

## Childcare, Justice and the City: A Case Study of Planning Failure in Winnipeg

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### *Résumé*

Ce texte explore la relation ville—services de garde à l'enfance. Il étudie les places en service de garde licencié à Winnipeg et fait le constat de l'iniquité de la répartition des places en garderie entre les différents quartiers. Les quartiers plus pauvres et ceux regroupant plus d'autochtones sont particulièrement désavantagés, car on y retrouve moins d'accessibilité et moins de services que dans les quartiers plus nantis ainsi que dans les banlieues. Dans l'ensemble, la répartition des places et des services traduit des dysfonctions systémiques de la structure actuelle des services de garde à l'enfance. Cet échec est multi-scalaire; bien qu'il soit ressenti localement, ses causes prennent leur source au sein des niveaux supérieurs de gouvernement. C'est un déni de justice urbaine induit par la politique des services de garde à l'enfance et sa mise en œuvre, qui reproduit et combine les dés/avantages entre quartiers. La conclusion fait ressortir la double problématique de la dépendance à l'égard du bénévolat et de l'inaction politique locale, chacune comportant des implications significatives pour les urbanistes.

**Mots clés :** Services de garde à l'enfance, services sociaux, urbanisme, justice urbaine, pouvoir local

*Canadian Journal of Urban Research*, Volume 16, Issue 1, Supplement pages 92-108.  
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ISSN: 1188-3774

*Abstract*

This paper explores the city-childcare connection. It analyzes licensed childcare spaces in Winnipeg, finding that inequity characterizes the distribution of childcare in all neighbourhoods. Poorer and more Aboriginal neighbourhoods are particularly disadvantaged, having less access and fewer services than more affluent and suburban areas. Overall, the distribution of spaces and services reveals systemic dysfunctions in the current childcare architecture. This failure is multi-scalar: while experienced at the local level, the originating causes are with higher orders of government. Urban justice is denied by childcare policy and delivery that reproduces and compounds neighbourhood dis/advantage. The conclusion problematizes both voluntary sector reliance and local political inaction, each of which carries implications for planners.

**Key words:** Childcare, social services, planning, urban justice, local government

**Introduction**

Childcare has an urban, as well as a justice, dimension. The justice case can be readily seen in the social democracies of Western Europe which deliver universal high quality childcare services as a matter of public entitlement, children's rights, gender equity and work-family reconciliation. In North America, by contrast, no such justice is found in the small number of expensive childcare spaces available on the private user-pay market. The case for childcare's urban dimension is found in urban under-development: in all Canadian provinces save Ontario, there is no municipal role in childcare. Close to one-half of Canada's urban dwellers are in two-parent or lone-parent families, yet in Canada's cities, regulated childcare services exist for only 10 – 16 percent of children aged 12 and under (Mahon & Jenson, 2006, p. 4).

Despite under-development, the city-childcare connection is being recognized. In 2000, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities declared its support for universal childcare (Federation of Canadian Municipalities, 2000). "Childcare is a must for a modern city" argue the authors of the Toronto Commission on Early Learning and Childcare (Coffey & McCain, 2002). Vancouver's Mayor Philip Owen proclaimed that "access to licensed, quality, safe and affordable childcare is one of the greatest contributors to the quality of life" (Garr, 2004). The Mayor of Toronto recently despaired that "choice in child care does not exist for most Canadian families who want access to early learning in a regulated program" (Miller, 2006).

In Canada (as in most liberal welfare states), childcare is mainly provided by the private sector. Save in Ontario, cities do not plan, manage or operate childcare, nor do other levels of government. Instead, about four out of every five regulated childcare spaces in Canada is provided by the third sector—the not-for-profit

domain of voluntary and community organizations, with a very small role for directly-government operated childcare services only in two provinces (Friendly & Beach, 2005, p. 206). The remaining 20 percent of Canada's childcare spaces are provided on a commercial basis by privately-owned businesses. Thus, Canada's childcare system is premised on voluntary sector delivery.

