

Ontario's new day care plan applauded by Sudbury operators ^[1]

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Sudbury day care operators are applauding the province's plan to move towards a universal child care system.

The government unveiled a five-year, \$1.6 billion plan yesterday to build thousands of more day care spaces, increase subsidies for families and salaries for child care workers.

In 2016, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development released a report that included a look at child-care costs. The group of wealthy nations found Canada to be among the most expensive for daycare among its 35 members.

The Ontario government's plan is a welcome change, said Tracy Saarikoski, executive director of the Discovery Learning Centre, which looks after 400 kids in the Garson area of Greater Sudbury.

"It's an ambitious plan, but it's time that we transformed this system," Saarikoski said. "It's been a lot of patchwork services for children and families."

Saarikoski said she hears from many parents who say their daycare bill is bigger than their monthly mortgage payment and it's time the province saw this as an essential for families rather than an option.

"If bills don't get paid, they cut off your hydro," she said.

"Well, early learning and care is a vital part of their budgets as well and it's time this government really stepped up."

The province will immediately subsidize care for 24,000 kids under four years old, however it says it needs to draw up what it calls an affordability strategy to know how to help parents in the long run.

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