019. The Children Communicating, Connecting and in the Community pilot was also launched in fall 2018 in Regina and Saskatoon for preschool-aged children who are deaf, deaf and hard of hearing or who are connected to the deaf, deaf and hard of hearing communities. It is expected at least 220 preschool-aged children who experience disability will be provided early learning and child care opportunities by 2020.

4. Francophone Minority Language Inclusion – Saskatchewan continues to support the Francophone community through licensed child care spaces dedicated to Francophone families. Saskatchewan has expanded beyond the goal of 65 licensed child care spaces to 75 in an effort to increase access to Francophone early learning and child care by 2020.

Activities, Expenditures and Results of the Agreement

1. Quality

Saskatchewan continues to invest in the quality of the early learning and child care system across the province. In addition to the *Play and Exploration* and *Active Play* grants from 2017-18, Saskatchewan invested in a range of new initiatives for 2018-19.

Early Literacy Initiatives – In 2018-19, access to early learning and literacy was enhanced by \$1.8 million for children who would not otherwise have access to these opportunities. Language and early literacy development are fundamental to a child’s present and future learning.

The Saskatchewan Literacy Network was contracted to provide **province-wide training** for early literacy in 2018-19 for a diverse audience including staff in early learning programs, child care, *KidsFirst*, Early Childhood Intervention Programs, community programs and families with children under the age of six. The Saskatchewan Literacy Network provides information, training and support to family and adult literacy practitioners in the province and aims to build a stronger foundation and a more coordinated approach to supporting early literacy advancement in Saskatchewan. Through 50 different training opportunities across the province, training is projected to reach 1,400 participants by March 2020.

In 2018-19, the Saskatchewan Literacy Network developed training content, engaged with stakeholders and determined locations based on evaluation data. At the end of 2018-19, three separate learning opportunities were facilitated in Saskatoon, Buffalo Narrows and Beauval to promote early literacy in families. Training will continue in 2019-20.

Investments were also made to enhance the multilingual collection at the Provincial Library to support early literacy, for the culturally diverse population in the province in which English is not their primary language. Early literacy books and resources have been purchased in multiple languages based on the current diversity in the province including Arabic, Bengali, Filipino, Hindi, Ukrainian and Persian. In 2018-19, approximately 8,500 books were acquired to enhance the collection.

Child care centres and child care homes were provided with a **one-time literacy grant** to purchase books to support children’s early literacy development. In 2018-19, the grant was provided to 349 child care centres and 233 child care homes. The grants were available for licensed child care centres and child care homes in the following amounts:

Child Care Centres:	\$800 per centre with 30 or fewer spaces
	\$1,300 per centre with 31-60 spaces
	\$ 1,700 per centre with 61-90 spaces
Family Child Care Homes:	\$600/home
Group Family Child Care Homes:	\$600/home

KidsFirst Regional and *KidsFirst Targeted* programs received grants to work with literacy partners in their communities to deliver **early language and literacy programming** to families with children under six who have limited opportunities to access high-quality early learning opportunities. In the winter and spring of 2019, they hosted literacy events, early learning playgroups and early childhood fairs across the province. These events provided fun opportunities for families to experience activities they could take home to support their children's literacy. The events also provided information to support parent and caregiver understandings of how children develop early language and literacy skills. Three hundred fifty-six sessions were held in 195 communities. Overall, 13,757 individuals were impacted, including 7,762 children and 5,995 adults.

Play and Exploration Workshops for Family Child Care Home Providers – One day, in-person workshops for licensed child care home providers centering on implementation of *Play and Exploration: Early Learning Guide* with a focus on:

- the benefits of using *Play and Exploration*;
- practical strategies for implementing *Play and Exploration* in a home environment; and,
- implementation of *Play and Exploration* in a multi-age setting.

In 2018-19, four *Play and Exploration* workshops were held, two in both Regina and Saskatoon. In total, 98 early childhood educators from the licensed child care home sector attended. Further workshops will be available in 2019-20 with a target of 115 early childhood educators attending over the course of the Agreement.

