



## Public Interest Alberta

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### **Government Under Spends on Childcare by \$19.2 million Policy leaves many low-income families unable to access quality childcare**

The Ministry of Children's Services and Supports recently released audited annual report reveals that the provincial government under spent the childcare budget by \$19.2 million (10% of its total budget). This latest annual report brings the total under spending of the provincial budget close to \$100 million since 2001.

"Despite a rapidly growing population, long waiting lists and far too many low-income families struggling to find quality childcare, it is shocking to see the provincial government is under-spending its budget in such a vital service for families," says Bill Moore-Kilgannon, Executive Director of Public Interest Alberta. "If this was a one-time occurrence, then I think we could give the Ministry a little more slack, but when it is practically the same story every year, you really have to question their budgeting skills."

The Ministry claims in the audited report they "under-spent by \$19.2 million because fewer families than expected accessed the subsidies that were available. This occurred primarily because a higher proportion of the spaces were utilized by middle and upper-income families who do not qualify for subsidy." (page 62)

"If we have so many low-income families who are not accessing subsidies, then we need to take a serious look at how our market-based childcare policy leaves out low-income people who cannot afford the increased costs of childcare above the subsidy rate," says Moore-Kilgannon. "We need a policy that supports public community-based childcare for children who live in low-income families that cannot afford to pay hundreds of dollars per month per child above the provincial subsidy."

According to a new study from the Childcare Resource and Research Unit at the University of Toronto, the number of children below the age of 12 who have a mother in the work force grew to 342,000 from 315,000 between 2003 to 2007.

"Yes, the Alberta government has increased spending in the past years on childcare, but we need to recognize that much of this increase has gone to the very important new policy for after-school care, and that our childcare budget is still the lowest in Canada. I am sure many families who are struggling to find and afford quality childcare will be very upset to find out that the government is not even spending the full amount from a budget that is already way too low," concludes Moore-Kilgannon.

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Bill will be available for media interviews throughout the day.