

Laura Alongi - Discovery Snapshot



**CATAMOUNT**

FELLOWSHIP FOR EMERGING CHANGEMAKERS

# Addressing Child Care Deserts in Calgary

## Catamount Fellow

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## Community Partner

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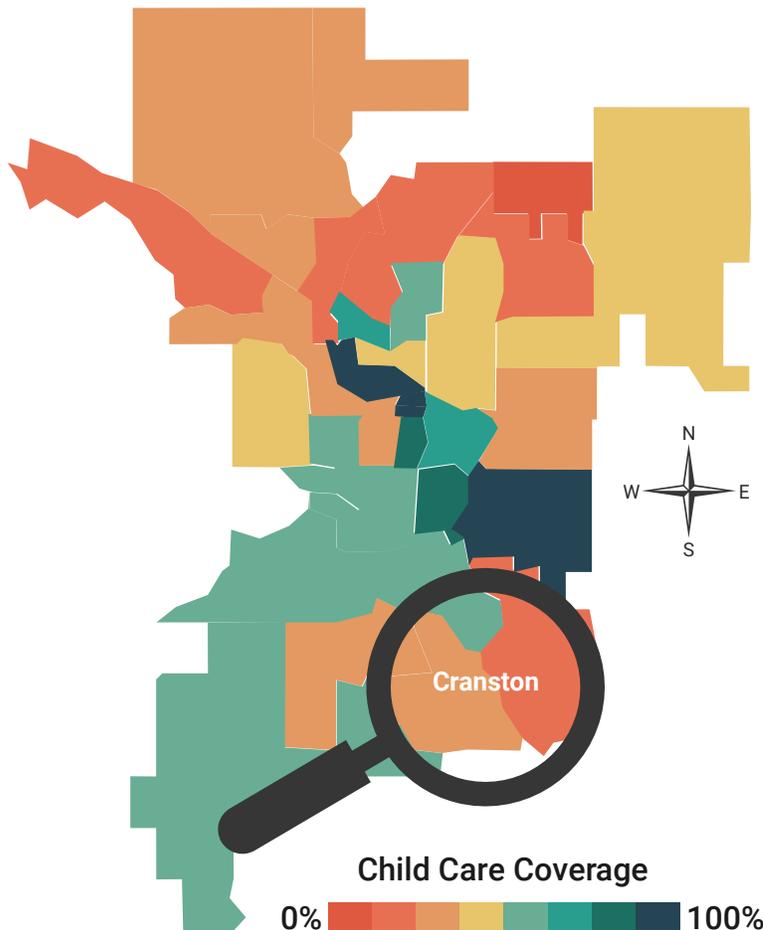
## Faculty Mentor

AnneMarie Dorland, Mount Royal University

## Problem Definition

The Government of Canada (2020) recognizes affordable and licensed child care services as a necessity; however, many Canadian families experience barriers to accessing appropriate child care. These barriers include high child care fees and minimally available child care services (Government of Canada, 2020; Macdonald & Friendly, 2017).

Canadians must have access to adequate child care services to achieve “a range of public goals, including closing the gender wage gap in the economy, spurring economic growth, easing the burden on struggling parents and supporting healthy child development” (Macdonald, 2018, p. 4).



(Adapted from Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, 2018)

## Where are the Child Care Deserts in Calgary

The majority of the child care centers in Calgary are located along the Bow and Elbow River, with numbers dropping substantially when reaching the outskirts of the city (Macdonald, 2018).

# 54%

of Calgarian Children Live in a Child Care Desert

(Macdonald, 2018)

Calgary has a

# 37%

Child Care Coverage Rate

(Macdonald, 2018)



Institute for  
Community Prosperity



## What is a Child Care Desert?

- A child care desert is defined as one licensed child care space available for three competing children (Macdonald, 2018; Malik & Hamm, 2017)
- Approximately “one-third of Canadian parents” reside in a child care desert” (Young et al., 2020, p. 2)

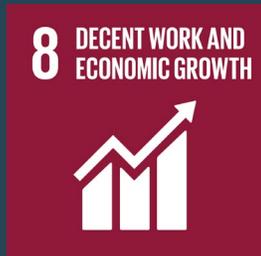
## Impacts of Child Care Deserts

- When individuals fail to access quality child care children’s rights, child development, work-family balance, and women’s equality are severely threatened (Prentice, 2017).
- Lower income families are more “constrained by the rising costs of education and childcare as well as poor job markets” causing their children to enter school unprepared in comparison to “the children of the more affluent group” (Tomer, 2014, p. 16).

## Factors Contributing to Child Care Deserts:

Comprehensive child care in Canada has been difficult to regulate due to the different legal responsibilities of the federal and provincial governments and the liberal welfare regimens (Prentice, 2017). The Canadian provinces were assigned responsibility for education and child care by the Constitution Act of 1867, causing challenges to the universal regulation of social services in Canada (Prentice, 2017).

