

Deal to reduce cost of childcare in Ontario is 'within reach,' education minister says ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

Education Minister Stephen Lecce says that he believes a deal is “within reach” that would allow Ontario to join every other province and territory in signing onto the Liberal government’s \$30 billion national child-care plan.

Lecce made the comment during a virtual press conference on Monday when asked for an update about the status of negotiations with the federal government.

His comments come in the wake of Premier Doug Ford telling a radio station in northern Ontario last week that his government is “very, very close” to reaching a deal with the feds on \$10 a day child care.

“I appreciate that everyone wants this deal done. Our government is committed to doing that; we are simply working with the federal government to get the best possible deal for families and taxpayers,” Lecce said. “I do believe, as the premier has noted, that deal is within reach and we are going to continue working with the feds constructively in good faith to provide a deal that finally makes childcare affordable.”

The federal government has offered Ontario \$10.2 billion in funding to reduce the average cost of child care by 50 per cent by the end of 2022 en route to lowering it to an average of \$10 a day by 2026.

Lecce, however, has said in the past that Ontario should be reimbursed for the \$3.6 billion that it spends on full-day kindergarten for four and five year olds, which is something that many other provinces don’t provide.

He has also expressed skepticism over whether the money being offered by the feds is actually enough to reduce child care costs to an average of \$10 a day.

Meanwhile, many parents in the other provinces and territories that have signed onto the federal plan are already realizing savings.

Saskatchewan, which reached a deal with the feds in the summer, has said that it will reduce the cost of licenced childcare to 50 per cent retroactive to this past July and will be issuing parents rebate cheques in the coming months.

Alberta also slashed childcare fees in half this month, saving many parents hundreds of dollars a month.

Speaking with reporters on Monday, Lecce said that the government is continuing to have active conversations with the feds and will work to ensure that parents get fee relief “in a timely manner” once there is a deal.

However, he refused to provide a timeline or provide specifics about what the hang up is.

“We’re working with the feds making our case for better flexibility that allows us to support all families and we continue to have conversations at the table with one aim – to get a deal to bring down prices and provide as much support to moms and dads as promised,” he said.

Region: Ontario ^[3]

Tags: Canada-wide agreements ^[4]

universal system ^[5]

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