

'You want the best for your kid': Calgary parents struggle to find daycare spots as costs go down ^[1]

The first instalment of our two-part series delves into the lack of adequate childcare access experienced by some Calgary parents

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AVAILABILITY

Access online ^[2]

Excerpts

Kate Maxwell was driving home from work when she learned of an E. coli outbreak at the daycare her son attended.

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Four months later, Maxwell's son is in the same daycare — she said the family had no better choice.

Her first choice was to enrol her child in another daycare, but centres in Calgary say they have hundreds of children on wait lists, while parents complain of having to pay hundreds of dollars in application fees only to wait years for a space — if they ever get in.

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Federal, provincial daycare agreement changes daycare landscape

Many link the spike in demand for such spaces to an agreement in 2021 between the province and federal government that aims to bring the cost of child care down to \$10 a day.

While the agreement made daycare cheaper and encouraged more women to re-enter the workforce, some parents complain higher demand has left them with fewer choices to balance work and care for their children.

...

Child and Family Services Minister Searle Turton said the 15-month arrangement is an interim one, with the final contract to be shaped by consultations with the industry and parents over the next year.

"Until then, we are receiving feedback from operators and families about how we can as a province provide high quality, inclusive and safe child-care spaces for families," Turton said in an interview.

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The federal government said it would dole out \$30 billion — of which 3.8 billion was allocated to Alberta — to build this system over the next five years, with a subsequent investment of \$9.2 billion every year.

It was an interim arrangement until the province and federal government signed off on a model determining the specifics of a framework, including calculating the actual costs of daycare services that would be used to decide on appropriate funding for such facilities.

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High demand "speaks to the success of the agreement and the benefits it's been able to provide the families who were not considering child care earlier, but are now actually considering child care," Turton said.

He said the agreement has helped create 20,000 new licensed spaces, enrol 40,000 more children and employ 9,000 early childhood care workers in the province.

"I think a lot of people don't truly understand the benefits of having affordable child care — it allows a parent the actual choice for the first time in the province's history to come back to work or not, knowing that there's a safe place that their child can attend."

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Related link: Alberta parents of children with disabilities say they're running out of daycare options ^[3]

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