

# Proceedings from the Child Care for a Change! conference<sup>[1]</sup>

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*Links to conference details no longer available*

Overview of the conference: It was dubbed as three days of discussion, debate and the latest developments on child care policy. The Child Care for a Change conference which took place in Winnipeg, November 12th to 14th, 2004 turned out to be all that & much more. From the moment you entered the Winnipeg Convention Centre you could feel the energy and enthusiasm of the 650 participants from across the country. And it was contagious. A focal point of the delegates' enthusiasm was a giant 30-foot-long banner emblazoned with the conference logo and an edict to "Make Your Mark for Child Care." Over the course of the three-day conference, the banner was covered with hundreds of finger-painted handprints, footprints, signatures and messages from conference delegates. The paint stations were staffed throughout the conference by second-year students in Early Childhood Education from nearby Red River College. Social Development Minister Ken Dryden and Manitoba Premier Gary Doer were among the conference participants who dabbled in finger paints to leave their mark for child care. A collection of photographs from across Canada was also featured in the main concourse area. Photos in the gallery illustrated what quality child care means to Canadians and included the winning entries in the CCSD's photo contest on this theme. The winning photographs were also featured in a special issue of the Council's Perception magazine. The conference opened with speeches by Social Development Minister Ken Dryden and Manitoba Premier Gary Doer, and activities in the plenary room were non-stop for the rest of the weekend. Highlights and details are available in the Conference Proceedings. The second day of the conference offered 34 workshop sessions covering a comprehensive range of topics on everything from the latest research, to Aboriginal issues, to challenges in rural communities. Participants identified needs and approaches that could move politics and policies forward. The final day of the conference was highlighted by a two-hour Town Hall session moderated by CBC journalist Mark Kelley. Audience participation was heartfelt and intelligent, and showed the passion and commitment to child care that had been evident throughout the conference. The discussions included an announcement by some child care advocates of a Building Blocks campaign to lobby for political action. The final word from this session went to Winnipeg grandfather and educator, Strini Reddy, who quoted a poem by Nobel Prize-winning Chilean poet, Gabriela Mistral: We are guilty of many errors and many faults But the worst crime is abandoning the children Neglecting the very fountain of life Many of the things we need can wait The child cannot Right now is the time his bones are being formed His blood is being made and his senses are being developed To him we cannot say "Tomorrow" His name is "Today" The conference concluded with an inspiring speech from an impassioned champion of child care, former Deputy Executive Director of UNICEF, Stephen Lewis.

**Related link:** Main conference website<sup>[2]</sup>

**Region:** Canada<sup>[3]</sup>

Manitoba<sup>[4]</sup>

**Tags:** advocacy<sup>[5]</sup>

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