

Half of Alberta Preschools May Close Without Funding Changes, ACE Survey Finds

ACE says Alberta's own call for federal flexibility should apply at home too

CALGARY, AB, CANADA, July 28, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The Association of Canadian Early Learning Programs (ACE) is warning that Alberta families are at risk of losing access to licensed preschool programs as the province's Child Care Affordability Grant continues to favour one licensed model over another.

Preliminary findings from ACE's Alberta Preschool Sustainability Survey found that 74% of licensed preschool operators report declining enrollment, 81% say families are choosing daycare because of lower fees, and half anticipate closing their preschool before or during the 2026-2027 school year if the funding model remains unchanged.



ACE Alberta is a Member of the Canadian Coalition of Childcare Operators

Under Alberta's Child Care Affordability Grant, families who choose a part-time daycare program can access significantly more affordability funding than families who choose a licensed preschool, even though both are licensed under the same legislation and both count toward Alberta's space targets under the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC) agreement. The province counts preschool spaces equally. It does not fund them equally.

"When licensed preschools close, Alberta families lose choice," said Krystal Churcher, Chair of ACE. "Every closure means fewer options for parents and fewer children getting the unique learning environment preschools provide. Families should be choosing the program that best meets their child's needs, not the one government funding makes cheapest."

ACE says last week's joint statement from Canada's Premiers is a reason for the province to act.



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In that statement, Canada's Premiers, including Alberta's, called on the federal government for childcare funding flexible enough to support families who need it most, citing income testing and the treatment of private and non-profit spaces as places where the current approach doesn't work.

"Alberta is telling Ottawa that flexibility matters and that funding should reflect the needs of families," Churcher

said. "We're asking the province to apply that same principle at home. Children learn differently, families have different needs, and Alberta benefits from a diverse early learning system. When government policy makes one licensed option financially unsustainable, families don't gain more choice. They lose it."

ACE is calling on the Alberta government to:

- Immediately address the funding inequity between licensed preschools and licensed daycares offering part-time care.
- Ensure families can access equitable affordability funding regardless of whether they choose a licensed preschool or a licensed daycare for part-time early learning.
- Implement an interim funding solution that prevents further preschool closures and license conversions while a long-term funding model is established.
- Commit to a funding model that lets affordability funding follow children across all licensed early learning options, not government-preferred program types.

"This isn't about spending more," Churcher said. "It's about making sure affordability funding follows children fairly across licensed early learning programs, so parents can decide what's right for their family instead of funding policy deciding for them."

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About ACE The Association of Canadian Early Learning Programs (ACE) is a national association representing licensed childcare operators across Canada. ACE advocates for practical, evidence-informed public policy that improves affordability, increases access, protects parental choice, and supports the long-term sustainability of licensed early learning programs across all delivery models.

Krystal Churcher, Chair

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