

'Our pockets are being squeezed': Ontario family's daycare increases cost after minimum wage hike ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

Taryn Aitken says she was shocked and frustrated when she opened a letter from her children's daycare centre that said she would be required to pay \$368 more a month because of the minimum wage increase, which came into effect Jan. 1.

"We were paying \$1656 a month for the two children, now we're paying \$2024 a month," she said.

"We are left where our pockets are being squeezed and pinched."

Aitken said after she received the letter, she spoke with the daycare's administrator who told her that despite the provinces \$12.7 million funding to early childhood education which was announced in November, costs still needed to increase.

"Their costs are going to go up regardless. Things like the catered lunch, that fee is increasing. Anything extra on top of providing basic care for the children," she said.

"In order to pay for those things, parent's pockets are being picked."

The province announced the additional funding would be available to licensed daycares to offset the added costs related to the wage hike. But president of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business Dan Kelly said the province needs to do more.

"There was no impact assessment done whatsoever before they announced this 22 per cent increase, on its way to a 30 per cent increase overall by next year," he said.

"The government is having to put Band-Aids on all sorts of stuff to try and deal with the fallout from their decision."

Aitken said in a perfect world childcare workers would be paid above minimum wage, in a system that would be paid for by the government.

"These are [people] caring for our children and building the foundation for their future. They are highly skilled, trained workers making slightly over minimum wage, where comparable jobs ... are making basically double," she said, adding that with a universal childcare system, there would be "no child left behind. No child left undervalued."

When Global News made a request for comment, a spokesperson for Indira Naidoo-Harris, minister responsible for early years and child care, said an announcement will be made Monday, alongside minister of education, Mitzie Hunter.

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