

# Paying the price of poor child care <sup>[1]</sup>

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## AVAILABILITY

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## EXCERPTS

The Selinger government announced the opening of a new child-care centre in south Winnipeg this week, including spaces for 64 children.

Unfortunately it won't even make a dent in Manitoba's growing child-care waiting list, which topped 12,000 this year.

The new facility, located at Highbury School in South St. Vital, will accommodate 48 pre-school children and 16 infants. The cost of the centre was \$2.2 million.

As part of the announcement, Family Services Minister Kerri Irvin-Ross said the NDP government is "moving forward" towards the creation of a universal child-care system in Manitoba, repeating a pledge her boss Premier Greg Selinger made last year.

Government won't say what they mean by a "universal child-care system" or when they expect to achieve their goal. If a universal system means that every family who needs a child care spot can get one, regardless of income, the NDP is eons away from reaching its objective. In fact, they're further away from reaching their goal today than they were last year when they announced it.

That's because no matter how much money the NDP dumps into the child-care system, the waiting list keeps getting longer. Government has added thousands of child-care spots to the system over the past decade. But the tightly controlled government model, which includes price controls that aren't related to ability to pay, isn't keeping up with demand. Not even close. And families with parents looking to get into the workforce are suffering as a result.

It's not good enough for government to tell us how many more child-care spots they've created and how much more money they're spending on government-run child care if they're not getting favourable results. It doesn't matter how many spots they've created if people who need child care can't get it. A growing waiting list means the system isn't working.

Yet the NDP just keeps doing the same thing over and over again, dumping more money into a failed approach.

It's obvious to us the system needs some fresh ideas, including harnessing greater resources and participation from the private sector. Manitoba needs a child-care system that can provide affordable service to low-income families. But it also has to meet the growing demand for all income groups.

Right now, it's not doing that and families are paying the price. Manitoba's child care system desperately needs an overhaul.

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