



SUPPORT CHILDREN & FAMILIES: QUESTIONS TO RAISE WITH CANDIDATES

HOW WILL YOUR PARTY INVEST IN & SUPPORT EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT?

Voting for Children and Families

- More than 1 in 4 children in Alberta are considered vulnerable in their development when they enter kindergarten. This rate is higher than the Canadian norm.
- Young children's early experiences have a deep and lasting influence on their future physical, cognitive, emotional and social development. Positive experiences enhance future education and employment success and reduce the costs of social assistance and policing.
- Governments, businesses and communities all are responsible for ensuring that young children and their families have the resources and opportunities they need to thrive.

HOW WILL YOUR PARTY WORK TO END CHILD POVERTY?

- 1 in 7 Edmontonians live in poverty* (42,000 children in Edmonton), with even higher rates among Indigenous families, immigrant families and single-parent families. The annual cost of poverty in Alberta is estimated to be \$7-9 billion dollars per year. *i.e., below the 2016 Canada Census Family Low Income Measure
- Poverty increases family stress and the risk of social and emotional challenges, thereby compromising long-term health and economic success.
- Government investments in services for families, such as high-quality early learning and care, reduces the impacts of child and family poverty. Alberta now has child care spaces for only 1 in 4 children below school age, and the average price of centre-based care is over \$1000 per month in Edmonton and Calgary.

HOW WILL YOUR PARTY IMPROVE MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES? FOR ALBERTA'S CHILDREN?

- Healthy emotional, intellectual and social development in the early years lays the foundation for mental health and resilience throughout life. Yet, while an estimated 1.2 million Canadian children and youth are affected by mental illness, less than 20% will receive appropriate treatment.
- 70% of mental health problems begin in childhood or adolescence.
- Alberta Health aims for children with "non-urgent referrals" to be seen within 30 days. Unfortunately, that benchmark is met only 55% of the time.

HOW WILL YOUR PARTY MEASURE AND MONITOR THE WELL-BEING OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES?

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- Investments in the early years of life are crucial for learning, social development and health in childhood and beyond. High-quality, safe environments for young children, especially disadvantaged young children, often yield benefits of more productive employment and reduced demands on education, legal, social and health systems. Yet no one ministry is responsible for the well-being of children.
- The Early Development Instrument (EDI) is used across the country and internationally to provide a snapshot in time of children's well-being at 5 years of age. This enables identification of areas of need and progress made over time in serving children and families. It could be used more effectively to monitor child development in Alberta.
- Increased data sharing and analysis across the departments of Health, Education and Children's Services would provide insights for improving policies and integrated services for children and families.

Find more information at www.earlychildhoodedm.ca

