

Albertans struggle to find part-time daycare despite affordable childcare grant ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

With many companies adopting hybrid work schedules as the pandemic eases, some Alberta families are having trouble finding affordable, part-time childcare.

Even with the implementation of the affordable childcare grant earlier this year, some Alberta families have noticed the grant has led to the elimination of some part-time services, lengthy part-time wait lists, and an increase in daycare fees.

That's what Dale Johnson and his wife, who both work hybrid workweeks, are dealing with right now as they struggle to find after-school care for their kids.

"For me ... if I'm going to pay for full-time rates in a part-time position, why would I not just put my child there for full-time? But we don't want our child there for full time. We want to raise our kid," said Johnson.

"Part-time rates — we were quoted almost \$500 a month a child for two days a week, for two hours a day of care. So four hours a week a child for close to \$500 a month each, which, does it justify having both spouses work at that point?"

The Johnsons have three children. The father says with waitlists being what they are, the family has no choice but to send the kids to different daycares.

The federal-provincial agreement was announced late last year by the Alberta and federal governments as part of a joint \$3.8 billion investment and agreement for accessible, affordable, and high-quality childcare.

The goal is to reduce childcare fees by 50 per cent on average by 2022. The plan also aims to provide families with a \$10-per-day childcare option for kids up to five years old, or kindergarten age, by 2026.

Childcare professionals say they understand the struggle parents are having in finding part-time care. But ultimately, with the grant making it more affordable for full-time care, these professionals admit those families tend to become the priority.

Though parents working a hybrid workweek are looking to benefit from their new schedules, some industry professionals caution it could actually hinder a child's development and social skills.

"It's a key point for a child to interact with another child, rather than staying at home watching Netflix or playing with their iPad or playing with their own toys alone," explained Rami Sarji, operator of AlphaBeeZ childcare centre.

Region: Alberta ^[3]

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waitlist ^[5]

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