

Manitoba expands child care capacity ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

Seven new day care centres are opening in Winnipeg, while a further nine are being expanded as part of the provincial government's plan to create new child care spaces.

The government released details of its plan yesterday to spend \$2.35 million building new day cares and expanding existing ones to boost the child care system's capacity in Winnipeg.

New day cares will open at Concordia Hospital and at the University of Manitoba's Inner Circle social work training centre, among other places, while several other existing centres in the city will receive funding to expand.

The projects are part of a 12-point child care plan released by the family services department in April 2008. The most significant aspects of that five-year plan were pledges to fund 6,500 more day care spaces and 1,000 more nursery school spaces; build more physical space within the system; produce an automated, central wait list for parents looking to get their kids into care; establish a pension plan for child care workers; and ensure the lowest average fees outside of Quebec.

...

"All the demand isn't entirely satisfied but it's a major commitment," he said.

Selinger also noted more than 2,800 of the 6,500 newly funded spots have been added so far.

Bonnie Mitchelson, the Tory family services critic, said she's happy to see many of the changes contained in the plan, but feels the plan ignores the private side of the child care industry.

"I'm not saying we shouldn't add fund more spaces and create more spaces, but there is a whole other piece of the puzzle that isn't being addressed," she said. "There are many parents who have chosen child care outside of the funded system."

Mitchelson said there is a concern that while some of the spots are genuinely new, others are simply spots that already existed in the private system and are now being funded publicly, which doesn't help improve capacity.

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