



May 12, 2009

Year one of provincial child care space creation initiative sees great success

More than 9,400 new spaces created

Edmonton... Alberta's *Creating Child Care Choices* space creation plan resulted in 9,449 new child care spaces and more than 1,100 new staff choosing to work in Alberta's licensed or approved child care programs during the first year of the initiative. The Alberta government's commitment to child care has helped ease the challenges some parents have had when looking for affordable, quality child care.

"We're very pleased with the progress we've seen through the first year of the initiative. It's great news for families needing care for their pre-school and school-age children," said Janis Tarchuk, Minister of Children and Youth Services. "Child care operators and their staff, business owners, school boards, community organizations and the 10 child and family services authorities are to be commended for working together and finding innovative ways to improve access to quality child care across the province."

The *Creating Child Care Choices* plan, introduced in May 2008, offers communities a range of funding initiatives and tools to support the creation of 14,000 new child care spaces by 2011; help operators attract and keep qualified staff; and make access to quality child care more affordable for low- and middle-income parents.

Space Creation Innovation funding offers operators up to \$1,500 for each new space created to help offset the costs of planning, minor renovations, and purchasing supplies, equipment and toys. This initiative has helped to create new spaces in 87 urban and rural communities.

To help operators ensure the sustainability of these spaces, a number of steps have been taken, including enhancing accreditation funding and staff wage top-ups, and introducing a new business support program (a first of its kind in Canada).

The Alberta government is continuing to work with communities to reach the three-year space creation goal of 14,000. The government has provided funding to school boards for the purchase and placement of 44 modulars that will be used to open new child care spaces adjacent to schools later this year. Funding also supports the renovations of two existing facilities on Métis Settlements that will be used for two new day care programs to help meet the needs of the Métis community.

"The child care profession is in a really good place right now," said Traudi Kelm, President of the Day Care Society of Alberta. "Staff are feeling a lot more secure and compensated in their jobs and operators are finding it much easier to hire and keep trained staff, leaving more time to concentrate

on delivering high-quality child care programming.”

In 2009-10, the government will invest \$206 million in child care, which includes continued support for the second year of its three-year child care space creation strategy. For more details on the allocation of funding, visit www.child.alberta.ca/childcare.

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Attachment: Additional year-one highlights

Media inquiries may be directed to:

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Improving access to quality, affordable child care - progress made to date

The Alberta government has a number of initiatives underway to help create 14,000 new child care spaces by 2011; help operators attract and keep qualified staff; and make access to quality child care more affordable for low- and middle-income parents. Highlights from the first year of the three-year plan are as follows:

Making child care programs more affordable for low- and middle-income families.

- Increased pre-school subsidy rates by 3.5 per cent. 10,435 families are now receiving subsidy.
- Introduced a new provincial subsidy for eligible families with school-age children. 3,792 families needing before- and after-school care are now receiving subsidy.

Increasing the number of quality licensed and approved child care programs.

- 9,449 new child care spaces have been created and are open for business in licensed day care centres, pre-schools, out-of-school cares and approved family day homes across the province.
 - 2,558 in day care centres
 - 3,229 in out-of-school cares
 - 2,007 in pre-schools
 - 753 in approved family day homes
 - 892 in kin child care*
 - 10 in group family child care**
- Expanding the criteria for the Space Creation Innovation Initiative to include the school-age sector; and introducing the Retention Stability Grant and the Staff Attraction Incentive Allowance to help operators recruit and retain staff played a key role in the significant increase in the number of licensed out-of-school care spaces.
- 204 grant applications were received and approved for funding through the Space Creation Innovation Initiative. A copy of the report, broke out by regions in Alberta is available at www.child.alberta.ca/childcare.
- Approved grant applications, submitted by school boards to support the purchase and installation of 44 modulars that will increase the number of spaces adjacent to schools later this year, as well as the funding provided to the Métis Settlements to renovate existing facilities. A copy of the modular report is available at www.child.alberta.ca/childcare.
- Over the past year, 2,552 spaces have closed. The majority of these spaces were closed on a voluntarily basis due to reasons such as the operator moved, retired, or sold the business, similar to what other business sectors experience.
 - 619 in day care centres
 - 834 in out-of-school cares

- 890 in pre-schools
 - 209 in approved family day homes
 - As a result, Alberta experienced a net gain of 6,897 spaces.
- Alberta now has a total of 77,234 licensed and approved spaces.
 - 26,322 in day care centres
 - 22,365 in out-of-school cares
 - 17,790 in pre-schools
 - 10,757 in approved family day homes

Improving quality in Alberta's licensed and approved child care programs.

- Invested over \$48 million in accreditation grant payments to child care programs to support quality child care programming in licensed day care centres and approved family day home agencies.
- 449 out of 586 licensed day care centres and approved family day homes are now accredited. Alberta is the only province that has a child care accreditation program. Accreditation gives parents with children needing care before and after school an additional tool to help them identify programs with standards of excellence over and above Alberta's regulated requirements.
- Designed and piloted a new out-of-school care accreditation program in 12 licensed programs in Alberta. The Out-of-School Care Accreditation program was made available to all licensed school-age programs on April 1, 2009.

Attracting and retaining qualified child care professionals.

- Implemented year one of a three-year recruitment marketing strategy to attract workers to the child care profession.
- 1,172 new or experienced staff now working in licensed and approved child care programs, which were eligible to receive the Staff Attraction Incentive Allowance.
- 1,517 staff with equivalent human service credentials have been certified to work in child care. Majority of these staff are new, and others were already working in child care and are now certified at a higher level.
- 2,902 individuals are currently participating in the online child care orientation course.

* Kin Child Care Subsidy helps eligible low- and middle-income families pay a relative to care for their child, outside of the family's home.

** A new licensing category that was introduced when the *Child Care Licensing Act* came into effect in fall 2008. This category allows for two caregivers to care for seven to 10 children in a home setting.

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