



Child Care Coalition of Manitoba

For Immediate Release

International Women's Day, March 8 2002

Where is the action on childcare?

Winnipeg, March 6, 2002: On International Women's Day 2002, on the theme: women and work, the Child Care Coalition of Manitoba asks *where is the action on childcare?*

One year ago, on International Women's Day 2001, the Child Care Coalition of Manitoba presented the Hons. Diane McGifford and Tim Sale with a copy of our Blueprint for Action: A Five Year Plan for Manitoba Child Care Policy Redesign. Many other Manitobans participated in a public consultation on childcare. Overall, between February and May 2001, over 24,000 Manitobans told the provincial government that they wanted a new 'vision' for childcare.

Today, the fundamentals of the Manitoba childcare system remain unchanged. In a province with almost 200,000 children under the age of 12 years, there are fewer than 24,000 regulated childcare spaces in centres and licensed family childcare homes. Quality childcare in a licensed setting remains inaccessible for the vast majority of children. Parents who want to use childcare must pay fees which are often more than family mortgages, and always more than university tuition. Parents must be well under the 'poverty line' to qualify for a full subsidy, and there are not enough subsidies for every family who qualifies. Families and children who need evening care, extended hours or weekend care find themselves virtually left out. Most licensed spaces are for preschool children aged 2 - 5 years; and other age groups (like infants and school-age children) have less access. There is little care for families in rural, remote and northern regions. Parents and children are not the only ones disadvantaged in the current system. Early childhood educators are still paid extremely low wages, and recruitment and retention problems make it hard for centres to find and keep trained staff, or keep morale high.

There is a way to fix the childcare crisis. The solution, as our Coalition has explained, is policy redesign. In a publicly-funded system, new policy principles can ensure all children have access to the care they want or need. Researchers have shown that universal childcare can pay for itself, since \$2 of social benefits flow from every \$1 invested in childcare. As the Vancouver Board of Trade has said, the payback from early childhood care is "spectacular."

Where is the action on childcare? How will this government respond to the 24,000 Manitobans who have asked for a new vision? In the upcoming provincial budget, will we see steps toward a universal childcare system

-30-

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