

More child care, more choice: Providing free preschool child care for children aged 2.5 to kindergarten ^[1]

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AVAILABILITY

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EXCERPTS

Today Premier Kathleen Wynne announced that full-day licensed child care will become free for preschool children from the age of two-and-a-half until they are eligible to start kindergarten, beginning in 2020. Free preschool child care will save families an estimated \$17,000 per child, allow parents to go back to work when they choose and help give children the best start in life.

The Premier was joined today at Nelson Mandela Park Public School in Toronto by Charles Sousa, Minister of Finance, and Indira Naidoo-Harris, Minister of Education and Minister Responsible for Early Years and Child Care, to talk about how Ontario's new investment of \$2.2 billion over three years will expand access to affordable child care across the province, ease the financial burden families are facing in our changing economy, and deliver free licensed child care for children from the age of two-and-a-half until kindergarten, beginning in 2020.

Early learning has been demonstrated to improve a child's academic performance throughout their lives. Improved access to child care gives parents, especially women, more choice about when they return to work and will help Ontario close the gender wage gap. This historic change to the way child care is delivered in the province follows advice economist Dr. Gordon Cleveland put forward in his report *Affordable For All: Making Licensed Child Care Affordable in Ontario*, and is informed by an extensive in-person and online consultation process with thousands of parents, educators and child care professionals across Ontario.

Making full-day child care free for families with preschool-aged children is part of the government's plan to support care, create opportunity and make life more affordable during this period of rapid economic change. The plan includes free prescription drugs for everyone under 25, and 65 or over, through the biggest expansion of medicare in a generation, free tuition for hundreds of thousands of students, a higher minimum wage and better working conditions and easier access to affordable child care.

Quick Facts

Ontario is making an overall new investment of \$2.2 billion over three years in child care, which includes over \$930 million in 2020-21 to make licensed preschool child care free for kids from the age of 2.5 until they are eligible for kindergarten, beginning in September 2020.

As part of the overall investment, Ontario is increasing operating funding across the child care system by an additional \$162.5 million over three years to increase access to licensed child care, support fee reductions, and reduce or eliminate fee-subsidy waitlists.

This investment includes \$90 million in 2018-19 to support continued expansion of child care for children ages 0 to 4 years, including \$53 million to create approximately 4,200 fee subsidies and \$26 million to establish base funding for home child care.

To support the expansion of quality, licensed child care, Ontario will also be introducing a wage grid for all program staff working in the

early years and child care sector in April 2020 that will ensure their compensation is more closely aligned with Early Childhood Educators working in full-day kindergarten.

Ontario is dedicating \$40 million over three years to support the expansion of licensed child care programs in First Nations communities. New capital funding will also be available to First Nations to support the construction or retrofit of new and existing child care facilities.

A two year, \$30 million innovation fund will seek solutions to chronic issues in child care, including ways to extend child care hours to ease anxiety and stress for parents who work long hours, shifts or are in precarious work situations.

Today the government is also releasing policy recommendations received from Dr. Gordon Cleveland, Associate Professor of Economics Emeritus in the Department of Management at the University of Toronto Scarborough on child care affordability, as well as the Workforce Study for Early Years and Child Care Employees conducted by R.A. Malatest and Associates Ltd. Free child care for preschoolers is a key recommendation coming out of Dr. Cleveland's report, and the implementation of a wage grid is a key recommendation in the Workforce Study.

Making child care more affordable and accessible was one of the key recommendations from the Gender Wage Gap Steering Committee's final report. This supports Ontario's Strategy for Women's Economic Empowerment that will help close the wage gap between men and women.

Since 2012–13, the number of licensed child care spaces in Ontario has grown to more than 406,000 — a 38 per cent increase.

As of September 1, 2016, licensed child care centres and home child care agencies may no longer charge parents fees to have their child placed on a wait list.

Additional Resources

[Creating More Child Care Spaces](#)

[Child Care in Ontario](#)

[EarlyON Child and Family Centres](#)

[Renewed Early Years and Child Care Policy Framework](#)

Quotes

"Not being able to find or afford child care is stressful, it is troubling, and it is holding families back at a time when it's already hard enough to get ahead. Our plan to make preschool child care free for Ontario children from the age of two-and-a-half until kindergarten will relieve that pressure and make sure kids are learning and growing in a safe environment. We listened to parents, educators and child care providers across the province, and they've told us this move is the right one to make. I know how stressful it can be for parents with young children. When my three kids were little, I worried about whether they were getting the right start. This investment will make life more affordable for families and allow more parents to make the choice to go back to work, knowing their child is safe and cared for."

Kathleen Wynne, Premier of Ontario

"Free child care for preschool aged children is an incredible support for Ontario children and families. This historic commitment will save Ontario families thousands of dollars annually and give parents peace of mind. Ontario is committed to creating a high quality child care system that is accessible and affordable for all families. This major investment will build on the progress we've made with a made-in-Ontario solution that supports children and families. It's a historic investment that will benefit Ontario kids for generations."

Indira Naidoo-Harris, Minister of Education and Minister Responsible for Early Years and Child Care

“Free preschool provides both economic and social benefits for our province. It saves families \$17,000 per child and gives parents the opportunity to go back to work sooner. Most importantly, these investments ensure all kids get the best possible start in life.”

Charles Sousa, Minister of Finance

“Making child care free for preschool children will be transformative for Ontario's families; it will help families balance the demands of work, education and family life, and will dramatically improve affordability, especially for children in low and middle income families.”

Dr. Gordon Cleveland, Associate Professor of Economics Emeritus, University of Toronto Scarborough

-reprinted from the Government of Ontario

Related link: Ontario's Renewed Early Years and Child Care Policy Framework [3]

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