Third sector delivery, however, is complex. While it is a bulwark against generally lower-quality commercial services, third sector reliance also more troublingly presumes facilities will materialize where and when they are needed, arising 'from the ground up.' Notwithstanding its many strengths, decentralized production "militates against attempts to foster equity" (Skelton, 1996, p. 62) because needs are typically not matched by capacities to produce services. Third sector service production tends to map onto and reproduce social gradients. Areas where social capital and socio-economic status are high are likely to have stronger capacity to organize services than disadvantaged areas. One way to demonstrate this relationship with respect to childcare is to examine neighbourhood rates of access, such as the number of regulated spaces per 100 children. As Canadian geographer Marie Truelove has observed, such service-to-access rates produce a crude, though telling, index of territorial social justice (Truelove, 1992).

The deleterious outcomes of inequitable distribution at provincial and national scales are widely-recognized. The distribution of services was decried by international experts of an OECD review team, who observed a "patchwork of uneconomic, fragmented services" which they described as a system of "mediocrity and weak access" (OECD, 2004, p. 6 and p. 57). Yet few Canadian studies have examined territorial distribution of childcare service at the local scale (see, for examples, Hertzman, 2004; Mahon & Jenson, 2006; Truelove, 1992; 1996). Curiously, local distribution of childcare is generally overlooked in policy analysis and discussions.

In this paper, I closely interrogate the distribution of licensed and regulated full and part-day childcare spaces provided by centres and family childcare homes in Winnipeg. The study reveals better access in affluent neighbourhoods and worse access in poor neighbourhoods, a gradient that is racialized as well as classed, given the distribution of Aboriginal people in the city. Across a socio-economic gradient, some families have systematically worse access than do others, as revealed through a ward-based review of Winnipeg. The conclusion problematizes both voluntary sector reliance and local political inaction, each of which carries implications for planners.

### **Third Sector Childcare Delivery: Manitoba and Beyond**

Manitoba, like other provinces, looks to the third sector to initiate and deliver childcare, part of a long tradition of voluntary sector delivery of social and per-

sonal services. In 2002, Manitoba ambitiously developed a Five-Year Plan to improve childcare services. The plan was warmly greeted by most provincial and national advocates, positioning Manitoba as a Canadian leader among English provinces. While heralding a host of new initiatives and promising to “support and expand Manitoba’s child care system,” the five-year plan entirely side-stepped the issue of voluntary sector delivery. Over 2005, as the province further elaborated childcare improvements to be funded under the “Moving Forward” bilateral agreement with the federal government, it underscored its reliance on the not-for-profit community-based sector (Government of Manitoba, 2005a; 2005b).

This pattern has deep historical and institutional roots. The first crèches in Canada were established by religious organizations in Montreal and Quebec City in the 1850s (Schultz, 1978). Winnipeg’s first childcare centre was established through philanthropy in 1906. In both eastern and western Canada, the arrival of day nurseries in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century was a direct result of urbanization, changing family patterns, and women’s employment (often as domestic servants). Early daycare providers were mainly religious authorities and charitable organizations, including immigrant settlement associations. Pre-WWII, government support was very limited, although municipal governments would occasionally provide small annual grants or per diem subsidies.

During WWII, childcare briefly became an urgent labour force priority (Prentice, 1988). The federal government passed temporary legislation authorizing federal-provincial cost-sharing of eligible childcare services. Few provinces signed on, and only in Ontario did the programs take hold (Langford, 2003). In Ontario, the cost-shared new services were publicly-funded and sometimes publicly-operated by municipalities, as well as by voluntary agencies and local groups.

After 1945, childcare services entered a period of national retrenchment. The federal government stopped funding childcare and only resumed spending in 1966, with the establishment of the Canada Assistance Plan. In the intervening years, numerous nursery schools and crèches sprang up independently. As before the war, services were established and maintained by private sector organizations. While charitable organizations initially predominated, for-profit services began to be established. By 1968, three-quarters of Canada’s crèches and nursery schools were commercially operated (Friesen, 1992).

