

'I'm so glad that it finally came true': Sudbury daycare operator applauds deal to reduce fees ^[1]

One Sudbury parent told us that she almost quit work when it came to the expense of putting her two younger kids in daycare - 'this is more than one of my paychecks in a month'

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EXCERPTS

Sudbury's Amy Barbe says daycare fees are so cost-prohibitive that she almost quit work when it came to the decision of finding child care for both of her younger children, now aged 4 and 6.

"Work talked me out of it," she said. "They wanted to keep me. Looking into it, it was like, this is insane. This is more than one of my paychecks in a month. So in staying, I say, 'We're trying to make just until they start school.'"

She said she and her husband (who also has a 17-year-old son) fall into a "black hole" as a working class family in between the low-income households that receive subsidized daycare, and well-off families who can easily afford care for their kids.

The two children go to daycare at a licensed centre at the same school her six-year-old son attends.

During the school year, it costs \$17 a day for before-and-after school care for the six-year-old. It costs \$43 a day for her four-year-old daughter, who will start school in the fall. In the summer, she pays full-day rates for both children.

"Last summer cost me \$3,000 for two months," Barbe said.

Daycare relief is coming for Ontario families, at least for some of them.

Last month, Ontario signed a \$13.2 billion deal on child care with the federal government with the goal of bringing the cost of daycare down to \$10 a day.

While Barbe's family will see some immediate benefit from the deal, she points out that by the time \$10 day daycare becomes a reality, her kids probably won't qualify due to age limitations in the deal.

Canadian Press reported that Ontario parents of children aged five and under will start getting rebates for licensed child-care fees in May and can expect to see costs cut in half by the end of the year now that the province has become the final signatory to a national program.

As a first step, all Ontario families with children five years old and younger in participating licensed child care centres will see their fees reduced, up to 25 per cent, to a minimum of \$12 per day, retroactive to April 1, 2022.

In December 2022, parents will see another reduction. In total, fees for families will be reduced, on average, by 50 per cent, relieving parents of \$1.1 billion in child care costs.

In September 2024, families will see further fee reductions, culminating in a final reduction to an average of \$10-a-day child care by September 2025.

The fee cuts would amount to an average savings per child of about \$6,000 a year by the end of 2022.

Ford, who will begin a provincial election campaign in a few weeks, framed the deal as one of several ways his Progressive Conservative government is saving people money, referencing other measures such as rebates on licence plate renewal fees.

"It's a great deal for Ontario parents and the right deal for Ontarians," he said, quoted in a Canadian Press article. "It's a deal that provides flexibility in how we allocate federal funding, flexibility that is critical for making this deal work for Ontario."

The province said it will address increasing demand for child care by creating 86,000 new, high quality child care spaces. This includes more than 15,000 new spaces already created since 2019.

New licensed child care spaces will include a mix of not-for-profit and for-profit settings to provide families with choice and flexibility.

Ontario will now work to enrol 5,000 licensed child-care centres and licensed home daycares into the program.

Education Minister Stephen Lecce said the operators have until September to apply, and parents will receive an "automatic benefit" and savings on their monthly fees, a Canadian Press article said.

Ford said the province would work on boosting wages for early childhood educators. The Association of Early Childhood Educators Ontario has called for a \$25 minimum wage for registered ECEs, the Canadian Press reports.

Currently, the province gives a \$2-an-hour wage enhancement for those making less than about \$28 an hour.

Region: Ontario ^[3]

Tags: fee reduction ^[4]

child care costs ^[5]

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