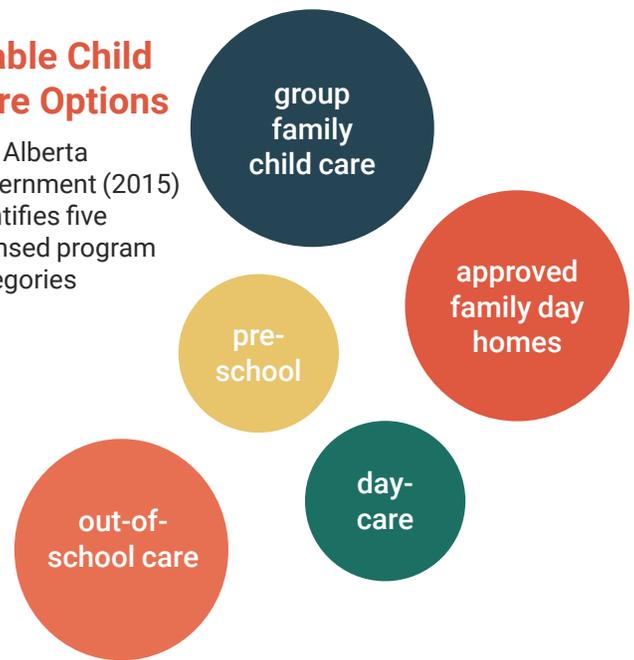
The current social and economic structure in Canada has changed significantly, proving the need for the government to change how services are distributed (Mahon, 2013). Canada’s current social programs are reflective of the “postwar period” consisting of a traditional nuclear family structure (p. 360). However, as more mothers enter the workforce the demand for child care services increases (Prentice & White, 2019).



Sustainable Development Goal number eight recognizes the need to “promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all” (United Nations [UN], n.d., Economic Growth section), which includes women returning to the workforce.

## Viable Child Care Options

The Alberta Government (2015) identifies five licensed program categories



## Methodology

### Research Question

What types of child care, policies, programs, and investments are needed to meet the demands of “child care desert” communities in Calgary?

### Trial Community

The community of Cranston, located in southeast Calgary, was chosen as a test neighborhood with a child care coverage rate of 16% (Macdonald, 2018). The test neighborhood was selected to trial different approaches to reach communities, in order to understand how Trellis can learn about their child care desert experiences.

### Community Child Care Survey

A survey was designed and distributed to Cranston resident Facebook groups to understand their child care needs. The results of the study highlighted the resilience of community parents/caregivers evident by their statements in the optional comment boxes.

### Community Conversation

In February, I hosted a community conversation where I welcomed parents, caregivers, teachers, child care providers, and community residents to attend and share their child care experiences. The community conversation was advertised using Facebook Groups, Facebook Advertisements, Mount Royal University medias, and personal email invitations. The stories from the attendees reinforced how child care deserts are negatively impacting the lives of Calgarians. The issue of child care deserts impacts all aspects of a family’s life, including their financial, emotional, and mental wellbeing.

# Cranston Child Care Desert

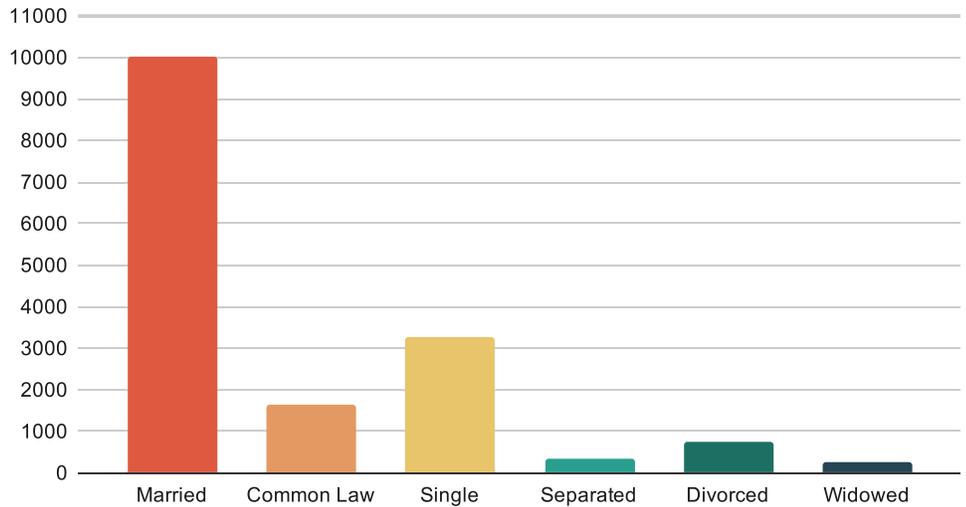
**16%**  
Child Care Coverage Rate

**733**  
Rental Properties

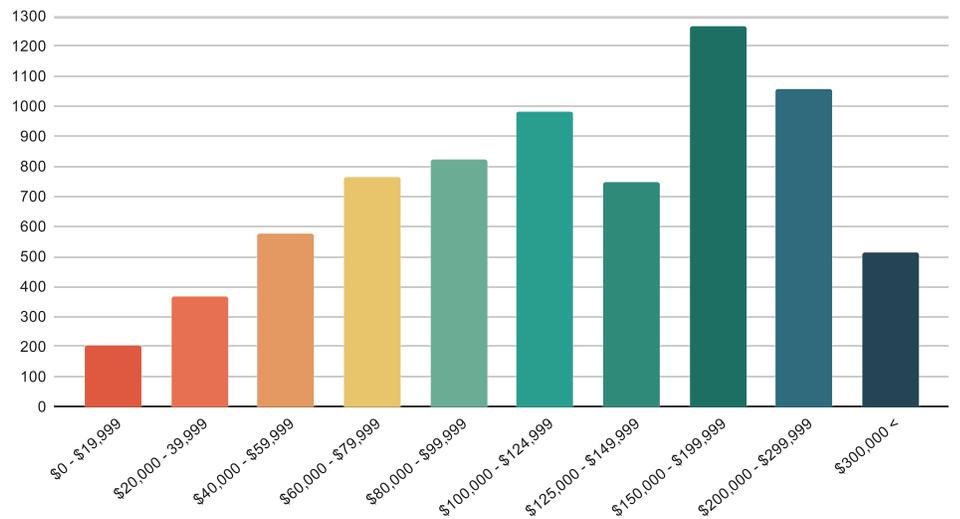
**\$141,839**  
Average Household Income

**6,565**  
Owned Properties

Marital Status



Range of Household Income



## Number of children in each age group living in Cranston

**0 - 4**  
Male: 868  
Female: 887

**5 - 9**  
Male: 1,006  
Female: 957

**10 - 14**  
Male: 839  
Female: 816

(J. Wilkes, personal communication, October 26, 2020)

## Reflection and Conclusion

Children and child care must become a priority in the city of Calgary. Child care services have not adapted fast enough to Canada’s changing workforce structure, leaving families with limited affordable care options. These services must meet the unique needs of parents/caregivers in order to address the issue of child care deserts. Organizations and changemakers must meet communities where they are at and work together to design and implement solutions. Trellis should collaborate with community residents and individuals experiencing these hardships to learn about their unique societal dynamics, experiences, and child care needs in order to develop appropriate support programs.

