



**GARDERIES
FRANCOPHONES**

INCREASING THE NUMBER OF PLACES IN FRANCOPHONE DAYCARE IN ALBERTA

Challenges, Reality and Recommendations

ABSTRACT

A significant number of Francophone parents are unable to find a French-language daycare centre for their child. This report suggests how the FPFA could be involved in meeting this challenge.

Fédération des parents francophones de l'Alberta

This study was carried out with the financial contribution of the Francophone Secretariat of Alberta



Contents

Executive Summary	2
Current State	3
Control Framework for Daycares	5
Assessing the Needs of Existing Francophone Child Care Centres	8
Institutional Child Care	8
Private family day care centres	9
Role of the FPFA	10
Findings	14
Appendix 1 : Questionnaire Distributed to Institutional child Care Centre	15
Appendix 2 : Questionnaire Distributed to Family Child Care Centres	16

Executive Summary

Currently, there is a shortage of Francophone child care spaces in Alberta. According to estimates presented in this report, it appears that barely half of Francophone families have access to French child care services.

In order to fully assume its role in the child care system, two recommendations are made:

1. That the FPFA serve on the Board of Directors of the AELCS, the body responsible for the accreditation of child care services, and
2. That the FPFA serve on the Board of Directors of the CCAA, the organization responsible for the recognition of child care educators.

Four options were made to the FPFA in order to assume a greater role in the development of Francophone Child Care.

1. Establish a Francophone Child Care Network

The FPFA is well positioned in the early childhood field to provide support to existing child care centres. Moreover, child care centres could benefit from specialized services (e.g. financial planning, professional development, advertising and educational resources) that could be centralized at the FPFA and provided to daycare centres. The FPFA has the wherewithal to immediately establish such a network.

2. Becoming a Francophone Child Care Agency

In order to enjoy a level of authority in child care, the FPFA would welcome provincial recognition for its capacity to enhance family child care services offered in French. Unfortunately, government considers that the 11 agencies currently serving Edmonton are sufficient and can offer support in French; that is not realistic. As a result, the FPFA must demonstrate its expertise before being able to request similar recognition by provincial authorities.

3. Facilitating the establishment of daycare centres

Since the FPFA cannot obtain accreditation, consideration should be given to asking existing daycares to assume this role with family child care centres. Furthermore, the FPFA has a facilitating role in this scenario to demonstrate the feasibility and viability of its approach to existing daycares.

4. Creating a daycare association

It is now more evident than ever that a greater mobilization of Francophone child care centres is required. The substantial involvement required to implement a new child care service can discourage parents from establishing such a service. By centralizing some key common services under an association, the FPFA could facilitate the creation of new child care services.

This report weighs each option and describes elements to consider in arriving at these conclusions.

Status Report

The 2011 Census revealed that there were 2,950 children aged 0-4 years with at least one Francophone parent in Alberta. A 2014 Statistics Canada study found that in Alberta, about 40% of parents want to enrol their child in a child care centre. Accordingly, the request for about 1 180 francophone child care spaces in the province is warranted.

To verify whether the offer was sufficient to fulfil this request, the FPFA conducted a brief survey of its partners to identify the number of child care spaces in institutions and child care centres in Alberta (Table 1).

Table 1: Existing Francophone Child Care Centres in Alberta

Garderies en établissement Institutional Child Care				
Name	City or Region	Accredited	Capacity	Waiting List
CEPP	Edmonton	Yes	52	50
CEPP	St-Albert	Yes	16	5
Les Petits Rayons	Edmonton	No	25	
Les p'tits chaussons	Beaumont	No	25	4
Les petits Oursons	St-Paul	No	21	
Chez Madame Picolo	Fort McMurray	Yes	56	22
Alouette	Calgary	Yes	30	
Pommes de reinette	Calgary SO	Yes	63	25
Pommes de reinette	Calgary NE	Yes	19	1
Toujouramis	Calgary	Yes	30	
Touche-à-tout	Lethbridge	Yes	26	10
Joyeux Colibris	Medicine Hat	Yes	15	3
CEPP	Canmore	Yes	33	
Subtotal - Institutional Daycare			411	120
Private Family Daycare Centres				
City or Region	Number	Capacity	Waiting list	
Edmonton et environs Edmonton and area	12	72	Unknown	
Cold Lake	1	6	Unknown	
Calgary	3	18	Unknown	
Cochrane	2	12	Unknown	
Banff-Canmore	3	18	Unknown	
Red Deer	1	6	Unknown	
Total (Institutional and Family)			543	120

