

# MLA's Report – Affordable daycare 'life-changing' for Albertans

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## AVAILABILITY

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## EXCERPTS

A few weeks ago, Dana and Eric Gagnon learned they were having twins.

Once the shock wore off, the shopping list began to grow: a second crib, a double-stroller, and massive loads of diapers. With a two-year-old daughter and two more coming in the fall, child care expenses were about to triple.

A few weeks later, Premier Rachel Notley announced a major expansion of our \$25-a-day child care pilot program at 100 new locations, including the Gagnon's day care at the Edmonton Military Family Resource Centre.

"It's been a godsend," Dana Gagnon said last week when I visited the centre in advance of Canadian Armed Forces Day.

"We didn't want to pull our two-year-old out of daycare."

I've heard stories like this ever since we began offering \$25-a-day child care. Parents from all backgrounds and circumstances come up and hug me, telling me how affordable child care has been "life-changing."

It's good for their kids, I tell them, and it's good for Alberta too. Universal accessible child care is a major priority for me and our government, and it will remain a priority as Alberta's economy continues to grow.

For young families like the Gagnons, the benefits are indeed life-changing. Like most moms, I know what it's like to manage a family budget. You want the best for your children. But when child care costs are like a second mortgage, your choices can suddenly become very limited.

For many moms, careers get put on hold, which has serious implications for future earning. If you want more children, those pricey early years are enough to make you rethink the possibilities.

The future is for everyone, not just the richest few. Like schools and health care services, affordable child care is something needed at important points of life. By investing in families, our communities are healthier and more sustainable.

Affordable child care is also good for kids. Children raised in loving homes are primed for success, especially when they have plentiful educational and social opportunities. Up to 90 per cent of brain development happens before a child enters kindergarten, and our pilot program has built-in curriculum improvements. Lessons learned at the snack table can set a child up for the workforce and their own future families.

Which brings me to a third point. Affordable child care doesn't simply protect pocketbooks and help families, it makes our economy stronger, more resilient and diverse.

The proof is around us. Roughly a third of Canada's real growth in gross domestic product over the last 40 years has come from more women joining the workforce. That's impressive, until you realize Canada still trails countries with stronger child care, parental leave policies.

There will soon be 122 affordable child care centres across Alberta with spaces for 7,300 children. We expect that over 1,000 parents – most of them women – will look for and find better employment opportunities. When we talk about an economic recovery built to last, this is the kind of thing we mean.

Our government has tackled an issue ignored for decades. I tell them our government wants to make life better for families today.

**Related link:** Alberta expands \$25 daycare to 78 more child-care centres [3]

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