

Child care becoming 'privilege' only upper-income Canadians can afford: advocate ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

Ridiculous. Expensive. Crazy. Those are just a few of the adjectives some Alberta parents use to describe the cost of child care.

Edmonton mother Amanda King decided it made sense to stay home to raise her 16-month-old daughter Penelope instead of returning to work considering the sky-high costs of care.

"It's like \$1,200 a month, so I would just rather cut costs elsewhere and stay home with her than send her somewhere else," King said.

According to a Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives report called *They Go Up So Fast: 2015 Child Care Fees in Canadian Cities*, the median cost for monthly, licensed full-day child care in Edmonton was \$900 for infants, \$790 for toddlers and \$800 for preschoolers. Calgary parents paid slightly more, with a median cost of \$1075 for babies, \$960 for toddlers and \$910 for preschoolers.

Ashley Wright-Caveny is preparing to send her daughter to a day home this September when she heads back to work after maternity leave. The care will cost her family \$750 per month.

"It would be nice if there was more benefit given to parents who are at work to lower the cost of it," Wright-Cavney said.

Both Alberta's NDP government and the federal Liberals campaigned on family-friendly platforms. The Liberals promised to deliver "affordable, high-quality, flexible, and fully inclusive child care." The NDP campaigned on \$25 a day child care, contingent on the province's finances.

Both plans have yet to come to fruition although in April, the Notley government earmarked \$10 million toward its child care plan. A spokesperson for the Trudeau government said the National Early Learning and Child Care Framework it's working on, could be approved as early as this fall. The Liberals' plan would allow for provinces and territories to tap into \$400 million over the next fiscal year.

Relief for parents can't come soon enough, said Nicki Dublenko with the Alberta Child Care Association.

"It needs to be accessible for low and middle-income families so that child care is not becoming a privilege (only) for upper-income families," Dublenko said.

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