

Alberta Reaches CWELCC Space Creation Targets Months Ahead of Schedule

CALGARY, AB, CANADA, June 5, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Alberta has effectively reached childcare space creation targets established under the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC) Agreement, nearly ten months before the end of the current bilateral agreement. The news came in a letter dated June 4, 2026, sent to all Alberta childcare providers from Alberta's Education and Childcare Minister, Honourable Demetrios Nicolaidis, stating that Alberta is "nearing its federal space targets".



Based on internal data gathered by the Association of Canadian Early Learning Programs (ACE), however, the association believes that the program is actually significantly over-subscribed and that many childcare operators looking to bring additional childcare spaces into operation over the coming months will be left without funding support.

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Krystal Churcher, Chair of ACE

“ACE believes that Alberta's childcare space creation achievement deserves recognition, since it is the only large province to even come close to meeting the federal government's targets”, said ACE Chair, Krystal Churcher. “Thousands of new childcare spaces have been created

across Alberta, expanding access for families and demonstrating the commitment of childcare operators throughout the province. Alberta's mixed-market childcare system—including both non-profit and private operators—has been instrumental in delivering this success.”

Nearly half (48%) of Alberta's approved expansion under the agreement was allocated to the private sector, whose investment, innovation, and willingness to expand helped make these targets achievable.

Unfortunately, today's announcement also exposes a fundamental flaw in the design of the federal childcare program.

“Because funding is attached to specific childcare spaces rather than to families, thousands of additional new licensed childcare spaces under development across the province will be excluded from the Affordability Grant program”, Churcher continued. “Many of these projects were planned specifically to address growing community demand and align with the objectives of CWELCC. Yet families who choose these programs will be unable to access the same affordability grant support available elsewhere because the province has reached a federally imposed space allocation limit.”

The result is that Alberta families will face dramatically different childcare costs depending on which licensed program they access, not because of their needs, income, or circumstances, but because of federal government policy.

For nonprofit operators opening new centres, Minister Nicolaides' letter creates significant uncertainty. Many providers now face the challenge of remaining financially viable while competing in a market where some families receive government subsidies and others do not. At the same time, Alberta families searching for childcare will find that many newly opened licensed spaces are effectively outside the \$15-a-day system.

This outcome runs contrary to the stated purpose of the federal program. The goal of CWELCC is to improve access to affordable childcare for families. Instead, Alberta is now witnessing a system where thousands of licensed spaces that meet community needs, employ qualified educators, and support working parents will be excluded from affordability funding because of an arbitrary cap on funded spaces.

“Today's announcement is living proof that funding spaces rather than families creates barriers, inequities, and access challenges”, Churcher explained. “The solution is simple. Funding should follow families, not physical spaces. ACE is calling on the Government of Canada to implement a directed subsidy or voucher that families can use to access affordable childcare.”

If affordability funding were attached to eligible families rather than government-designated spaces, every licensed childcare program could participate, families could choose the provider that best meets their needs, and governments could achieve affordability objectives without restricting access or limiting growth. ACE believes that a family choosing a licensed childcare program should be able to access the same support regardless of where they live or which provider they choose.

As governments discuss the future of childcare funding beyond March 2027, ACE is calling on both the federal and provincial governments to modernize the program and put families at the centre of childcare policy.

Alberta has demonstrated that it can exceed expectations and achieve ambitious expansion goals. The next step is ensuring that affordability funding is delivered in a way that supports choice, flexibility, sustainability, and equal access for all families.

No family should be denied affordability support because they selected the "wrong" licensed childcare centre. No childcare operator should be excluded from serving families because government policy has run out of funded spaces.

About ACE

The Association of Canadian Early Learning Programs (ACE) is Canada's only national association dedicated exclusively to representing childcare operators. ACE advocates for sustainable childcare policy, affordable access for families, and a strong, diverse early learning sector that includes public, non-profit, and private providers.

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