Until the 1960s, what little public involvement in childcare existed came from municipal authorities. The reintroduction of federal-provincial cost-sharing under CAP prompted most provinces to address childcare services. All provinces eventually passed childcare legislation, generally assigning responsibility to their welfare authorities. The shift moved childcare from the local to the provincial scale. Only Ontario retained a role for cities. As Jenson and Mahon wryly observe, “since the 1960s—the period in which demand for child care has increased dramatically and full recognition has spread of the importance of quality care in preschool

years—most local governments have *lost* the capacity to intervene and to be a partner in childcare provision” (2002, p. ii, italics in original).

Today, the majority of Canadian children are in some form of non-parental care. The most recent evidence shows that in 2002 - 2003, 54 percent of children aged 6 months to six years were cared for by someone other than their parents; however less than one in four was in a regulated childcare centre (Bushnik, 2006). Nationally, there is a licensed childcare space for 15.5 percent of children aged 0 - 12 years (Friendly & Beach, 2005). Children in urban centres generally enjoy better access than do children in rural areas. For example, Quebec can serve 30 percent of its children, but in Montreal there are services for 45 percent of youngsters. Saskatoon can serve 6.9 percent of the city’s children, although the Saskatchewan provincial average is just 4.9 percent (Friendly & Beach, 2005, Table 26, p. 205; Mahon & Jenson, 2006, p. 4). Where they exist, childcare centres are mainly operated by non-profit groups.

Uneven childcare access by family income has been found in several parts of Canada. Vancouver, for example, has a ten-fold differential in neighbourhood access between the best and least served parts of the city (Hertzman, 2004). Clyde Hertzman, author of the Vancouver study, laments that the least-served neighbourhoods are found in the working class areas of the east side, where quality childcare would likely provide the greatest developmental benefit to vulnerable children. Research in Quebec has likewise found that poorer children have worse access, despite the intentions of the generous provincial program. The authors conclude that despite the significant increase in the number of childcare places available since 1997, “it is the more privileged rather than the less privileged Quebec families who are reaping the greatest benefit” from the growing system (Japel et al., 2005, p. 30).

The under-servicing of marginalized communities is particularly troubling, since it results in vulnerable children having worse access to childcare, despite its documented capacity to mitigate some of the disadvantages of family poverty. “High-quality daycare centres increase children’s linguistic, cognitive and social competencies, and [childcare] has long-lasting benefits for children from low-income families. Investments in daycare for vulnerable children have large returns over time” (Kohen et al., 2002, p. 273). The consensus among child development experts is that “high-quality care is associated with outcomes that all parents want to see in their children, ranging from cooperation with adults to the ability to initiate and sustain positive exchanges with peers, to early competence in math and reading” (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000, p. 313). Additionally, childcare services support parents, facilitating employment or education/training, particularly for mothers, and lessening work-family conflict. Overall, these multiple benefits for both adults and children mean that childcare is equally needed by poor as well as affluent communities.

### Winnipeg: Planning Failure

Winnipeg has 100,537 children aged 0 -12 years (City of Winnipeg and Census Canada, 2002). For these children, there are 16,627 regulated childcare spaces provided by 250 full-day childcare care centres, 73 part-day day nurseries, and 295 family homes. City services can serve 16.5 percent of children—exceeding both the Manitoba and national averages (14.5 and 15.5 percent respectively). As is common across the country, Winnipeg has had no legislated municipal role in the delivery, operation or funding of childcare since the 1974 establishment of the provincial program.

Winnipeg's childcare system make an impressive, if under-recognized, contribution to the City. The field employs over 3,230 people, who earn a total of \$80 million/year. As an industry, the sector is worth \$101 million annually. Every \$1 invested in childcare returns \$1.38 to the Winnipeg economy (and a larger \$1.45 nationally), through the “ripple” effects of input-output multipliers. Almost 22,000 parents in 12,776 households depend on regulated childcare. In addition to supporting parental labour force participation and/or training, childcare provides demonstrable benefits to children. Developmental children's services are particularly important in a city with the dubious distinction of being Canada's child poverty capital, and where poor children's educational outcomes are so troubling (Brownell et al., 2004; Social Planning Council of Winnipeg, 2005, p. 5).

