

Bilateral Agreement on Early Learning and Child Care for Alberta

Alberta At-a-Glance	
Spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regulated centre-based spaces are available for 21.8% of children aged 0-5 (2016)²⁷ Kindergarten is not compulsory though the vast majority of 5-year-olds attend
Fees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mean average monthly fees in centres, province-wide (2016): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Infants - \$884 12 months - 19 months - \$938 19 months - 3 years - \$864 3 years - 4.5 years - \$828 4.5+ years - \$796 Median monthly full-time fees in Calgary (2017): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Infant: \$1,250 Toddlers: \$1,050 Preschool: \$1,000
Auspice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 58% of regulated child care for children 0-12 years is for-profit (2016)
Wages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Median gross hourly wages of program staff: \$15.33 (2012) Median gross hourly wages of program directors: \$20 (2012)
Provincial Allocations (2015-2016) Total spending on regulated child care: \$263,844,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fee subsidies: \$139,302,000 One-time funding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff certification \$972,000 Recurring funding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accreditation \$101,182,000 Infant care incentive \$8,000,000 Specialized child care (including inclusive) \$5,782,000 Family day home agency contracts \$6,806,867 Northern Allowance \$2,169,000 Other related funding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Home visitation \$9,896,000 Parent Link centres \$26,210,000 Kin Child Care \$2,200,000

²⁷ All provinces and territories also provide regulated home child care. However, an age breakdown (0-5, 6-12) is not available. In 2016, there were enough regulated spaces (including centres and home child care) in Alberta to cover 16% of children aged 0-12.

Recent Initiatives in Alberta

In March 2017, the province initiated a new approach to child care that is centred on the development of ELCC Centres, supported with a budgetary promise of \$10 million over three years. The centrepiece of the ELCC Centre approach is a fee cap of \$25/day. The ELCC Centre approach also focuses on creating spaces, enhancing quality, addressing gaps in the current system, and enhancing program evaluation:

- Offer flexible care for parents who work shifts and part-time, and in accessible settings that include co-location with other public buildings.
- Implement the early learning child care curriculum *Play, Participation, and Possibilities*.
- Support children with diverse needs.
- Collaborate with other service organizations to support knowledge about cultural diversity and language acquisition, recognition of Indigenous children, provision of parenting resources and support, and support for vulnerable families who are in need.

Not all centres use this approach. As a result, there is some variation based on local and community needs. The first phase of this approach is to transform 13 existing child care programs into ELCC Centres, and to create 9 new ELCC Centres (Government of Alberta, 2018).

ALBERTA'S ACTION PLAN

After this initial pilot project of 22 centres, the province will expand the ELCC Centre approach to include 100 more centres (82 of these are existing programs, and 18 new centres will be added) (Government of Alberta, 2018).

The province plans to use federal funding to expand the ELCC Centre program. The Action Plan specifies that federal contributions will be used to support an estimated **78 ELCC Centres** along with 22 Centres funded by the Government of Alberta. The federal contributions will take the form of operating grants to ELCC Centres. This process has already begun: disbursements for successful applicants began in March 2018.

The Expression of Interest guidelines for potential ELCC Centres provides the most detailed information about what is expected in terms of affordability, accessibility, quality, and inclusivity. Programs that are approved as ELCC Centres must demonstrate the following as conditions of their receipt of operating grants:

- Access: up to \$3,000 per centre for space creation (spaces that are entirely new or the result of increased enrolment). Where feasible, new spaces must be created in communities with shortages, poor early development outcomes, and high community needs; must increase participation of infants and/or children with diverse needs; must be co-located within community buildings and partnered with public institutions; and must be located in a nurturing environment.

- Affordability: parents fees must be capped at \$25/day; child care subsidy and accreditation programs must be available.
- Quality: ELCC Centres must implement the *ELCC Curriculum Framework*; must support on-site professional development that enables full participation of all children including those with diverse needs; and must encourage parents to engage in a quality assurance process. It is also suggested that ELCC Centres introduce wage floors, although this is optional (and funded by the province).
- Improvements: Expressions of Interest must include one or more improvements, depending on local community needs. This could include collaborating with local service organizations, supporting language acquisition or rural child care, and offering flexible hours.
- Other: Selected ELCC Centres must participate in evaluations and a learning community with other sites; share financial records; and conform to other provincial requirements around branding.



Federal transfers	Year 1: \$45,630,673	Year 2: \$45,593,076	Year 3: \$45,593,076	Total: \$136,816,825
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Availability
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approximately \$9.98 million in each of the three years to support availability and accessibility, including creating new spaces, improving enrollment, and serving children with special/varying needs. It is estimated that 3,000 new spaces will be created.
Affordability
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approximately \$23.19 million in each of the three years to support affordability, specifically by capping parent fees at \$25/day. This will support family needs such as flexible/extended hours, infant/toddler spaces, rural spaces, and support for children with diverse needs. It is estimated that up to 4,500 children will benefit.
Auspice
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Action Plan briefly notes that the Expression of Interest process will invite grant proposals from not-for-profit organizations that currently operate, or propose to operate, a licensed day care program, but gives no further specifics on this point.
Inclusion, Equity, Diversity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The money spent on enhancing availability and affordability (above) includes services for children and families with diverse and flexible needs. Approximately \$4.79 million in each of the three years to implement the ELCC curriculum framework <i>Play, Participation, and Possibilities</i> and inclusive child care practices for children with diverse needs. It is estimated that 4,500 children will benefit. Approximately \$6.04 million in each of the three years to support improvements, such as flexibility and inclusivity (as set out in the Expression of Interest Guide), linguistic diversity, and language acquisition. It is estimated that 4,500 children will benefit: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and implement a French language version of the online Child Care Orientation course Support the curriculum framework for Francophone child care practitioners
Other
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approximately \$1.6 million in each of the three years for administrative costs.

What is innovative about the Alberta Action Plan?

The Action Plan identifies several elements of the ELCC Centre program that they claim reflect their commitment to innovative approaches, including the widespread adoption of the *ELCC Curriculum Framework*; on-site coaching models designed to improve staff competencies; community hub models of child care and parent programs; and on-site coaching to improve compliance to regulations and the promotion of quality.

Following the signing of the Multilateral Framework Agreement on Early Learning and Child Care in 2017, the federal government reached a bilateral agreement with each province and territory, and an asymmetrical agreement with Quebec. For more information about these agreements, go to

timeforchildcare.ca

