

Manitobans urged to 'vote child care' in federal election^[1]

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EXCERPTS

Manitoba child care advocates want voters to think close to home when they decide which party to support in the federal election on Oct. 19.

Families' struggles to find decent, affordable child care should be an election issue, Vote Child Care organizers say.

"We would like Manitobans to be sure that when they go cast their vote in October they know where their candidates stand on this issue," said Susan Prentice, a member of the steering committee of the Child Care Coalition of Manitoba. It serves as the Manitoba chapter for the Canadian Child Care Advocacy Association, which is behind Vote Child Care.

Vote Child Care advocates for federal funding to support affordable, high-quality daycare across Canada.

The Manitoba coalition plans to raise child care as an issue with candidates at debates and town halls, Prentice said, to see exactly where they stand on federal funding for universal child care.

"By thinking of child care we're hoping to make sure there's a more informed vote when it comes to gender equality questions ... and when it comes to a vision of what kind of Canada we want to live in," Prentice said.

Advocates with Vote Child Care spoke to people at Winnipeg's ManyFest last week and on Sunday organized a "grandparents rally" to show the dependence parents place on elders for child care.

"It often falls to grandparents to take care of their grandchildren so that their daughters and sons can work," Prentice said.

Thelma Randall, who runs West Broadway's Cornish Child Care Centre, said her organization is licensed for 37 preschoolers and eight infants, but more than 500 children are on the centre's waiting list.

"That's how many people are trying to figure out what to do with child care. ... On that list, there are 50 children that are not even born yet," she said.

"I have mothers tell me they are pregnant before they tell their own mothers. ... They are so afraid they won't have child care."

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