Statistique Canada, Recensement de la population de 2011, produit numéro 98-314-XCB2011026 au catalogue de Statistique Canada.

¹ Statistique Canada, Les services de garde au Canada, produit numéro 89-652-X au catalogue de Statistique Canada.

As shown, there would be 543 child care spaces available. Consequently, there is a shortage of 630 places to meet the potential demand. The importance of the waiting list (120 names) amplifies the fact that francophone child care centres are popular with parents.

These figures' attempt to compare the supply and demand of child care spaces are distorted by two essential elements. Firstly, there is no guarantee that Francophone parents wish to send their child to a Francophone daycare. For example, some parents will consider other factors, such as proximity to work or home, type of programming proposed, etc. in their choice of child care. Secondly, some Francophone parents may have to rely on a child care services offered in another language.

On the other hand, a contrary argument reveals that some non-French-speaking parents could choose French-language daycare services based on the same motivations as their French-speaking counterparts. We assume here that these two groups are equivalent so that as many francophone parents would choose a non-francophone child care service as a non-francophone would choose a francophone child care service.

Numerous studies report on a critical period for language acquisition and the results are conclusive: infants are the most capable of language acquisition. Similarly, the longer a child starts learning a language, the less chance he has of mastering the language. Thus, if the French-speaking child is to have a masterful command of French, he must be given access to francophone child care as soon as possible.

It should be noted that this need is less present for Anglophone families since Alberta's socio-linguistic environment favors the acquisition and transmission of the English language in children. A French-language day care service can necessarily help counter the predominantly English environment by offering a more balanced English-French environment to the child.

Control frameworkd for daycares

According to the Alberta government, any child care service with seven or more children must be registered. It is the Child and Family Services Authorities (CFSAs), paragovernmental organizations that are responsible for granting operating licenses. CFSAs are also responsible for day care agencies¹.

A daycare centre with fewer than seven children can operate as a "family daycare centre". Under the law, non-accredited daycares may have up to six children, in addition to those in the family providing the service. On the other hand, if a family wishes to be accredited, it must not only operate under a daycare agency, but is also limited to six children, including those in the family. The daycare agency is itself accredited thus ensuring that the child care centres it represents meet government standards.

The FPPA contacted some agencies to fully understand their role and two were particularly receptive to the FPPA's requests. Strathcona County Family and Children Services is responsible for about 30 family daycare centres. They have a waiting list of child care centres wishing to join their agency and are refusing to take on more. It appears that their popularity stems from the low costs it requires from child care centres (\$35/child/month), which is about three to four times less than similar agencies in Edmonton. The presence of a Parent Support Centre and the support of the municipality ensure the quality and performance of the service.

The second agency (Child Development Dayhomes) operates in three regions: Calgary, Edmonton and Fort McMurray. It provides services to more than 400 family daycare centres. In the absence of more information sharing, the Director was kind enough to volunteer his assistance for opening an agency, but also cautioned us about the time it would take to operationalize the service. The Director suggested a time span of five to seven years, however with her willingness to share best practices, she estimates that five years would be more likely.

Accreditation and Early Learning Care Services (AELCS) are used by daycare centres and agencies for accreditation. This organization has received the government's mandate to grant certification to child care services that meet the six regulatory standards. Once obtained, AELCS ensures that accreditation is maintained through a renewal process.