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Laura Alongi - Creative Work



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What is a Child Care Desert?



Children

Competing For

1  
Licensed  
Child Care  
Space

(Macdonald, 2018; Malik & Hamm, 2017)



"My friends"  
-4 year old girl



"A safe place where  
my children can  
learn and grow"  
-Parent



"Rectangles"  
-3 year old boy



"Playing cars"  
-4 year old boy

"My teacher"  
-4 year old girl

"I like to play in the gym,  
classroom, and outside"  
-3 year old boy



What Is  
Your  
Favorite  
Part of Child  
Care?

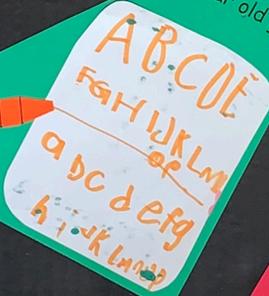
"I like when my friend  
comes to play with me"  
-4 year old girl



"I like to color"  
-4 year old girl



"Doing  
my  
letters"  
-4 year old girl



"My favorite thing about  
preschool is playing with the toys  
and my friends"  
-4 year old girl

"I like when we  
make volcanos"  
-3 year old boy



"Knowing my  
children will be  
safely looked after  
and cared for"  
-Parent



"I like water, I  
like ocean  
[water station]"  
-3 year old boy



54% of  
Calgarian  
Children Live  
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(Macdonald, 2018)



Calgary has a  
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# Laura Alongi - Scholarly Output



# CATAMOUNT

FELLOWSHIP FOR EMERGING CHANGEMAKERS

# Child Care Deserts in Calgary

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Laura Alongi

**Community Partner**

Randy Coutts, Trellis

**Faculty Mentor**

AnneMarie Dorland, Mount Royal University



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## Land Acknowledgement

Mount Royal University is located in the traditional territories of the Niitsitapi (Blackfoot) and the people of Treaty 7 which includes the Siksika, the Piikani, the Kainai, the Tsuut'ina, and the Îyârhe Nakoda. We are situated on land where the Bow River meets the Elbow River. The traditional Blackfoot name of this place is Mohkinstsis, which we now call the City of Calgary. The City of Calgary is also home to the Métis Nation III of Alberta (Mount Royal University [MRU], 2021, "Welcome" section).

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I am thankful for the continuous feedback, encouragement, and support I received throughout the Catamount Fellowship. This project would not have been possible without the support of the following individuals:

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## Introduction

The Government of Canada (2020) recognizes affordable and licensed child care services as a necessity; however, many Canadian families experience barriers to accessing appropriate child care. These barriers include high child care fees and minimally available child care services (Government of Canada, 2020; Macdonald & Friendly, 2017). Young et al. (2020) identified approximately “one-third of Canadian parents” reside in a child care desert (p. 2). In child care deserts there is only one licensed child care space available for three competing children (Macdonald, 2018; Malik & Hamm, 2017). Canadians must have access to adequate child care services to achieve “a range of public goals, including closing the gender wage gap in the economy, spurring economic growth, easing the burden on struggling parents and supporting healthy child development” (Macdonald, 2018, p. 4). Child care deserts are a systemic issue as effective early child care programs help prepare children for school, sets children up for future success in life, and enables parents to participate in the workforce (Dobbins et al., 2016; Macdonald, 2018).

The research report was developed in partnership with the Institute for Community Prosperity and Trellis to explore the issue of child care deserts in Calgary. Trellis works closely with “children, youth and families to unlock their potential and support their growth” (Trellis, 2021, “Coming From” section). Their “programs focus on improving access to resources, developing family and community supports and building the capacity to deal with future challenges” (“Coming From” section). I began my [Catamount Fellowship](#) journey in September of 2020, where I met early on with my faculty mentor and community partner and was introduced to the concept of child care deserts (Appendix A). The Catamount Fellowship has utilized online technologies to virtually connect with one another due to the COVID-19 pandemic and current government restrictions and policies. Like many Calgarians, the term “child care desert” was unfamiliar to me when I began my project.

Through preliminary research and incorporating my personal experiences working with children, I learned early on the immense impact Calgary’s child care status is having on many Calgarians. Children are vulnerable and completely dependent on their caregivers. Recently, I have worked with low-income children whose parents are unable to send lunch to school with their child, let alone afford child care. I have witnessed parents exhausted from the strain of caring for a child with special needs, with only family to support them in their struggles. Child care deserts are an important issue to address as they go far beyond simply inadequate numbers of child care spaces, as the impacts can affect the livelihood of caregivers and families. My initial research combined with my past knowledge and experiences confirmed the complexity of the systemic issue of child care deserts. Each caregiver, parent, or family has unique child care needs; thus, will require different child care services and programs. Therefore, this report explores the following research question: what types of child care, policies, programs, and investments are needed to meet the demands of “child care desert” communities in Calgary?

