

*Strengthening Families.
Building Communities.*



MANITOBA FAMILY SERVICES AND HOUSING
2006 Progress Report

Manitoba Family Services and Housing supports citizens in need to achieve fuller participation in society and greater self-sufficiency and independence. The department helps keep children, families and communities safe and secure and promotes healthy citizen development and well-being. It is committed to improving Manitobans' quality of life through furthering the social, economic and labour market inclusion of all citizens, ensuring that diversity is respected, that people feel accepted and valued, and live with dignity and security. The department works with the community to support Manitoba children, families and individuals achieve their fullest potential.

Helping Persons with Disabilities Participate Fully in Society

Meeting the needs of persons with disabilities and helping them increase their self-sufficiency, independence and inclusion in society is a priority for the Province.

Full Citizenship: A Manitoba Provincial Strategy on Disability released in 2001, has provided a framework for improvements to services and supports across departments.



VISITABLE DESIGN

In September 2005, it was announced that a new visitable design consultant will work with government agencies, builders, developers, community groups, architects and the public to assist in the development and further promotion of design features so homes under construction can be made more accessible for, or visitable by a person with a disability.

EMPLOYMENT FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

In 2004, a pilot Employability Support Unit was launched, as part of a new Employment Strategy, to help interested people with disabilities receiving Employment and Income Assistance find jobs, primarily through referrals to community employment programs.

In 2005, a multi-sectoral forum on disability and employment was held including private and public sector employers, disability service organizations and advocacy groups, and individuals with disabilities.



PROGRAM FUNDING FOR ADULTS WITH A MENTAL DISABILITY INCREASED

In the 2006/07 budget, funding for the Supported Living Program was increased by over \$13 million to a total of over \$154 million, a 155 per cent increase since 1999. The program supported approximately 4,500 persons with disabilities living in the community in 2005/06. The new funding will make a substantial contribution toward addressing the community support needs of these individuals.

CHILDREN'S PROGRAMS

The provincial government remains committed to providing supports to families who have children with developmental and/or physical disabilities, increasing funding to the Children's Special Services program by nearly 85 per cent since 1999. Among recent developments is a new tri-departmental Children's Therapy Initiative in which regional partners work together to share and co-ordinate therapy resources to facilitate effective and efficient delivery of occupational therapy, physiotherapy, speech-language therapy and audiology services for children across the province. Capacity also continues to be increased for the Applied Behaviour Analysis program for children with autism.

RESIDENTIAL CARE LICENSING SPRINKLER INITIATIVE

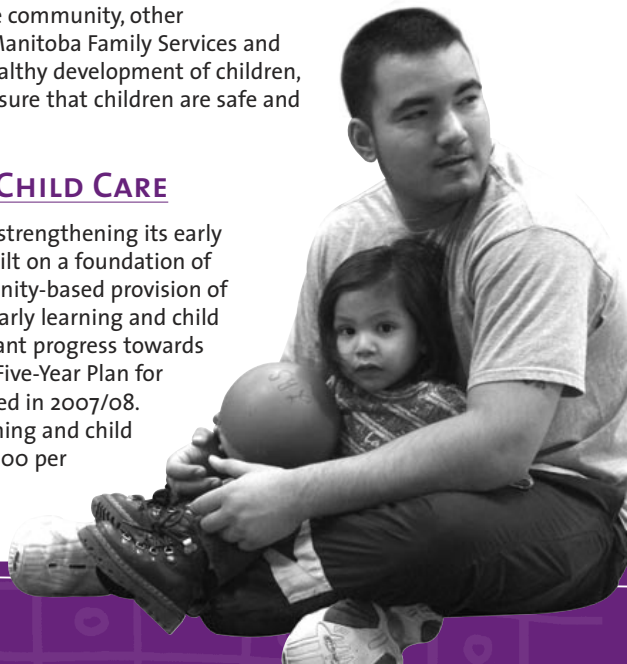
In response to an inquest into the death of a resident of a licensed residential care facility destroyed by fire in 2001, the department launched the Sprinkler Initiative in 2005/06. This initiative involves the installation of sprinklers in residential care facilities housing individuals who are unable to exit the building without assistance.