Winnipeg's city government is made up of a mayor (elected at large) and 15 councillors, one elected in each of 15 wards. The poorest wards make up the ‘inner city’: Daniel McIntyre, Mynarksi, and Point Douglas. The City of Winnipeg designates the inner city as “major improvement neighbourhoods” (City of Winnipeg, 2001, Policy Plate D). The low-mid socio-economic status (SES) areas are Elmwood, Fort Rouge and Old Kildonan. Medium SES characteristics in St. Norbert, St. James, St. Vital, St. Boniface, St. Charles and North Kildonan have led to these areas being associated with Winnipeg's “middle class” (Brownell et al., 2004). The most affluent neighbourhoods are River Heights, Charleswood-Tuxedo and Transcona. The more disadvantaged areas tend to be found in the central part of Winnipeg, and the most advantaged areas on the outskirts of the city. Both child and total population densities vary across the city (Brownell et al., 2004).

As Table 1 demonstrates, there is little relationship between a ward's child population and its number of facilities. The number of children by ward ranges from a low of 4,204 (St. James) more than twice as many in inner-city Point Douglas. Facility numbers range from a low of 23 (in St. James) to a high of 63 (in St. Boniface)—nearly a three-fold difference. River Heights has the most spaces (at 1,582) in 35 facilities. By contrast, the 34 facilities of North Kildonan serve just 610 children. A ward with one large childcare centre may well have more absolute service than one with a handful of smaller facilities—setting aside distance

and convenience. St James, for example, has the fewest number of childcare facilities (at 23), but enjoys the next-to best access in Winnipeg, with a regulated space for 23.9 percent of its children.

**Table 1. Children, Facilities, Spaces and Access by Ward**

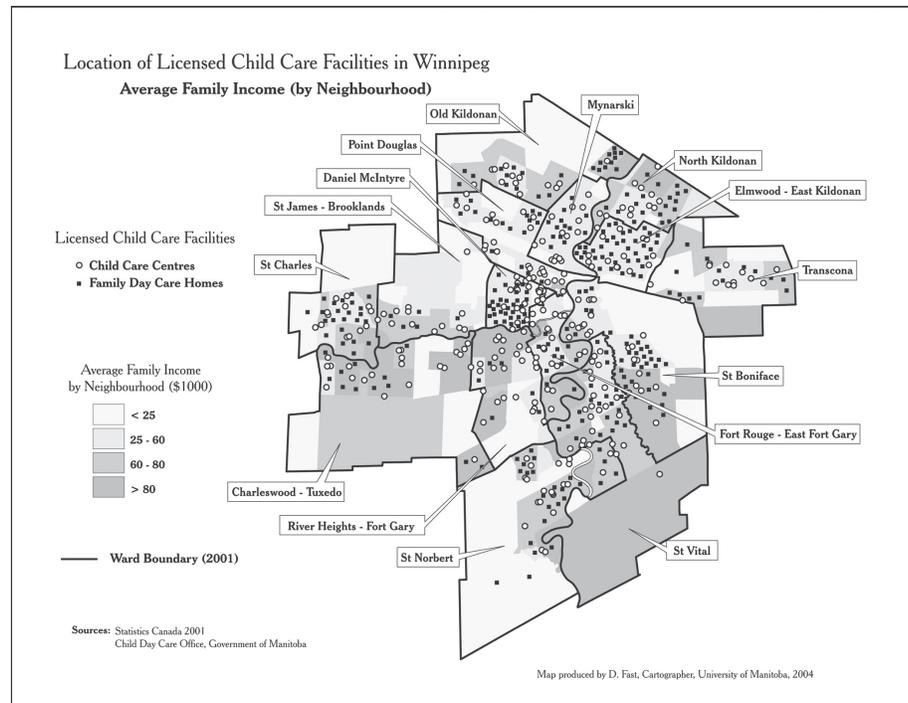
Ward	Child Population (age 12 and under)	Total Facilities (full and part-day centres and homes)	Total Spaces	Access Rate (% of children for whom there is a space)
Charleswood	7,331	39	1,167	15.9%
Daniel McIntyre	7,527	57	1,335	17.7%
Elmwood	7,490	53	934	12.5%
Fort Rouge	4,827	33	1,072	22.2%
Mynarski	7,502	28	912	12.2%
North Kildonan	5,520	34	610	11.1%
Old Kildonan	7,096	39	890	12.5%
Point Douglas	8,582	45	1,344	15.7%
River Heights	6,515	35	1,582	24.3%
St. Boniface	7,337	63	1,491	20.3%
St. Charles	4,759	39	949	19.9%
St. James	4,204	23	1,006	23.9%
St. Norbert	7,704	47	1,175	15.3%
St. Vital	8,027	54	1,501	18.7%
Transcona	6,116	29	659	10.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100,537</b>	<b>618</b>	<b>16,627</b>	<b>16.5%</b>

