

Opinion: Child care that works for all: Alberta can do better ^[1]

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Excerpts

Recent changes to Alberta's child-care system are a mixed bag of immediate and long-term adjustments. These changes have set up a system that pits families against each other, funds care without incentivizing quality, and leaves child-care workers behind.

But we still have options – quality, accessible \$10-a-day child is still possible in Alberta.

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By early 2024, Alberta had already achieved an average child-care cost of \$15/day. The UCP's latest changes, however, have kept this average but redistributed costs among parents, lowering costs for higher-income families at the expense of lower-income families. Rather than taking from some families to give to others, we could have implemented a fee cap instead of a flat fee and scaled it down for low-income families, ensuring all families benefit. Nearly every other province has a low-income subsidy under their \$10-a-day programs – nothing in the federal deal is stopping Alberta from having this as well.

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The UCP's new grant model funds providers based on average costs in set regions. This means that daycares in large regions receive the same government funding regardless of their actual costs or quality, with little room for program improvements. While regional averages are better than the older provincial average, they still mask cost and quality differences, pushing all providers toward the middle – except for families who can afford extra fees.

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