

Ontario Liberals unveil plan to provide \$10 a day licensed child care ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

The Ontario Liberals are pledging to provide universal child care for all families and create \$10 a day licensed child care if elected next year.

On Thursday, the party released its plan to provide \$1 billion in more affordable child care for Ontario families if they are elected in June 2022.

The party plans to work with federal partners to reduce average fees for licensed child care from over \$50 a day to \$10 a day by the end of 2024, an average annual savings of about \$10,000 per child, the party said.

The plan will keep subsidies in place for lower-income families with no cost for households with a net income below \$20,000 and partial subsidies for those with a family income of up to approx. \$45,000.

The reduced costs will be implemented in a phased approach to "create and staff the spaces needed to meet demand." First, it will apply to preschool children aged 2.5 to four years old by the end of 2022, then toddlers aged 18 months and up by 2023, and all children 0 to four years old by 2024.

"...The Ontario liberal plan for childcare, care for every child, will deliver urgent pocketbook relief for Ontario's hard working families, the families that have been putting the time and making the sacrifice and feel every year that they're falling further and further behind," Ontario Liberal leader Steven Del Duca said in a virtual press conference on Thursday.

The reduced child care fees are in line with the federal Liberals' budget released last month which includes over \$30 billion in new child care spending, including eventually implementing \$10 a day child care across the country, except in Quebec which has its own system.

The federal budget seeks to address calls from advocates and businesses to help mothers return to the labour force after their staffing dropped due to daycare closures during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Within 100 days of taking office, the Ontario Liberals also pledged to cut the cost of before and after school care by more than 50 per cent to \$10 a day by Sept. 2022.

The 18-month parental leave program is also set to be revamped to allow new parents to stay at home longer with their newborns without their employment insurance benefits being reduced by the end of next year.

For families not using licensed child care, the Liberals plan to enhance the Childcare Access and Relief from Expenses tax credit to an average of \$2,000 in regular advance payments.

The party also proposed more inclusive care options for racialized groups, including a focus on licensed home care expansion and an equitable funding approach for First Nations communities.

Furthermore, the Liberals plan to provide free tuition for early childhood education programs at Ontario colleges and "enhanced pay and benefits" for these workers.

The Liberals' child care plan is estimated to allow roughly 130,000 Ontario parents to join the workforce full-time.

"If we want our post-pandemic economy to recover and we want that recovery to be successful and sustained we need universal licensed childcare, and a comprehensive system that shows Ontario families that were on their side. The Ontario liberal plan, care for every child, does exactly that," Del Duca said.

The plan will also create 30,000 new jobs for child care centre staff and 15,000 construction jobs to help create new child care spaces over the next three years, the Liberals said.

Ontario Education Minister Stephen Lecce responded to the Liberal's plan and said it is a "one-size-fits-all system that does not work for

every family.”

“The Del Duca-Wynne Liberals promise action in the first 100 days, yet, after 15 years in office, they saddled Ontario parents with a legacy of income stagnation, a rising cost of living, and one of the most expensive child care systems in Canada – of which Ontario moms and dads paid the price,” Lecce said in a statement to CP24.

“Under Premier Ford, our government introduced the Child Care Tax Credit, that now includes a 20% top up of child care expenses saving families \$1500 per child on average. Last year alone, 16,000 child care spaces opened, in sharp contrast to the 800 centres that closed under the Liberals between 2014-2018,” he added.

Ontario NDP Child Care critic Bhutila Karpoche also reacted to the Liberals' plan and said they're acting too late.

“Steven Del Duca and the Wynne Liberals had 15 years to make child care affordable. They chose not to. In fact, Del Duca and the Wynne government jacked up the price of child care again and again until it was the highest in the country,” Karpoche said in a statement.

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