## The Impact of Child Care Deserts

Child care deserts are a complex, systemic issue in society today. In Canada, access to affordable child care is viewed as having “good fortune” rather than a right (Prentice, 2017, p. 421). When individuals fail to access quality child care children’s rights, work-family balance, and women’s equality are severely threatened (Prentice, 2017). Additionally, caregivers who cannot afford quality child care may be forced to leave their jobs or sacrifice their retirement savings in order to care for their children (Government of Canada, 2020), contributing to the cycle of poverty. For example, if a caregiver cannot afford child care they may be forced to stay at home with their children, even though their family may require two salaries to make ends meet. In order to improve “equitable access to affordable childcare”, the number of licensed child care spaces and their prices must be addressed (Macdonald, 2018, p. 6). Addressing the issue of child care deserts is complex due to Canada’s market-based economy and provincially run social programs, highlighting the need for public policies to ensure equitable child care access for all Canadians (Macdonald, 2018).



## Adverse Childhood Experiences

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), defined as “traumatic early life experiences, which can have a profound impact on health in later life”, are not simply an individual or family issue as they are rooted in “macro level factors including government policies, social, physical, economic and environmental factors” (Waite & Ryan, 2020, p. i-53). According to Waite and Ryan “ACEs can include being a victim of abuse, neglect or exposure to risk in the home or community” (p. i). Additionally, child “exposure to adversity and stressors including poverty, lack of safety and stability in the family environment, and lack of access to quality early education can unfavorably affect their development” (p. 16). Tomer (2014) identified lower income families are more “constrained by the rising costs of education and childcare as well as poor job markets” causing their children to enter school unprepared in comparison to “the children of the more affluent group” (p. 16). Additionally, “the gap between the human capital endowments of children from higher income families and those of lower income families at school entry constitutes the educational inequality which presumably leads in later years to income inequality” (p. 19). Children growing up in lower income households deserve to have the opportunity to experience high quality child care, enter school prepared, and avoid ACEs.

## Factors Contributing to Child Care Deserts

Comprehensive child care in Canada has been difficult to regulate due to the different legal responsibilities of the federal and provincial governments and the liberal welfare regimens (Prentice, 2017). The Canadian provinces were assigned responsibility for education and child care by the Constitution Act of 1867, causing challenges to the universal regulation of social services in Canada (Prentice, 2017). Canada's federal government does not have the authority to dictate provincial social regulations; however, the federal government may transfer funds to provinces to assist with social services (Prentice, 2017). Macdonald and Friendly (2017) identified appropriate provincial policies providing direction to determine child care fees are needed. In provinces that set parent fees, like Quebec, child care is much more affordable compared to provinces with market-based fees (Macdonald & Friendly, 2017). Although provinces have attempted to offset child care fees with subsidies for lower income families, in some cities, such as Calgary and Saskatoon, caregivers still pay "out-of-pocket fees" of approximately \$500 per month for preschool (Macdonald & Friendly, 2016, p. 5). In Canada, "Toronto has the highest preschool fees in the country at \$1,150 a month", with Calgary closely behind with preschool fees of \$1,000 per month (p. 5)

Child care services in most of Canada are market based, due to the liberal welfare regime (Prentice, 2017). Traditional "liberal welfare norms" have reinforced the belief that government funding for child care services are a "last resort" (Prentice & White, 2018, p. 67). Prentice outlines Canada as "a country entirely without a nation vision or plan for childcare", causing Canadian child care to rank poorly compared to other countries (p. 423). Canada offers services only to those who have "exhausted every other possibility, with its focus on eligibility testing rather than universality" (p. 424). The liberal welfare regime encourages "for-profit and unregulated child care services", rather than universally accessible and affordable child care (p. 424).

According to the rankings of 35 Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries by Asher and Lyric (2020), Canada ranks 19th for raising a family. The Nordic Countries rank very high for best countries to raise a family, as they typically offer publicly funded Early Childhood Education and Care (Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, 2009). "Denmark, Finland and Sweden are the only Nordic countries with a legal right to daycare" which requires municipalities to "provide daycare for every child under school age" (p. 71). These "extensive public daycare systems" allow mothers to participate in the "labour market", ultimately supporting gender equality in Nordic Countries (p. 68).

The demand for an adaptable, diverse, and responsive child care system has increased due to changing economic demographics (Dobbins et al., 2016). The current social and economic structure in Canada has changed significantly, proving the need for the government to change how services are distributed (Mahon, 2013). Mahon identifies Canada's current social programs as reflective of the "postwar period" consisting of a traditional nuclear family structure (p. 360). However, as more mothers enter the workforce the demand for child care services increases (Prentice & White, 2019). Sustainable Development Goal number eight recognizes the need to "promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all" (United Nations [UN], n.d., Economic Growth section), which includes women returning to the workforce. Moyser (2017) found the employment rate for married women has risen significantly, and the difference of weekly hours worked has decreased between men and women in the past few decades. Child care in Canada, with the exception of Quebec, "is not treated in policy terms as part of a human capital investment" or even a "social investment"; ultimately, hindering gender equality and children's lives (Prentice & White, 2019, p. 69).

Those in the most need of child care, including "full-time, overworked parents with young children", are suffering greatly from living in child care deserts "because of their inability to find care options" (Young et al., 2020, p. 572). Research shows children of single mothers who work unregular hours, such as evenings and nights, have fewer child care "options available to them" (Hepburn, 2018, p. 1203). Young et al. (2020) concluded fathers working long hours experience "greater psychological distress", resulting from the increased role and responsibilities fathers have in child care in recent decades (p. 572). Young et al. (2020) also identified mothers living in child care deserts have become resilient and found alternative methods to meet their unique child care needs, such as through "neighbours, grandparents, and unlicensed facilities" (p. 22). Canadian families should not have to resort to unlicensed child care facilities due to insufficient number of licensed facilities, as it potentially subjects their children to unsafe and inadequate care. Public and government support for child care services will improve parent's work-life balance and help sole income families improve their economic standing (Mahon, 2013).