To our knowledge, these assessments are conducted in English. There is no requirement for AELCS to offer French-language visits to Francophone child care services. This could be an informal barrier to the accreditation of francophone child care centres apprehensive about being monitored and assessed in English.

It would be interesting to assess the relevance of the FPPA to serve on the Board of Directors of the AELCS. This would allow for a better understanding of the "insides" of the certification process. Also, it could give the FPPA an overview of the actual number of francophone child care centres requiring service in French.

¹ Government of Alberta, Family day home standards manual for Alberta, April 2013.

Institutional day care centres seeking accreditation may receive support from the Alberta Resource Centre for Quality Enhancement (ARCQE). The agency receives a portion of its funding from the Alberta government to promote accreditation of child care centres and to provide them with general supports. This agency also offers certain services for a fee.

In the past, ARCQE had to meet the needs of francophone child care. One observation made by ARCQE was that their "free" support to Francophone child care centres is insufficient and that they often must resort to the "paid" services of the organization. While ARCQE has infrequently had bilingual staff to overcome this deficiency, it has no obligation to have a French-speaking trainer to meet the needs of francophone child care centres.

While discussing with ARCQE, it became evident that they agreed with the appropriateness of having francophone agents. If there are not enough applications for a full-time francophone worker, there are certainly enough applications for a part-time employee. However, given ARCQE's limited resources and without additional support from government, the agency will not restrict its hiring to French-speaking personnel.

Finally, the Alberta Child Care Association (CCAA) is a member organization of the Canadian Child and Day Care Federation (CCCCF). It identifies itself as an organization for the recognition of the child care sector. It receives funding from the government and subsequently redistributes it to educators who wish to pursue their professional development after reaching Level 3 (Child Development Supervisor). CCAA wants all educators to have at least a Level 2 (Child Development Worker).

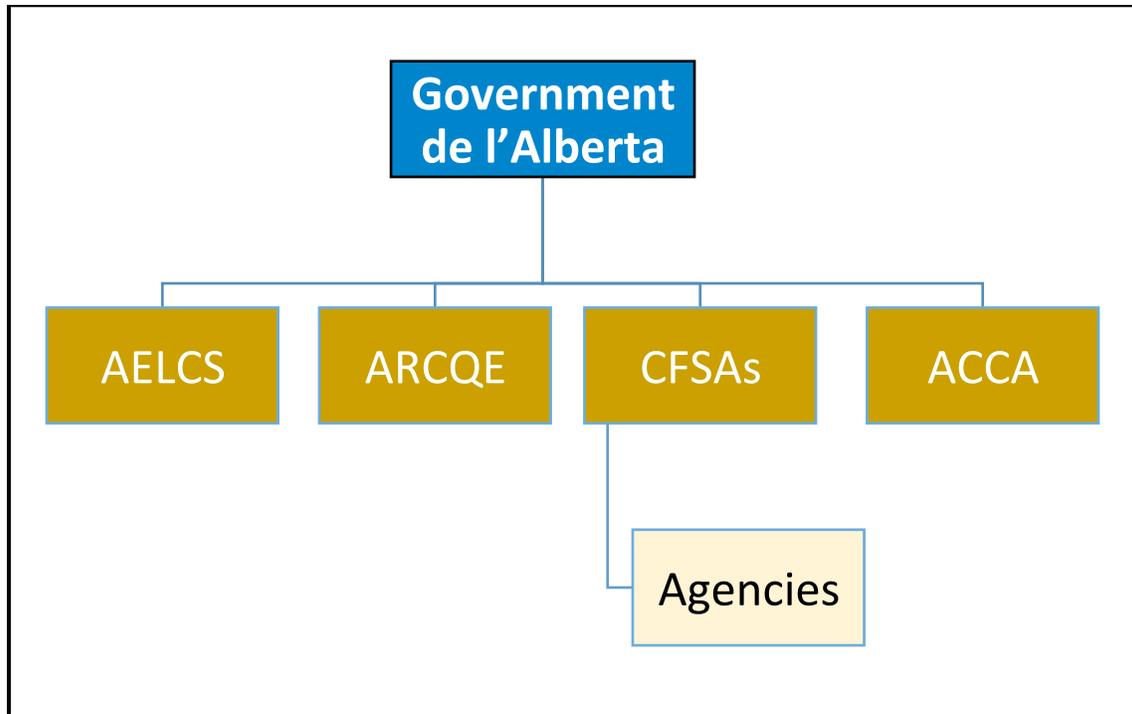
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Given the objectives of this organization and the presence of the FPFA at the early childhood level in Alberta, it would be important for the FPFA to participate in CCAA's activities and evolution.

