



CHILDCARE MANITOBA

Why are parents such a low priority?

Winnipeg, April 22, 2003: In response to today's provincial budget, the Child Care Coalition of Manitoba remains perplexed why the provincial government has done so little to help working parents with childcare.

Today's budget increase of \$6 million is much-needed, and will help the overall childcare system. The new spending is targeted to existing childcare centres and programs, including long-overdue improvements to the salaries of early childhood educators.

"But as a fee-paying parent," says Susan Prentice, "I can't see the difference between yesterday and today." Among the unchanged features of the childcare system:

- high fees and no reduction in the cost of childcare;
- stringent eligibility criteria for a fee subsidy for low-income parents;
- maintenance of the \$2.40/day per child surcharged levied against most low-income parents;
- long waiting lists;
- few programs with extended hours of operation for parents who work irregular hours.

Manitoba has about 24,000 licensed childcare spaces. In the province, there are approximately 128,000 children under the age of 12 with working mothers, and nearly 186,000 young children in the total population.

Today's budget announcement contains no news of growth or expansion of the childcare system, something parents who work/study badly need. This oversight is all the more puzzling because Manitoba has just entered Year 2 of a Five Year Plan for childcare.

"Today's announcement will do a lot to help current programs and staff," says Prentice, "which is great. But we are still waiting for action that really helps working parents to find and afford high quality care."

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For more information:

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