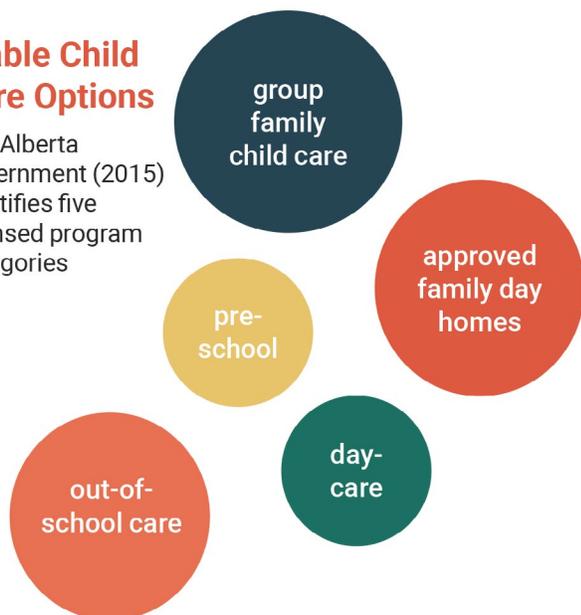
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## Viable Child Care Options

The Alberta Government (2015) identifies five licensed program categories



## Attempts at Addressing Child Care Deserts in Canada

In response to the demand for publicly supported child care, the government of Canada implemented many different programs to try and address the issue of child care deserts. The Canadian Government introduced the Canada Assistance Plan in 1966 and then the Child Care Expense Deduction in 1971 (Mahon, 2013). However, these interventions failed to promote access to child care services and did not “promote the formation of a universally accessible early childhood education and care (ECEC) system across the country” (Mahon, 2013, p. 360). The Canadian government has also offered Universal Child Care Benefits (UCCB), Employment Insurance Maternity and Parental benefits, and an Investment Tax Credit for Child Care Spaces to eligible families (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2013). Lebihan and Takongmo (2018) found the UCCB did not improve the wellness of children and parents; however, a “modest but fragile beneficial effect is found for low-education families and for girls” (p. 423). In 2016 the Canada Child Benefit, which offers tax free monthly payments to families, replaced the UCCB and Canada Child Tax Benefit (Government of Canada, 2018). According to Sarlo et al. (2020) the Canada Child Benefit has “taken a greater share of the available resources away from lower income families with children and channeled them to middle and upper-middle income families” (p. 9). These benefits offer financial assistance to parents and caregivers to help with the costs of caring for a child, such as child care, living expenses, and more.

The Government of Canada (2020) is now investing millions of dollars in Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) Centres to help address the issue of child care deserts and to promote “innovative practices in early learning and child care” (para. 2). The ELCC centres are designed to support Canadian families, offer flexible care for shift workers, provide affordable care with a maximum daily fee of \$25, and ultimately reduce child care

deserts in Canada (Alberta Government, 2020). Although the Government of Canada has recognized the importance of addressing child care deserts and have developed strategies to solve the issue, child care deserts are still prevalent today and impacting many families.

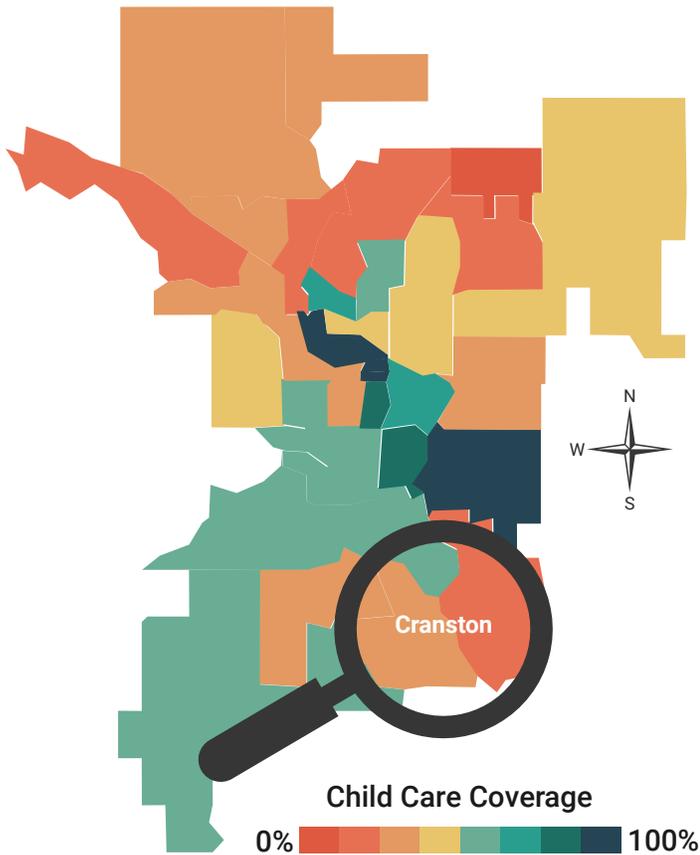
## Viable Child Care Options in Alberta

To ensure the safety and health of Albertan children, “licensed child care programs must meet the requirements laid out in the Child Care Licensing Act and the Child Care Licensing Regulation” (Alberta Government, 2015, p. 5). Licensed child care programs in Alberta are regularly inspected by child and family services (Alberta Government, 2015). The Alberta Government identifies five licensed program categories: day-care, pre-school, out-of-school care, approved family day homes, and group family child care. Day care programs provide “care to infants, pre-school, and kindergarten children”, while pre-school programs offer approximately four hours of child supervision per day (p. 5). Out-of-school care programs provide supervision and care for those in kindergarten and grade school when schools are closed, before and after school, and at lunch time (Alberta Government, 2015). Approved family day homes provide “care for up to six children with no more than three under three-years-old and no more than two under two-years-old, including the providers own children” (p. 6). Group family child care programs provide care for seven to ten children between the ages of zero and 12 years old by two caregivers (Alberta Government, 2015). To comply with the Alberta regulations required to provide adequate child care, a significant number of licensed child care programs are needed.

