

Report doesn't do justice to N.B.'s day cares [CA-NB]^[1]

Opinion

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EXCERPTS Tony Huntjens, Minister of Family and Community Services, Guest Commentaries The point I see from this report card is that it shows how the day-care system in New Brunswick suffered from years of lack of investment in the previous decade. In 1998 when the "You Bet I Care" national day care study was done, child-care facilities received no direct financial support from government for the critical role they play in our children's well-being. Things have radically changed over the last few years. The report card raised two important issues that needed to be addressed in New Brunswick as in other provinces in Canada: working conditions and training. Since 2001 this government has directly invested \$12 million in our child-care facilities. This money has been used to train child-care workers and improve their salary and working conditions. In addition, government has provided \$6.3 million a year in the Day Care Assistance Program to provide subsidies to parents in need. This is a total of \$30.9 million invested in child care in the past three years. At the same time, we are focusing on increasing the number of trained staff in New Brunswick child-care facilities. In April 2003, the province implemented new training standards - one in four staff or the owner/operator must now have a diploma in early childhood education. At the request of the day care sector, facilities that did not meet the standards were given three years to do so, and their staffs were offered the opportunity to access distance education, with 80 per cent of their tuition subsidized. As well, we are also providing funding to individual child-care facilities to help with ongoing professional development of all staff. Quality, accessible, affordable child care is a priority of the Province of New Brunswick. Fully half of New Brunswick's investments under its Early Childhood Development Agenda benefit child care facilities directly; in 2004-2005, New Brunswick will invest a record \$5.7 million in initiatives that promote quality child care. This is in addition to the \$6.3 million the government already invests in child care subsidies. Moreover, the government plans to augment significantly its Early Learning and Child Care investments in 2004-2005, and these details will be unveiled in few weeks with the presentation of my department's Main Estimates. - reprinted from New Brunswick Telegraph Journal

Region: New Brunswick ^[2]

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