Aboriginal Awareness Training – In support of the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action*, training regarding Aboriginal awareness was developed in 2018-19. Aboriginal Consulting Services will be delivering the training for a diverse early years sector audience, including child care centre directors and staff, family child care home providers, Early Childhood Intervention Program executive directors and interventionists, and *KidsFirst* community developers, program managers and home visitors. Fifteen planned in-person workshops will be delivered in various locations across the province from April 2019 to March 2020 for up to 90 participants per workshop, or up to 1,350 participants.

Leadership Training – A series of five in-person leadership training modules to support child care centre directors to enhance their array of leadership knowledge and skills including:

- Effective Employee Supervision
- Communication
- Coaching
- Developing High Performing Teams
- Change Management

In 2018-19, the first module, Effective Employee Supervision, was offered three times in March 2019. In total, 85 child care centre directors attended with a target of 188 over the course of the Agreement. Leading into 2019-20, the other four training modules will be offered along with a second round of the series.

Play and Exploration Grant – The *Play and Exploration Grant* was a one-time grant for licensed child care facilities as a component of Saskatchewan's Action Plan. The grant supported facilities to implement Saskatchewan's foundational early learning framework, *Play and Exploration: Early Learning Program Guide*.

In 2017-18, Saskatchewan supported 580 facilities. In 2018-19, grant funding was provided to an additional 45 licensed child care centres and 38 licensed family child care homes. A total of 663 facilities have received the *Play and Exploration Grant* to date.

The *Play and Exploration Grant* was available to child care centres and homes licensed and in operation at March 31, 2018. Family child care homes could receive up to \$600, group family child care homes up to \$900 and child care centres \$2,500 for the first 30 spaces and \$75 per space for additional spaces.

Active Play Grant – The *Active Play Grant* was a one-time grant for child care facilities as a component of Saskatchewan’s Action Plan. The intent of the Active Play Grant was to purchase equipment and materials to encourage active play in licensed child care settings.

In 2017-18, Saskatchewan supported 583 facilities. In 2018-19, grant funding was provided to an additional 45 licensed child care centres and 39 licensed family child care centres. A total of 667 facilities have received the *Active Play Grant* to date.

The *Active Play Grant* was available to child care centres and homes licensed and operational at March 31, 2018. Family child care homes could receive up to \$500, group family child care homes up to \$750 and child care centres \$1,900 for the first 30 spaces and \$60 per space for additional spaces.

2. Accessibility

Licensed Child Care Spaces – In 2018-19, Saskatchewan exceeded its target of 950 licensed child care centre spaces by allocating 1,015 spaces since 2017-18. With 597 spaces allocated in 2017-18 and an additional 418 spaces allocated in 2018-19, the province will increase the number of centre-based spaces by 1,015 by 2020.

Within the licensed home-based sector, 447 new licensed child care home spaces were opened in 2017-18 and another 350 in 2018-19, for a total of 797 new spaces across the province with a target of 1,500 over the course of the Agreement.

In 2018-19, as a part of the Agreement, Saskatchewan spent \$6.45 million on a variety of both one-time as well as periodic grants that were provided to licensed child care facilities to assist with operational expenses, encourage new start-ups and increase the accessibility of child care. As a part of becoming a licensed child care provider in Saskatchewan, the following grants are available to all eligible funded licensed child care facilities:

- **Start-up grants** – to assist with the expenses incurred in opening a licensed child care centre or family child care home (e.g. equipment, furnishings, fire inspection).
- **Space Development Capital grants** – to assist with the costs of developing, renovating or constructing new child care spaces in centres.
- **Fire, Health and Safety grants** – to assist new family child care homes, group family child care homes and teen student support homes with the costs of meeting fire, health and safety requirements, as part of the initial licensing process.
- **Nutrition grants** – to assist with the provision of well-balanced, nutritious meals and snacks for children in licensed child care homes. In 2017-18, as a part of the Agreement, the Nutrition grant maximum was increased from \$40 to \$60 per month per licensed child care space.
- **Equipment and Program grants** – to assist with the expense of purchasing children’s toys, equipment, furnishings, craft supplies and children’s activities. In 2017-18, as a part of the Agreement, the Equipment and Program grant maximum was increased from \$100 to \$150 per year per licensed child care space.

