

# Canada-Alberta Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement

## Information for Operators

### Affordability – General

#### Fee Reductions

- Alberta is committed to reducing parent fees through operating grants that will directly support child care providers. We'll be continuing with the targeted supports that Alberta parents have come to rely on through our established Child Care Subsidy Program.
- There are two ways we are making child care more affordable: operating grants and parent subsidy.
- Alberta will reduce fees to an average of \$10/day by providing operational grants directly to programs and by using the current subsidy system with new rates and thresholds starting in early 2022.
- Programs will receive an operational grant per enrolled licensed space. This will be a fixed amount based on age grouping and program type, with increased funding for infant spaces to reduce fees and incentivize spaces dedicated to children under 19 months.
- Programs can still raise their fees by three per cent annually to address inflation and increased costs.
- We are working with the federal government to determine when the full child care agreement can be released.

#### Operating Grants

- An operating grant is fixed monthly funding, calculated at varying rates for each child care type and age category, to help programs cover the day-to-day costs of running a licensed child care facility.
- Operating grants help ensure that licensed programs can lower parent fees while maintaining, or increasing, the quality that Albertans expect from their child care programs.
- To receive an operating grant, eligible operators will need to commit to working with the Government of Alberta to ensure the fees for all Alberta families reach an average of \$10/day in the next five years.
- Programs that receive an operational grant will be required to limit annual parent fee increases to three per cent or less.

- Families who are eligible for the child care subsidy program will be able to apply for the new rates and thresholds online at [alberta.ca/child-care-subsidy.aspx](https://alberta.ca/child-care-subsidy.aspx). Receiving subsidy will further reduce their parent fees.
- Alberta's subsidy model means that families in need will get the most support.

#### Eligibility Criteria for Operating Grants

- All existing licensed spaces (and those currently in the approval process) for children not yet in kindergarten will be included in the operational grant.
- This includes licensed daycares, preschools and family day homes under licensed family day home agencies.
- The funding is the same for all existing not-for-profit and private programs as well as those currently in the process of becoming licensed.

#### Grant Calculation

- Using historical data, Alberta determined the average child care fee for a licensed space (child care type and age group) as of June 2021, and calculated the necessary operating grant required to reduce fees in half for 2021-22.
- Operating grants have been calculated, per enrolled space per month, based on the type of child care and the age group.
- Infant spaces (for children under 19 months) will receive the highest grant rates given the low staff to child ratio and the additional costs of operating spaces for this age group.

#### Application Process for Operating Grants

- We are working on a specific application process and will be sharing more details with you very soon.
- We also encourage you to visit [alberta.ca/ChildCareDeal](https://alberta.ca/ChildCareDeal) to find the most up to date information about how to participate.

## Authorized Uses for Operating Grants

- Eligible programs can use operating grants for the day-to-day costs of running a licensed child care facility.

## Space Creation

### Eligibility Criteria for Space Creation

- We'll begin creating new spaces in spring of 2022 and will focus on building capacity in licensed not-for-profit and home-based child care, with up to 42,500 spaces in these settings over the next five years.
- Starting in 2022-23, we'll be creating about 10,000 new not-for-profit licensed spaces.
- Family day homes under licensed agencies will also be an important part of building access to new child care spaces in the province. We will be working with licensed family day home agencies to help eliminate barriers for unlicensed providers to become part of the licensed system
- We'll be sharing more information on our space creation plan as soon as we can.

### Space Creation for Private Operators

- We know private programs are often run by female entrepreneurs or are family-owned businesses, offering valuable, quality programs for families. While we hope to create new capacity in the non-profit child care sector, we will not be requiring private operators to switch to a non-profit model.
- Recognizing Alberta's mixed market system, the governments of Canada and Alberta will create a Canada-Alberta Implementation Committee. The committee will develop an expansion plan and cost control framework to support the growth of additional regulated spaces by licensed providers in the private sector.
- This work will begin immediately. We expect it to be completed by early 2023.
- We expect that private providers will be invited to create new spaces near the end of 2023 to meet the demand for spaces throughout Alberta.

### Funding Eligibility Criteria for New Private Operators

- Alberta recognizes the importance of our mixed-market system, which is why we advocated to include private operators in this agreement.
- If you have already begun the licensing process, you will be eligible to be included for funding.

- While any program is welcome to begin the licensing process at any time, new privately-owned/operated programs will not be eligible for funding under this agreement until early 2023. This means these new programs will not be eligible for operating grants, and families enrolled in these programs will not be eligible for subsidies or reduced fees.
- If a child care business is sold, the new owners will be eligible for the same grants and subsidies as the previous owner if the business is still in the same location and serves the same number of clients.

### Reduced Fees and Impact on Enrolment

- We know that licensed programs are not at 100 per cent enrolment right now. We have many spaces in the system.
- In other jurisdictions, as fees decrease, we have seen parent demand increase.

## Quality

### Investing in Quality

- Alberta will continue to invest in the child care workforce. One of the primary methods to support quality programming is to support the early childhood educator (ECE) workforce.
- We have an effective and long-standing wage top-up model that serves as a salary grid and provides all certified ECEs in licensed facility-based and home-based child care programs with a wage enhancement.
- We are committed to increasing the total number of ECEs to meet the demand for new spaces by working to address capacity in our post-secondary institutions to train new early childhood educators.
- We'll use federal funding under this agreement to support the increased workforce that will be accessing wage enhancements as Alberta's child care sector grows.