Recommendation #2: That the FPFA serve on ACCA's Board of Directors

Considering the importance of these organizations, we understand that the Government of Alberta, through the Department of Human Services, controls numerous players in the organization of child care. Diagram 1 presents this structure in hierarchical fashion. The question becomes where the FPFA should be positioned in this organization to best respond to the need for increasing child care spaces.

Chart 1: Organization of Daycare Services in Alberta



Assessing the Needs of Existing Francophone Child Care Centres

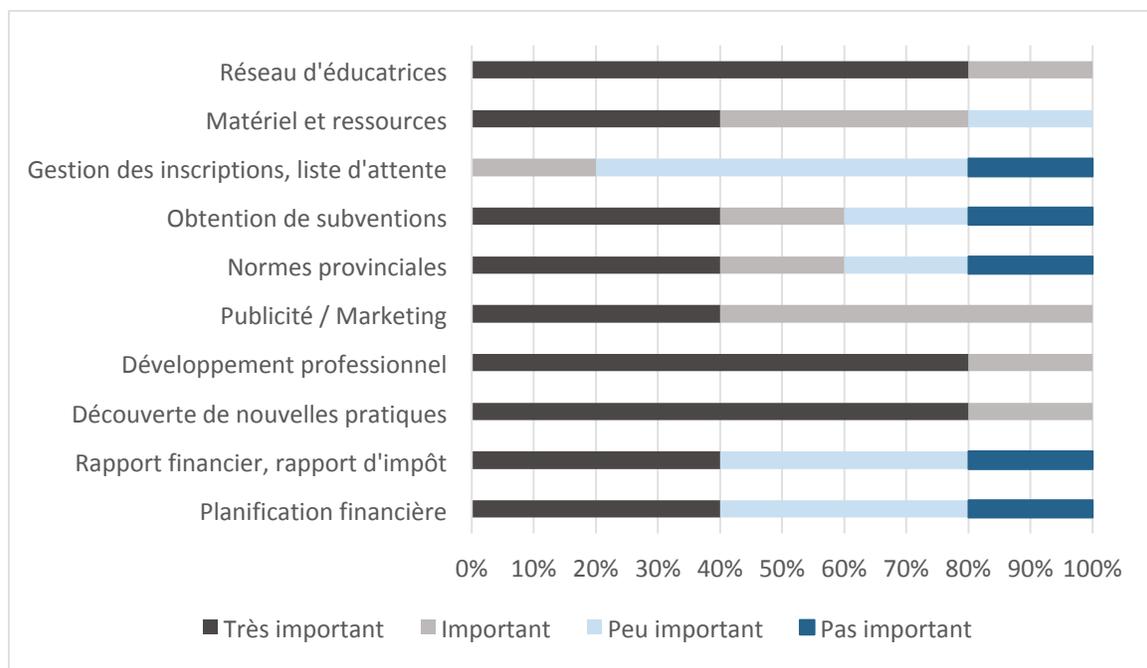
Two surveys were conducted in January 2016 to target the needs of Francophone child care centres. The first was distributed to daycare facilities in institutions, the second to family daycare centres.

In this survey, daycare centres were asked to identify the types of services or resources an organization such as the FPFA could provide to help them better carry out their activities.