Accessibility and Building Support Funding – This funding supported the provision of infant care, inclusion of children experiencing disability and to assist centres to meet significant safety requirements in child care centres. This included changes to physical space required for the centre to include infants, physical accessibility improvements to support the inclusion of children experiencing disability and significant changes to physical space required as per the centre’s most recently completed Fire Inspection Report. In 2018-19, \$1 million was distributed to 28 child care centres based on requests received.

Early Years Family Resource Centres – 2018-19 saw the coordination, planning and initial development of seven new Early Years Family Resource Centres in the communities of The Battlefords, Meadow Lake, Moose Jaw, Nipawin, Prince Albert, Saskatoon and La Ronge. Early Years Family Resource Centres bring services to one location and provide no cost programming for all families with young children prenatal to age five. These resources help families access reliable information and allow them to participate in services like parenting programs and early learning and literacy opportunities that might be hard to find in their community. The target for opening the new centres is for fall/winter of 2019-20.

3. Inclusive

Supporting inclusive early learning and child care opportunities for young children experiencing disability is a priority for Saskatchewan. The *Saskatchewan Plan for Growth* lays out the goal that Saskatchewan will be the best place in Canada to live for persons with disabilities. This goal is affirmed in The *Saskatchewan Disability Strategy* which aims to improve programs and services for people with disabilities.

In 2018-19, under the Agreement, Saskatchewan invested \$4.4 million in inclusivity initiatives to support children who are experiencing disability through the Children Communicating, Connecting and in the Community pilot, the Early Learning Intensive Support Pilot and the Enhanced Accessibility grant.

The Children Communicating, Connecting and in the Community Pilot – provides access to early educational intervention for children who are deaf and hard of hearing to reduce communication barriers when communicating with their families, other children and within their community. Children’s development is supported through inclusive environments with trained staff and appropriate technology. The pilot was launched in fall 2018 with a program in both Regina and Saskatoon for preschool-aged children who are deaf, deaf and hard of hearing or who are connected to the deaf, deaf and hard of hearing communities. The program is based on the Ministry of Education’s early learning principles of children as competent learners, holistic development and learning and strong positive relationships. In 2018-19, 14 children were served through the program.

Early Learning Intensive Support Pilot (ELIS) – allows additional children to attend existing school division selected Prekindergarten programs. These spaces provide children with intensive needs access to the program and additional supports are put in place to ensure the needs of all students are being met.

ELIS was launched in Regina and Saskatoon at the end of the 2017-18 school year. In 2018-19 it became fully operational with 110 children enrolled and utilizing the ELIS program. By the end of 2018-19, the program was expanded to the communities of Prince Albert, Moose Jaw, Swift Current, Yorkton and North Battleford. The expansion is expected to be fully implemented in the 2019-20 school year.



Young students take part in a Prekindergarten class in Regina in November, 2018. Just one of several classes offering the ELIS pilot program.

Enhanced Accessibility Grant – issued to licensed facilities monthly to support the actual cost (up to \$2,000 per month) of the additional staff required to care for a child with particularly challenging needs and/or behaviours. Needs of the children vary and are confirmed through a referring professional. The grant supported 151 children in 2018-19.

4. Francophone Minority Language Inclusion

Saskatchewan continues to expand access to Francophone child care. In 2017-18, 30 child care spaces were allocated as Francophone among the 597 licensed child care spaces. In 2018-19, among the 418 licensed child care centre spaces allocated, 45 of the spaces were Francophone spaces allocated in Regina, Prince Albert and Vonda. Saskatchewan had a target of 65 spaces over the course of the agreement, based on consultations with the Fransaskoises parent boards and the Conseil des écoles fransaskoises, but has already exceeded the target with a total investment of 75 spaces.

In 2018-19, \$579,000 was invested in grants to support start-up costs for new Francophone child care centres, monthly overhead and operating costs and to assist with the costs of developing, renovating or constructing new child care spaces in a centre.

Saskatchewan will continue to work with the Fransaskoises community to support Francophone children in child care and early learning programs.

5. Other

Differential Monitoring – While Saskatchewan currently uses a generalized approach to licensing child care, the investment in a risk-based approach to licensing will modernize its current system and create a more strategic approach to monitoring. This will allow for a greater focus on centres that struggle with compliance and in turn, enhance the quality of programs in those centres. The province will collaborate with experts in the field of risk-based assessment so that the new system will reflect current research and best practice. This change in approach to licensing will also provide the opportunity to develop innovation and quality measures for child care in Saskatchewan in a more systemic way. This will provide a basis for better data-informed decision making within the licensed system. In 2018-19, \$161,254 was invested to initiate this new approach including collaboratively developing the overall plan, collecting and analyzing child care inspection data, creating stakeholder communications and initial review of policies and procedures.

