

New minister wants Canada to be 'crazy about its kids' [CA] ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

Canada's new social development minister says her mission is to do nationally what her home province has already accomplished: Become known as a place that's "crazy about its kids."

And Liza Frulla appears undaunted by the warnings of some cabinet colleagues that money is extremely tight, or that Prime Minister Paul Martin says the word "cities" a whole lot more often than "children" when he talks about his spending priorities.

"It's easy to sell kids," Frulla insisted this week in one of her first interviews since being elevated from the backbench before Christmas. "All around me, when I talk about kids, I know that all the other ministers are either parents or they are uncles or aunts, or they're grandfathers and all the MPs, they're all parents, and they all relate to that."

Frulla, who represents a Montreal riding, said the Quebec government has clearly made children a "super priority" with its \$5-a-day day-care program and other family policies.

"It's a super priority'- you have to get the government saying that. That's an objective in itself. Then, if it's a super priority ... you have to make a commitment. Then, once the government makes a commitment, then the money follows."

Frulla's vision does not include a national day-care program, which she argues would intrude on provincial jurisdiction.

Instead, she speaks in far broader terms, of "social policies that are oriented towards kids." She wants to ensure that children are considered in all the government's decision-making, be it in health, international development or finance. As well, Frulla argued governments in Canada could do a better job of learning from each other's experiences in areas such as child care.

Her department is brand-new- carved out of the massive and scandal-plagued Human Resources Development Canada. The old HRDC was split, with Toronto MP Joe Volpe becoming minister of human resources and skills development and Frulla taking on social development issues.

She's responsible for children and families, disability issues, seniors, volunteerism and the federal offices that provide services such as employment insurance, although EI falls under Volpe.

- reprinted from Toronto Star

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