

# Education minister says feds now have Ontario's 'full complete financials' amid dispute over child-care funding <sup>[1]</sup>

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## AVAILABILITY

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

## EXCERPTS

Education Minister Stephen Lecce says that the Ford government is now awaiting a response from the feds after providing them with financial information that he claims supports Ontario's request for a larger share of the \$30 billion national child-care plan.

Ontario and New Brunswick are the only provinces that have not yet signed on to the accord, which aims to cut the price of licensed child-care spaces in half by the end of 2022 before further lowering it to an average of \$10 a day by 2026.

In explaining the slow pace of negotiations Lecce has claimed that the deal that the feds are proposing, in which Ontario would receive more than \$10 billion in federal funding over five years, is unfair to taxpayers as it doesn't take into account the higher cost of delivering childcare and would only lower fees to an average of \$21 a day.

He also slammed the fed for refusing to reimburse Ontario for the \$3.6 billion it spends on delivering full-day kindergarten for four and five years olds, something only a minority of provinces do.

Federal officials, meanwhile, had said as recently as last month that Ontario had yet to even submit a detailed action plan for how it would spend the federal funds, which would be the first formal steps in negotiations.

During Question Period at Queen's Park on Monday, Lecce was pressed for an update on the state of negotiations with the feds and seemed to suggest that they have now have all the information they have requested, months after some provinces finalized agreements.

"We're working with the federal government. In fact we met with them multiple times, walked them through our numbers, our methodology and our asks, which is for a larger investment over a sustained period of time so we can finally make childcare affordable for parents in Ontario," he said. "That is with the federal government and they have our full complete financials. We look forward to hearing from them so yes we can wrap up a deal that reduces costs for moms and dads right across this province."

A number of provinces have already indicated that parents will get imminent financial relief from the high cost of child-care fees, including Saskatchewan where the government has promised rebate cheques retroactive to July 1.

But in Ontario, which has the highest child-care fees in Canada, it still remains unclear when and if parents will get a break.

During Question Period on Thursday, NDP Leader Andrea Horwath interrogated Lecce on why parents in this province continue to pay "mortgage level child-care payments" when their counterparts in other jurisdictions see cost relief.

The education minister did suggest that reaching a deal is a priority for his government but refused to put a timeline on it.

"He (Premier Ford) and I and other members of our government are working with the feds and making the case on an expedited basis to get us the feedback, that is the response, that I think Ontario families deserve now that they have the full data they requested," he said.

Toronto parents face the highest median daycare fees in the country at \$22,394 a year.

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

**Tags:** bilateral agreement <sup>[4]</sup>

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

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[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/21/12/education-minister-says-feds-now-have-ontarios-full-complete> <sup>[2]</sup>

<https://www.cp24.com/news/education-minister-says-feds-now-have-ontario-s-full-complete-financials-amid-dispute-over-child-care-funding-1.5695372> <sup>[3]</sup>

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