## Methodology

The methodology of this project changed significantly throughout my Catamount Fellowship journey (Appendix A). Originally, the goal of the project was to select a community in Calgary experiencing child care deserts and determine the type and cost of child care required for the community. However, throughout my research, and in consultation with my community partner and faculty mentor, the aim of the project shifted to the goal of understanding how Trellis can better reach communities to learn about their child care needs and experiences. The shift in goals allowed for a more transformative and reflective learning experience, allowing me to grow as a changemaker.

After my initial meeting with my faculty mentor and community partner, I met with individuals from Trellis to learn how child care deserts have impacted the lives of Calgarian families. The meetings proved educational as I began to explore concepts such as reactive parenting, the cycle of poverty, and became aware that child care is not only for working families. Meeting with the individuals helped expand my view of this systemic problem and proved how important affordable and quality child care truly is for the development of children and the wellbeing of families in our city.



**54%**

of Calgarian Children Live  
in a Child Care Desert

(Macdonald, 2018)

Calgary has a

**37%**

Child Care Coverage Rate

(Macdonald, 2018)

(Adapted from Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, 2018)

### Calgary Child Care Deserts

According to Macdonald (2018), Calgary has a child care coverage rate of 37%, while 54% of Calgarian children currently live in a child care desert (Appendix B). Calgary has 48,385 children under the age of five and only “28,851 licensed childcare spaces available for non-school-aged children” (Macdonald, 2018, p. 22). The majority of the child care centers in Calgary are located along the Bow and Elbow River, with numbers dropping substantially when reaching the outskirts of the city (Macdonald, 2018). High coverage rates start near the “University of Calgary and follows the Bow through the city centre... then veers south following the Elbow River through Mission and Elbow Park, but then back over to the Bow River in the Highfield and Lynchwood areas” (p. 22). The neighborhoods of “Lakeview, Braeside, Willow Park and Lake Bonavista” in the southwest have an approximate coverage rate of 50%, which is much lower than areas in the city center (Macdonald, 2018, p. 22-23). The southeast, including the neighborhoods of Cranston and McKenzie Lake, have a 20% average child care coverage rate, “despite large numbers of young children living there” (p. 23). Similarly, northern Calgary, including the neighborhoods from Tuscany in the northwest through Saddle Ridge in the northeast have an approximate child care coverage rate of 20% (Macdonald, 2018). Overall, the city of Calgary has many areas experiencing child care deserts.

### Trial Community: Cranston

Meetings with Urban Matters provided further information regarding the location of child care desert communities in Calgary. After discussions with the Urban Matters team and my community partner, in conjunction with the research conducted by Macdonald (2018), the community of Cranston, located in southeast Calgary, was chosen as a test neighborhood with a child care coverage rate of 16% (Macdonald, 2018; Appendix B). The test neighborhood was selected to trial different approaches to reach communities, in order to understand how Trellis can learn about their child care desert experiences. Cranston has nine licensed child care centers and five schools in the community, with three preschools, two before and after school care programs, and four day homes. The majority of Cranston residents own their home (6,566), with only 733 renters (J. Wilkes, personal communication, October 26, 2020; Appendix C). Cranston has an average household income of \$141,839, with yearly incomes ranging from \$0 to \$19,999 to greater than \$300,000 (J. Wilkes, personal communication, October 26, 2020). There are 11,674 married/common-law families, 3,272 singles, and 1,077 separated/divorced couples (J. Wilkes, personal communication, October 26, 2020). J. Wilkes (personal communication, October 26, 2020) identified Cranston has 1,755 children ages zero to four, 1,963 children ages five to nine, and 1,655 children ages ten to 14 currently living in the community.

## Windshield Survey

After selecting the community of Cranston, a windshield survey of the neighborhood was conducted. A windshield survey is “an informal survey where the health professional” or researcher “drives around the community/area they are researching, and records his/her observations” (Washtenaw Community College, 2021, “Windshield Survey” section). Windshield surveys allow health care professionals and researchers “to be able to knowledgably plan services for a community” by identifying potential gaps in service which could lead to health problems or community wide issues (“Windshield Survey” section). The windshield survey revealed Cranston as a growing community with a range of housing options from detached homes, town houses, and condos. The community has a range of services including grocery stores, coffee shops, bus routes, restaurants, banks, wellness amenities, such as hair and nail salons, and a dental office. There are also playgrounds, parks and sidewalks throughout the neighborhood. The community of Cranston presents as a welcoming, family community.

## Community Child Care Survey

In January, a survey was designed and distributed to Cranston resident Facebook groups to understand their child care needs (Appendix D). In accordance with Mount Royal University’s Student-Based Human Research Ethics Guideline, the survey was collected with the purpose of gathering “minimal risk information” for Trellis (MRU, 2021, p. 3). The results of the study highlighted the resilience of community parents/caregivers evident by their optional comments. Although the survey had a small uptake, the results indicated many individuals were indeed impacted by their community child care desert. Due to confidentiality reasons, the specific results of the survey cannot be further discussed in the paper, but Trellis will be able to utilize the results for quality assurance projects.