Institutional Child Care

Of the 11 francophone child care centres identified in Table 1, eight were surveyed and five responded. Figure 1 shows the results of this survey.

Chart 1: Support that should be provided by an association - Institutional child care



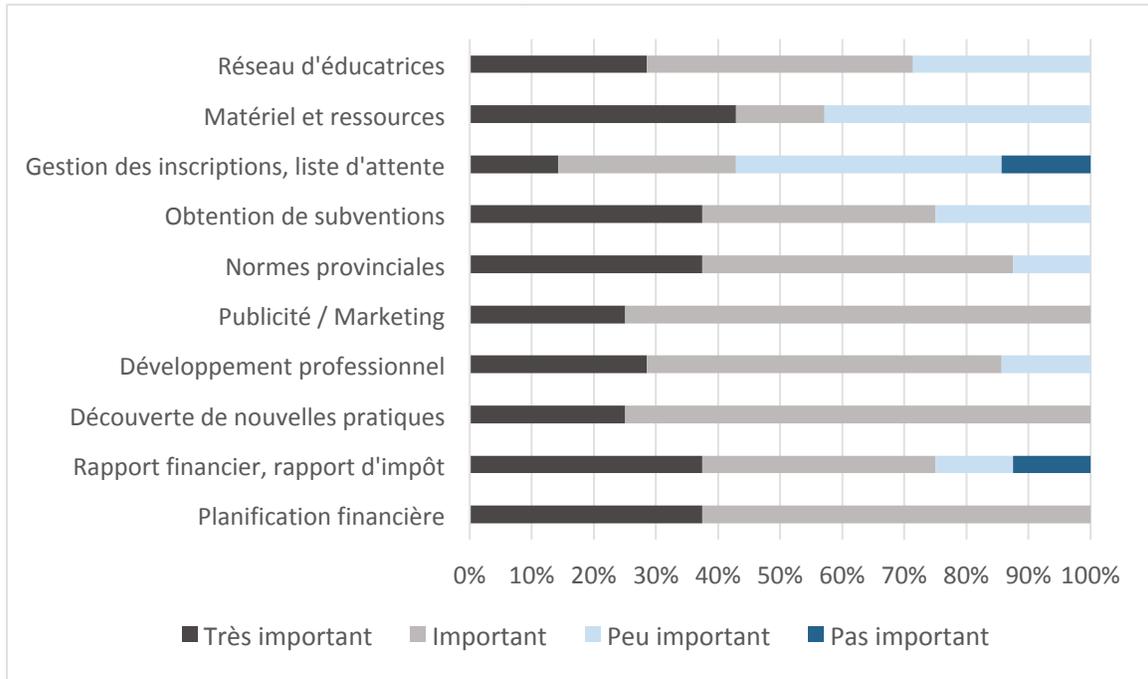
As shown, the most pressing needs for institutional child care centres are professional development and the identification of new practices. It must be noted that the FPFA already performs both tasks. It would therefore be important to publicize these workshop opportunities provided by the FPFA to daycare centres.

Another equally important element is the establishment of an educator network. The interest here lies in the possibility of replacing an educator who is ill or unable to go to work. Also, child care centres want to receive support in terms of advertising and formulating marketing plans.

Private family day care centres

Contacting family child care centres is more complex. Indeed, most provide only their phone number as contact information. Nevertheless, 15 of the 20 child care centres identified in Table 1 were contacted and eight responded to the survey. The results are shown in Chart 2.

Chart 2: Support that should be provided by an agency - Family Day Care Centres



As shown, the primary element is access to materials and resources, although it is a concern for barely half of the respondents.

On the other hand, advertising, identification of new practices and financial planning were universally identified as important services that an agency could offer. Professional development and knowledge of provincial standards are also services that seven out of eight centres would appreciate receiving.

Obtaining grants and providing financial reporting and tax returns are also identified as being very important by more than one-third of child care centres.

