

# Mayor John Tory announces child-care subsidies, asks province and feds for more help <sup>[1]</sup>

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**Source:** CBC News

**Format:** Article

**Publication Date:** 17 Jan 2017

## AVAILABILITY

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## EXCERPTS

Mayor John Tory says 300 more families will be able to get subsidized child care in 2017, but he also called on the province to shoulder the cost of occupancy grants paid to local schools that house daycares.

Tory outlined his child-care plans at a new daycare on Dane Avenue, near Dufferin Street and Lawrence Avenue, on Tuesday morning. The mayor said the city needs to do more to help parents with child-care costs — which are higher here than anywhere else in Canada — but said the province and federal government need to help with that.

"We need to do more," Tory told reporters.

The city is providing child-care subsidies to some 26,359 families, but there are still nearly 18,000 more on a waiting list.

Meanwhile, councillors and school trustees who have criticized the child-care measures in this year's budget say the city's plan to stop providing \$1.13 million to local schools that house daycares will result in higher fees for all parents.

Coun. Janet Davis said she worries parents could wind up paying some \$350 a year if the city stops providing the occupancy grants.

Toronto District School Board Trustee Jennifer Story tweeted that Tory's plan "hardly makes sense," and represents increasing the money for thousands to pay for subsidies for a few hundred.

## Province in talks with school boards

Tory said the money saved by cutting the occupancy grants will go toward funding child-care subsidies. He said the province should fully fund the grants to reduce the pressure on those schools.

The Ontario government has provided some \$271 million to school boards in recent years to support building and renovating child-care spaces, a government spokesperson said.

Officials are also in talks with school boards about how much they charge child-care partners in an effort to address those challenges.

"The province does not fund child care directly," said Lucas Malinowski, a spokesperson for the Minister Responsible for Early Years and Child Care, Indira Naidoo-Harris, in an email.

"We believe local municipalities and service system managers are best suited to direct those funding dollars to meet the unique needs of their communities," his statement continued, pointing out Toronto receives about \$306 million per year and could use that money to pay for the occupancy fee.

## Daycare spaces remain empty

The government has also committed between \$600-\$750 million to create 100,000 new licensed child-care spaces in the next five years, some of which could be used for subsidies.

Tory praised that plan, but said in addition to the capital investment, parents will need help with affording those daycare spots.

Tory noted the federal government also had some "encouraging words" when it comes to supporting child care in the city, but didn't provide specifics.

Currently, Tory said, there are 4,000 empty child-care spaces in the city because parents just can't afford them. That's causing problems for not only parents, but daycare operators, as well.

"People simply can't afford the spaces that are available," Tory said.

Toronto's budget process continues in the coming weeks, with the budget committee meeting again next week before the entire city council gets a say at the end of the month.

-reprinted from CBC News

**Region:** Ontario <sup>[3]</sup>

**Tags:** funding <sup>[4]</sup>

subsidies <sup>[5]</sup>

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