

new support for families

Compassionate leave

New legislation allows employees to take an unpaid leave of absence to care for a dying loved one. They are then able to apply for the new federal compassionate leave benefits now available through Employment Insurance. These arrangements are in line with the recommendation of the Romanow commission on health care that people be granted time off for informal caregiving for family members at critical times. The bill also protects the jobs of employees returning from maternity, parental or compassionate leave.

Benefits fully restored

For the first time ever all Manitoban families will receive their national child benefit supplement in its entirety this year. This federal supplement is given to low-income families across the country. But when it came to Manitoba families on social assistance, the previous government had been reducing their payments by the amount they received as a federal supplement. The province had been clawing-back the money intended to help clothe and feed some of our most vulnerable children.

Our government began reducing this clawback in 2001, beginning with families with the youngest children. We did this because we believe that every child deserves the right start in life, and that society must help those in need to achieve their full potential. Now, as of January 2004, the supplement has been completely restored. This puts nearly fourteen million dollars directly back into the hands of low-income families, benefiting some twenty-three thousand children in eleven hundred families.



Jim met with many seniors during the month of December 2003. This was an opportunity to exchange ideas on his new portfolio and events in the constituency.



I love to read

Elementary students in Assiniboia benefit from the many activities that take place during the “I Love To Read” month of February. The importance of reading is highlighted through these activities, whether they involve guest readers, family “Cuddle Up and Read” nights or other events involving the family and community.

Studies show higher literacy rates mean improved access to higher education, greater opportunities for individuals to achieve personal goals and superior productivity in the workplace.

This year each of the elementary schools participated in a bookmark design competition introduced by Jim Rondeau. Each school selected a number of bookmarks that they felt were suitable for reproduction. These were then printed and distributed so that each student could have a bookmark of their own to use.

Reading aloud to children is the single most important activity for building understanding and skills essential for reading success.



The minimum wage in Manitoba will increase by 25 cents to \$7.00 on April 1. The gradual rate adjustment ensures that Manitoba's ranking remains in the middle of Canadian provincial minimum wage rates.