

Notes from the Provincial Council of Women of Manitoba's (PCWM) Semi Annual Meeting November 17th. *Early Learning and Child Care in Manitoba: Challenges and Services*

- Maxine Balbon, President of Provincial Council, provided an introduction of the program, and PCWM. Welcome to participants. Introduction of Lesley Hughes, Emcee (see program.)
- Lesley Hughes – welcome to the “Faithful”. Referred to Dr. Fraser Mustard and his recent inspirational speaking to Canadian Club. A wonderful Emcee for the day!
- Kathy Reid (Director, Manitoba Child Care Program, Department of Family Services and Housing Province of Manitoba) – History with the Child Care program in Manitoba

For some, may be repetitive. Early learning and child care is important for the Manitoba Government. Supports for families. As important as elemental, secondary and post secondary schooling. 1909 first day care on Stella Ave. was founded. Early child care was staffed by nurses, and teachers, and many volunteers. Volunteers till keep system going. 1974 program introduced – studies recommended licensing – up to then, different funding (LIP, LEAP etc) Child Day Care Program introduced in 1974 trying to find groups that wanted funding. 1500 spaces. First province to sign agreement with Feds. Covered 50% under CAP.

1980 province introduced tax reform – raising fees and other initiatives. Consultation across province. Quality the same for training early child hood workers. Supports for children with disabilities. Requirement for staff to have qualification. Grandparented in those already working in child care. Standards and qualifications upgraded. 1/3 to 2/3rd of staff to meet training requirements. In 2000 Unit Funding model – realized not equitable. Made of parent fees and grants. Child Care regulatory review committee. Regulations were fine, adjustments. Certain number of staff/children ratio. More equitable – every child can generate the same amount of revenue. Child Care On Line program – first, assists families applying for fee subsidy. Simplify system as much as possible. Licenses on line can view license on line. Information of all the people working in child care.

2002 – 2007 5 year plan- came from work with the community – put recommendations forward – not just year to year. Advanced 3 elements – improving affordability, accessibility, quality – all goals exceeded – First province to sign bi lateral agreement – did put initiatives in place. Continued movement toward quality. Improving training requirements. April 2006 – all family child care providers, and assistants needed to complete at least 40 hours of training. More training – 2007 – Supports for people getting trained. Shortage of early child hood educators – realized reasons for it – paying 1st year tuition – worked with colleges in such a manner that community members can attend. Program can hire substitute. Recruit Back grant for people to return to work. Community Child Care Act – came into force in 80's not been changed much over the years. Defines

child care settings, comprehensive standards, governance etc. Contributes to development of children, 5 types of CC in Manitoba – full time infant, nursery schools, school aged programs, family child care homes, group child care homes. Monitoring homes. Licensing – 1984 (prior public health) Subsidy if low income. Eligible – non profit and parent elected board. Minimum 5 member board. Still rely on volunteers. Have records of everyone working in Child Care.

1500 spaces when began 27,000 spaces now. Short spaces as well. 12 weeks to 12 years of age are included. Integrating special needs children. Nursery school program expanded. Nursery school subsidy. Community based program. Affordability – adjust income levels. Fees second lowest in country. High if paying full cost of child care. Even if fully subsidized, still have to pay \$2.00/day. Training supports – shortage of ECEs. Promise of 10% and actually 15% increase. Internationally qualified program in place – 39 accepted. Supported colleges – expand program, and address people where they're at. Quality – Early Learning and Capital Fund – boards doing fund raising – trying to find resources outside of the program. 5.6 million allocated. 163 facilities approved. Encouraging going beyond licensing. Environmental Rating Scale – licensing staff work with programs – set some goals to move beyond where they're at. Volunteers – difficult for some areas to have volunteers – get into planning mode so work in areas that need assistance.

Minister – announced – new multi year plan. Under development – don't know when announced – 2500 more spaces in 08-09 more funds for training and more for wages.

- Jamie Koshyk- (Early Childhood Education program at Red River College) see program.

Importance of early learning for children. Touch on 3 topics. Brain development, experiences, and nurturing.

Development rapid – brain wired to learn. Brains developing even before birth. Reading a familiar passage for example – studies that children learn pre birth. Growth and development after first 3 years important too. Language in the home - children from poor homes not same language development – Amount of experience. – in professional category hearing a million words, not same for the poor homes. Frequency matters, variety and richness of environment. No matter what, home environment important. Everyday physical environment can have an impact – Nurturing – impacts brain development – life long implications. Secure attachment provides the foundation. Early Learning – what are the environments like? All factors offering quality care. Genetic potential – not pressuring to learn earlier. Safeguard children's right to play. Valuing childhood. Freedom to play.

