



## Alberta child care advocates celebrate federal early learning and child care legislation

Child Care Now Alberta welcomes and celebrates the introduction of Bill C-35, *An Act Respecting Early Learning and Child Care*, introduced by federal Minister of Families, Children, and Social Development, Karina Gould, on December 8, 2022.

Bill C-65 would set out in law the federal government's commitment to build a high quality Canada-wide system of licensed child care programs and services if adopted by Parliament. This legislation is key to ensuring that supported child care programs will deliver high quality early learning and education for all children in Alberta.

"Child care advocates in Alberta and across the country have been pushing for more than 50 years for this legislation," adds Dr. Cake. "If passed, this Act will recognize in law that Alberta's children and families should have the right to inclusive and high-quality early learning child care programs and services regardless of where they live in the province," she adds.

Alberta families face unique barriers to accessing licensed child care, particularly in rural and remote communities, Dr. Cake notes. The current workforce crisis, which saw Alberta lose thousands of qualified early childhood educators during the COVID-19 pandemic, and resulted in staff burnout has not been adequately addressed by the provincial government, she adds.

Morna Ballantyne, Executive Director of Child Care Now, the parent organization of Child Care Now Alberta, notes, "Bill C-35 does not put conditions on federal funding transfers to the provinces and territories, which means that responsibility falls on the federal government to negotiate child care transfer agreements that align with the principles set out in the Bill." The principles referring to affordability, accessibility, inclusivity, and high quality who access Alberta's system of early learning and child care.

"It will be important for the federal government to negotiate Alberta's transfer agreement to address the extreme shortage of early childhood educators, to expand the availability of licensed child care programs, and to bring parent fees down to a maximum of \$10 per day," Dr. Cake says.

"In Alberta, we have seen a significant decline in parent fees, money towards training new educators, and the first increase to the wage top-up program since 2008.. These are good first steps, but they are the bare minimum. We need to build a system of child care that is accessible to all children and families, high quality, and properly compensates the workforce," says Dr. Cake.

This legislation is, ultimately, a welcome addition to complement the Canada-Alberta Early Learning Child Care Agreement. During its introduction, Minister Gould noted that the legislation will, “ensure federal funding for the Canada-wide system that remains in place beyond our current agreements with provinces, territories and Indigenous Peoples...this bill will ensure the system we build remains in place long into the future.”

Dr. Cake says, “This legislation, if passed, will give Albertans the peace of mind that Canada is committing to this system beyond 2026.”