

Alberta adds more than 6,000 new affordable day-care spaces ^[1]

'Parents shouldn't have to choose between groceries and child care,' Premier Rachel Notley says

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AVAILABILITY

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EXCERPTS

The Alberta government has expanded its \$25-a-day child-care program by adding another 100 Early Learning and Child Care Centres to the program.

The 100 centres announced Wednesday are in addition to 22 centres that were part of the 2016 pilot project, which provided affordable child care to 1,200 kids across the province.

Adding the extra day-care centres to the program means 6,000 more children will have access to the spaces, the province said.

"Parents shouldn't have to choose between groceries and child care, which is why today's announcement means more money for groceries and more basic family necessities," Premier Rachel Notley said.

The expansion follows a bilateral agreement with the Government of Canada, which will see the federal government invest \$136 million over three years to expand Alberta's affordable child-care program. The province will invest an additional \$4.5 million toward the expansion, on top of the \$10 million announced last year.

The premier and members of her cabinet made the announcement at Norquest College, which is home to the 1000 Women Child Care Centre. The centre has 56 spaces for children aged 12 months to five years.

Province now has 7,300 affordable spaces

"Today's announcement brings the total number of affordable child-care spaces in Alberta to 7,300," Notley said. "It creates 450 child-care jobs and it allows more parents to join, or re-enter the workforce because they can have childcare that they can afford."

There are currently 880 licenced day-care programs in Alberta, with a total of just under 50,000 spaces.

The province said enrolment currently sits at just under 42,000 children.

Decisions about who qualifies for \$25 spaces are left to individual day cares. In order to qualify for the program, day cares must have not-for-profit designations.

Parents who currently have their kids enrolled in the program say it is making a difference to their bottom line.

Brianna Vere said her daughter, Ophelia, has been in a \$25-a-day centre for the last 11 months. The program cut her family's child-care costs in half while still maintaining quality child care. Before the program, Vere said she and her partner were relying on credit to pay monthly day-care costs.

"Child-care costs can be equivalent to a second mortgage or more," Vere said. "For our family, this meant we struggled to make ends meet. Our income level was such that we fell through the cracks."

The 1000 Women Child Care Centre hosted the news conference and is also one of the centres that will now offer affordable child care. It was opened in 2017 and takes care of the children of students and some outside applicants.

"We are extremely thankful to join other Early Learning and Child Care Centres in our city in providing this service," said Ann Colbourne, board chair at NorQuest College.

The province has posted a list of the Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) Centres that are part of the program.

Region: Alberta ^[3]

Tags: universal ^[4]

fees ^[5]

spaces ^[6]

funding ^[7]

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[6] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/spaces> [7] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/funding>