

# Alberta NDP's \$25-a-day child care plan doesn't go far enough, researcher says <sup>[1]</sup>

**Author:** Fletcher, Robson

**Source:** Metro News

**Format:** Article

**Publication Date:** 24 May 2015

## AVAILABILITY

Read online <sup>[2]</sup>

## EXCERPTS

Premier Rachel Notley's pledge to push child-care costs down to \$25 per day may bring hope to financially stretched parents in Alberta, but a leading public-health researcher says the NDP's proposed policy doesn't go nearly far enough.

"Kudos to actually saying putting more money into child care is important, because it is ... but they don't back it up with investing the dollars that will make it so," Dr. Paul Kershaw said of the winning party's platform.

As an associate director of the Human Early Learning Partnership at the University of British Columbia, Kershaw studies the long-term impacts of early-childhood education and care at a population-health level.

He said the growing body of evidence is "absolutely" clear in showing that access to high-quality child care "makes kids more likely to succeed in school, less likely to wind up in jail, and less likely to end up sick in a hospital when they're older."

But, even at \$25 a day, which works out to more than \$6,000 a year, he noted the cost of early-childhood care remains higher than most university tuition in Alberta, and the burden of that cost falls on parents who are "facing a fundamentally different reality" than the previous generation.

"They make less money for full-time work, they need more parents in the labour force for more time than in the past, and then they face higher housing prices after starting with larger student debt," he said.

Alberta already had the largest age gap in per-capita social spending under the previous PC regime, Kershaw noted, and, if the NDP government lives up to its platform, he estimates that gap will grow even wider, with the province spending more than \$18,000 per Albertan over the age of 65 compared to around \$7,800 per Albertan under 45.

"I don't know any families that want to pit generations against one another but the platform, even of the winning party, is to some degree doing that," Kershaw said.

For many parents, the lack of affordable child care remains a barrier to "being able to get out and achieve employment," said Lucy Miller, president and CEO of the United Way of Calgary and Area.

She added more accessible child care is "one of the big things we need to provide in order to put people in a position where they can be independent and make a contribution."

Quebec's system of subsidized daycare is far from perfect, Kershaw said, but one thing it has revealed is that governments, to a certain extent, realize a relatively quick return on their investment in affordable care through increased participation in the labour force.

"What you're facilitating, in particular, is more female labour-force participation," he said.

"Some of that comes back in tax dollars," Kershaw added. "There is an increasing amount of evidence that, even in the first or second year of child-care investments, at a population level, you're getting somewhere between a third and a half of it back."

-reprinted from Metro News

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

**Tags:** affordability <sup>[4]</sup>  
accessibility <sup>[5]</sup>

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/15/05/alberta-ndp%E2%80%99s-25-day-child-care-plan-doesn%E2%80%99t-go-far-enough> [2] <http://www.metronews.ca/news/calgary/2015/05/24/alberta-ndps-25-a-day-child-care-plan-doesnt-go-far-enough-researcher-says.html> [3] <https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/7859> [4] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/affordability> [5] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/accessibility>