

# Governments of Canada and Alberta are improving quality, accessibility and affordability of early learning and child care across Alberta <sup>[1]</sup>

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## AVAILABILITY

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## EXCERPTS

The governments of Canada and Alberta are investing in early learning and child care systems to make life better for families with affordable, quality child care in Alberta. Today, the Honourable Amarjeet Sohi, Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, on behalf of the Honourable Jean-Yves Duclos, Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, and the Honourable Danielle Larivee, Minister of Children's Services for Alberta, announced a three-year bilateral agreement that reaffirms their commitment to children's development, helping parents with the rising costs of raising children, and addressing the unique early learning and child care needs of families in Alberta.

The agreement allocates just over \$136 million, over three years, to Alberta for early learning and child care investments. Funding to the province will focus on increasing access to quality, affordable, flexible and inclusive child care through the expansion of Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) Centres across the province. In 2017, the Government of Alberta launched 22 pilot ELCC Centres, based on a maximum fee for all parents of \$25 per day to support children and their families accessing affordable, quality, flexible and inclusive child care. With this new funding, approximately 78 additional Early Learning and Child Care Centres will be launched across Alberta in 2017–2018, an increase of more than 350%.

This announcement follows a historic agreement, made on June 12, 2017, by the Federal, Provincial and Territorial Ministers Responsible for Early Learning and Child Care on a Multilateral Early Learning and Child Care Framework. The Framework sets the foundation for governments to work towards a shared long-term vision where all children across Canada can experience the enriching environment of quality early learning and child care.

By taking care of our children today, we're growing and strengthening the middle class for years to come. The bilateral agreement is supported by long-term Government of Canada investments in early learning and child care announced in Budgets 2016 and 2017, totaling \$7.5 billion over 11 years. This is another step to help ensure that Alberta's children get the best start in life.

## Quotes

*"The development of early learning and child care systems is one of the best investments our government is making to strengthen Canadian families, society and the economy. Through the agreement signed with the Government of Alberta, we will be able to better support parents, families and communities in their efforts to build high-quality, inclusive and affordable early learning and child care."*

– The Honourable Jean-Yves Duclos, Minister of Families, Children and Social Development

*"We believe accessible, affordable quality child care is essential to positive early childhood development, labour force participation of parents, women's equality, social integration and inclusion of newcomers, and poverty reduction—all aspects of social and economic growth."*

– The Honourable Amarjeet Sohi, Minister of Infrastructure and Communities

*"Kids in Alberta deserve the best possible start to life, and our government is committed to making early learning and child care, and other life-changing opportunities, more affordable for families."*

*"We are proud to have the support of the Government of Canada to make \$25-a-day child care available to even more families in our province, and we look forward to announcing the locations of additional Early Learning and Child Care pilot centres in the very near future."*

– The Honourable Danielle Larivee, Minister of Children's Services for Alberta

## Quick Facts

- Federal Budgets 2016 and 2017 proposed to invest \$7.5 billion over 11 years, starting in 2017–18, to support and create more high-quality, affordable child care across the country, particularly for families more in need. Of this investment:

- \$95 million will go towards closing data gaps to better understand child care challenges and needs and track progress
- \$100 million will go towards early learning and child care innovation; and
- a portion will be dedicated to strengthening culturally appropriate early learning and child care for Indigenous children.
  - The federal government is working with each province and territory to enter into three-year bilateral agreements that will address the early learning and child care needs unique to its jurisdiction and funding allocation. Bilateral agreements with 11 other provinces and territories have been announced: British Columbia, Manitoba, New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, Northwest Territories, Nova Scotia, Nunavut, Ontario, Prince Edward Island, Saskatchewan and Yukon.
  - Through the bilateral agreements, the Government of Canada will provide provinces and territories with \$1.2 billion, over the next three years, for early learning and child care programs. Governments will report annually on progress made in relation to the Framework and bilateral agreements.
  - A separate Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care Framework is being co-developed with Indigenous partners to reflect the unique cultures and needs of First Nations, Inuit and Métis children and families.
  - The Alberta action plan identifies the expansion of Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) Centres as a priority to increase access to high-quality, affordable, flexible and inclusive early learning and child care across the province at \$25 per day for all parents. Federal contributions under the bilateral agreement will be used to support up to an estimated additional 78 ELCC Centres, an increase of more than 350%. The impact of the 22 ELCC Centres currently funded by Alberta gives insight into the anticipated impacts associated with the expansion of the ELCC Centres.
  - In April 2017, the Government of Alberta announced funding for 22 pilot ELCC Centres based on a maximum fee for all parents of \$25 per day. This has resulted in:
    - approximately 1,300 licensed child care spaces, of which over 700 are new;
    - approximately 120 new child care jobs province-wide; and
    - 357 parents, mainly women, able to enter the workforce.
  - This expansion from 22 ELCC Centres to approximately 100 across the province will increase the total number of children enrolled from approximately 1,300 to an estimated total of 5,800 children.
  - ELCC Centres offer improvements in child care, including flexible and extended hours to support parents working part-time or attending school, and extra support for vulnerable families.
  - ELCC Centres support the implementation of quality initiatives including the evidence-based ELCC Curriculum Framework and inclusive child care programming.

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