

In Alberta's radical remake of child care, costs are way down but the heavy lifting lies ahead ^[1]

Halfway through deal with Ottawa, challenges remain with access, workforce and operator buy-in

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With inflation so high these days, it may seem like the price of everything is up. But there is one massive exception: child care.

Albertans with young children have seen dramatic — even life-changing — reductions in the cost of care since the provincial and federal governments signed an agreement just over two years ago aimed at bringing the average price down to \$10 per day by 2026.

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With \$3.8-billion in federal funding commitments, the program has also helped create thousands of new child-care spaces and topped up the wages of the early-childhood educators who work at participating facilities.

And yet, the operators of some facilities are now balking at the next phase of the agreement, with some even considering opting out of the program altogether because of what they see as onerous restrictions that threaten the viability of their businesses. On Tuesday, more than a dozen facilities closed their doors for the day as a form of protest.

Some parents, meanwhile, have complained the actual fees they are paying are still higher than they were initially led to believe. And finding child care remains a challenge for many, with demand for new spaces — and workers — continuing to outpace supply.

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