

Province thinking over how to spend child care money [CA-AB] ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

[Alberta] will take the summer to determine how to spend the \$70 million in child care funding it will receive from the federal government this year.

Children's Services Minister Heather Forsyth signed the agreement Thursday, after receiving assurances from Ottawa that Alberta can use the money for both profit and non-profit centres.

Two-thirds of the day-care centre in the province are for-profit.

Forsyth says the deal gives "maximum flexibility to meet the needs of Alberta's children" and that details of how the money will be spent will be released this fall.

"Our job over the summer is to listen, to hear what [parents] have to say, and we'll come out with our findings in the fall," Forsyth said.

But there are concerns that the Alberta-Ottawa funding agreement doesn't address the quality of care children are getting.

"It's not just about babysitting or someone looking after your child," Bill Moore-Kilgannon, of Public Interest Alberta, said. "Better quality childhood education has an impact for everyone, and so there's not a lot of details in there that reflect that.

"Let's hope that two or three years from now we're looking at a very different and better system. The only way that's going to come is with parents and people who are very concerned about the quality of our child care system actually making lots of noise."

And some parents are concerned that their needs aren't being addressed.

"I live in a rural area, I have no access to care," Lisa Lambert, who lives in Lethbridge with her two sons, says. "My children do not have regulated care. My children do not have an option for regulated care, because I work non-standard [hours]. I work nights."

Lambert estimates about 30 per cent of women living in rural areas have trouble finding quality care for their children.

- reprinted from CBC News

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