

Gretzky calls on Wynne to ensure child-care workers earn more money ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

Windsor West MPP Lisa Gretzky says it's time Ontario child-care workers earned better pay.

The NDP education critic on Wednesday called on Premier Kathleen Wynne to commit to a system that provides affordable child care while paying decent wages to the professionals taking care of Ontario children.

"Parents who couldn't afford child care before this government's throne speech are no better off today," Gretzky said during Question Period in the legislature. "Working conditions in the child-care sector are reaching a tipping point where over a quarter of our dedicated professionals are looking for another job.

"Nearly 25 per cent of early childhood educators make under \$15 an hour despite their tremendous role and responsibility in caring for our children, the future of this province."

In her September throne speech, Wynne promised 100,000 new licensed child-care spaces over five years starting in 2017, creating spots for about 40 per cent of children up to age four.

But Gretzky feels working conditions for child-care workers are growing worse.

Early childhood educators and child-care workers from across Ontario — or as Gretzky said, "from Windsor to Wawa" — travelled to Queen's Park Wednesday to deliver petitions signed by more than 4,000 people.

On the 16th annual Child Care Worker and Early Childhood Educator Appreciation Day, the petitions called for the creation of universally accessible child care. The Association of Early Childhood Educators also released a report the same day highlighting poor working conditions in the early-learning sector.

"Will this government finally commit to a universal child-care system that works for child-care workers and Ontario families?" asked Gretzky.

Ontario's Associate Minister of Education responsible for early years and child care, Indira Naidoo-Harris, rose to defend the Liberal government's commitment to improve the early-learning sector with a \$269 million investment and a \$2-an-hour increase in wages.

"We are transforming the way that we deliver child care in this province," Naidoo-Harris said. "We are transforming it with an historic investment."

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Region: Ontario ^[3]

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