In conclusion, family child care centres clearly have high expectations in terms of support that would be helpful for them. However, it is also noteworthy that services offered by an agency would be equally relevant for institutional child care.

Role of the FPFA

The analysis of the survey results leads us to imagine four scenarios for the FPFA. These scenarios are intended to meet the identified needs of child care centres in the aforementioned surveys.

Scenario 1: FPFA Establishes a Francophone Child Care Network

According to this scenario, the FPFA becomes a centre of expertise in early childhood, assuming the role of trainer (via an annual conference), reference centre (via a resource centre) and support service (via assistance with registration and accreditation) of child care centres. FPFA ultimately forms the link between the various child care centres in the province.

This network would support institutional child care. Fortunately, the FPFA is well positioned to meet this demand by way of established communication and contacts with several daycares and their educators. They are consulted for the training offered by Réseau entre-aides where a broad spectrum of professional development workshops is made available during two full days of training in February.

At this juncture, the FPFA has few resources to help day care centres with their programming or management. However, a partnership could be foreseen with either the Institut Guy-Lacombe pour la famille (IGLF) or la Société de la petite enfance francophone du sud de l'Alberta (SPEFSA) to open a resource centre that could be easily accessed by all parties.

To facilitate the accreditation process for francophone child care centres, the FPFA should have a trained employee. We know there are qualified people in the Alberta Francophone community able to assume this task. It then becomes a question of being able to hire such an individual, either permanently or contractually as needed.

Some of these responsibilities are like those proposed by ARCQE which receives a portion of its funding from the province, but also from the sale of services. Given that the FPFA would play a comparable role, a similar arrangement could be devised for FPFA with the government.

Some of the services proposed above would also be relevant for home child care. Indeed, these centres could benefit from a resource centre and expertise with regulations and standards around accreditation. However, a service agreement would be required with these centres, especially for financial planning.

The FPFA could request an amount for children placed in family child care through the network to fund the service. Accordingly, it would be necessary to determine whether it should be a lump sum (e.g. \$100 when referring a child) or payable monthly (e.g. \$10 per month per child referred).

The FPFA does not currently have the support of Alberta Human Services to fund services. There would undoubtedly be a period (3 to 5 years) during which the FPFA would have to build its expertise and prove itself. The FPFA could request temporary support from the Francophone Secretariat to fulfil this mandate. Once the relevance of the service is demonstrated, it would be easier to ask the government for financial support to continue offering or expanding the service.

Further to our conversation with ARCQE, they agreed to a joint ARCQE-FPFA request in support of Francophone child care centres. This would be akin to the type of agreement the FPFA previously enjoyed with the Alberta School Councils' Association (ASCA) in support of francophone school councils.

Scenario 2: FPFA Creates Francophone Child Care Association

Beyond a network of child care centres, the FPFA could also play the role of spokesperson for francophone daycares. By creating an association of Francophone child care centres, the FPFA could centralize some essential day care services, namely accreditation expertise, payroll management, budget monitoring and training workshops. By combining these different elements, the association could gain expertise through the specialization of tasks and derive efficiencies from economies of scale.

The association, holding an overall vision for child care, could also oversee the expansion of child care centres. Using its experience and staff expertise, the association could respond more adequately to needs in areas not currently served and where the involvement of volunteer parents would be insufficient to implement such a service.

A model to consider for instituting this association would be Prince Edward Island. The Parents' Federation of Prince Edward Island created the Association of Francophone Early Years Centres of PEI. Inc. On the island, there are six child care centres holding "Early Childhood Centre (CPE)" status, all partially funded by the province. The six local committees were abolished and a provincial committee was formed. The board of directors includes a parent representing each centre, two representatives from the French-language school board (superintendent and trustee) and the director of the Parents' Federation, for a total of nine members.

A director was hired and seed funding was secured. Three-year funding comes from Heritage Canada through the Department of Education. A total of approximately \$450,000 will be awarded over the next three years for the implementation of the project. They also have the possibility of accessing other funds at the end of the period if the association can demonstrate a specific need. Knowing that the educator positions are subsidized by the province, the association expects to self-finance within the next three years.

