

Alberta government promises 1,500 new child-care spaces days before NDP's \$25-a-day program ends ^[1]

Author: Joannou, Ashley

Source: Edmonton Journal

Format: Article

Publication Date: 25 Mar 2021

AVAILABILITY

Access online ^[2]

EXCERPTS

The Alberta government says it will create up to 1,500 new child-care spaces across the province, including overnight care, using federal money first announced last summer.

The details of the \$9.7-million program announced Thursday by Children's Services Minister Rebecca Schulz come days before a \$25-a-day child-care pilot project created by the former NDP government is slated to end.

There's no word on how much these new spaces will cost families. Schulz said chosen providers are getting one-time grants ranging from \$1,700 to nearly \$12,000. The money is to be used by daycares and day homes to add spaces by renovating, to open new facilities or to add capacity for overnight care.

"This announcement is really about creating accessibility to child-care spaces in communities that don't have enough spaces to meet the needs of families," Schulz said. "(It's) also meeting the needs of those families who may be shift workers, frontline workers working in industry where they may work right around the clock."

She said the government will be working with operators to keep overnight care affordable and that the province already offers subsidies for parents and wage top-ups for child-care providers.

The grants are set to be handed out by March 31 and Schultz said the government is working with providers to have spaces open "over the next couple of months."

Spaces include 50 in the City of Edmonton and 206, including 24 overnight spaces, in the Edmonton area, in Sherwood Park, St. Albert and Sturgeon County.

"We have a made-in-Alberta approach that meets the needs of Alberta working families," Schulz said.

"Specifically, one of the things that we heard was much needed were those spaces for parents who work outside the typical nine to five or need care for shift workers or those who may work throughout the night."

The second phase of the NDP government's \$25-a-day child-care program, which included approximately 100 centres, ends on March 31.

In a statement, NDP children's services critic Rakhi Pancholi accused the government of rushing the federal money out the door to save face before the old program ended.

"Tomorrow, I will stand with parents of children from across the province who were enrolled in the \$25-a-day program and they will detail for Albertans just how devastating the loss of this program will be for them and their children," she said.

"Let's be clear — there is no economic recovery in Alberta without affordable child care. Creating new spaces without addressing affordability shows the UCP does not understand what is needed to get Alberta parents back to work."

In question period Wednesday, Pancholi said the NDP program was positively received and created 1,740 new child care spaces throughout rural and urban Alberta. Schultz responded by accusing her of cherry-picking data.

On Thursday Schulz defended her government's choice by saying it is part of an overall plan that will help more families across the province.

Region: Alberta ^[3]

Tags: child care spaces ^[4]

Links

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/21/03/alberta-government-promises-1500-new-child-care-spaces-days-ndps-25> [2]

<https://edmontonjournal.com/news/politics/alberta-government-uses-federal-money-for-1500-new-child-care-spaces> [3]

<https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/7859> [4] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/child-care-spaces>