- Her Honour, Lenore Bersheid.

Extensive work on Autism and FAS.

Experiene with selling garbage foods in school in 1986. Proud to be a Manitoban. Child Care one of the reasons. Services with neuro development disabilities. Committee – to annoy people on issues. Kids in public school – neuro developmental difficulties – environment – in schools. Now paying attention to what happens to them when no longer children. Getting into difficulties with the law. No place judge can call for an assessment. Centre for adult assessment, focus on IQ. Capacity and culpability.

Panel Discussion

- Pat Wege – Moderator

Involved in child care since 1976

Frontline worker

Executive Director of MCCA

Manitoba cannot go on without quality child care. Proud of the current system. Voices of community supporters, such as PCWM, have an impact.

National Children's Day – "I have the right to be active" theme of the Nov. 20/07 celebration.

- Susan Prentice –Associate Professor, Department of Sociology at the University of Manitoba; Research with the Child Care Coalition of Manitoba (CAM)

Earlier this year, CAM document child care services across Manitoba. Produced with Status of Women funding – no longer possible to produce this kind of research.

Rural and northern child care – new research, old trends.

Rural municipalities going to vote on a resolution to provide more capital and operating grants to local child care. Increase pool of rural child care educators in local communities. Every 1 dollar creates \$1.58 local economic opportunity. Child care creates economic opportunity in local communities.

Northern child care services (Thompson)

Manitoba Aboriginal pop: youthful, higher than average fertility rate, 1 in 4 children are aboriginal. 1/3 persons report aboriginal identity in Thompson.

More than 70% youth living on reserve haven't completed high school.

Legacy of colonialism and residential schooling.

Thomspon region – highest rate (in MB) of single led families (both men (6%) and women.

Problems with addictions, poverty, health care.

Stimulating early child hood care and learning goes a long way towards building healthier families, communities.

Aboriginal Children have poor access to child care services. Number of services have been dropping.

More names on waiting lists than kids in child care.

Rural child care – Manitoba is a rural province. Agriculture is largest industry. Child care is badly needed in rural areas. Quality of life and competitiveness is dependent on having the services they require. Rural depopulation is a real problem. # of school children dropped by 25%. Longer worker hours. Farming is a workplace where children are present, farm children are at greater risk than non-farm children. Accidents from being extra riders on farm equipment. Higher than average fatality rates for farm children.

Keystone Agriculture Producers have linked farm safety and child care needs.

Most child care spaces are in Dauphin. Huge access problems – due to transportation. While school system provides transportation, child care services do not.

PCWM, other orgs must fight for child care across the province. See that the AMM motion gets passed.

- Debra Mayer, Executive Director for SpecialLink, the National Centre for Child Care Inclusion.

Recognition of the role of Muriel Smith in establishing child care services in Manitoba.

Children with disabilities and special needs in the child care services.

There are several factors that contribute to problems:

!0% require special support – more training, parental supports needed.

Children with disabilities are frequently turned down for child care because system doesn't have the resources to meet their needs - trained staff, occupational therapists.

CND does not have legislative framework to ensure that services meet the needs of children with disabilities.

Inclusive environments for children with disabilities require workforces with trained staff – graduating students don't feel well prepared to meet the needs.

Most ECEs in Manitoba feel that children have the rights towards these services – right-based approach to child care services.

ECE should work with parents and children to establish service delivery plans.

When this happens, outcomes are spectacular – results for children and communities – children getting along better,

Specialink – advocates for FPT agreement to advance the full inclusion of children with disabilities. Bill C303 – advise Mr. Harper to make a financial commitment to create more places for children in system.

More spaces and institutions must be truly accessible. To accommodate access for children with disabilities, spaces must be adequately budgeted for.

Must make sure that the resources needed by children are available where ever children live. Centre staff should get the support they need to welcome all children. We cannot claim to have a well-functioning system if it is not inclusive.

- Gail Watson – School Trustee; Women and Poverty Project with Women’s Health Clinic – two aspects of presentation - early learning and child care for families living on low wages 2) how school division can support early learning.

