

New report shows child care fees in Edmonton and Calgary remain high, enrolment dips due to COVID-19 ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

A new report shows child care fees in Alberta remain high while enrolment dropped during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The new study by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA), titled *Sounding the Alarm: COVID-19's impact on Canada's precarious child care sector*, involved more than 11,000 phone calls to child care centres, licensed family child care providers and in provinces using an agency-based family child care model.

The fees included in the survey are for children aged five and under in centres of family-based, full-time, regulated child care.

According to senior economist and the report's co-author David Macdonald, child care centres offering lower fees because of provincial funding were able to hold their own during the pandemic.

"Our survey shows that cities with higher fees saw bigger drops in enrolment," Macdonald said in a news release. "It's clear that relying on exorbitant parent fees to fund services that should be part of the social infrastructure is what got us into this mess in the first place. Canada's economic recovery is at risk without more, and different, support."

According to the report, in Edmonton, the median monthly child care fee for pre-school aged children was \$925 while the median monthly fees for infants was \$1,050. For toddlers it was \$950.

In Calgary, those fees were \$1,145 for pre-school aged children, \$1,300 for infants, and \$1,250 for toddlers.

Edmonton was among the top 10 cities – coming in at eighth place – that saw the largest enrolment drop. Between February and September 2020, child care enrolment decreased in the city by 43 per cent. In Calgary, it decreased by 31 per cent.

The report states the percentage decline does not show the absolute number change. However, in Edmonton, there was more than 10,000 fewer children in child care in the fall of 2020 than before the pandemic and nearly 7,000 fewer in Calgary.

Six per cent of child care centres in Edmonton reported an increase in fees due to COVID-19 pressure. Edmonton also saw a six per cent increase in pre-school aged fees in 2020 compared to 2019.

The study notes one factor that could influence the fee change is the province halting the \$25-a-day child care program in 22 of 122 centres in June 2020.

"Another factor was that subsidy rates for lower-income families increased in August 2020 and experience shows that unless parent fees are controlled, providers often raise fees when subsidy rates are increased," the report states.

"It's important to note that this survey was conducted prior to the full end of the province's \$25-a-day project on March 31, 2021. It is expected that the impact of the remaining 100 centres losing their operational support will further increase Alberta's median fees in 2021."

The survey took place between Sept. 22 and Nov. 13, 2020 – after the first wave of the pandemic – and completed shortly before the second wave. The data represents a sample of 53 per cent of regulated full-time centre-based and regulated family child care in Canada.

Related link: [Sounding the alarm: COVID-19's impact on Canada's precarious child care sector](#) ^[3]

Region: Alberta ^[4]

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