Table 1 also reports childcare access rates (a service-to-need ratio of spaces per 100 children) by ward. It shows that across Winnipeg's fifteen wards, access ranges from 10.8 – 24.3 percent. The worst served ward is Transcona, the best-served are River Heights and St James. The mean access rate is 16.5 percent, but varies across individual wards by more than a factor of two.

The absolute number and location of facilities is important, since services must be consumed locally to be convenient to users. One Dutch inquiry into the geography of childcare found that the “availability effect”, which the researchers operationalized as within ten minutes from home, is very large (Van Ham & Mulder, 2005). As Map 1 demonstrates, many Winnipeg families live much further than ten minutes from a childcare centre, especially if slow public transit (as opposed to

private automobile travel) is the mode of transportation. Equally important, Map 1 visually presents the distribution of facilities by family income, revealing the spatial dimensions of inequitable distribution.

**Map 1. Location of Licensed Child Care Facilities in Winnipeg and Average Family Income by Neighbourhood**



The uneven distribution of childcare spaces for particular age groups is illustrated in Table 2. Preschoolers aged 2 – 5 years have the best coverage, since 60 percent of Winnipeg’s full and part-day spaces are dedicated to them. Winnipeg, in fact, has over ten times more service for preschoolers than for infants. Children aged 6 – 12 constitute half the child population needing care, but only one-third of Winnipeg’s centre spaces are school-aged. Services for very young children are the scarcest: just 5.5 percent of the City’s centre-based spaces are dedicated to infants.

Part-day nursery spaces are particularly interesting. They are mainly used for child development, since the program is part-time (generally 3 hours/day three or four times/week), and is not designed to accommodate parental employment. The inner-city ward of Daniel McIntyre has no nursery spaces and its neighbour, Mynarski, has just 18. This contrasts with fourteen times more service in middle class and suburban River Heights and St. Boniface.

**Table 2. Full- and Part-Day Centre Spaces by Age Group and Ward**

City Ward	Infant spaces (0-2 years)	Nursery spaces (part-day, 2-5 years)	Preschool spaces (2-5 years)	School-age spaces (6-12 years)	Total Centre spaces
Charleswood	87	177	431	389	1084
Daniel McIntyre	88	0	695	336	1119
Elmwood	0	46	397	226	669
Fort Rouge	80	115	646	148	989
Mynarski	56	18	438	310	822
North Kildonan	12	166	107	193	478
Old Kildonan	24	92	327	287	730
Point Douglas	124	154	636	312	1,226
River Heights	60	247	525	709	1,541
St. Boniface	48	250	539	403	1,240
St. Charles	86	68	329	306	789
St. James	51	78	498	345	972
St. Norbert	44	61	534	362	1,001
St. Vital	28	188	629	510	1,355
Transcona	20	75	273	193	561
<b>Total</b>	<b>808</b>	<b>1,735</b>	<b>7,004</b>	<b>5,029</b>	<b>14,576</b>