Protecting Children and Supporting Families

Through its partnerships with the community, other departments and governments, Manitoba Family Services and Housing works to improve the healthy development of children, families and communities and ensure that children are safe and protected.

EARLY LEARNING AND CHILD CARE

Manitoba remains committed to strengthening its early learning and child care system built on a foundation of quality, not-for-profit and community-based provision of services. As a national leader in early learning and child care, Manitoba has made significant progress towards the goals outlined in Manitoba's Five-Year Plan for Child Care, which will be completed in 2007/08. Since 1999, funding for early learning and child care has increased by more than 100 per cent to \$103 million. The budget for Children with Disabilities in

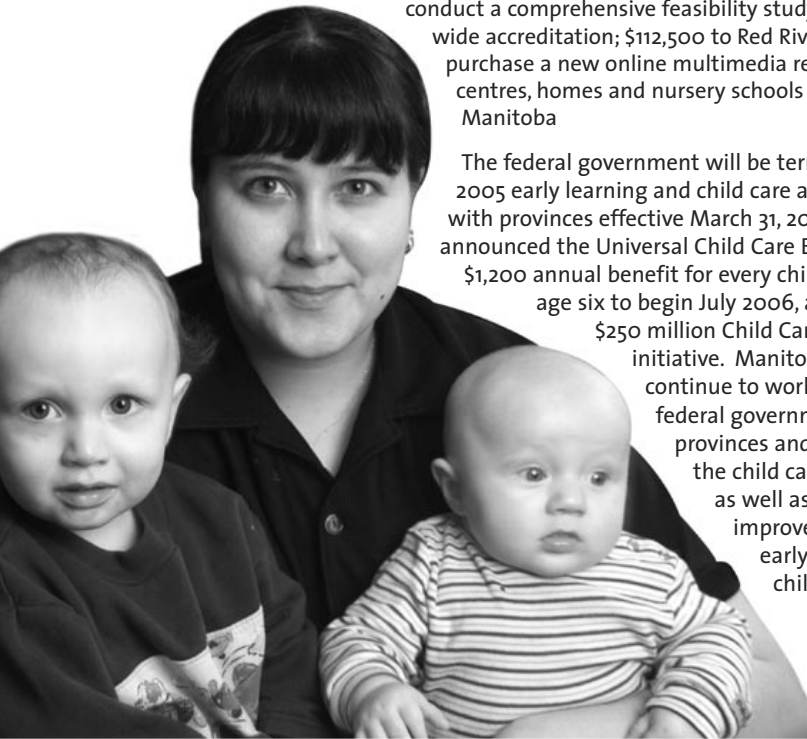


Child Care has increased by 131.6 per cent and the number of children with disabilities has increased by 55 per cent.

Accomplishments in 2005/06 include:

- increases to operating grants to support annual wages for early childhood educators, including those working with children with disabilities, of \$27,000 to \$30,000
- \$2.9 million for training and recruitment initiatives to further develop the early learning and child care workforce, including those supporting children with disabilities
- an investment of \$5.75 million for up to 3,168 additional licensed child care spaces
- an announcement of a \$2.7 million Early Learning and Child Care Capital Fund, to be implemented in 2006/07
- funding to explore alternative board governance models
- funding for exceptional circumstances at child care centres
- funding to support a new nursery school subsidy to increase access to early childhood programs by families, including those with a stay-at-home parent
- a new Early Learning and Child Care in Schools Policy with a focus on the use of surplus school space as a first choice location for early learning and child care
 - \$250,000 to the Manitoba Child Care Association to conduct a comprehensive feasibility study for province-wide accreditation; \$112,500 to Red River College to purchase a new online multimedia resource for all centres, homes and nursery schools throughout Manitoba

The federal government will be terminating the 2005 early learning and child care agreements with provinces effective March 31, 2007. It has announced the Universal Child Care Benefit, a \$1,200 annual benefit for every child under age six to begin July 2006, and a \$250 million Child Care Spaces initiative. Manitoba will continue to work with the federal government, other provinces and territories, the child care community, as well as families, to improve the province's early learning and child care system.



