

While the Ford government delays and distracts, child care advocates call for system overhaul; Ontario must make child care a right ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

TORONTO--(BUSINESS WIRE)--A recent announcement by the Ford government of targeted after-school recreation programs is a further distraction from the province's failure to sign a child care deal, reports CUPE.

Advocates urge Premier Ford to focus on making child care a right in the province by implementing \$10-a-day child care and creating a workforce strategy that addresses the growing shortage of early childhood educators (ECEs).

"Ministers Lecce and MacLeod's recent announcements of targeted recreation programs only serves to highlight how piecemeal and inadequate Ontario's approach to child care really is. The Ford government needs to think much bigger and more boldly," says Carolyn Ferns, Policy Coordinator at the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care (OCBCC). "Last week Quebec made history by introducing legislation to enshrine child care as a right. Educators in PEI are already seeing wage increases. Meanwhile Ontario keeps falling further behind."

The Federal government has offered Ontario \$10.2 billion to support a universal, accessible, and affordable system of early learning and care that includes \$10-a-day child care. Seven provinces and one territory, including Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, Quebec, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, British Columbia, and the Yukon, have concluded agreements with the Federal government.

"The Ford government is failing to address the child care crisis with the urgency it requires. Instead, we get nothing but dithering, delays and smokescreens," says Ferns. "With the provincial election around the corner, you can bet that child care will be top-of-mind for many voters."

In Toronto, parents and caregivers can expect child care to cost \$22,000 a year for infant care, approximately \$19,000 a year for a toddler, and about \$15,000 per year for a preschooler. In provinces who've penned deals with the Federal government, some parents have already received word that their child care fees will reduce by 50 per cent next year, reports CUPE.

"A few targeted recreation programs just don't cut it – this is so far from what is needed. Every parent and caregiver deserves access to licensed, quality, affordable child care," says Carrie Lynn Poole-Cotnam, CUPE Ontario social services chair. "We owe it to Ontario's children and families to act now. This is about the real impacts that inadequate child care has on women and how we need to make child care a right so that all children and their families can thrive."

In July 2021, the OCBCC and AECEO released a Roadmap to Universal Child Care in Ontario ^[3] that features 20 policy interventions to transform early learning and child care from a market-based patchwork to a comprehensive, publicly funded system.

Region: Ontario ^[4]

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