

We can do better for kids, Dryden admits [CA] ^[1]

New minister talks to experts. Focuses on care, early education

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EXCERPTS

Minister of social development Ken Dryden says the federal government can do more to help disadvantaged children.

"You do important work, and we need to help you do that work even better," he told a conference of the Child Welfare League of Canada yesterday, his first speech as federal minister.

"As with child care and early childhood education, we want to do better because we can do better," he said, referring to Prime Minister Paul Martin's election promise of \$5 billion over five years to create 250,000 new child-care spaces.

Dryden, rookie MP for York Centre, has been charged with implementing that program, one that signals a more activist agenda than the Liberals have delivered in the past (the party has been promising a national child-care program since 1993).

Canada needs to help the disadvantaged because "no matter how stable our economy, no matter how secure our institutions, no matter how strong our economies, no matter as a people how healthy we are, things can go wrong."

Dryden, Ontario's youth commissioner between 1984 and 1986, has written four books, including *In School*, which documents the experience of high school.

- reprinted from the Toronto Star

Region: Canada ^[2]

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