The challenge with this model would be to get the various day care centres to join the association. Indeed, some might fear the effects of this decentralization. The FPFA would therefore have to create a clear definition of the specific tasks that would remain within each daycare's purview.

This model has the potential to be self-financing insofar as daycares agree to join the association and that the amount retained by the FPFA for the provision of services allows the financial viability of each daycare centre. We are aware of grants that the FPFA could apply for as an association. It would be necessary to further analyze these possibilities that could help reduce service costs. It should be noted that the association would be open to providing services to family day care centres as member associations.

Scenario 3: The FPFA becomes a daycare Creates Francophone Child Care Association

Under this scenario, the FPFA is given a new role, that of the Francophone child care agency in Alberta, with the objective of supervising and training child care providers. The agency could also provide bookkeeping and fundraising services to family child care centres.

Legally, an agency must have two positions:

- (1) A coordinator responsible for the day-to-day activities of the agency; this person also acts as a contact for both families and community members.
- (2) A consultant responsible for home visits with at least Child Care Assistant certification and having a duty to confirm that the activities of the family daycare centres comply with provincial standards.

It is not excluded that the same person would be responsible for both tasks. However, considering the extensive travel requirements, it would be advisable to have two employees associated with the agency.

As an entity, it would be possible for the service to be profitable. Indeed, if enough child-care centres were to join the agency, it could become self-financing. It is also possible that the agency would become independent of the FPFA.

The main challenge associated with this scenario is that agency designation is granted locally by the CFSAs. The FPFA has already explored the opening of an agency in the Edmonton area, but encountered a refusal at that level. Choosing the Edmonton area as a starting point made sense insofar as the FPFA offices are in the city. However, since an agency operated by the FPFA would be present throughout the province, it should be possible to work with other CFSAs. Therefore, we must explore the possibility of starting the agency in another region to gauge support elsewhere and then to expand the agency's activities across Alberta.

This scenario, which remains feasibly uncertain, is still the best long-term option if the project's mandate is to be properly fulfilled and if child care centres can be enticed to join the association.

A daycare agency like the one in Strathcona County requires low agency fees, e.g. \$35/child in the Greater Edmonton area. If the FPFA offered a somewhat higher fee, for instance \$50/child, it could become profitable by way of services provided and by providing affordable services to its members, which would facilitate recruitment. It is not uncommon for agencies in the Edmonton area to charge \$100 or even \$150 per child per month.

Of course, the question of whether family child care centres would agree to join the FPFA's agency remains uncertain. It will therefore be up to the FPFA to make itself known and to offer a quality service to daycares who will choose to join the agency.

Scenario 4: Accredited child care facilities also acting as agencies

If the FPFA does not have the option of becoming a daycare agency, it could be envisaged that institutional child care centres act as an agency for family child care centres. This right has already been granted to the Glengarry Day Care Centre in Edmonton. Unfortunately, to date, we have been unable to meet with their senior officers to explore how to proceed.

The main advantage of this model is that the FPFA would not be directly responsible for the file. As a result, it would not be within its purview to ensure that family child care centres meet provincial standards. Also, the FPFA would not have employees or sites to visit.

On the other hand, it would be necessary to convince institutional child care centres to assume this role. Preferably, the FPFA should have a facilitator role responsible for supervising day care centres and ensuring that the service continues.

Findings

The objective of this study was to explore the feasibility of increasing the number of francophone child care spaces in Alberta. After drawing a list of various existing child care services and gauging the demand for such services, the FPFA concludes that there is a stark lack of child care spaces for French-speaking clients. The current supply would only fill 46% of the demand.

To explain this lack, we noticed that no Francophone individual or organization was present at the early childhood decision-making level. It is therefore essential that the first step for FPFA is to be heard by these organizations, mainly AELCS for the accreditation process and ACCA for support to educators.