Protecting Children

CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM RESTRUCTURING

October 2005 marked the achievement of an important milestone in the restructuring of Manitoba's child welfare system with the completion of case transfers to the most culturally appropriate authority and their respective agencies. Based on the principle that Aboriginal people are entitled to child and family services that respect their unique status, culture and heritage, the four new authorities (two First Nations, one Métis and one general) now work to ensure that children are safe and protected and that children and families receive timely, efficient and culturally appropriate services. The provincial government and the four authorities continue to work together on improving Manitoba's child and family services system.

MANITOBA STRATEGY ON SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

Manitoba Family Services and Housing co-ordinates a team that crosses departments and jurisdictions to better ensure the safety and security of children and youth who are vulnerable to or victims of child sexual exploitation through a range of prevention, intervention, legislation, communication and research initiatives. A specialized training module has been developed called Understanding and Working with Sexually Exploited Youth, which is designed for multi-sector front-line staff who work with children and youth victimized by sexual exploitation. The department is also working with rural and northern areas to deal with child sexual exploitation in their regions.

FAMILY VIOLENCE PREVENTION

The 2006/07 budget provided for increased funding to meet specified service needs at several community-based family violence prevention and intervention agencies. These include Wahbung Abinoojag, the Laurel Centre, the Men's Resource Centre and the Winnipeg Children's Access Agency.

As well, new funding was allocated to the department to develop and implement a service to child witnesses of domestic abuse, in recognition of the importance of interrupting the intergenerational cycle of family violence.

In March 2006, the department, in partnership with Manitoba Justice and the Winnipeg Police Service, launched the Domestic Violence Intervention Unit, an intervention and support program for the community where families are connected to services through a shared referral process.



BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS

Manitoba Family Services and Housing is proud to be one of the eight provincial government partners that make up Healthy Child Manitoba, which works across departments and sectors to encourage a community development approach for the well-being of Manitoba's children, families and communities. Programming for the early, middle and adolescent years is supported with a focus on early childhood development.

The Manitoba Child Care Program and Children's Special Services are key components of the Early Childhood Development Continuum.

Reducing Poverty

One of the central goals of the department is to reduce the depth and incidence of poverty and increase Manitobans' participation in the labour market. Manitoba Family Services and Housing continues its work to reduce the effects of low income on Manitoba's families and individuals.

INCREASES TO EMPLOYMENT AND INCOME ASSISTANCE

Since 1999, the province has increased the income available to Employment and Income Assistance participants by both raising income assistance rates and exempting other sources of income. For example, the Manitoba government's full restoration of the National Child Benefit Supplement to income assistance families with children has increased the disposable income for these families by \$13.7 million annually. Other federal benefits, such as the Universal Child Care Benefit and the one-time Energy Cost Benefit, have also been exempt for the purposes of assessing Employment and Income Assistance benefits.

In February 2006, a new monthly benefit of \$25 per household was introduced for Employment and Income Assistance program participants in northern and remote areas, which will help to offset the increase in the cost of basic necessities resulting from rising energy costs, such as the increased cost of transporting goods to these communities. This is in addition to increasing the northern allowance a further 20 per cent in February 2005 to offset the high cost of healthy foods in the North.

Other recent enhancements for Employment and Income Assistance participants include:

- an increase of \$20 per adult in the monthly income assistance rates for non-disabled single adults, childless couples, adults with disabilities and adults in the aged category
- regular increases to room and board rates for individuals requiring care and supervision or residential care
- exemption of asset building accounts, such as Registered Education Savings Plans, Canada Learning Bonds and Individual Development Accounts, which will allow participants to save towards a specific goal, such as their children's education, a first home or business capital, without their income assistance benefits being affected
- establishing a Rapid Re-Enrolment Policy for individuals with disabilities who attempt employment and need to return to the program because of disability
- improved exemptions on earnings to provide an incentive for participants who work, in addition to other supports which assist participants who are seeking employment, such as child care, voice mail services and employment enhancement programs



- introduction of an exemption for residential school compensation payments
- introduction of an exemption for certain lump-sum payments for persons with disabilities to help improve their quality of life
- increases to the school supplies allowance for children
- the Building Independence program continued to develop employment-related initiatives for EIA participants, partnering with government, business, service providers and community-based organizations



MILEAGE ALLOWANCES

For the first time since 1982, mileage rates for Employment and Income Assistance and Vocational Rehabilitation were increased from 13 cents to 20 cents per kilometer in April 2005.

