

Over to you, Doug Ford: MP says childcare ball in premier's court ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

As far as a childcare funding agreement between Ontario and Ottawa goes, the ball is in Premier Doug Ford's court, a federal cabinet minister told The Free Press Wednesday.

"We are still waiting for Ontario to submit their action plan," said Karina Gould, the minister of families, children and social development. "We really can't move forward without that."

Since last summer the federal government has negotiated agreements with every territory and province except Ontario.

Last month, Ford told a radio interviewer Ontario was "very, very close" to signing a deal with the feds.

Ontario wants to get more than the \$10.2 billion offered by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, whose goal is to have a \$30-billion system in place to cut childcare fees to an average of \$10 a day by the end of the five-year deal.

Ontario has also voiced concerns about funding beyond the five years.

Gould took part in a virtual roundtable with Londoners to discuss childcare Wednesday afternoon from her home riding of Burlington.

Asked by The Free Press how many London families would get \$10 child care once a deal is in place, Gould said she didn't have a raw number off the top of her head, but repeated that the goal is to get to the \$10 daily average at every licenced daycare in the province in five years.

When would a deal, once in place, go into effect? "It will kind of depend on the plan that Ontario puts forward," she said. Alberta puts its into effect within about two months, and Saskatchewan made the breaks to parents retroactive after it reached a deal.

Gould was also asked about the possibility that Ontario is dragging its heels in the runup to a provincial election as a campaign tactic. She said she wasn't going to speculate about why the Ontario government has not yet reached an agreement.

Her goal is to get the new system in place as soon as possible, the minister added, saying Ottawa doesn't have a preference to deal with a newly elected government at Queen's Park after the June 2 provincial vote.

"We are agnostic to who the government is," she said. "We have negotiated with governments of every stripe."

The federal fiscal year-end comes on March 31, and Gould said there is a billion dollars of federal funding on the negotiating table that Ontario stands to lose out on. "We're coming up (to) a bit of a crunch time in that regard," she said.

Region: Ontario ^[3]

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