Early learning opportunities for families living on low incomes – systems at no-cost or low-cost are critical opportunities must be close to home because of transportation.

Subsidies for nursery schools have been helpful.

Quality child care – women coming from reserves are especially at risk – low education levels, low literacy levels, long pathway of education ahead for these women.

Program at Taking Charge! – single moms are eligible for training at this facility. Daycare at this facility is a critical reason that they choose this facility – because the facility offers quality child care. Women do not become involved in child care unless they can trust that their children are getting good care. Women require transportation for their children. We need to look at all the needs to participate in child care and account for them in the system because if the support services are not holistic, it can derail a woman’s education plans, etc.

What can school divisions do to help – must realize that child care and early learning is really important. School divisions have come along way – used to believe that their work started at age 5. School divisions should make space for child care services in their schools – at low cost.

What the province is doing:

Offer space when it’s available for parents to gather with children for pre-school and child care activities. Take advantage of the resources that exist. Parent child drop-ins.

When schools are closed – 1st priority goes to non-profit organizations. When new schools are built, community has the opportunity to influence whether there is a need for child care.

School system no longer consider child care programs as open spaces within schools.

- Christine Alongi – Parent, User of the Child Care System.

Jean Carlo – entitled to 6 month maternity leave. Younger son – entitled to 1 year maternity leave.

When first son was two months old, started search for child care. Figured out what she needed from child care – but this didn't matter. She had to take what she could get. No options. Too challenging to have an infant in a group of toddlers – didn't have a place to take her child. Infant child care is not offered in all locations. When he went over to the toddler room, he started having trouble – high turnover rate was making it difficult for the children. Turned their own home into a child care space until they could find a new space for their son to go.

Second son, started looking for child care when she was pregnant. Became almost like a fulltime job – looking for spaces for her child. Ran in to trouble again because of programming that didn't respond to infants.

Questions and Answers:

Question: – What facilities exist for parents who work non-traditional hours?

Answer: There are some centres that operate on non-traditional hours, extended hours, but not many. Such centres exist in the home, because they are more conducive to extended hours care to allow for children sleeping. This is a big problem in the rural Manitoba, particularly in agriculture sector.

France model – subsidize care givers to take child to their own home and care for them in the home.

Look at ensuring new centres explore 24 hours centres.

New building costs: 20,000 per space. 50 spaces – 1 million dollars.

Question: – Concerns over the training of educators. Is there a change in focus happening? Making sure that there are not only services, but that the services provide quality.

Answer: Child Care Education program review committee – reviews the course content of ECE educator training program. Core competency program has been developed by

national organization. Foundation of training program is research-based. Training of early child educators is some of the best across the country. The scope of the training is excellent. Extensive, difficult program. The standards are reviewed on constant basis. Our ECEs are so well-trained that they are in demand in other areas. Offered many opportunities in school system.

Mention of SISTARS – off-campus training program, community-based training. 24 enrolled, 16 graduate.

Regulations for different licensing situations.

Newcomers – placing strains on child care systems because lack of culturally appropriate training. And employment issues for newcomers. Can create bridges in employment training programs.

Training programs for small groups that want to establish child care centres.

CFAN group – extended governance model, where one director oversees many small centres. This kind of model can be more efficient.

Problems with programs that are established in schools can sometimes suffer from changes in administration – school based services are moved to smaller spaces and lose their rights to operate within other areas of the school – gym, etc.

Child care in schools policy has been in effect since 1986. New invigoration of the policy by the Ministers. Problem- many programs are not considered partnerships, they are much more based on landlord/tenant relationship.

What to do: take it to the superintendent or to a school trustee.

- Karen Dempsey, President of National Council of Women of Canada.

Mary Scott, Muriel Smith, Bonnie Siemens are on the Board. Elizabeth Fleming, Beatrice Watson are National Convenors. Arlene is chair of fundraising.

Local council and Provincial council are very successful and deserve congratulations.

AGM in Ottawa – Last week of May.

NCWC more vital than ever. More needed than ever. NCWC has been recognized by the federal govt for its historical significance. Comprised of 7 local councils, 5 provincial councils and many nationally organized societies.

Internationally, council is a member of the International Council of Women. And plays a vital role with the United Nations.

In 19th century, worked to improve the lot:

- women prisoners;
- women factory workers
- women immigrants.

We've been ahead of our time.

Supported the call of a Royal Commission on the Status of Women in 1976 and supportive of the establishment of the Advisory Committee on the Status of Women.

