

Doug Ford must seize this child-care opportunity ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

This week, Manitoba signed on to the proposed new national child-care program designed to expand access and bring down average parent fees to \$10 a day.

It's the seventh of the provinces and territories to take up its share of the federal government's offer of \$30 billion over five years to create the affordable, accessible child-care system Canada has long needed — and it's a particularly important signatory.

Manitoba is one of the self-styled conservative “resistance” provinces that, along with Alberta, Saskatchewan and Ontario, has responded in the past to policies coming from Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's Liberal government in hyperpartisan ways.

Yet Manitoba's minister of families, Rochelle Squires, called this deal good for children, parents, child-care providers and the economy. “We need a stronger child-care system to support and encourage women to join the workforce and contribute their knowledge, skills and talent,” said Squires. “We needed this before COVID and COVID has made this even more essential.”

We can't put it any better than that. So here's the question: What is Ontario waiting for? Under the national child-care program, families in Manitoba stand to save \$3,900 annually per child. In Ontario, which has the most expensive child care in the country, families would save far more — over \$10,000 annually for infants, according to one analysis.

Premier Doug Ford should be making a child-care deal for Ontario a priority. It's what the province's families and the economy needs.

British Columbia was the first to sign and Manitoba is the latest. In between, Nova Scotia, P.E.I., Newfoundland and Labrador, Yukon and Quebec managed to get deals done. Yet from Ontario there's been only silence.

Quebec signed a deal for \$6 billion. As the biggest province, Ontario stands to get more for this public service that, as Squires rightly points out, was needed before the pandemic and is now even more essential to economic recovery and growth.

Region: Ontario ^[3]

Tags: affordability ^[4]

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<https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/9083> [8] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/federal-budget>