

Alberta's Five-Point Investment Plan

In 2005, Children's Services asked Albertans what was important to families regarding child care, whether parents go to work, go to school or stay at home.

Albertans said their priorities were to:

- Help low and middle income families access affordable child care;
- Provide new supports to stay-at-home parents;
- Help families with disabled children access specialized child care;
- Improve the quality of child care and increase wages and training opportunities for child care professionals; and
- Provide parents with more information, resources and early intervention opportunities.

Based on this feedback, the province has introduced an innovative new plan to make child care more affordable and to improve access to early childhood development opportunities.



1 Albertans want regulated child care to be affordable for low and middle income families

The province responded:

New income eligibility thresholds

Starting November 1, the maximum income for families to receive full subsidy has increased by 25 per cent. In addition, more families earning over the maximum income thresholds, will qualify for a partial subsidy.

For example, currently, a two-parent family with one infant and one pre-school child earning \$31,680 annually qualifies for a full child care subsidy of \$855 per month. Starting November 1, this same family can earn up to \$39,600 and qualify for a full child care subsidy of \$1,075 per month.

In the case of a partial child care subsidy, currently the same size family earning \$51,600 qualifies for a subsidy of \$25 per month. Starting November 1, this same family can earn \$70,000 and qualify for \$230 per month.

These changes, along with adjustments to the subsidy model will increase the number of low and middle income families now eligible to receive a child care subsidy by almost 50 per cent.

Increased subsidy rates

Families working shifts or non-traditional hours can now receive extended hour subsidy. This applies to low and middle income parents working hours outside the regular 6 a.m. – 6 p.m.

Low and middle income families, who have a relative looking after a child while the parents work or attend school, may benefit from the Kin Child Care Program. Relatives must be providing child care outside the family home.

INCREASED SUBSIDY RATES	DAY CARE			FAMILY DAY HOME		
	Current rate	New rate	Extended hour	Current rate	New rate	Extended hour
Infants	\$475	\$575	\$675	\$300	\$475	\$575
Pre-school	\$380	\$500	\$600	\$300	\$400	\$500

KIN CHILD CARE PROGRAM	Current rate	New rate
		\$240

2 Albertans want more support for parents to stay at home to care for their children

The province responded:

Starting January 2006, eligible stay-at-home parents will be able to receive a new subsidy of up to \$100 per month to help their pre-school-age children participate in early childhood opportunities. Funding will be provided directly to licensed nursery schools and other approved early childhood programs.

Approved early childhood development programs refer to community-based services that provide opportunities for pre-school children – either on their own, or with a parent – to participate in activities that promote healthy childhood development.

3 Albertans want better access to child care for children with disabilities

The province responded:

Increased funding will provide more child care spaces and more opportunities for staff who care for children with disabilities, to receive specialized training.

4 Albertans want quality child services

The province responded:

Child care accreditation funding for day care centres and family day home agencies supports quality programming, recruitment of qualified staff and their professional development. Increases to the child care accreditation funding program are retroactive to September 1, 2005.

5 Albertans want better supports in their role as primary caregiver and more access to early intervention services

The province responded:

Supports for parents and early intervention programs, including developmental screening and assessment services, will be significantly improved. Parents will have access to better on-site and outreach early intervention services, as well as expanded respite programs for at-risk families. New programs will improve language, literacy and multicultural supports for francophone, new immigrants and Aboriginal off-reserve communities. These enhanced programs will roll out later this year following further development and consultation.

Families experiencing domestic violence will have access to regulated child care and specialized child care supports while they work toward safe and healthy lives.



PROGRAM SUPPORTS	PRE-ACCREDITED		ACCREDITED	
	Current rate	New rate	Current rate	New rate
Day Care	\$300 to \$1,200*	\$450 to \$1,800*	\$2,400 to \$4,800*	\$2,640 to \$5,280*
Family Day Homes	\$600 to \$1,200*	\$900 to \$1,800*	\$2,400 to \$4,800*	\$2,640 to \$5,280*

* Annually, based on size of program

STAFF SUPPORT FUNDING	PRE-ACCREDITED		ACCREDITED	
	Current rate	New rate	Current rate	New rate
DAY CARE CENTRES				
Trained Day Care Staff • Level 1 (50 hour course)	\$0.46/hr	\$0.64/hr	\$0.58/hr	\$0.96/hr
Trained Day Care Staff • Level 2 (1 year certificate)	\$0.61/hr	\$1.21/hr	\$0.76/hr	\$1.81/hr
Trained Day Care Staff • Level 3 (2 year diploma)	\$0.94/hr	\$1.97/hr	\$1.18/hr	\$2.96/hr
FAMILY DAY HOMES				
Trained Agency Staff	\$0.61/hr	\$1.21/hr	\$0.76/hr	\$1.81/hr
Trained Caregivers	\$80/month	\$110/month	\$100/month	\$166/month

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT GRANTS	Current rate	New rate
DAY CARE/TRAINED AGENCY STAFF	\$250 annually	\$1,000 annually

Exploring Future Options

During the consultations, Albertans also expressed interest in tax credits for stay-at-home parents. Although Alberta pushed the boundaries of the agreement with Social Development Canada, this particular option was outside the mandate of this federal agreement. However, the province will forward the results of the consultation to the federal government and strongly advocate for tax changes that will benefit stay-at-home parents across Canada.

Alberta's five-point investment plan is contingent on continued federal funding. Therefore, we will join our Provincial and Territorial colleagues to advocate that the federal government continue this funding on an ongoing basis.

PARENT INFORMATION LINE

For information about the child care options available in Alberta, or to obtain an online application form, go to the Alberta Children's Services website at: www.child.gov.ab.ca.

You can also call the new Parent Information Line at: 1-866-714-KIDS, toll-free from anywhere in Alberta. This service is available from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m., Monday to Saturday (closed on Sundays and government holidays).