

# Provincial budget allocates more money for child care <sup>[1]</sup>

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## AVAILABILITY

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## EXCERPTS

A \$10-million increase but otherwise status quo when it comes to the provincial budget's affect on child care.

"Overall we're really happy there hasn't been any slashes to early childhood educator wages, because that could really cripple the child-care field. And same for parent subsidies, it's really important that those have remained," said Jennifer Usher, co-ordinator of the Medicine Hat and District Child Care Association, and chairperson of Medicine Hat Early Childhood Coalition.

Thursday's provincial budget has \$297 million budgeted in 2015-16 for child care -a 3.5 per cent increase from last year.

It's "not necessarily nearly enough," to address existing child-care shortfalls in Alberta, said Usher, but it keeps "key things" and maintains child care the way it currently is.

This includes keeping the parent subsidy, accreditation wage top-up for early childhood educators, investments in inclusive child care, staff attraction allowance to bring workers back into the field, and professional development grants, she listed.

But there are other initiatives -for example a pilot project for the Alberta early learning and child-care curriculum framework of which Medicine Hat was one of five areas to pilot - whose future they're uncertain about.

And there remains the issues of a lack of quality child-care spaces, she said, while the accreditation wage top-up hasn't been raised in years meaning many ECE workers aren't earning a living wage.

It's because of this Usher urged people to advocate for ECE to MLAs and as the election approaches.

"We definitely want voters and parents, even people who aren't parents, to think about the importance of investing in childcare and early learning. Those little guys are really needing that strong foundation to go forward to be upstanding influential citizens as well."

**Region:** Alberta <sup>[3]</sup>

**Tags:** funding <sup>[4]</sup>

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