When neighbourhoods are examined by income, poverty and degree of Aboriginality, other dimensions of inequity become visible (Table 3). The data demonstrate that poverty, like childcare access rates, varies dramatically across the city. While the Winnipeg average family poverty rate is 15.5 percent, rates across neighbourhoods range from a low of 6.4 percent (in suburban Charleswood) to a high of 30.1 percent (in inner-city Mynarski)—a five-fold difference. Three wards have poverty rates above 26 percent, and three privileged wards have very low rates of poverty (at 8.6 percent or under). In Mynarski, for example, where 30.1 percent of families are low-income, there are spaces for only 12.2 percent of the neighbourhood's children, compared to River Heights where the poverty is 6.4 percent and the childcare access is 24.3 percent.

As Table 3 shows, the poorest wards have family incomes \$12,000 - \$16,000 below the City median of \$54,724. The most affluent neighbourhoods surpass Winnipeg's average by \$4,000 to \$22,000. Childcare access is lower in poor, inner-city neighbourhoods and better in more outlying suburban wards. This socio-economic gradient is troubling, since the worst access is by the poorest children

where the greatest gains could be made, and where preferential access might generate more child development gains.

**Table 3. Social Inequality in Winnipeg: Poverty, Aboriginality, Childcare Access and Family Income by Ward**

Neighbourhood	Poverty Rate (Incidence of Low Income for Economic Families, 2001)	Access (Percentage of Children for Whom There is a Space)	Percent of Residents Reporting Aboriginal Origins (2001)	Median Family Income (2001)
<b>Low SES</b>				
Mynarski	30.1%	12.2%	23.1%	\$37,927
Daniel McIntyre	27.6%	17.7%	13.1%	\$39,715
Point Douglas	26.2%	15.7%	14.6%	\$42,175
<b>Low-Mid SES</b>				
Elmwood	22%	12.5%	12.9%	\$45,061
Fort Rouge	20.8%	22.2%	10%	\$49,170
Old Kildonan	13.1%	12.5%	6.3%	\$56,895
<b>Mid-SES</b>				
St. Norbert	12.5%	15.3%	6%	\$64,030
St. James	12.7%	23.9%	8.6%	\$53,499
North Kildonan	12.5%	11.1%	5.2%	\$58,627
St Vital	12%	18.7%	8.3%	\$58,557
St. Boniface	11.7%	20.3%	8.4%	\$60,372
St. Charles	10.3%	19.9%	6.7%	\$59,196
<b>High SES</b>				
River Heights	8.6%	24.3%	3.5%	\$67,114
Transcona	8.6%	10.8%	8.4%	\$58,522
Charleswood	6.4%	15.9%	4.4%	\$77,695
<b>City Averages</b>	<b>15.5%</b>	<b>16.5%</b>	<b>9.6%</b>	<b>\$54,724</b>

The childcare gradient in Winnipeg is raced as well as classed. The poorest neighbourhoods in Winnipeg are those with the highest rate of Aboriginality. The neighbourhoods worst served by childcare are the poorest and also have the highest rates of Aboriginal residents. Table 3 shows the distribution of residents reporting Aboriginal origins in the 2001 census. Neighbourhoods in Winnipeg are clearly racialized: the presence of Aboriginal people ranges from a low of 3.5 percent in River Heights to a high of 23.1 percent in inner-city Mynarski—a difference of a factor of six. Overall, 9.6 percent of Winnipeggers report Aboriginal origins, and where Aboriginality is higher, the rate of childcare spaces is lower. This inverse relationship is further evidence of the mal-distribution of childcare services. Across Winnipeg, childcare is closely linked to racialized neighbourhood affluence.

Winnipeg citizens are aware of the misdistribution of childcare access, and of the need for more services. A recent survey of Winnipeg childcare centres found 14,758 names on centre waiting lists, more than the total number of centre spaces and evidence of significant unmet need (CCC of M, 2006). A public opinion poll conducted in 2004 found inner city residents were profoundly dissatisfied with the availability of childcare. Fifty-nine percent rated preschool childcare access as “fair or poor” and school-age childcare access was deemed even worse, at 63 percent. By contrast, in the new residential and outer edges of the cities, only about one-quarter of respondents believed childcare access was poor (MCHP and SEED Winnipeg, 2004).