Urged pay equity legislation in 1907.

Prime Minister Harper has forgotten he signed on to CEDA during his election.

Taking equality out of the mandate of SWC funding, closing SW offices, closing key services are signs that he does not believe in the elimination of gender discrimination.

Women are finding it increasingly difficult to qualify for EI benefits.

Part time workers, unemployed women, women who require maternity benefits are suffering most.

Women are victims of sex-based crime – cuts to social programming are affecting these women.

Housing issues – women are really suffering from housing shortages. Critical housing shortages in Northern Manitoba.

Older patients – older women are more likely to die in ICU than men. Gender disparities in the quality and provision of health care services.

Women are less likely than men to receive medical services – medications, defibrillators.

Access to justice has been a real issue – cutting the court challenges program enabled citizens who believed their rights had been legally infringed to challenge law federally or provincially. Many discriminatory laws have been successfully challenged as a result of this program. How will government ensure that its services and laws are equitable?

Services to volunteers have been cut – higher proportion of women volunteers.

Immigrant and visible minority women – cuts to programming.

“Older women want to continue working” – in reality women are forced to continue working minimum wage jobs to survive.

Cuts to research funding.

Currently, the gov't boasts of its 19 billion dollar surplus. The surplus has been achieved at the hands of our social safety net. It has been at the cost of women, children, and our most disenfranchised.

- Rob Altemeyer, MLA

Talked about current directions.

There is lots to be proud of, however we still have many challenges that we must tackle. The major impact that federal politics has on provincial child care. We had a national child care program. But twice, this program has been destroyed. We negotiated with the federal government but change in government changed this.

Cuts to status of women will be ongoing battle that we face.

Before election, worked as SA to Tim Sale, Minister of Conservation. Frustrating because there was no media attention given to the environment. One of the challenges, is not only to receive community feedback but to put it into action.

Child care funding has doubled.

7,100 more spaces than there used to be.

Election promise: next two years, 2,500 more spaces.

Capital funds available for infrastructure, more educators. Support for wages has gone up by 11% increase and expect it up by 6% over the next two years. Develop multi-year child care plan with stakeholders. The fact that these things are happening is just one sign that we are fighting poverty.

Reward for Work – reducing the wage fee for child care. More EI benefits while in training.

Poverty is going down in Manitoba. Dropped over a third, since 2000. Child poverty rate has dropped from 20% to 15% - still too high, but coming down.

New challenges: shift work, new Canadians.

There are good things going on, but there needs to be more happening.

In many of the areas that the federal government is failing, Manitoba is trying to distinguish itself and make itself better.

9 billion is what the provincial government raises and spends over the course a year.

For profit child care – Bill C303 – (Federally) would restrict funding to not-for-profit centres. We need provincial governments to champion this bill.

Question: Why hasn't our premier championed this Bill, what are we going to do to ensure that this type of child care (Big Box Child care) doesn't come into Manitoba.

MCCA hired a researcher to identify the gaps between what ECEs are being paid in other, similarly skilled professions. 15-20% below.

3 percent per year, the next two years is not enough.

While the FPT agreement was not followed through on, does not let Manitoba off the hook.

Question: Brief to the Conservative caucus, according to caucus, the money needed for child care was sent over in an equalization payment. And because it is provincial jurisdiction, they do not wish to be involved.

Is this what's happening? Does the province have the money? What do we say when we hear this?

Large chunk of money that provinces received has to go to health.

Comment: NAFTA has a real affect on everything – child care is one of them. Under NAFTA if we refuse entry of business, they can sue gov't in taxpayer dollars for restitution.

TILLMA is an interprovincial agreement that would double this impact.

Pedophiles – what are we going to do?

We can't pass laws on this issue because it's federal jurisdiction. Province does do a lot on improving quality of life for women and children.

Question: drafting a letter to Minister Salinger – what is happening with these transfer payments, has the equalization formula changed. Used to be based on the performance of 4 provinces, but new equalization formula is based on 10 provinces, based on three years.

Send a copy to Rob when we send off the letter.

Offloading of responsibilities – housing is a perfect example.

- Announcement: Karen Dempsey – On Nov.28/07 NCWC is going to be on the shopping channel to sell boutique items from Celebrating Women.

Update – Today, November 29th - at the Association of Manitoba Municipalities conference in Brandon a resolution asking the Association to advocate for more support **for rural child care** was approved