



## **Social Service Workers**

Manitoba's social services and social service workers are essential to maintaining the quality of life we expect and the economic foundation we need. Without these workers and services, Manitoba would not have the capacity to keep skilled people, would not be able to afford the health and security costs of maintaining the public, and would not be known as one of the most caring and friendly provinces in Canada. In short, Manitoba's social service workers contribute to keeping the community of support necessary for a modern, compassionate and productive society.

There is a perception that people in personal crisis, children needing day care, those suffering mental illness or families with difficulties are the only ones needing social services. The reality is that everyone in society needs these services either directly or indirectly. Whether a family member or friend, neighbour or colleague, there are thousands of Manitobans who get help from one of Manitoba's many social services. Ultimately, every citizen of the province benefits if social services are appropriately available and act effectively to protect those needing help.

Social service workers also know that Manitobans using these services are not to blame for their situations, as some politicians would like us to think. Every day, these workers meet people who are unable to be productive members of society because of circumstances beyond their control or because of the lack of resources to deal with these circumstances. These workers know that quality services cost money and that cutting taxes only makes it harder for the people who are already suffering.

Therefore, it is important for political candidates to describe how they will provide the political support and public resources to maintain Manitoba's social services. Each of the three parties is being asked to answer the following questions that deal with various aspects of Manitoba's social services.

### **Childcare, Day care**

If in Government, would you and your party be willing to initiate proactive measures to expand and improve public day care facilities, to make high quality day care universally accessible?

How soon would you and your party, if in Government, act to raise wages and improve benefits for early childhood educators and other day care workers, so they could continue to provide quality day care attention?

### **Child Protection**

What is your party prepared to do, to minimize the disruption experienced by children and families who are being affected by the devolution of services from Child and Family Services (CFS) Winnipeg to related Aboriginal agencies?

Will your party give the assurance that the use of non-trained and non-unionized staff at CFS be stopped, to assure the protection and safety of children in care?

### **Protection for Abused Women**

Is your party prepared to significantly increase the funding available (sustained core resources) for agencies that are helping women suffering sexual abuse and domestic violence?

Will your government be prepared to work with local agencies dealing with domestic violence to mount a major public education campaign, to help prevent violence and abuse?

### **Support for those with Mental Disabilities**

What will your party do to assure that people with mental disabilities are not denied services and supported accommodation because they do not specifically fit the rigid criteria set in Manitoba for access to social services?

How will your party help the families and front line workers who are now helping people with mental disabilities stay in their communities and out of institutions that cannot support them adequately?

### **Support for those with Mental Illness**

What would you do to make sure that all people living with mental illness have the services and supports they need in their community?

What would you do to try and encourage professionals to work and stay in Manitoba? How would you ensure that appropriate training is provided so that these professionals deliver good service?

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CUPE members, who are involved in coordinating activities as part of Social Services RESPECT Campaign, work in agencies such as Osborne House, Nine Circles, Interlake Association of Community Living, Genesis House, the Canadian Mental Health Association, Child and Family Services (Winnipeg) and Child and Family Services (Central). There are almost 2,500 social service workers represented by CUPE in Manitoba.

The RESPECT Campaign was launched at the CUPE Manitoba Convention in April. CUPE members will be focusing attention on the state of social services in Manitoba, pressuring officials to adopt supportive programmes that benefit those in need, and raising awareness of the importance of social service workers to these services and for all Manitobans.

The Canadian Union of Public Employees is Canada's largest union representing more than a half-million women and men. In Manitoba, CUPE represents 24,000 members working in health care facilities, school divisions, municipal services, social services, childcare centres, public utilities, libraries and family emergency services.

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#### **CUPE Manitoba, Social Services and Childcare Committee**

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