

All of Canada is signed on to \$10-a-day child care. When will parents see costs go down? ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

The federal government's \$30-billion universal child-care plan is expected to create 146,000 new child-care spots nationwide by 2026, according to estimates by the Canadian Child Care Federation. That means tens of thousands of new jobs for child-care workers.

But at the same time, early-childhood educators have been leaving the industry in droves across the country. Low wages and long hours are driving factors, but so is the emotional toll of working in institutional child care. In some provinces, parents face waiting lists that are more than two years long, which has many families wondering whether they will be able to access subsidized care while their kids are young enough to be eligible for it.

Alberta

Alberta signed a deal in November that commits \$3.8-billion in federal funding over five years. Child-care fees will be cut in half by the end of 2022. According to the province, parents can expect to pay \$10 per day if they earn up to \$119,999; \$11 to \$17 per day if they earn between \$120,000 and \$179,999; and \$22.19 per day if they earn \$180,000 and above. In 2020, median infant child-care fees in Calgary were \$1,300 per month. By 2026, fees will be reduced to an average of \$10 a day. The deal includes all types of licensed child-care facilities up to kindergarten and aims to create 42,500 new licensed early learning and child care spaces by the end of March, 2026.

How can parents access the benefits?

To find licensed child-care programs with reduced fees, use the province's child-care lookup tool, or call Child Care Connect at 1-844-644-5165. Parents with a household income under \$180,000 a year can also get subsidies to reduce their child-care fees.

British Columbia

In July, 2021, the province and Ottawa reached a deal that promises an average of \$10-per-day child-care in licensed spaces for children under six before 2027. It also aims to create 30,000 new spots over the next five years with fees reduced by half by the end of the year.

The federal government will invest \$3.2-billion over the next five years, while the B.C. government will invest more than \$2.5-billion over the next three years in early learning and child care. In 2020, the median infant child-care fees were \$1,165 per month in Vancouver.

How can parents access the benefits?

British Columbia will use its existing Child Care Fee Reduction Initiative, in which child-care providers apply to receive funding. Families can find participating providers on the province's website.

Manitoba

Manitoba reached a deal in August, 2021 with the federal government committing to \$1.2-billion over five years for \$10-a-day child care in licensed daycares by 2023. The province also expanded its child-care subsidy program to reduce fees for parents with children in licensed care by an average of 30 per cent, and aims to cut it by another 20 per cent by the end of 2022.

Manitoba already has some of the lowest child-care fees in the country – in 2020, the median infant child-care fees were \$651 per month in Winnipeg – but the plan will further reduce costs.

It also aims to create 23,000 early learning and child-care spaces for kids ages six and under and sets a wage threshold of \$25 an hour for child-care workers.

How can parents access the benefits?

Families can apply for Manitoba's child-care subsidy on the province's website.

New Brunswick

New Brunswick announced in December it had signed a \$544-million child-care deal – with \$491-million in federal funding and \$53-million from the province – to provide an average of \$10-a-day child-care by 2026. The plan aims to create 5,700 new spaces and will increase the wages of daycare workers to \$23.47 per hour in the next five years. The province says that fees are expected to decrease by 50 per cent in the coming year, meaning that on average families will pay around \$14 per day. In 2020, the median infant child-care fees were \$856 per month in Moncton.

How can parents access the benefits?

The program builds on pre-existing programs that provide subsidies for families. Visit the province's Parent Portal for more information on accessing the subsidies and finding child-care spaces.

Newfoundland and Labrador

Newfoundland and Labrador signed a deal with Ottawa last July for \$347-million over five years. The province will see a reduction in average parent fees for children under six in regulated child care to \$15 a day from \$25 a day in 2022, and to \$10 a day in 2023. In 2020, the median infant child-care fees were \$955 per month in St. John's.

The deal also includes a new full-day, year-round pre-kindergarten program for four-year-olds, which will start rolling out in 2023.

How can parents access the benefits?

Since Jan. 1, regulated child care has moved to \$15 per day, and more than 90 per cent of regulated child care spaces in the province are subject to this rate through the Operating Grant Program.

Northwest Territories

Northwest Territories' deal with the federal government, which was reached in December, 2021, cuts child-care costs by 50 per cent, retroactive to Jan. 1, 2022. The plan aims to reach \$10-a-day or lower child-care by March, 2026. According to the territory, families could save up to \$4,950 per child by the end of 2022. By comparison, in 2020, monthly median infant child-care fees were \$1,015 in Yellowknife.

The \$51-million deal also aims to create 300 new licensed daycare spaces by the end of March, 2026. All of these spaces will be provided exclusively by not-for-profit providers and family day home providers.

How can parents access the benefits?

Visit the territory's website for more information on licensed child-cares and additional child-care subsidies.

Nova Scotia

In July, 2021, Nova Scotia signed a deal to reduce child-care fees to an average of \$10 a day by March 31, 2026. The first step toward that starts April 1 of this year, with families seeing the cost of accessing licensed, funded child care reduced by an average of 25 per cent – saving anywhere between \$3 and \$10.50 per day, per child, based on the child's age. In 2020, the median infant child-care fees were \$957 per month in Halifax.

In the agreement, the federal government has promised \$605-million over five years with \$40-million from the provincial government. Along with reduced fees, there will be 1,500 new not-for-profit spaces by fall 2022, and a total of 9,500 new spaces by 2026.

How can parents access the benefits?

Parents will see the reduced fees applied directly to their bills. The licensed centres that have accepted the 2022-23 annual funding agreement will receive funding to offset the fee reduction. The reduced fees will be applied retroactively to Jan. 1, 2022, so parents will receive a cheque or credit for amounts paid above the new reduced rate between January and March.

