

If we want families to contribute to the economy or continue their education, early learning & child care has to be part of Alberta's economic plan.

With **73% of mothers with young children (0-5) participating in Alberta's workforce**, we require safe, high quality early learning programs for children, prior to school entry, that provide the foundation for achieving better education, health, social and economic outcomes over the long-term.

Unfortunately, **only 25% of Alberta's children aged 0 to 5 have access to a licensed or regulated child care space and only 15% have access at age 6 to 12**. Approximately **28% of our current licensed child care programs are non-compliant with the Child Care Licensing Act and Regulation**. Low quality child care remains an issue as a result of early childhood educators not being well-prepared for this important work.

In order to open more spaces, Alberta needs **to graduate at least 7,000 new early childhood educators to a diploma level and maintain the current 15,500 educators we have in the system**. Staff turnover rates are high, graduation rates are low and compensation levels deter those looking to enter the field.

Research shows that high quality child care must be provided by educated and competent early childhood educators. **Currently, 39% of Alberta's early childhood educators are certified to work with children having completed only a 54 hour online course with no English language requirement. This needs to change.**

We require planning mechanisms, not only to address the child care space shortage but also to address the early childhood education workforce challenges – recruitment and retention, diploma graduate numbers, post-secondary capacity, compensation, workplace supports, and bursary supports. Alberta's families cannot work without addressing these issues.

Our funding model no longer works as parents cannot afford the fees for infant care at \$15,000/year in Calgary and \$11,880/year in Edmonton. Toddler fees are \$12,600/year in Calgary and \$11,880/year in Edmonton. **Many parents cannot afford to contribute to Alberta's economy even if they wanted to.** Early Learning and Child Care must be seen differently and funded differently. Early learning starts prior to school entry.

Poor wages, the view that early childhood educators are 'just babysitters' and the lack of system support does not help the situation. Organizations require supply side funding to keep their employees, provide high quality environments and ensure the workforce is competent and able to address the complex needs that many of Alberta's children are presenting with.

Research and experience shows the #1 indicator of quality in early learning and care settings is the knowledge, education and capacity of the adults working with young children.

For more information:

Susan Garrow-Oliver sgarrow@mtroyal.ca

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