

CHILDCARE and INFRASTRUCTURE updates

This issue of "And Furthermore" brings readers up to speed on two topics that may seem somewhat distant from each other – child care and infrastructure. However, both represent healthy growth in our communities. In fact, in the Spring 2008 issue of the **Leader** Susan Prentice wrote that "childcare is both an industry in its own right, as well as being an infrastructure that enables other sectors of the rural economy to function."



UPDATE

On April 28, 2008, the Province announced a five-year, 12-point child-care agenda called Family Choices. Family Choices includes:

1. 6,500 more funded child-care spaces
2. Nursery school for 1,300 more children
3. Family Choices Building Fund, including up to 35 more program sites, capital to convert surplus school space, and a \$22.5-million increase from Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth to create a \$37-million fund.

Also included are a child-care safety charter, a centralized online wait-list, greater inclusion, the lowest fees outside Quebec, and several other improvements.

In the first year of the Family Choices agenda there will be:

- funding for 1,500 more child-care spaces,
- funding for 100 more children in nursery school,
- a 3% overall increase for wages effective July 1 plus a low-wage adjustment,
- equalization of tuition for early childhood education students at rural Red River College sites, and
- safety charter implementation assistance for all child-care facilities.

The total new investment for 2008-09 is \$7.75 million. It is estimated that funding for child care will increase to \$201.8 million over the five-year plan, up from \$109.8 million in 2007-08. More information about Family Choices is available at www.manitoba.ca/familychoices.html.

The Winter 2008 Leader featured a special report on infrastructure along with an infrastructure programs directory that referred to the Community Places Program, the rural library establishment grant, and various other recreation programs.



UPDATE

On February 27, 2008, the Province pledged to provide \$707,600 to support the recreation delivery system in Manitoba. This includes \$50,300 for the Recreation Connections annual operating grant in 2007-08 along with \$657,300 through Recreation Opportunities for program and training support for 50 recreation commissions. Established in 1996, Recreation Connections Manitoba is a provincial organization that supports professionals, practitioners and volunteers in the recreation, sport, parks and leisure industries. The Recreation Opportunities program encourages municipal corporations and school divisions to form partnerships aimed at providing a wide range of community recreation opportunities through qualified recreation leadership.

More information on Recreation Connections is available at: www.reconnections.com.

On April 16, 2008 the Province announced a \$9-million investment to

enhance and upgrade recreation facilities. The investment is an extension of the Rural/Northern Municipal Recreation Fund that was announced in 2006 and established as part of the Building Manitoba Fund, with \$7.4 million in provincial funding committed over three years for recreation and library facility projects in rural and northern Manitoba. Through the Building Manitoba Fund, municipalities receive a share of provincial income and fuel taxes – revenues that grow with the economy – to support their infrastructure and service-delivery needs. This second phase of the Municipal Recreation Fund will maintain the current efficient program delivery mechanisms using existing Community Places and Canada-Manitoba Infrastructure application processes. Eligible projects include construction or improvements to recreation and wellness facilities such as recreation centres, community halls, parks, libraries, arenas and pools.

Finally, on April 23, 2008 the Province announced \$1 million in funding for libraries. Support to libraries will be increased by over \$700,000 in Budget 2008, with over \$300,000 of this including direct, ongoing assistance to rural and northern facilities for new technologies, enhanced services and improved public access.

Also included:

- An increase to the grant available for library establishment to \$10,000 to encourage greater municipal participation;
- \$230,000 toward the establishment of additional libraries in First Nations communities and the Rural Municipality of Springfield;
- A commitment of \$20,000 to enable new strategies in the delivery of library service to unserved communities; and
- Over \$100,000 to Winnipeg Public Libraries to update collections and technology.

Eric Robinson, Minister of Culture, Heritage, Tourism and Sport noted this new funding addresses several key recommendations of the Public Libraries Review and responds to recommendations of the Association of Manitoba Municipalities. 