Public Awareness – Saskatchewan is investing in initiatives that emphasize the importance of the early years, support parents in navigating programs and services as well as inform caregivers of their role in the development of children zero to six. An investment of \$193,545 in 2018-19 was focused on the initial development of resources and information to subsequently increase parent and family awareness, knowledge and navigation of the sector.

To support parent and caregivers to navigate the early learning and child care sector, Saskatchewan is working with the United Way to build a specific portal on the 211 site. The portal will serve as a one-stop shop for parents, caregivers or anyone looking for information, programming or services for children zero to six.

In 2018-19, Saskatchewan also began the development of a public awareness campaign emphasizing the importance of the early years and supporting parents and caregivers in their role in child development. The campaign will consist of multiple media options, including videos and social media engagement.

Financial Expenditures

In 2018-19, Saskatchewan expended a total of almost \$17.4 million through the Agreement to support the early learning and child care sector in the province.

Initiative	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Quality	\$ 2,494,610	\$ 2,225,558	\$ 2,550,000
<i>Play and Exploration</i>	\$ 1,400,700	\$ 153,600	
Active Play	\$ 1,093,910	\$ 121,650	
Training		\$ 98,483	
Literacy Initiatives		\$ 1,851,825	
Accessibility	\$ 4,211,585	\$ 9,535,634	\$ 6,241,000
Early Childhood Services Operating Grant		\$ 303,233	
Start-up Grants	\$ 89,776	\$ 1,063,692	
Space Development Capital Grants	\$ 3,402,000	\$ 4,932,154	
Fire, Health, Safety Grants	\$ 37,700	\$ 47,899	
Nutrition Grants	\$ 583,909	\$ 583,321	
Equipment and Program Grants - Homes	\$ 98,200	\$ 96,775	
Early Years Family Resource Centres		\$ 1,505,000	
Infrastructure		\$ 1,003,560	
Inclusive	\$ 2,192,236	\$ 4,454,420	\$ 4,811,000
Early Learning and Intensive Support pilots, Children Communicating, Connecting and in the Community pilots and Enhanced Accessibility grants	\$ 2,192,236	\$ 4,454,420	
Francophone Minority Language Inclusion	\$ 180,000	\$ 578,620	\$ 293,000
Miscellaneous	\$ 9,135	\$ 564,187	\$ 922,000
Differential Monitoring		\$ 161,254	
Public Awareness Campaign		\$ 193,545	
Administration	\$ 9,135	\$ 209,388	
Total	\$9,087,566	\$ 17,358,419	\$ 14,817,000

Results Achieved: Indicators and Targets

In 2018-19, Saskatchewan made significant progress towards our 2020 targets as displayed in the table below.

Objectives/ Programs	Outputs/ Outcomes	Indicators	Targets by 2020	Actual Results in 2018-19
High Quality	Enhance the quality of child care facility programming	Licensed family child care home providers participating in training	50 per cent or 115 of child care home providers	98 child care home providers
		Child care directors participating in training	60 per cent or 188 of child care centre directors	85 child care centre directors
	Innovation	Under development		
Accessible and Flexible	Increase access to licensed child care	Licensed child care centre spaces	Increase of 950	1,015 spaces (2017-18 - 597) (2018-19 - 418)
		Licensed group or family child care home spaces	Increase of 1,500	797 spaces (2017-18 - 447) (2018-19 - 350)
	Flexibility	Under development		
Inclusive	Increase access for minority groups	Preschool-aged children served who are experiencing disability	Increase of 220	275 preschool-aged spaces
		Licensed child care spaces that support French language minority communities	Increase of 65	75 spaces (2017-18 - 30) (2018-19 - 45)



Impact on Families

Saskatchewan continues to ensure that the allocation of child care spaces meet the following priorities in the Agreement:

- offering flexible child care arrangements;
- supporting Indigenous families, new Canadians, and/or French language minority populations; and,
- offering services in areas where children and families experience vulnerability.

