March 26, 2014

The Honourable Kevin Chief  
Minister of Children and Youth Opportunities  
Room 314 Legislative Building  
450 Broadway  
Winnipeg, MB R3C 0V8

Dear Minister Chief,

On behalf of the University of Manitoba, I would like to express our appreciation for the provincial government’s $5.5 million commitment to child care in the 2014 Budget: Steady Growth Good Jobs. As you are well aware, there is a severe shortage of child care spaces in our Province which is negatively affecting the ability of Manitobans to enter the workforce and/or pursue postsecondary education. This injection of funds should help to alleviate the pressure on the child care system and provide more options for parents.

The University of Manitoba’s multi-sectorial Childcare Working Group is presently assessing viable options to enhance access to licensed child care for students, faculty and staff. Current demand for child care spaces on our campuses is extremely high with 128 child care spaces available in three out of five campuses and a waiting list of over 700. Increased funding to support child care spaces and to augment staff salaries will go a long way in creating sustainable, predictable child care for our students, faculty, staff and our community.

Enhancing child care at our campuses will directly contribute to a number of our strategic priorities such as delivering an exceptional student experience, fostering Indigenous achievement and promoting the University of Manitoba as an outstanding employer. In regards to student experience, there is an increasing demand for child care as the demographics of today’s student is older, especially graduate students, and our Indigenous student population tends to be older, many with young families. We estimate that approximately 1500 of our faculty and staff will require child care.
One of the main impediments for new child care spots is physical space. However, based on the University of Manitoba’s current space audit, we will be able to free up physical space to expand child care on campus with some minimal retrofits. The University of Manitoba is also focused on the Visionary (re)Generation project for the former Southwood Golf Course where there are opportunities for new child care facilities to service that community.

Once again, I thank you for the government’s commitment to enhancing child care in Manitoba and look forward to reviewing the funding details in the coming weeks. Our Office of Government and Community Engagement would be pleased to arrange a meeting between department officials and members of the Childcare Working Group to discuss child care options at the University of Manitoba.

Sincerely,

David T. Barnard, Ph.D.
President and Vice-Chancellor

c.c. Honourable Kerri Irvin-Ross – Minister of Family Services
✓c.c. Susan Gottheil, Vice-Provost (Students), University of Manitoba
c.c. Greg Juliano, Associate Vice-President (Human Resources), Director & General Counsel (Office of Fair Practices & Legal Affairs), University of Manitoba