



Fast

FACTS

CANADIAN CENTRE FOR POLICY ALTERNATIVES - MANITOBA

May 13, 2015

Springing to Action on Child Care

Numerous studies have demonstrated that quality child care has a positive correlation with improved childhood outcomes, notably higher social and cognitive scores upon school entry, especially with children living in poverty. On Wednesday May 13th child care advocates from across Canada are joining together to call for a universally accessible, quality and comprehensive child care system. This system would benefit all children, especially the most vulnerable to poverty and social exclusion.

Manitobans continue to struggle with higher than average poverty rates in spite of living in one of the country's most financially stable provinces. Manitoba's child poverty rate has persisted above the national average since 1990, apart from 2008 and 2009. It has been on a downward trend over the past couple of decades, from a high of 24.2% in 1991 decreasing to 11.3% in 2011 for the LICO-AT (low income cut off - after tax).

We are often reminded that specific groups are more vulnerable to living in poverty, including lone female parents, newcomers, families with disabilities and those of Aboriginal descent. These particular families are faced with more financial hardships and higher unemployment rates. While there are various barriers to employment, one of the most significant for families is a lack of affordable child care. Being either unable to find a child care space or unable to pay the fees leaves parents with little capacity to find a job, much less establish a long-term career.

The period where a parent is out of the labour force is not only consequential on immediate family revenue, it is further exacerbated as work experience, seniority and pension amounts are not accumulated. Consider cost of living increases, most notably housing costs, with less revenue, and it's a recipe for poverty and household debt. The provincial government has identified the availability of licensed child care as an important indicator for targeting poverty in its report for All Aboard: Manitoba's Poverty Reduction and Social Inclusion Strategy (2013).

The subsidized early learning and care model Québec launched in 1997 and continues to operate, providing almost 380,000 regulated spaces in 2012. Alongside the enactment of a law for poverty reduction and a poverty reduction plan, Québec's child poverty rate was nearly halved and is among the lowest in the country.

Over 100 organizations endorsed The View from Here 2015: Manitobans Call for a Renewed Poverty Reduction Plan, calling for the province to invest in early learning and child care to increase the coverage rate. The plan specifies the need for 12,000 new licensed spaces as the official provincial wait list sits at over 12 000 children. In order to have that kind of access, there needs to be trained early childhood educators. This workforce needs to be recruited and retained in the field in order to secure a quality child care system robust enough to respond to the current need and

there is an alternative.

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continue to expand.

Another factor to consider as we examine this situation is that Manitoba has seen an increase in immigration—some 16,000 newcomers made our province their home last year. This is a record number for current times. We know that many are arriving with children and will also require spaces either to gain employment or to upgrade their studies. Another demographic trend to note in Manitoba is the median age of the Aboriginal population which is roughly half of that of non-aboriginal residents, according to the most recent national household survey and second youngest throughout Canada. These population characteristics require a solid infrastructure that can sustain families and their child care needs.

These early experiences help shape future outcomes and also improve quality of life for children and their families in the present. When we consider its socioeconomic impact as well as developmental benefits, early childhood education and care could well be the greatest equalizer of all.

The Province of Manitoba has taken significant steps to increase the number of funded child care spaces across the province and improve training and wages for child care workers. The province envisions a universally accessible child care system. They need a willing federal partner to make this happen. The current federal government increased the Canada Child Tax Benefit, which does nothing to build the universal child care system Canadians need.

The Child Care Coalition of Manitoba invites you to join us Wednesday May 13th at noon at the Legislative Building to call on the federal government to build a national child care plan during the May 11 – 15th Week of Action for Child Care in Canada. High quality childcare is good for children, parents, women, employers and all Manitobans.

More information <https://www.facebook.com/events/1585606918386943/> or votechildcare.ca

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