

Dryden in charge of what is usually women's domain [CA]^[1]

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EXCERPTS

Child-oriented ministry: 'It's about time a man got this job,' says B.C. children's minister.

In his new role as Minister of Social Development in charge of the Liberal government's national daycare agenda, Ken Dryden, recently the president of the Toronto Maple Leafs, will find himself almost entirely in the company of women.

Social services portfolios usually get tossed at junior female ministers, who spend their days making low-profile announcements about bits of new funding for daycare centres or seniors' programs. Their budgets are often the first to get slashed during times of cutbacks.

But turning the former NHL star goalie into the most famous child-care advocate in the country suggests Paul Martin, the Prime Minister, wants to give some celebrity appeal to what is usually considered a low-profile women's issue.

That earned Mr. Martin applause from the female-dominated world of early childhood development, where advocates know the appointment will make it difficult for Mr. Martin to break his promise of \$5-billion for the provinces, as has been the habit of past Liberal governments.

"I'm very excited," said Sandra Griffin, executive director of the Canadian Child Care Federation. "It feels like, my gosh, there may be some light here."

New Brunswick is the only province with a man heading a children-oriented ministry, Tony Huntjens, Minister of Family and Community Services, while the Premier, Bernard Lord, heads a youth commission. Nova Scotia has only one female in its 15-member Cabinet, Carolyn Bolivar-Getson, Minister of Human Resources. Nova Scotia also does not have a families ministry but does have a man, David Morse, running Community Services.

A man heads Quebec's Ministry of Employment, Social Solidarity and Family Welfare, but junior minister Carole Theberge runs the Family Welfare department, including Quebec's massive \$7-a-day daycare program.

Otherwise, all children's, youth, family and community portfolios in the provinces are headed by women.

"It's about time a man got this job," said Christy Clark, British Columbia's Minister of Children and Family Development, as well as the province's Deputy Premier.

"This gives cultural recognition to the fact that daycare is a family issue, not a just a women's issue. That's an incredibly important step forward."

(B.C. is the only province that assigns a junior minister to early childhood development, a post currently held by Linda Reid.)

Toronto's Tony Ianno will work under Mr. Dryden as Minister of State for Families and Caregivers, a ministry previously called Children and Youth and headed by Ethel Blondin-Andrew.

Ontario's Minister of Children and Youth Services, Marie Bountrogianni, who also heads the province's Immigration Ministry, says Mr. Dryden is extremely qualified for the job.

Following his job as goalie for the Montreal Canadiens, he wrote a book about high school classrooms, was the Ontario Youth Commissioner from 1984 to 1986, created a scholarship fund for students from foster homes to pursue post-secondary education and has been a past key-note speaker for the Canadian Child Care Federation.

"A man can take strong leadership," said Dr. Bountrogianni. "We are more interested that a strong person that knows the issues has been put in charge."

The Ontario Minister says she is so pleased with Mr. Dryden's appointment, she is planning to go to Ottawa with roses and champagne to congratulate him.

- reprinted from the National Post

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