

# Province finishes last in child care spending study [CA-AB] <sup>[1]</sup>

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## AVAILABILITY

See text below.

## EXCERPTS

A new study suggests the Alberta government spends less per child on day care than any other province, leading some critics to question whether programs for toddlers are suffering.

The report, released Thursday by the University of Toronto, also found Alberta and British Columbia were the only provinces to dedicate less money to child care over the past four years.

While provincial officials suggested the report's data is improperly interpreted, researchers said Alberta's funding is falling behind other jurisdictions, adding that Canada isn't a model of adequate financing in child care.

"You can't provide quality for \$816 per space," said study co-author Martha Friendly, referring to the amount Alberta allocated for child care last year.

The report from the university's Childcare Resource and Research Unit is being released as negotiations between Alberta and the federal government continue in an attempt to reach agreement on a bilateral day-care deal.

The study found Alberta allocated \$816 for each regulated child-care space in the province in 2003-04, although that number rises to \$1,118 when school-age children are not included.

That is the smallest amount spent by any province on day-care spaces, with Prince Edward Island paying slightly more at \$1,142 per space.

The study also found that public spending on child care improved in recent years, except in Alberta and British Columbia, where it declined between 1992 and 2004.

But officials with Children's Services said they are concerned about the study's results and how they have been interpreted, arguing the research didn't include spending on several programs.

Jody Korchinski, a spokeswoman for the provincial department, said the government is requesting an independent review of the findings from the Alberta Centre for Child, Family and Community Research. "Our investments in child care are extremely generous. The conclusion that Alberta is not spending its fair share is not sound."

Yet the Alberta division of the Canadian Union of Public Employees said the study's results are "shameful," given the province's resource wealth.

- reprinted from the Edmonton Journal

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