## Community Conversation

Early on in my research I came to the realization that reviewing data and statistics in isolation may lead to the wrong conclusion. It is imperative to talk to the community and the individuals living or working in these environments to gain a true understanding of the real-life impacts child care deserts have on people. In February, I hosted a community conversation where I welcomed parents, caregivers, teachers, child care providers, and community residents to attend and share their child care experiences. The community conversation was advertised using Facebook Groups, Facebook Advertisements, Mount Royal University medias, and personal email invitations. The stories from the attendees reinforced how child care deserts are negatively impacting the lives of Calgarians. The issue of child care deserts impacts all aspects of a family’s life, including their financial, emotional, and mental wellbeing. One key takeaway from the

community conversation was that the inability for mothers to return to work due to child care requirements negatively impacts society.

Owing likely to the COVID-19 pandemic, and the restricted availability of many parents and caregivers to devote time to community conversations, the parent and/or caregiver population was a difficult audience to target. The community conversation invitation had to be adapted several times to allow for a broader target group. Originally, the community conversation was designed for Cranston parents/caregivers; however, due to low registration numbers the audience and location was expanded to include parents, caregivers, teachers, and child care providers of south Calgary. In pre-pandemic times, the community conversation would have been hosted in the community of Cranston, making parent and/or caregiver attendance more convenient; instead, it was hosted online in the evening. The lower than anticipated participation in the community conversation is a possible reflection of the pandemics negative impact on the lives of parents and/or caregivers.

## Reflections

My Catamount Fellowship journey has changed the way I have approached the issue of child care deserts. The stories shared and research conducted reinforced the importance for organizations and changemakers to work with communities to make lasting change. Organizations and changemakers must meet communities where they are at and work together to design and implement solutions. The experience has allowed me to connect with many remarkable individuals, making me optimistic for a brighter and more inclusive child care future.

The Catamount Fellowship has been a transformational learning experience where I have had the opportunity to improve my leadership skills and learned how to become a changemaker. My views and perspectives of the issue were challenged on a daily basis, encouraging me to approach this project using a systemic lens. I have learned how to engage the broader community to discuss complex issues which has shaped the outcomes and conclusions of my project. The community conversation attendees demonstrated resilience, intelligence, and determination to solve the child care issues existing in our city today, which proved the importance of addressing this complex issue. After reflecting on the community conversation, I understood the importance of engaging with the community to understand their child care needs and experiences.

## Conclusion

What types of child care are needed to meet the demands of “child care desert” communities in Calgary? A simple question at surface level, but once you take a deeper dive into the systemic issue of child care deserts the answer is not as clear. Some may answer that we need more flexible child care options for shift working families. Others may say more affordable and safe child care options. Furthermore, others may believe the child care system must be restructured to allow for mothers and fathers to have equal access to the workforce. All of these responses highlight the need for organizations, like Trellis, to interact with residents to discover what type of child care is needed for a particular community. Connecting with community residents allowed me the opportunity to learn about their child care experiences and hopes for the future. There is no simple solution to the issue of child care deserts in Calgary, but safety and inclusivity must be prioritized.

Children and child care must become a priority in the city of Calgary. Child care services have not adapted fast enough to Canada’s changing workforce dynamic, leaving families with limited affordable care options. Communities in Calgary may require unique child care services to meet the different needs of parents/caregivers living in those areas. Therefore, Trellis and other family serving organizations should collaborate with community residents and individuals experiencing these hardships to learn about their unique societal dynamics, experiences, and child care needs in order to develop appropriate support programs.

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# Appendix A

## Steps of My Catamount Fellowship Journey

- **September 18, 2020:** Catamount Fellowship commenced
- **September 15, 2020:** First meeting with community partner and faculty mentor
- **September – October 2020:** Meetings with Trellis employees
- **September – October 2020:** Preliminary research on child care deserts in Calgary
- **September 29, 2020:** Meeting with the Urban Matters Tea
- **October 2, 2020:** Research Question: I want to know what types of child care are needed to meet the demands of “child care desert” communities?
- **October 19, 2020:** Community of Cranston selected as test neighbourhood
- **October 20, 2020:** Windshield Survey of Cranston
- **October 26, 2020:** Urban Matters provides Cranston data
- **November – February 2020:** Preliminary Cranston research and Literature Review
- **November 20, 2020:** Peer-input Circle on best way to connect with Cranston residents
- **December 4, 2020:** Ten survey questions and four interview questions are designed for Cranston residents. Survey questions were selected.
- **December 2020:** Reflected on the best ways to send out a survey to Cranston residents in a COVID-19 world: Facebook group pages
- **December 18, 2020:** Literature Review Submitted
- **January 8, 2021:** Community Child Care Survey designed on Survey Monkey and distributed to Cranston Facebook groups
- **January – February 2021:** Community Conversation Planned and advertised using Facebook Groups, Facebook Ads, Email invitations, and Mount Royal University contacts
- **February 16, 2021:** Hosted Online Community Conversation
- **February – March 2021:** Reflected on Catamount Fellowship Journey and began Scholarly Output
- **February- March 2021:** Connected with Trellis Child Care Manager regarding Creative Output
- **March 19, 2021:** First Draft Scholarly Output Completed
- **March 26, 2021:** Research Question Adapted: What types of child care, policies, programs, and investments are needed to meet the demands of “child care desert” communities in Calgary?
- **April 4, 2021:** Discovery Snapshot and Creative Works Submitted
- **April 8, 2021:** Second Draft of Scholarly Output Completed
- **April 9, 2021:** Catamount Fellowship Community Showcase