Nunavut

Nunavut announced a \$66-million deal in January, the second-last jurisdiction to do so. The territory plans to cut daycare fees in half by the end of 2022, reaching \$10 a day by 2024 and to create 238 new licensed early learning and child-care spaces by March, 2026. There are currently about 1,000 spots. The territory currently invests nearly \$4.3-million in early learning and child care annually and says daycares will need to be licensed with the department in order to be involved under the agreement.

How can parents access the benefits?

Details for how the savings will be passed on to families are not available yet. For more information, visit Nunavut's website.

Ontario

On March 28, Ontario became the last province to sign a deal, promising \$10.2-billion in federal funding over the next five years. Families will be eligible for phased-in rebates by the end of 2022 that will save them up to \$6,000 this year. Beginning in May, parents with children five and younger in licensed child-care centres will have their fees reduced by as much as 25 per cent, with the change retroactive to April 1, according to the province. In December, those fees will be reduced again by 25 per cent. The province says that by March, 2026, child-care fees will hit the goal of an average of \$10 a day for children under five. The plan also aims to create 86,000 new daycare spaces, as well as provide wage increases for early-childhood educators.

Ontario families face some of the highest fees in the country – in 2020, median infant child-care fees were \$1,866 per month in Toronto, while provincially, day fees currently range from \$30 to \$95 a day.

How can parents access the benefits?

The province says it will work with municipalities to enrol more than 5,000 licensed child-care centres and home child-care agencies into the new program by September 1. Ontario families can continue to access the child-care tax credit program.

Prince Edward Island

PEI is aiming for \$10-dollar-a-day child care by the end of 2024. The province is receiving \$120-million from the federal government, and contributes \$31-million of its own budget annually to early learning and child care. The deal should cut the average fees for children under six in half by the end of 2022 and add 452 new regulated early learning and child-care spaces within two years by mid-2023. Fees were reduced to \$25 dollars per day on Jan. 1, 2022

How can parents access the benefits?

Designated centres automatically receive a subsidy to cover the reduction in fees, which will be passed on to parents. Parents don't need to apply to receive the reduced rates. Centres can apply for designation [here](#).

Quebec

Quebec has had its own affordable child-care program since the 1990s. Still, it reached a deal with the federal government last summer that allows the province to opt out of the national program while still receiving its share of the funding. Quebec will receive \$6-billion over five years, which Quebec Premier François Legault says will help create another 37,000 subsidized daycare spaces. Currently, families pay \$8.50 a day per child in Quebec's public daycare system, by the far the lowest fees in Canada.

Saskatchewan

Saskatchewan's deal, which was reached in August, 2021, aims to bring the cost of child care down to \$10 a day in licensed daycares by the end of fiscal 2025-26, while fees will be cut in half by the end of 2022. The federal government is providing nearly \$1.1-billion over the next five years to create 28,000 new licensed early learning and child-care spaces, as well as expanding spaces in not-for-profit child-care centres and home-based daycares.

How can parents access the benefits?

Licensed facilities will receive the funding from the government, which will be applied directly to parent fees. Depending on the child's age and the fees paid, some parents can get refunds for a portion of fees going back to July, 2021. Families with children under six, in licensed child-care, are also eligible for the parent reduction fee grant, which ranges from \$306 to \$395 per month.

Yukon

The federal government is contributing \$42-million over the next five years to create 110 new licensed early learning and child-care spaces, and introduce universal \$10-a-day child care for children under six. Minimum wage for early childhood workers will also be bumped to \$30 per hour.

How can parents access the benefits?

Families can visit Yukon's website to find out more information on how to access the territory's universal child care, as well as how to access other child-care subsidies.

Does Canada have enough early-childhood care workers to fill the new spaces?

The Canadian Child Care Federation estimates that more than 38,000 new early childhood educators will need to be hired to accommodate the federal government's plan to create 146,000 new child-care spots by 2026. Dave McGinn reports that without addressing the work force issues and staffing shortages already plaguing the daycare sector, provinces and territories may not be able to meet this requirement.

Meanwhile, Erica Alini reports that increasing capacity will take time.

Increasing the number of licensed home daycares is a faster way to boost capacity, but adding spaces in home daycares requires finding more people willing to work in the sector.

Some provinces, like Newfoundland and Labrador, have included pledges to add additional seats in postsecondary early learning and child-care programs and increase the wage grid to help expand child-care capacity. However, increasing pay and other supports for child-care workers isn't a condition that provinces and territories have to satisfy to receive federal money, Kerry McCuaig, a fellow in early childhood policy at the University of Toronto's Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, told Alini.

With much of the funding taken up by lowering fees and adding capacity, in general "the work force is getting the leftovers rather than being seen as an essential priority," she said.

What does the national child-care deal mean for unlicensed operators?

There is no doubt that as the supply of licensed child-care spaces increases over the next few years – and as parents are able to pay drastically reduced fees – there will be more pressure on unlicensed providers to become licensed to access funding, reports Dave McGinn.

Some will join agencies, said Julie Bisnath, program co-ordinator at the Child Care Providers Resource Network. "Some will retire, some will switch careers altogether, and some will remain independent and see what that brings."

The process for becoming licensed varies by province and territory, and jurisdictions are taking different approaches to which kind of organizations will have access to the federal funding.

In Ontario the licensed child-care sector currently only has capacity for approximately 24 per cent of kids 12 years and younger in the province, according to the Child Care Providers Resource Network. The rest are looked after by parents, grandparents, nannies or unlicensed, independent providers.

It can take anywhere from six months to two years to become a licensed child-care provider in Ontario, and usually involves a criminal-background check, CPR and first aid training, undergoing a safety check of the home and permitting monthly monitoring visits.

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