Increasing Safe and Affordable Housing

The department is dedicated to increasing access to safe, affordable and appropriate housing for low- to moderate-income Manitobans, including seniors and persons with disabilities. Programming helps to provide stability and security to these individuals and families through construction of new affordable housing units and improvements to existing housing across the province.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING INITIATIVE

In April 2005, a supplementary agreement extending the Affordable Housing Initiative to 2008 was signed, with the federal and provincial governments each contributing a further \$11.5 million. This builds upon the \$50.78 million commitment in the first phase of the agreement to give low- and moderate-income Manitobans increased access to safe, affordable housing by creating up to 2,500 affordable housing units. A significant focus of the initiative's second phase is on programs targeted at low-income residents. In the summer and fall of 2005, affordable housing projects for families, seniors and people with disabilities were announced for several Manitoban communities.

NORTHERN HOUSING STRATEGY

In support of the Northern Housing Strategy, a long-term plan was created with key northern and Aboriginal organizations to address the unique needs of the north. New homes are being built by the province for the first time in over ten years in northern Manitoba under the Canada-Manitoba Affordable Housing Initiative. Ten homes are underway in the rural and remote communities of Wabowden, Camperville and Duck Bay using panellized housing technology that is particularly suitable for construction of healthier, more energy-efficient homes in the north.

The federal and provincial governments are partnering with the Town of Grand Rapids and Grand Rapids First Nation on a comprehensive pilot project. The pilot is intended to bridge jurisdictions to address housing needs on and off-reserve, but will respect the jurisdiction of each of the parties. The pilot will go beyond examining the existing housing stock, with its ultimate goal being the creation of a longer term vision which includes skills training and capacity building.

MANITOBA SHELTER BENEFIT

Manitoba's 2006 Budget provided \$7.8 million for the Manitoba Shelter Benefit. The new benefit, which is based on a person's rental costs and income, provides monthly assistance to low-income seniors, families and persons with disabilities to help pay their rent in the private market. Effective July 2006, the Manitoba Shelter Benefit will replace the Shelter Allowance for Elderly Renters (SAFER) and Shelter Allowance for Family Renters (SAFFR) programs, increase the maximum monthly amount available to \$200 and extend eligibility to some persons with disabilities. In addition, the shelter benefit will provide a flat rate monthly amount to persons receiving Employment and Income Assistance who are enrolled in the disability case category and who live in private rental or room and board accommodation (\$35 per month for private rental and \$15 per month for room and board). The restructuring and enhancement of the shelter allowance system is an important step in Manitoba's strategy to reduce poverty.

Improving Service and Accountability

Manitoba Family Services and Housing is committed to working with community organizations, other departments and other levels of government to support Manitoba citizens in achieving their fullest potential. The department continues to focus on service improvement and facilitate access to services for Manitobans in order to best address their needs and requirements.

ACCESS CENTRES AND INTEGRATED SERVICE SITES

The Manitoba government has worked with the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority to integrate certain health and social services in community ACCESS Centres. ACCESS Centres locate health and social services at a single point of access for a wide range of health and social services, including primary care. ACCESS River East opened in March 2004 and ACCESS Transcona opened in June 2006. ACCESS Inkster is in the planning stages.

Four other integrated health and social service sites have been opened in Winnipeg, including two in St. James-Assiniboia, one in St. Boniface/St.Vital via the Bilingual Service Centre, and one in River Heights/Fort Garry. These sites provide a comprehensive set of health and social services, but do not include primary care services. An integrated service site for Seven Oaks is scheduled to open in late 2006.

ACCOUNTABILITY

The Agency Accountability and Support Unit, which began operating in January 2005, works to improve the department's comptrollership, agency accountability and financial management capacity. The unit has successfully established service purchase agreements with most funded agencies and is improving compliance with agency reporting requirements.

Manitoba Family Services and Housing
219-114 Garry Street
Winnipeg MB R3C 4V6
204-945-3242
www.manitoba.ca/fs