### **Childcare Development and Delivery in Winnipeg**

Geographic inequity characterizes the distribution of childcare spaces in all of Winnipeg’s neighbourhoods. Poorer and more Aboriginal neighbourhoods are demonstrably disadvantaged, with less access and fewer services. Yet, despite the gradient, even the most affluent neighbourhood can meet the needs of just one-quarter of its children. While more privileged neighbourhoods enjoy better access, they are still characterized by inadequate services, and inequitable service by age group. The net distribution across the whole City reveals the systemic dysfunctions of the current childcare architecture.

All of Winnipeg’s childcare spaces are privately provided—there is no directly government-operated or public childcare. As in the rest of Manitoba, childcare centres and family homes are established by private actors. Most of this occurs in the not-for-profit sector: Manitoba has effective disincentives that mitigate against the establishment of commercial childcare services (Ferguson & Prentice, 2001). As a result, 92 percent of Manitoba’s centres are not-for-profit—much better than the national average of 79 percent (Friendly & Beach, 2005, Tables 10 and 27).

Research evidence shows higher quality care in the nonprofit as compared to the commercial sector (Cleveland & Krashinsky, 2004; Prentice, 2005).

Since 1999, under an NDP government, childcare has assumed a higher political priority and Manitoba is now recognized as a national champion of early learning and care. The province is proud of its reliance on a grassroots and ‘bottom-up’ strategy for childcare development, and its community-based policy advisory process (Prentice, 2004; Sale, 2003). In practice, advocates quip this means “if you build it, we will license it.” Neither the province nor Winnipeg engages in any development planning: no efforts are made to inventory areas of need or to direct resources to under-served communities. The provincial government relies on the self-organization of the voluntary sector (and small proprietary sector) for all new development. There are few human or financial resources available to start up childcare, and a very limited pool of capital dollars (Government of Manitoba, 2002; 2005c; Prentice, 2004).

Childcare advocates have pointed to the inequitable consequences of relying on the voluntary sector, in the context of a lack of planning. Over 2003 - 2004, the Child Care Coalition undertook an economic and social analysis of childcare in Winnipeg, under the direction of a fifteen-member Advisory Council (Prentice & McCracken, 2004). No elected municipal official accepted repeated invitations to join the Advisory Group. The City instead assigned a staff person from Community Resources as its representative. The process concluded with a recommendation that the Mayor of Winnipeg, working with the province, establish a Task Force to propose a childcare agenda for the city. The childcare agenda suggested for Winnipeg would include “appropriate ways to integrate childcare into cross-sectoral policy and planning for economic and community development and social infrastructure” (Prentice & McCracken, 2004, p. 26). To date, no city councillor or senior official is pursuing this recommendation.

Winnipeg’s inaction on the childcare file is partially understandable. Like other big cities, it is confronted with an inadequate resource base and a crumbling physical infrastructure. Glen Murray, the imaginative and forward-thinking former Mayor, has been succeeded by Sam Katz, a business person with a conservative approach to urban politics. City planning is guided by Winnipeg Plan 20/20 (City of Winnipeg, 2001). Plan 20/20—which the City declares its most important document—contains no references to childcare at all, and discusses children only in relation to immigration and poverty. Neither the Community Services nor the Planning, Property and Development departments has any responsibility to address childcare as an element of either community or economic development.

Unlike Toronto or Vancouver, each of which has been proactive on the childcare file, Winnipeg is passive. As a slow-growth city, it has neither been pushed nor

pulled to leverage its zoning powers to coax developers into providing childcare services (City of Vancouver, 1990; Coffey & McCain, 2002). Winnipeg has not created a Children's Advocate, adopted a Children's Roundtable, nor undertaken any of a host of similar childcare-friendly initiatives being tested in other cities. Across Canada, a range of urban childcare initiatives is underway. A recent review of eleven municipalities observes that action is not occurring just in big cities (Mahon & Jenson, 2006). While Ontario municipalities, with their legislatively mandated role, have a particular interest in childcare, cities in other provinces can and do move on childcare.

