

# How Ontario did – and didn't – approach a child-care deal<sup>[1]</sup>

**Author:** Pinkerto

**Source:** iPolitics

**Format:** Article

**Publication Date:** 9 Mar 2022

## AVAILABILITY

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

## EXCERPTS

For months, Premier Doug Ford has promised Ontario is ever-so-close to landing on a plan to work toward \$10/day child care with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's government.

Finally on Tuesday, word came of a long-awaited development in the talks between Ottawa and the last province or territory left to sign on to the "national" child-care plan it promised almost one year ago.

It was shared by Ottawa's negotiant, Families, Children and Social Development Minister Karina Gould with Global News.

At long last, the Ontario government submitted an action plan – eliminating one of the impasses to discussions that's lasted for months, even while regular meetings have carried on between federal and provincial negotiators.

What's the action plan and why does it matter?

Simply put, Ontario's action plan is an official proposal to Ottawa.

It explains how the province intends to spend money to shrink up-front child-care fees to \$10/day per child within five years. This is essential to Ottawa opening its chequebook, since it's fully – or almost fully – funding its agreement with each province and territory, according to a federal official close to the negotiations.

The crux of each agreement is how tax dollars provided by the feds to each province are spent. Each province and territory pitched Ottawa its vision in an action plan submitted before Trudeau's government agreed to write them annual cheques of millions to billions of dollars.

In an action plan, the federal government has expected provincial governments to explain how they'll achieve \$10/day child care in five years, how they'll create spaces for every child, and how they'll build a workforce to provide care. Ottawa also expects proposals to explain how provinces will ensure care is of high quality and how they'll track and report their progress.

In Ottawa's view, an agreement with Ontario was a non-starter without this action plan.

What's still preventing a deal?

To begin with a caveat, the provincial government has not viewed its action plan's submission with the same weight.

"This wasn't holding it up," a provincial source told QP Briefing recently. "The action plan is putting the cart before the horse. Asking for an implementation plan (aka action plan) before details were discussed ... Conversations continue."

QP Briefing agreed not to name certain provincial and federal officials close to the negotiations so they could share details they wouldn't otherwise be allowed to.

As for where deal-making heads now, the federal government assessed each of the other provinces' and territories' action plans after receiving them, a federal source said. Then, it doubled back to any given province about ways it felt its proposal needed to be fine-tuned to meet the national child-care plan's objectives.

For example, because of how dispersed the territories' populations are, Ottawa would have been more inclined to seek assurances from their governments that particular spending is geared toward creating child-care spaces in remote areas.

Beyond contention over the action plan itself, a few sticking points have repeatedly been brought up by officials on both sides, including the total funding afforded to the province, how many years an initial agreement lasts, and whether for-profit child-care operators qualify within an agreed-to system.

Nevertheless, if either side's public comments can be taken for the truth, Ontario and Ottawa will reach an agreement. It's a matter of when, not if.

"I am really getting the sense that this is something they do want to sign onto, so I feel really quite encouraged by that," Gould told Global

News on Tuesday.

“We’re going to get this deal,” Ford said in question period on the same day. “Just stay tuned... Hopefully, it will be sooner than later.”

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

**Tags:** Canada-wide agreements <sup>[4]</sup>

policy <sup>[5]</sup>

universal system <sup>[6]</sup>

---

**Source URL (modified on 16 Mar 2022):** <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/22/03/how-ontario-did-%E2%80%94-and-didn%E2%80%99t-%E2%80%94-approach-child-care-deal>

**Links**

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/22/03/how-ontario-did-%E2%80%94-and-didn%E2%80%99t-%E2%80%94-approach-child-care-deal> [2] <https://www.ipolitics.ca/news/how-ontario-did-and-didnt-approach-a-child-care-deal> [3] <https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/7856> [4]

<https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/9207> [5] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/policy> [6] <https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/9083>