

Daycare delight

New spots will open up in city

BY COLLEEN COSGROVE

One by one, the number of daycare spaces in the Wheat City is on the rise.

The provincial government announced nearly \$1 million in funding Friday to expand and renovate existing facilities and create 197 new spaces at five daycare centres across the city.

The province is also investing \$86,000 in new equipment, accessibility and enhanced green space for 19 centres in Brandon.

"Manitoba has committed to making additional spaces available and continues to work aggressively

WHICH DAYCARES ARE EXPANDING?

In April 2008, the province announced its five-year, \$10-million Family Choices initiative that aims to create 6,500 spaces and 35 new child-care sites by 2013. To date 2,850 child-care spaces have been announced.

The nearly \$1 million in funding announced Friday will support the construction or renovation of five centres in Brandon and help create 197 new child-care spaces including:

- Assiniboine Early Learning Centre will expand its infant and preschool services on the Victoria Street Campus of Assiniboine Community College.
- The Brandon University Early Learning Centre will expand its infant and preschool services.
- Victoria Day Care Centre will complete a major renovation to expand services and improve its preschool program.
- Kokum's Little Friends will renovate existing space adjacent to its current facility and expand its infant and preschool programming.
- Victoria Day Care Centre will complete a major renovation to expand services and improve its preschool program.
- Brandon YMCA South will establish a fourth child-care program

to recruit and retain more child-care workers to staff these new and expanded centres," said Brandon East NDP MLA Drew Caldwell, speaking in Brandon yesterday on

behalf of Manitoba's Family Services Minister Gord Mackintosh. The YMCA's fourth daycare, Brandon YMCA South, is the first to benefit.

The daycare, located at the corner of First Street and Richmond Avenue, officially opens its doors Monday at 7 a.m.

The new daycare has space for 104 kids ranging in age from infant to five years old. Twenty-one staff, a majority of whom are graduates of Assiniboine Community College's Early Learning Education program, will work at the facility.

With six classrooms, one infant room, a music room, gymnasium and an art room, the daycare is designed like a school for "even littler people," YMCA CEO Lon Cullen joked during a tour of the facility.

"There is a real shortage of services out there in the community and we wanted to look for a larger space that we could develop," Cullen said. "We have tremendous waiting lists in all facilities in Brandon so this is just one way to help ease that burden."

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» Victoria Day Care Centre needed renovations

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"We'd put them away and were waiting until we heard that the application went through before we went any further," Thiessen said.

The BUELC currently provides child care for pre-school and school-aged kids up to age 10.

With funding secured, plans will move forward on the construction of a new facility that will be adjacent to its current location.

The additional space will

allow the BUELC to expand its services to include care for infants and toddlers.

Meanwhile, program director with Child and Family Services Laurie Jackson says the funding means a viable future for the agency's daycare, Victoria Day Care Centre.

"The facility was badly in need of major renovations ... without these renovations we were really looking at how much longer we could continue," Jackson said.

VDCC applied for

\$100,000 in funding that will help pay for a complete overhaul of the aging building.

The funding also means the

daycare can increase its spaces from 44 children ages two to eight to 48 children.

Renovations are expected to start in June after the

facility's preschool has closed for the summer.

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