

Alberta government rejects report projecting it won't hit federal child care fee targets ^[1]

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Source: Calgary Sun

Format: Article

Publication Date: 11 May 2022

AVAILABILITY

Access online ^[2]

EXCERPTS

Children's Services Minister Rebecca Schulz is dismissing a report that projects Alberta's two biggest cities won't hit federal child care fee targets by the end of the year.

The federal government's \$3.8-billion child care plan aims to cut average fees in half in the province by the end of 2022, before hitting the \$10-a-day mark in 2026, but Canadian Centre of Policy Alternatives (CCPA) research released Tuesday projected the monthly median fee for preschool-aged child care in Edmonton won't hit this year's target.

In question period in the legislature Tuesday, Schulz said it represents spin from a "union-funded left-wing think tank," adding 90,000 parents across the province benefit from Alberta's subsidy plan.

"Parents are paying between \$10 and \$25 a day and ... the most supports are being targeted to the parents who need it the most," said Schulz.

For her part, Opposition NDP Leader Rachel Notley accused the government of forcing Albertans to pay some of the highest fees for child care in the country, citing the CCPA report.

Speaking to reporters earlier, Schulz noted the report doesn't take into account Alberta's subsidies.

Changes made in November mean Alberta's child care subsidies range from \$266 a month for the lowest-income families to \$106 for families making under \$180,000.

Operating grants to providers aim to offset fee costs, ranging from \$450 to \$635 per child in licensed facility-based daycares, depending on age. However, co-author of the CCPA report, David Macdonald, noted the report focuses on fees charged by providers and that government rebates don't always guarantee full fee decreases.

Andrew Reith, Schulz's press secretary, said in a statement Tuesday centres are required to provide financial statements to the ministry to ensure funding agreements are met.

"In order for a program to receive the affordability grant, they must sign the grant agreement which stipulates that they must reduce the child care costs for each child care space by the full amount of the funding received," said Reith.

As part of the federal program, the province promises to create at least 42,500 new not-for-profit child-care and early learning spaces in the province.

However, NDP children's services critic Rakhi Pancholi has flagged staffing shortages as a barrier, calling on the UCP government in February to put an extra \$200 million into recruitment and training to deal with increasing demand.

Region: Alberta ^[3]

Tags: government funding ^[4]

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