We then conducted a survey of family and institutional centres which indicated that child care centres would greatly appreciate receiving support to fulfil their mandate. In exploring the current position of the FPFA, we concluded that the FPFA was the right body to assume this role.

Therefore, we suggested four scenarios for consideration. This study concludes that the objective of increasing the number of child care spaces will be most achievable if the FPFA assumed a central role in the provision of services. Thus, it is recommended to opt for the establishment of a provincial francophone daycare association. This would allow the FPFA to provide child care services while maintaining its organizational position as an umbrella organization for parents of children of all ages.

Appendix 1: Questionnaire Distributed to Institutional Child Care Centres

FPFA - Aide aux garderies - organismes

La FPFA désire connaître les principaux besoins des garderies en milieu familial. Veuillez remplir le sondage ci-dessous pour nous aider à bien identifier les ressources que la FPFA pourrait mettre en place.

*Obligatoire

Pour chacun des éléments suivants, veuillez identifier l'intérêt que vous auriez à recevoir de l'appui. *

	Très important	Important	Peu important	Pas important	Sans objet
Planification financière (Établissement d'un budget, gérer les dépenses)	<input type="radio"/>				
Rapport financier / rapport d'impôts (Rapport pour Alberta Registries, Gaming, Reçus d'impôts)	<input type="radio"/>				
Découverte de nouvelles pratiques (Liens internet, ateliers et conférences)	<input type="radio"/>				
Développement professionnel (Cours, formations)	<input type="radio"/>				
Publicité / Marketing (développement de matériel promotionnel)	<input type="radio"/>				
Connaissance des normes provinciales pour les services de garde (Visite sur place, consultations)	<input type="radio"/>				
Obtention de subventions (Lien avec le gouvernement de l'Alberta)	<input type="radio"/>				
Gestion des inscriptions / liste d'attentes (Tri des inscriptions, recommandations sur le service approprié)	<input type="radio"/>				
Matériel et ressources (Jouets, livres, cd, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>				
Réseau d'éducatrices (Liste d'éducatrices disponibles sur demande, en cas d'urgence)	<input type="radio"/>				
Ligne 11	<input type="radio"/>				

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Y a-t-il d'autres façons que la FPFA pourrait vous appuyer dans vos activités?

Votre réponse

Appendix 2: Questionnaire Distributed to Family Child Care Centres

FPFA - Aide aux garderies en milieu familial

La FPFA désire connaître les principaux besoins des garderies en milieu familial. Veuillez remplir le sondage ci-dessous pour nous aider à bien identifier les ressources que la FPFA devrait mettre en place.

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Pour chacun des éléments suivants, veuillez identifier l'intérêt que vous auriez à recevoir de l'appui. *

	Très important	Important	Peu important	Pas important	Sans objet
Planification financière (comment bien établir son budget pour la garderie)	<input type="radio"/>				
Rapport financier / rapport d'impôts (récupérer les chèques, émettre les reçus d'impôts)	<input type="radio"/>				
Découverte de nouvelles pratiques (liens internet, nouvelles ressources)	<input type="radio"/>				
Développement professionnel (formation, cours, ateliers)	<input type="radio"/>				
Publicité / Marketing (développement de matériel promotionnel)	<input type="radio"/>				
Connaissance des normes provinciales pour les services de garde (visite sur place, consultation)	<input type="radio"/>				
Obtention de subventions (lien avec le gouvernement de l'Alberta)	<input type="radio"/>				
Gestion des inscriptions / liste d'attente (tri et attribution de gens cherchant un service de garde)	<input type="radio"/>				
Matériel et ressources (jouets, livres, cd, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>				
Réseau d'éducatrices (liens avec d'autres éducatrices pouvant dépanner en cas d'urgence)	<input type="radio"/>				

Y a-t-il d'autres façons que la FPFA pourrait vous appuyer dans vos activités?

Votre réponse