

Free preschool child care will help close the wage gap for women

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Ontario marks equal pay day with commitment to child care and pay transparency

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EXCERPTS

Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne marked Equal Pay Day today by highlighting the government's plan to create free preschool child care as part of a strategy to promote women's economic empowerment and close the gender wage gap.

Premier Wynne was joined by Harinder Malhi, Minister of the Status of Women, at St. Helen Catholic School today to discuss how Ontario's transformative plan for free preschool child care will help eliminate the pay gap between men and women. Equal Pay Day this year is on April 10. With women earning about 30 per cent less than men, the date of Equal Pay Day is set to show how far into 2018 women must work just to earn the same amount that men earned in 2017.

Ontario's plan will provide free licensed preschool child care for children between the ages of two-and-a-half until they are eligible to start kindergarten. This will give mothers more options when it comes to returning to the workforce and advancing their careers. It will also relieve financial pressures on families with young children and give more kids the best possible start in their education.

Premier Wynne also spoke on Equal Pay Day about Ontario's efforts to increase pay transparency.

The proposed Pay Transparency Act will, if passed, help ensure women and other disadvantaged groups have the equal opportunity to negotiate fair wages and have equal opportunities to advance in their careers. It will also require employers to record and report on pay gaps based on gender and other diversity characteristics. The act will also prohibit employers from asking applicants about their prior salary, require employers to indicate a pay rate for all publicly advertised vacancies, and ensure that employees are protected from reprisal if they want to discuss their pay with coworkers or their employer.

That same bill would also establish Equal Pay Day as an official day of recognition in Ontario, to stand as a clear reminder that gender inequality continues to be a reality in the province that must be addressed by government and all sectors of the economy.

Closing the gender wage gap 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

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

According to McKinsey & Company's 2017 report "The Power of Parity: Advancing Women's Equality in Canada", improving gender equality in workplaces and society could add as much as \$60 billion to Ontario's GDP over the next decade.

A 2013 report from the OECD found that around the world, increasing access to child care for children under the age of three is the number one way to improve women's participation in the economy.

The gender wage gap in Ontario has remained stagnant for the last decade, with women earning around 30 per cent less than men.

The gender wage gap is as much as 42 per cent between non-racialized men and racialized women and 43 per cent between Indigenous women and non-Indigenous men.

Currently, the majority of workers in Ontario earning less than \$15 per hour are women (nearly 60 per cent). The government plans to increase the minimum wage to \$15 per hour on January 1, 2019.

In the 2018 Budget, Ontario committed \$2.2 billion over three years to 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 2.5 to kindergarten, beginning in 2020.

Free preschool child care for children between the ages of 2.5 to kindergarten 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.

Additional Resources

Free preschool child care for children aged 2.5 to kindergarten

The Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act

Ontario's Strategy for Women's Economic Empowerment

A Time for Care and Opportunity: Speech from the Throne

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