

Doug Ford needs to sign a child care deal for Ontario's parents and economy ^[1]

Author: Star Editorial Board

Source: Toronto Star

Format: Article

Publication Date: 22 Sep 2021

AVAILABILITY

Access online ^[2]

EXCERPTS

Now that the federal election is safely over, Premier Doug Ford has popped up to call for “unity” after a “difficult and divisive” campaign.

It was a divisive campaign and Canadians do need their leaders, at all levels of government, to refocus on the job at hand: wrestling down the pandemic and moving the country forward. But we do hope that a desire for unity is not the only thing that Ford took away from Monday's election.

Debate will go on for some time about the various messages voters sent, but in Ontario's results there's a clear message for Ford.

The Liberals were the overwhelming party of choice among voters in Ontario, particularly in the vote-rich GTA. And as much as there were any discernable big issues at play in this leader-slugfest of a campaign, they included pandemic policies, climate change and child care.

Ford's Progressive Conservatives have been offside on all those issues, to one degree or another.

The Ford government grudgingly brought in a vaccine certificate system, which started haphazardly on Wednesday. It still has not come around to requiring vaccines for workers in vital fields such as health care and education.

Ford's government fought — and lost — a court case over the Liberals's decision to put a price on carbon.

And when Ford's PCs ousted Kathleen Wynne's Liberals in 2018 they replaced a plan to provide free licensed care for preschool children with tax credits. That was terribly misguided; it has not made child care any more affordable or available in Ontario.

Ford now has a second chance to get it right. He could do that by quickly signing on to the Liberal government's national, \$10-a-day child care system.

It was welcome to hear Ford say on Wednesday that “we want a deal.”

But then he went on to suggest that rests with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, rather than his own government.

“There's a lot of people in Ontario that supported the prime minister and now it's time for the prime minister, he made a lot of promises, to support the people of Ontario,” said Ford.

These are bilateral child care agreements. The leaders of most provinces and territories, led by Liberals, New Democrats and conservatives, managed to sign deals with Ottawa before Parliament was dissolved.

They could see the importance of affordable child and they didn't waste any time.

The two big holdouts? Ford in Ontario and Jason Kenney in Alberta.

As the days ticked down to the election call it looked like the Ford government might be dragging its feet, perhaps not wanting to undermine Erin O'Toole's Conservatives who vowed, if elected, to kill this \$30-billion plan outright and replace it with vastly inferior refundable tax credits.

If so, the time for those political games is over; the voters have spoken. And as Ford himself said, “now is the time to put our political differences aside.”

Education Minister Stephen Lecce has said Ontario was in discussions with Ottawa in the final hours before the election call. The Ford government needs to end its extended summer break and kick those negotiations into high gear.

Ontarians have already waited for affordable child care for far too long. The federal plan to cut average costs in half next year and get to \$10-a-day care by 2026 will be transformative in Ontario, where the median cost of licensed care in 2020 ranged from \$12,000 a year for a preschooler to \$17,000 for an infant.

Nascent child care plans have fallen victim to elections, federally and provincially. Finally one has survived. Now Ontario just needs to sign on.

Region: Ontario ^[3]

Tags: universal child care system ^[4]

federal programs ^[5]

Source URL (modified on 24 Sep 2021): <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/21/09/doug-ford-needs-sign-child-care-deal-ontario%E2%80%99s-parents-and-economy>

Links

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/21/09/doug-ford-needs-sign-child-care-deal-ontario%E2%80%99s-parents-and-economy> [2]

<https://www.thestar.com/opinion/editorials/2021/09/22/doug-ford-needs-to-sign-a-child-care-deal-for-ontarios-parents-and-economy.html> [3]

<https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/7856> [4] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/universal-child-care-system> [5]

<https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/federal-programs>