

# Ontario municipalities consider direct talks with Ottawa on cheaper child care <sup>[1]</sup>

**Author:** McKenzie-Sutter, Holly

**Source:** Global News

**Publication Date:** 9 Nov 2021

## AVAILABILITY

Access online <sup>[2]</sup>

## EXCERPTS

TORONTO — Some Ontario municipalities are looking into working directly with Ottawa on affordable child care as federal-provincial talks drag on, with local councillors citing the need to support families during pandemic recovery.

Toronto city council was to hear a motion Tuesday asking for the option to try appealing directly to the federal government on the \$10-per-day child-care plan if the province doesn't make a deal.

A summary of Coun. Joe Cressy's motion described the issue as "an urgent matter for Torontonians," and also asked for a report back on the talks by Dec. 1.

Hamilton Emergency and Community Services committee members are set to debate a similar idea later this month.

The motion by Coun. Maureen Wilson, introduced by colleague Nrinder Nann who sits on the committee, asked city staff investigate the possibility of a direct agreement with Ottawa and also highlighted the importance of affordable child care to pandemic recovery, supporting women re-entering the workforce.

Last month, Niagara Regional Council also directed staff to probe the feasibility of a municipal-federal agreement so the region can participate in the plan. The federal government has promised to spend \$30 billion over five years to cut child-care costs to an average of \$10 per day across the country.

Seven provinces and one territory have inked deals with Ottawa, but Alberta and Ontario aren't among them.

Ontario Education Minister Stephen Lecce has said the province is open to the plan but wants to keep negotiating to get more funding and protect offerings of the current system, such as full-day kindergarten.

He has also said his political opponents critical of the delay would have rushed to accept an inadequate offer from Ottawa.

"We believe as Progressive Conservatives we can make child care affordable and accessible through a better deal with the federal government," Lecce said in the legislature last month, adding that he wants to ensure fees are reduced "for good."

A spokeswoman for Lecce said Tuesday that the government would continue discussions with Ottawa and would not sign a deal that "short changes Ontario families."

The government said negotiations on the child-care plan that were paused during the federal election period will pick up again soon.

A spokeswoman for Families, Children and Social Development Minister Karina Gould said the federal government is committed to working with provinces and territories on the plan because they are responsible for child care.

"We remain optimistic that we will come to an agreement with the remaining provinces and territories — just as we did with the eight provinces and territories that came to the table — to deliver affordable, accessible, inclusive and high quality child care for families," Mikaela Harrison said in an emailed statement.

Carolyn Ferns with the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care said the trend among municipalities speaks to the growing frustration with slow provincial progress on the plan.

"I think partly it's an escalation tactic on the part of the municipalities to get attention to say, 'Hey, you need to take child care seriously, why is there no progress on the federal plan,'" Ferns said in an interview.

he said federal-municipal deals would be a "last resort" option if the province doesn't sign on and expressed frustration with the delay.

"For years, we called on the federal government to step up with real funding to move ahead on child care and they finally did that this year," Ferns said.

"To see this now in a state where it's being held back because the province of Ontario is playing politics with it, frankly, is so disappointing. I

think that that's the same frustration that we're now seeing from municipalities."

**Region:** Ontario <sup>[3]</sup>

**Tags:** universal system <sup>[4]</sup>

federal budget <sup>[5]</sup>

---

**Source URL (modified on 10 Nov 2021):** <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/21/11/ontario-municipalities-consider-direct-talks-ottawa-cheaper-child>

#### Links

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/21/11/ontario-municipalities-consider-direct-talks-ottawa-cheaper-child> [2]

<https://globalnews.ca/news/8361501/ontario-municipalities-consider-direct-talks-ottawa-child-care/> [3] <https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/7856>

[4] <https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/9083> [5] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/federal-budget>