

Let's get moving on child care [CA-NB]^[1]

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See text below.

EXCERPTS

It's no secret that Canada's child-care system pales in comparison to what's in place in many other countries around the world, particularly European nations. And, it's no longer any secret that among Canadian provinces, the New Brunswick government is dead-last in child-care spending.

That doesn't sit well with many families, especially those with young children and both parents in the workforce, or for the legion of unsung heroes who sacrifice so much to provide a decent life for their offspring - the single moms.

Many will view the provincial government's latest response to day-care and child-care initiatives as weak. Some will see it as a backward step. Family and Community Services Minister Joan MacAlpine has given no indication her government has the appetite to get this province up to speed with the rest of Canada.

To do that, the minister has a long journey ahead of her, and perhaps she is not up to the challenge. A University of Toronto report has revealed that the province spends \$1,066 per regulated child-care space - a third of the national rate. By any standards, that's woeful.

Ms. MacAlpine's department budgeted \$6.4 million on its day-care subsidy program for 2003-04, shaving \$1.1 million from the previous year's funding. With new money made available in federal Finance Minister John Manley's budget this week - \$12 million over five years - the minister appears unwilling to commit to matching funds for child-care initiatives.

Is there no merit in providing to the national standard for our families?

This much is certain: it's counterproductive to families and the economy to lessen day-care access in New Brunswick. It's also a concern that the province would be reticent about piloting an initiative that has the potential to get more women into the workforce.

Recent census numbers have clearly pointed out that our population is greying and that our workforce is shrinking. One of the plausible solutions is making the workforce more attractive to women. Does this government not see how investing more in child care might help our workforce's demographic challenges?

This government also talks about bright young minds in its prosperity plan. Isn't child-care one of the first things skilled professionals with young families inquire about? Often, they are not as concerned with funding as they are with ensuring the community they're moving into has adequate spaces in a regulated setting.

From top to bottom, working families requiring child care deserve some vision, if not more help, when Ms. MacAlpine offers her department's budget estimates.

- reprinted from The New Brunswick Telegraph Journal

Region: New Brunswick^[2]

Tags: demand^[3]

availability^[4]

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