

Ontario now alone in not signing federal child-care deal, opposition says parents 'paying the price'

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Nunavut signed child-care deal Monday, leaving Ford government as last holdout

Author:

Source: CBC News

Format: Article

Publication Date: 25 Jan 2022

AVAILABILITY

Access online [2]

EXCERPTS

Ontario Liberal Leader Steven Del Duca says it's "outrageous" that Ontario is the only jurisdiction in Canada not to sign on to the federal government's \$10-a-day child-care program, now that Nunavut has struck a deal.

Del Duca said if he is elected in the June provincial election, he will make it happen. But he said Ontario Premier Doug Ford should sign a deal as soon as possible because it's urgent.

"I think it's outrageous that here in Ontario we see that Doug Ford stubbornly refuses to get a deal done with the federal government to deliver a universal licensed \$10-a-day child care system for Ontario's families," Del Duca said.

A deal would make a huge difference to parents, he said.

"It's just deeply, deeply discouraging that he is just completely missing in action on this."

Del Duca made the statements after Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced a \$66-million child-care deal over five years Monday with Nunavut Premier P.J. Akeeagok.

"This funding will bolster Nunavut's sector and provide a significant investment in our children and our families," Akeeagok said.

Trudeau said the agreement means Nunavut's daycare fees will be cut in half by the end of this year and will be \$10 a day by March 2024. He said the estimated savings for families in Iqaluit, the Nunavut capital, will be about \$14,000 a year.

The deal is part of the Liberal government's promise to spend \$30 billion over five years to realize a national child-care program and cut fees to \$10 a day over five years.

Ontario Education Minister Stephen Lecce said on Monday the provincial government is still working to get a deal that the province considers fiscally sustainable and fair for families.

Negotiations are continuing this week, he added.

"We've been working very hard to get a fair deal for Ontario families because we know child care is too expensive. It is inaccessible to too many families in Ontario. That is just simply unacceptable," Lecce said.

"We're at the table and we have been for months with the federal government, urging them for a longer term investment, an increased investment and more flexibility to support all families in how they raise their children, be it in not-for-profit child care or independent child care."

Trudeau said Ottawa has been ready to sign a deal with Ontario for "many, many months now" and is still optimistic an agreement can be reached.

"We're all just waiting on the government of Ontario."

'Ford is not here for working parents,' NDP says

Ontario NDP Leader Andrea Horwath and NDP child-care critic Bhutla Karpoche said in a statement on Monday that Ford is costing working families hundreds of dollars monthly by refusing to sign onto the deal.

"Families in Ontario continue to be crushed by Ontario's massive child-care fees. The price of everything continues to climb, and parents in Ontario are forced to pay our province's staggering, mortgage-level fees," they said.

"Doug Ford's refusal to make parents and young families a priority means that parents are paying \$2,000 a month or more in fees while

families in every other jurisdiction in the country are paying as low as \$10-a-day," they continued.

"Ford is not here for working parents, and they're paying the price for that, literally."

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