In 2018-19, Saskatchewan allocated 418 child care centre spaces, with 45 of these designated for Francophone communities. The remaining 373 child care spaces were allocated to organizations who have committed to offering flexible child care arrangements, supporting indigenous families or new Canadians, and/or providing child care services for children and families experiencing vulnerability.

Examples of this in practice:

- the allocation of 14 spaces in Hope's Home, located in Saskatoon. Hope's Home offers child care services for children with complex medical needs, their siblings as well as typically developing children from the community.
- the allocation of 30 spaces in Saskatoon through the First Nations University of Canada. First Nations University of Canada is a unique Canadian institution that specializes in Indigenous knowledge.
- the allocation of 59 child care centre spaces in Prince Albert. In 2016, 27 per cent of families residing in Prince Albert were lone-parent families, 11 percentage points higher than Saskatchewan overall (16 per cent)¹. Median total income of households in Prince Albert was almost 11 per cent less than that of Saskatchewan². Finally, 42 per cent of Prince Albert's census population identifies as Aboriginal, 26 percentage points higher than Saskatchewan overall (16 per cent)³.
- the allocation of 43 total spaces to three different rural towns, each with populations under 1,500 people, according to the 2016 census; Delisle (1,038), Beauval (640), Vonda (384).

1 Statistics Canada - Census Profile, 2016

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.

Innovation

Innovative ways of delivering services is a priority for Saskatchewan. In 2018-19, Saskatchewan invested in the Early Years Family Resource Centres to improve early childhood outcomes in the province.

Early Years Family Resource Centres offer prevention-oriented programming for all families with young children prenatal to age five by bringing no cost services to one location. These resources will help families access reliable information and allow them to participate in services like parenting programs and early learning and literacy opportunities that might be hard to find in their community. By providing families with positive early learning experiences and opportunities to improve their parenting skills, family resource centres contribute to positive brain development and the building blocks necessary for children to succeed in the classroom.

Evaluation research on family resource centres shows potential savings to high-cost human service interventions such as grade repetition, special education, social welfare assistance, overweight and obesity and significant reductions in childhood vulnerability and improvements in school readiness.

Anticipated to be operating in the fall/winter 2019, Early Years Family Resource Centres are an innovative service delivery approach for families with young children because they will offer a venue to improve access to programming for harder to reach families. Centres will provide the opportunity to engage families who may not otherwise have access to high quality early learning opportunities and offer a visible space in the community for families such as newcomers to Canada, Indigenous families, families on parental leave and single parents/guardians.

Centres will also offer private child care home providers and community preschool providers information and support to enhance the quality of their early learning programs. In addition to increasing access to early learning opportunities and improving school readiness outcomes, Saskatchewan anticipates Early Years Family Resource Centres will help to address social isolation, improve parental knowledge about the elements that make up a quality early learning environments and parent and caregiver knowledge about how they can support child development in holistic ways.

The province is working with local implementation teams that include representatives from health, education, Indigenous groups, settlement agencies, municipal governments, social services, child care, libraries and community-based organizations. These teams are making decisions about centre location, staffing and how they can work together to support and enhance centre programming. They are also working to engage children and families and find out about the local context and what families need. The province has established consistent provincial guidelines and will work with sites to develop a reporting and evaluation system to guide the continuous improvement of the centres and demonstrate their positive impact on early learning and family outcomes.

In 2018-19, Saskatchewan invested \$1.5 million to develop seven new Early Years Family Resource Centres in The Battlefords, Meadow Lake, Moose Jaw, Nipawin, Prince Albert, Saskatoon and La Ronge through the Agreement.

Engagement Communication

Saskatchewan works to ensure continuous engagement communication with provincial organizations and stakeholders such as parents and those working in the early learning sectors. Meetings and collaboration with organizations such as the Saskatchewan Early Childhood Association, a non-profit, membership-based organization, occur on a regular basis. Opportunities to help shape programs by providing important feedback are provided not just to those working in the sector, such as child care directors and home child care providers, but to the diverse voices of families.



Ongoing engagement ensures Saskatchewan's Action Plan under the Agreement is responding to the many local and provincial contexts with the goal of helping all children to develop to their full potential.

For More Information

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