

Subsidized Daycare: A big win for families facing food insecurity

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EXCERPTS

As we've discussed in past issues of this column, household food security is not merely a food issue, it is an indicator of a household's ability to get by.

As we all know, costs of living are continuing to rise and wages are not keeping up. The middle class is disappearing and many are struggling to pay for basic necessities.

Families with children are among the highest of those facing food insecurity, especially those led by single mothers. According to the 2017-2018 Canadian Community Health Survey, 1 in 8 households in Canada faced food insecurity. This is 4.4 million individuals, including 1.2 million children. In this same year, 17.3% of households with children under 18 – or more than 1 in 6 – experienced food insecurity.

While statistics in recent years are slow to be released, we know these numbers are significantly higher now than just four years ago. Last year, nearly 10,000 people (including 5,500 children) accessed Gleaner's Food Bank – that marks a usage rate of nearly 1 in 5 for Belleville. And we know there are many others silently struggling that did not turn to the food bank for help.

While increased income supports will continue to be the only fundamental solution to this problem, reducing living costs will surely also make a difference.

On Monday, Premier Doug Ford and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced that they signed a \$13.2 billion dollar agreement to lower licensed daycare fees to an average of \$10 per day per child by September 2025. This agreement will also support the rollout of 86,000 new childcare spaces and a minimum wage of \$18 for early childcare educators.

As the last province in Canada to sign on to the national child-care plan, this is a huge step forward that Ontario families have been waiting for. This comprehensive agreement offers a multi-pronged approach to many of the issues surrounding childcare.

It also offers a substantial answer for families struggling to put food on the table. Reducing childcare costs to \$10 per day, is estimated to save families approximately \$6000 per year per child. Not only will families be saving money, they will also have the opportunity to focus on new opportunities for income generation that they may not have been able to in the past.

On average, families of Belleville are spending upwards of \$60 per day on daycare. For those with more than one child, it is often costing more to go to work than to stay home. It is not a choice to work or not, it is a must to stay home. And for many families, women are the ones making this sacrifice.

This is a liberating moment in history that we should all be proud of and excited for.

Region: Ontario [3]

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affordable child care [5]

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