

Ottawa, Alberta expanding \$10/day daycare plan to include 22,500 new private spaces ^[1]

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Source: CTV News

Format: Article

Publication Date: 31 Jan 2023

AVAILABILITY

Access online ^[2]

Excerpts

Alberta's UCP government celebrated a victory in "parental choice in child care" Tuesday while announcing that a nationwide effort to make daycare more affordable will also include thousands of new privately-operated spaces in the province.

In November 2021, Ottawa and Edmonton agreed to a \$3.8-billion deal to reduce daycare fees to \$10/day on average within five years.

As of September 2022, 112,000 spaces were eligible for funding support in both private and non-profit facilities.

The original deal included plans to open 42,500 new non-profit spaces. Tuesday's announcement would add 22,500 private spaces, with a goal of having all operating by 2025-26.

"We fought hard for a deal that would fully include our valued private operators, because we knew the success of this program relies on the innovation and creativity of these, oftentimes, female entrepreneurs," said Alberta's Minister of Municipal Affairs Rebecca Schulz.

Schulz, then the children's services minister, admitted that the original agreement "wasn't perfect" but said the UCP wanted to get a deal done to help parents save money and get back to work as soon as possible.

The federal minister of families, children and social development said the deal cannot be successful without adding new spaces to the system.

"Our expansion plan will create spaces for parents and get children off waitlists while ensuring the reasonable use of tax dollars," said Karina Gould.

Gould said studies show that for every dollar invested in early childhood education the "broader economy" receives between \$1.50 and \$1.80 in returns.

"Childcare is not just social policy, it's an economic one," said Edmonton-Centre Liberal MP Randy Boissonnault.

"And as this province is scheduled to lead the country in economic growth for the next two to three years, we need all the workers we can and childcare is a great enabler to get parents into the workforce."

The deal, officially called the Canada-Alberta Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement (ACELCC), is expected to save parents between \$450 and \$635 per month for each child receiving full-time care.

"As a government, we respect parental choice in child care and are focused on keeping child care affordable for families," said Alberta Minister of Affordability and Utilities Matt Jones.

Minister of Children's Services Mickey Amery said the agreement will include a cost-control framework stating private operators must dedicate "surpluses above reasonable earnings" to improving their child-care services. Amery didn't specify what the allowable profit would be.

As many as 1,600 private spaces "may be eligible for funding almost immediately," the Alberta government said, with another 2,000 eligible once licensing requirements are complete.

Last December, the UCP government also announced one-time payments and wage top-ups for early childhood educators in an effort to retain workers. The money came from \$13.3 in federal funding and \$2.7 million from the province.

Region: Alberta ^[3]

Tags: private child care ^[4]

public funding ^[5]

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