### Conclusion

Childcare is a challenge to Canada's cities. Within cities, childcare does not meet Harvey's test of urban justice, namely "a just distribution justly arrived at" (Harvey, 1973, p. 98). Harvey reminds us that where territorial social justice exists, the prospects of the least advantaged territory are as great as they possibly can be (p. 116-117)—a requirement that childcare, *prima facie*, fails. The evidence is that access to, and distribution of, urban childcare services are unequal and inequitable. Mahon and Jenson conclude that "bottom-up processes," on their own, will do little to address distributional inequities (2006 p. 39). Voluntary sector production and the absence of public mandates are the structural causes. This two-sided failure is multi-scalar: while experienced at the local level, the originating causes are with higher orders of government.

Neil Bradford has summarized why 'cities matter' and why they must be taken seriously. While much attention has been directed to horizontal questions of coordination, Bradford argues that "of greater significance are vertical relationships that link the city-region to upper level provincial and federal governments" (Bradford, 2002, p. vi) and that localized processes must scale up to levels where critical policy and financial choices are made. The city, in fact, may be the best order of government to administer childcare, being closer, more accountable, and more attuned to local complexities. The OECD suggested as much, in its recommendation that management be at the local level (e.g. "publicly mandated, community or municipal agencies with responsibility for childcare development") (OECD, 2004, p. 70).

As a case study, Winnipeg provides an example of both failure to plan and planning failure. Urban justice is not merely denied, but actively inverted by a childcare policy and delivery system that reproduces—and then compounds—neighbourhood dis/advantage, compromising urban citizenship. Into this breach, planning must step. While there is much to reject in modernist planning, critical

practitioners continue to seek redistributive justice to lessen “the growing gap between those who live in extremes of wealth and poverty” (Radher & Milgrom, 2004). In this quest, childcare can play a key role—promoting greater equality of opportunity for children (particularly among those made vulnerable by poverty), while supporting parents and increasing the economic independence of women.

As the urban agenda develops in Canada, childcare and other ‘quiet crises’ (Clutterbuck, 2002) will assume a higher profile. Changing family and economic patterns are leading federal and provincial governments to pay increased attention to childcare, and we can predict local governments soon will be both pulled and pushed into the discussions. Winnipeg’s current practice, like that of most Canadian cities, can be read as revealing a stunted conception of the contribution of childcare to the quality of urban life, political neglect and government inaction. Local planning capacity is needed, and this will require rethinking and redesign of decentralization and third-sector reliance. Planning practitioners and those interested in the place-policy interface can find in childcare a compelling site of exploration and innovation.

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Estimates are that one in ten non-profit spaces is publicly-operated by local government or school boards, almost exclusively in Ontario or Quebec. (Doherty et al., 2003, p. 28). Municipalities do regularly offer children’s recreational programs, which are not normally considered early childhood education and care (ECEC) and which are not designed to accommodate parental labour force participation or education/training.

<sup>2</sup> At an average of 29 hours per week, according to Statistics Canada, which considers 30 or more hours/week to correspond to full-time weekly employment hours (Bushnik, 2006, p. 23).

<sup>3</sup> Data on Winnipeg’s childcare services was collected by a research project undertaken by the Child Care Coalition of Manitoba, and reported in *Time for Action* (Prentice & McCracken, 2004). Ward characteristics and demographics are derived from 2001 Census data and are reported in a series of neighbourhood profiles (City of Winnipeg and Census Canada, 2002) Original tables were created for this discussion.

<sup>4</sup> These contributions are elaborated in *Time For Action*, 2004 (Prentice & McCracken, 2004).

<sup>5</sup> Family homes are not licensed for particular ages of children, and so are excluded from age access figures.

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