

Recipients:

Your MLA (<https://www.elections.ab.ca/voters/members-of-the-legislative-assembly/>),

The Minister of Children and Family Services, Searle Turton (cfs.minister@gov.ab.ca)

MLA Diana Batten, Critic for Childcare (Diana.Batten@assembly.ab.ca)

Premier Danielle Smith (premier@gov.ab.ca)

Subject: Urgent Appeal for Emergency Financial Support and Revisions to the Affordability Grant and CWELCC Agreements

Dear Government Officials,

I am an Early Childhood Educator (ECE) working at [Your Childcare Center Name], which is participating in the rolling closure today in solidarity with numerous childcare centers across Alberta.

Today's closure is distressing and is a decision that has been arrived at as a last resort. Causing upset to our families is the furthest from our desires, which is why my director has shouldered the financial burdens of the government's affordable childcare program for two years and advocated consistently to the government before arriving at the gravity of today's decision to close. The government must consider the real costs and unintended consequences of the way the affordable childcare program is being implemented.

My program's clear priority is families and children and our commitment to affordable, high-quality childcare is unwavering. My director has shown unquestionable consideration for parents by signing into the Government's new contract - under duress - so that affordable fees will continue to be available to families. The decision to continue to participate in the affordability program comes with significant risk to the viability of our childcare centre. We seek solutions that prioritize children's welfare while maintaining service excellence.

The root of these concerns continues to lie in the program's significant financial shortfalls and unintended consequences left unaddressed by the federal-provincial CWELCC agreement. I am disappointed to learn that my director feels cutbacks seem inevitable in the areas of staffing, operating hours, supplies and programming, not to mention that the upcoming policy principles of 'core' versus 'enhanced' services threaten to create disparities among children, which could harm their social and emotional well-being.

In the face of potential cutbacks, I am fearful for the future of my employment and my ability to earn a livable wage. I am also concerned that if the situation does not improve soon, less staff will be on the floor and that it may become my responsibility in the future

to prevent some children from participating in activities because their parents haven't paid for an "enhanced service". I urge the Alberta government to intervene with emergency funding and to also advocate for a different policy approach towards core and enhanced services.

For over two years, my director's Association (the Association of Alberta Childcare Entrepreneurs - AACE) has been meeting with government officials to make the industry's concerns known. Six weeks ago, we made parents aware of these concerns as well, in an effort to keep families informed about the potential unintended consequences of the program and its implementation. Disappointingly, when meeting with the Minister of Family and Children's Services, AACE's plea for emergency actions that match the scale of the challenges caused resulted in still no new solutions proposed.

I implore the government to provide enough emergency funding to cover the real costs of childcare in Alberta and to make policy changes to prevent unintended consequences. Despite what has been suggested by your Minister, this is not about childcare operators raising fees or increasing profit margins, nor is it about a childcare centre's business model; not-for-profit and for-profit programs are both facing the same challenges. It is about addressing the \$10/day program's billion-dollar underfunding and inflexible policies that are crippling childcare operators' ability to serve families effectively.

I appreciate the government's attention to this matter, considering that affordable, high-quality childcare from supported, viable programs is essential to retain the Early Childcare Educator workforce.

Sincerely,