

# New child care spaces good news, but small numbers <sup>[1]</sup>

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## EXCERPTS

Childcare is a difficult thing.

There's so much to consider: family finances, if there is a licensed care provider near where you work or live, or if you or your partner have the desire to become a stay-at-home parent or want to keep working.

Sometimes the decision is made for you - say, a waiting list and no one else to care for your child - or is set after months of fraught debate on career versus staying-at-home.

The thing is, the shortfall of a provincially regulated system shouldn't be what the decision is based on.

In 2016 the Ontario government pledged to open up 100,000 new licensed child-care spots in schools, workplaces and communities.

But, earlier this month, a press release changed that a bit to now "helping" 100,000 children aged 0 to 4 access license child care in five years.

Now, what the province announced in a June 19 press release is \$1.6 billion to create 45,000 licensed child-care spaces in five years and is starting with 460 new child-care spaces spread over nine communities.

This is all well and good, but 460 this year leaves 44,540 in four years if the 45,000 number is taken. That's a lot of new daycare staff and buildings to be put in place. It's also a deadline that stretches past the provincial election next year.

The problem is that the pace seems pretty slow and parents and parents-to-be need the assistance now.

The province is saying all the right words. Parents' days were probably made at the news as they envisioned how much easier life would be they had good child care closer to home, or the office.

But as the numbers seemed to change between 2016 and 2017 those same parents, driving 20 minutes one way to get one child from daycare then heading in a different direction to grab another from the after school program before finally heading for home are probably keeping their excitement in check - maybe a 'ya right' slipped out.

Yes, the government needs to ensure our money is going in the communities where it's needed, but shouldn't that have been figured out before the pledge was made?

Whatever the case, we are glad to see the province is opening up more child-care spaces and projects are underway.

We're not pleased that the number is so low when a new government could soon control the public purse.

-reprinted from North Bay Nipissing

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