### Educator Training

- The Government of Alberta knows that quality care starts with quality educators. We have negotiated in this agreement funds for professional development and training to support early childhood educators.
- We will also increase investments in professional development and skills training, which includes investing in supports for staff release time. Staff release time includes paying a staff's wages for education and training and/or wages for a staff to offset the costs to operators and increase ECEs ability to participate.
- We'll also use some of the quality investments to support ECEs to increase their certification level.

- We will continue to expand existing investments in quality frameworks, standards and tools for early learning and child care. Alberta plans to expand access to the FLIGHT curriculum, making it more accessible for child care programs

### Eligibility Criteria for Quality Supports

- All existing licensed child care programs and new created spaces will be able to access and benefit from quality supports.

### Workforce Recruitment

- Along with previous investments, we will provide supports to operators to help them recruit, retain, and develop early childhood educators. We are optimistic we will see the number of educators in Alberta increase.

### General Information on Wage Top-Ups

- Alberta has one of the highest wage top-ups in the country for early childhood educators, so that centres can recruit and retain the best staff.
- About 15,000 early childhood educators receive wage top ups. Wage top-ups vary according to an educator's certification level.
  - Level 3 ECEs receive \$6.62 per hour on top of their employer paid wage,
  - Level 2 ECEs receive \$4.05 per hour on top of their employer paid wage, and
  - Level 1 ECEs receive \$2.14 per hour on top of their employer paid wage.
- We are expanding the eligible hours to claim wage top up to include planning and administrative time.

### ECE Salary in Alberta

- In September 2021, Alberta's average early childhood educator salary across certification Levels 1 to 3 was \$46,048.75. Those with Level 3 certification make on average \$53,536.32/year.
- Alberta is in the top five Canadian jurisdictions for overall ECE wages and top two for Level 3 wages.
- Alberta has one of the highest minimum wages for ECEs in the country.
- Almost 70 per cent of child care staff are already receiving an employer-paid wage of more than the minimum before government wage top ups.
- Early childhood educators can access the wage top up program based on their certification level. Programs are free to increase an ECE's base rate as a retention measure.
- Alberta's goal is to maintain the same wage top ups across the child care sector in all licensed care.

- Over the course of the agreement, Alberta will commit to exploring increases to the wage top-up program and other benefit considerations to the grid that will help recruit and retain high-quality, trained educators.

## Inclusion

### Inclusive Programming

- The Alberta-Canada ELCC agreement will provide funding to help programs meet the unique needs of Alberta families. We'll be investing in inclusive programming, as well as access to cultural and language resources to ensure all Albertans have the child care they need.

### Accessing Inclusive Child Care Supports

- The Inclusive Child Care Program is being phased in across the province. Child care programs can contact their licensing officer to find out which inclusive child care supports are available in their area.
- The Inclusive Child Care Program (ICC) will work with you to gather information and conduct a screening so they can figure out which supports each program will need.
- ICC supports provided may include:
  - Onsite consultation from a trained expert in inclusion strategies and environmental modifications;
  - Training on how to implement the evidence-based Pyramid Model through the Access, Support and Participation (ASaP) program;
  - Individualized in-person instruction to programs needing more support to offer an inclusive program; and
  - Short-term funding to add additional staff to enhance the staff to child ratio.

### Funding for the Inclusive Child Care Program

- For the remaining months of year 1 (2021-22), we'll use \$200K to complete the expansion of the ICC program across the province.
- In year 2 (2022-23), we'll invest \$21M to expand further access to the Inclusive Child Care program across Alberta to grow with the number of spaces being created at the same time.

## Unlicensed Sector

### Private Day Homes

- This agreement only applies to licensed providers. To be included in this agreement, unlicensed providers are encouraged to consider the benefit of becoming a family day home provider under a licensed family day home agency.
- Private day homes can apply to a licensed family day home agency if they wish to become a licensed provider.
- Private day homes may be interested in exploring Alberta Biz Connect at [alberta.ca/biz-connect.aspx](https://alberta.ca/biz-connect.aspx). This website provides workplace guidance and supports to help businesses affected by COVID-19 operate safely and support their recovery.

### Becoming a Licensed Day Home Provider

- We encourage you to contact your local child care licensing office or Child Care Connect toll-free at 1-844-644-5165.
- Information is also available on our website at [alberta.ca/become-an-approved-family-day-home.aspx](https://alberta.ca/become-an-approved-family-day-home.aspx).

### Becoming a Family Day Home Agency

- You can submit an application to become a family day home agency, as outlined in *Alberta's Early Learning and Child Care Act*. You can find more information, including the application form, at: [alberta.ca/starting-a-child-care-program.aspx](https://alberta.ca/starting-a-child-care-program.aspx)

### Operating Grants for Day Home Agencies

- Information regarding operational grants for family day home agencies is coming soon.
- Licensed family day home agencies are eligible to receive operational grants based on differing amounts for child age (infant, toddler and preschool-aged children) and enrolment.
- We're also looking at additional funding to support the monitoring and professional development functions that licensed family day home agencies are also required to perform.

## Schools / School Boards

- The investments under this agreement are specifically earmarked for child care programs that are licensed and regulated under our *Early Learning and Child Care Act* and Regulation for children not yet enrolled in school (including kindergarten).

- This agreement does not apply to Early Childhood Services (ECS) programs under the *School Act* and overseen by school boards.
- If a school board is a license holder to any licensed preschool programs, this agreement and the available funding and supports might be available to them.