# Appendix B

## Child Care Coverage for Children aged 0-4 in Calgary

	Spaces for Children Aged 0-4	Number of Children Aged 0-4	Coverage Rate
Northwest Calgary	594	2085	28%
Tuscany/Scenic Acres	356	1890	19%
Hawkwood/Arbour Lake/Royal Oak/ Rocky Ridge	930	3195	29%
Dalhousie/Edgemont/Hamptons/Hidden Valley	526	2300	23%
Symons Valley	592	1750	34%
Sandstone/Harvest Hills/Coventry Hills/Panorama Hills/ Beddington	1205	5430	22%
Calgary Northeast	67	1400	5%
Mount Pleasant/Capitol Hill/ Banff Trail	511	1210	42%
Martindale/Taradale/Falconridge/Saddle Ridge	1174	6200	19%
Montgomery/Bowness/Silver Springs/ Greenwood	649	2085	31%
Brentwood/ Collingwood/ Nose Hill	443	600	74%
Thornecliffe/ Tuxedo	1030	2015	51%
Bridgeland/Greenview/Zoo/YVC	912	2045	45%
Rundle/Whitehorn/Monterey Park	1450	3755	39%
City Centre/Calgary Tower	1323	570	232%
Penbrooke Meadows/Marlborough	1156	2696	31%
Kensington/Westmont/Parkdale/University	1193	1340	89%
Discovery Ridge/Signal Hill/Aspen Woods/Patterson/ Cougar Ridge	1867	4500	41%
Rosscarrock/Wildwood/Shaganappi/Sunalta	401	1170	34%
Connaught/ West Victoria Park	375	335	112%
Inglewood/Burnsland/Chinatown/East Victoria Park/ Saddledome	494	730	68%
Forest Lawn/Dover/Erin Woods	488	1405	35%
Lynnwood Ridge/Ogden/Foothills Industrial/Great Plains	928	1010	92%
Highfield/Burns Industrial	435	535	81%
Oak Ridge/Haysboro/Kingsland/Windsor Park	908	1520	59%
Lakeview/Glendale/Killarney/Glamorgan	1519	2465	62%
Braeside/Woodbine	1321	2210	60%
Douglas Glen/McKenzie Lake/Copperfield/East Shepard	1302	5570	23%
Queensland Downs/Lake Bonavista/Willow Park/Acadia	1152	2300	50%
Millrise/Somerset/Bridlewood/Evergreen	920	3655	25%
Midnapore/Sundance	953	2815	34%
Cranston	736	4545	16%

(Macdonald, 2018)

# Appendix C

## Cranston Statistics

### “Number of children in each age group (0-4, 5-9, 10-14)

- 0-4 Males: 868
- 5-9 Males: 1,006
- 10-14 Males: 839
- 0-4 Females: 887
- 5-9 Females: 957
- 10-14 Females: 816
- Pre-School Children: 2,068 (2019)

### Number of children per household

- 0-4: 1,755
- 5-9: 1,963
- 10-14: 1,655
- Average Children per Household: 1

### Number of renters

- Tenure (Owned): 6,565
- Tenure (Rental): 733

### Average household income

\$141,839

### Range of income in the community (if available)

\$0-\$19,999: 203  
\$20,000 - \$39,999: 367  
\$40,000 - \$59,999: 577  
\$60,000 - \$79,999: 764  
\$80,000 - \$99,999: 823  
\$100,000 - \$124,999: 980  
\$125,000 - \$149,999: 748  
\$150,000 - \$199,999: 1,265  
\$200,000 - \$299,999: 1,058  
> \$300,000: 514

### Marital status (married, single)

Married/Common-Law: 11,674  
Married: 10,014  
Common Law: 1,660  
Single: 3,272  
Separated: 329  
Divorced: 748  
Widowed: 267

(J. Wilkes, personal communication, October 20, 2020)

# Appendix D

## Community Child Care Survey

Hi, my name is Laura, and I'm an MRU student researching the child care choices available in communities like Cranston in partnership with Trellis (previously Aspen Boys and Girls Club). This study will help us better understand how to ensure that every family gets the child care they need in their own community. Could you please take less than five minutes to answer a few questions about your needs and current child care situation. This survey will provide us with critical insights into the child care issues that face Cranston residents like yourself. If you have any questions or comments, please feel free to contact me at lalon822@mtroyal.ca. Thank you for your response!

### 1. What is your current child care situation?

- a. Child care IN Cranston
- b. Child care OUTSIDE of Cranston
- c. Stay at home parent/caregiver
- d. Looking or will soon be looking for child care
- e. Other (please specify)

### 2. Have you ever had difficulty finding child care in the community of Cranston?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Comment

### 3. Do the child care services available in Cranston suit your current needs and schedule? (Example: work schedule, times available, etc.)

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Comment

### 4. What additional child care services do you wish you had in your community? (Select all that apply)

- a. Child care for children ages 0-4
- b. Preschool
- c. Kindergarten
- d. School Aged Programs

### 5. What days do you require/would like child care? (Select all that apply)

- a. Monday
- b. Tuesday
- c. Wednesday
- d. Thursday
- e. Friday
- f. Saturday
- g. Sunday

### 6. What times do you require/would like child care? (Select all that apply)

- a. Morning
- b. Afternoon
- c. Evening
- d. Night

### 7. What do you currently pay for full-time child care per month per child?

- a. Less than \$800 per month/child
- b. \$800 to \$1200 per month/child
- c. \$1200 to \$1500 per month/child
- d. Greater than \$1500 per month/child
- e. Not applicable (I do not require full-time child care)
- f. Prefer not to answer

### 8. Has the ability to find affordable child care affected your family's quality of life? (Example: ability to work due to cost of child care, working additional jobs to afford child care, increased stress, etc.)

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Comments

### 9. Would you like to take part in a community conversation (video meeting) around child care options available in the community of Cranston?

- a. Yes (If yes, please email lalon822@mtroyal.ca to be included on the invitation list)
- b. Maybe (If maybe, please email lalon822@mtroyal.ca to learn more about the community conversation)
- c. No