

# AACE Members Agree to Sign the 2024 Childcare Agreement Under Duress

*Childcare operators will sign the agreement to support affordable childcare, but seek emergency funding from Alberta Government to ensure financial viability*

CALGARY, AB, CANADA, January 23, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The Association of Alberta Childcare Entrepreneurs (AACE), an industry association representing a diverse range of childcare providers including private, for-profit childcare centres, non-profit childcare centres, and day home operators, has been actively engaged in critical discussions addressing the challenges posed by the imminent Alberta Childcare Affordability Grant Agreement.



AACE has convened several emergency member meetings to strategize a response to the January 31st deadline for signing the Affordability Grant Agreement. AACE has also engaged in a crucial dialogue with Alberta's Children and Family Services Minister, Searle Turton, and Senior department officials, highlighting the financial predicament the agreement precipitates within Alberta's childcare sector.



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*Krystal Churcher, Chair*

After considerable deliberation and with a unified voice, AACE and its members have resolved to adhere to the signing deadline, reinforcing their unwavering commitment to the families and children they serve. This decision should not be considered a win for the Alberta Government, the Government of Canada or for the

childcare sector. The industry's consent is marked by an air of duress, underscored by looming

concerns over potential service reductions, the jeopardization of childcare quality, and the stark reality of potential insolvency for some childcare operators. The root of these concerns lies in the [significant financial shortfalls left unaddressed by the agreement](#).

“Alberta’s childcare operators have no choice but to sign the 2024 Affordability Grant agreement. If they don’t sign, it means immediate insolvency for some and drastic service reductions for others; if they do sign and nothing changes, it means an inability for some operators to remain financially viable over time and reduction of services across the sector,” said AACE Chair, Krystal Churcher. “The ball is in the Alberta Government’s court to come up with emergency funds. If they don’t, they will have to explain to Albertans why they let some childcare operators go insolvent and why childcare services have been reduced across the province.”

AACE implores the Government of Alberta to urgently provide enough emergency transition funding to cover the cost of childcare, in addition to one full month’s worth of grants, to cover the cash flow challenge caused by the way the program is administered. This appeal for support is critical in averting industry-wide financial crises and in safeguarding the quality of childcare services in the ensuing months. [AACE has provided the Government of Alberta detailed information about the](#) financial burden this agreement has placed on the industry.

The urgency of the situation is further amplified as the industry braces for its most financially vulnerable period since the inception of the \$10/day childcare announcement. With the government set to cover approximately 85% of childcare fees in 2024, concerns intensify due to the 40-45 day delay in these payments to operators. Additionally, the childcare sector has had fees frozen and grant amounts increased by a mere 3% annually, which falls well below the inflation index for the same period. Finally, the agreement imposes massive administrative costs on operators, estimated on average to be approximately \$25/month/child - a financial burden that childcare operators have been carrying for 24 months. AACE acknowledges that the Government of Alberta has provided grants in an effort to cover these costs, but the amounts provided fall far short of the actual costs, especially in light of high inflation.

“We understand that the CWELCC Agreement signed between the Government of Alberta and the Government of Canada places very challenging restrictions on Alberta’s ability to manage its childcare sector and we know from several reports that the federal government has significantly underfunded the program across Canada,” continued Churcher. “But it was the Government of Alberta that signed the deal that caused this situation without first consulting with its own sector, and now we have no choice but to count on them to come up with emergency funds to keep the industry afloat and childcare quality at a level that parents expect.”

AACE will launch a public awareness campaign in the coming weeks to educate Alberta parents about the financial hardships that the \$10/day agreement has placed on childcare operators and the impact this will have on the childcare quality and choice. The Association has also been in discussions with operators across Canada who all face similar challenges and a national campaign is in development. AACE and its members urge Minister Turton to be a strong public

champion, both in Ottawa and amongst his provincial counterparts, [for more federal funding to support affordable childcare](#). The Association also urges Minister Turton to advocate for much more flexibility for provinces to develop affordable childcare programs that align with the market realities and cultures in each province.

“Childcare falls within provincial jurisdiction, but the federal Liberal Government has bought their way in by promising billions of dollars to make childcare more affordable,” added Churcher.

“While the promise of \$10/day childcare is great marketing by the Prime Minister to buy votes, the program has been ideologically driven and extremely inflexible. Alberta has had a thriving, high quality mixed market system for decades and Albertans will be shocked when they begin to understand that the \$10/day childcare program is effectively a hostile government takeover of private businesses. AACE is confident that Albertans will actively oppose Prime Minister Trudeau’s efforts to transform the childcare industry to fit his ideological vision.”

AACE remains steadfast in its mission to ensure that every child in Alberta receives the highest quality of care and education. As the industry navigates these challenging times, the association underscores the need for collaborative efforts and timely intervention from the Alberta Government to ensure the sustainability and excellence of childcare services across the province.

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#### About AACE:

The Association of Alberta Childcare Entrepreneurs (AACE) is a non-profit organization dedicated to representing for-profit and non-profit childcare centres, as well as day home operators across Alberta. AACE advocates for policies and practices that enhance the quality and accessibility of childcare services within a thriving mixed-market childcare system, ensuring the well-being and development of children, as well as childcare choice for Alberta parents and families.

Krystal Churcher, Chair

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