

First you listen, then you dream



In Part 1 of our look at the *Harvest Voices* report, we went straight past the statistics and examined the deeper context of our collective potential to relieve human suffering and do some community-building. The kind of potential that comes from the 350,000-plus meals Harvest Manitoba provides every month.

That’s the part of Harvest everyone knows. What isn’t so obvious is Harvest’s role as an ‘advocate for change’ in the realm of maintaining food security for everyone in Manitoba. Back in 1985, Lee Newton was that advocate. She had an impossible vision of feeding hungry people in Winnipeg. Today Manitobans donate about 11 million pounds a year and Harvest distributes it to 325-plus communities across the province.

We need more of that type of thinking, that kind of vision.

Today we are going to look at some of the *Harvest Voices* report’s recommendations to show you what that kind of thinking can look like. At the risk of being wrong, overreaching, naive, or impossible on almost every point, we are going to ‘brainstorm’ ways that these recommendations might be fulfilled.

This isn’t a desperate measure. It’s what creative companies, committees, scientists, artists, think tanks and ad agencies do. Everything is impossible until somebody does it. Everything ever accomplished started with an idea or a dream.

Recommendation: *Fund and grow school programs across Manitoba to provide universal access to nutritious food for all children in all educational settings.*

It sounds impossible, but these ideas may be:

- Make participation in school nutrition part of the curriculum. (Look up school food programs in Japan or France.) Students clean the cafeteria. At every age and stage, everyone participates. Everyone contributes;
- Share evidence-based research about the impact on childhood health and development;
- Start a ‘Vision Group’ or meet-up about what roles everyone can play — students, teachers, school community, business leaders, community leaders and government representatives;
- Find a role model program;
- Look for shared values;
- Create campaigns and presentations

aimed at students, families, potential partners;

- Develop Kickstarter partnership opportunities;
- Find a test site. Pilot program. Examine results.

Recommendation: *Develop a plan to introduce 17,000 new affordable child-care spaces.*

Failure in this area is a tradition. Let’s get creative.

- Find every section of existing government budgeting; child welfare, education, employment insurance, health care... and tie an aspect of the program to it;
- Create a vision group to search for success stories and role models;
- Contact a real estate company about site partners;
- Appeal to employees everywhere to look for potential daycare sites at or near work. Perhaps the provincial government could provide support/ rebates /start its own program;
- Envision business practices and packages that it will take to create the daycare companies to fulfil 17,000 clients;
- Empower local daycare co-ops to expand into schools or any appropriate, empty government spaces;
- Partner with architects and construction companies for plans to build and/or renovate daycares.

Yes, these may sound like impossible schemes and dreams — until somebody does it.

Recommendation: *Prioritize and invest in meaningful, well-paying jobs and training.*

It sounds like training, job creation and child-care initiatives could be the foundation of a new industry.

- How? Start with a vision.
- Who will do this?
- Someone with passion and a vision. Inspired people. Dreamers. People who don’t know it can’t be done.
- The Lee Newtons of 2021.
- A student who asks a business teacher about a daycare or babysitting program.
- A landlord who looks at four empty units and thinks... here?
- An Uber driver who says, “Hey — I can be the bus.”
- A parent who asks a school trustee what their plan is for their school community.
- An ad agency that says, “Let’s help this committee with their presentations...”
- And some of it might happen because the voices in the *Harvest Voices* report were



Supplied image
Recommendations outlined in the *Harvest Voices* report strive to create an equitable landscape for families.

heard.

Manitoba and its programs, visit www.harvestmanitoba.ca

For more information on Harvest



Join the Harvest Movement!

Hunger is on the rise. We need you to get active and help alleviate hunger in Manitoba.

Find out how at:

<https://www.harvestmanitoba.ca/ways-to-give/advocate/>