

Local child care centre advocating for federal subsidy ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

One High River Day Care Centre is joining the fight, asking the UPC Provincial Government to accept the Federal \$10 a day, daycare program.

Julia Gwyn-Morris, Executive Director for Daydreams ELCC says not only would the program make monthly childcare costs an easier pill for parents to swallow, it would also lend a hand to a struggling child care sector.

"The biggest cost to care centres are educators, and during this Covid scenario we've been so restricted and limited which means we're not getting funds in." She adds "So many have been forced to close their doors, that's why we've had the situation where we've lost over 4000 educators in Alberta alone, with 120,000 educators across Canada have left the industry because we can't pay them what they're worth based on income that's coming in."

Gwyn-Morris says over 400 daycare centres in Alberta have closed their doors due to economics, and that's left families with less choice overall.

The proposed federal program would provide a stable income in the form of subsidy, which she says would help centre keep their doors open.

"They way it looks, is that all centres and family day homes that are licensed, including pre-schools out of school would be covered under this national umbrella. In a day home the businesses cost of care may \$40-\$60 dollars per day, and that cost is based on space available. It's up to you to fill that space because that's how you get your income." She explains "In this federal model, the daily cost of care is determined based on your centre, and the parent would end up paying \$10 per day per child in any licensed facility. The rest of the cost of care comes from the Federal Government who are covering 75% and the remainder coming from the province."

She says that helps immensely because the centres can rely on and expect that lump sum that they can operate within, which would relieve the day-to-day business worry.

"Currently we don't know, day-to-day we're worried because we don't know if all the parents who have children attending our centre are going to be able to pay, or are even going to be there. If your numbers drop and you can fill your licensed amount of families, that's a stress that daycare's, preschools and family day homes cannot afford."

If parents can afford to go to work, Gwyn-Morris says that will also lift strain from the general economy as well.

"When people say well I don't want to have to pay for it, you end paying for it through your taxes either way. If a parent has to stay home we end up paying taxes to cover their EI, or their health care, their mental health care costs increase and we start to pay through non-education, and we never say this about public schools, or funding schools in any capacity why is early learning different?"

Quebec is one province that does provide subsidized child care and stats provided from the Quebec's Ministry of Families show that women who entered the work force peaked at over 80% of their provincial population prior to the pandemic, and that quality of life for families also measured higher.

Gwyn-Morris attributes that to subsidized child care costs which average out to \$8.50 per day.

The board at Daydreams ELCC is continuing to lobby the government to accept the subsidized program, says Gwyn-Morris.

"We've met with Roger Reid, He came to visit and did a photo-op and we explained the positives for us as a business from the subsidized program and he promised to take our concerns to Miss Shultz, and we kept checking in to see if there was any feedback and we never got anything back from any of our efforts."

Several lobby groups and child care associations which include Childcare Now and the Canada Child Care Federation are also pressuring the government to accept the program, saying it would make life better for many Albertans.

Region: Alberta ^[3]

Tags: bilateral agreement ^[4]

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