

# Niagara Falls riding candidates share how they would fix child-care shortage problems <sup>[1]</sup>

COVID-19 shone a spotlight on issues in Ontario's child-care system, such as staff shortages and affordability

**Author:** Hmood, Zahraa

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## AVAILABILITY

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

## EXCERPTS

When schools closed during the COVID-19 pandemic, child care became more of a concern than ever: daycare shutdowns — and emergency openings — put pressure on a system already experiencing staffing shortages, and exacerbated the lack of spots and unaffordability of daycare for many parents in Niagara.

With that in mind, Niagara this Week asked provincial election candidates what they feel are the key improvements needed for the child-care system and how we can achieve those improvements.

### WAYNE GATES (INCUMBENT) — NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF ONTARIO

Under Conservative and Liberal governments, child-care prices in Ontario became the highest in all of Canada, with some fees the size of mortgage payments.

Families in Niagara need and deserve high-quality \$10-a-day child care — and we have a plan to deliver it in partnership with the federal government. Ford's decision to fight rather than work with the federal government to deliver affordable child care needlessly cost families thousands of dollars in extra fees. It was a shameful decision by him but we can make it right.

### BOB GALE — PROGRESSIVE CONSERVATIVE PARTY OF ONTARIO

We have delivered a \$13.2-billion agreement that will dramatically reduce fees for parents, and provide more accessible and high-quality child care, including delivering an average of \$10-a-day child care by September 2025. This agreement will create 86,000 additional child-care spaces and support the hiring of new early childhood educators (ECEs) and improved compensation for all staff working in licensed child care.

Together, through the Ontario Child Care Tax Credit (CARE), affordable child-care options, and continued investment in all-day kindergarten, Ontario parents are now provided with the largest array of options, benefits, and supports for early years and child care in the country.

### ASHLEY WATERS — ONTARIO LIBERAL PARTY

Ontario Liberals commit to providing parents with child-care discounts retroactive to Jan. 1, 2022 giving families back, on average, \$2,750/child. Within September 2022, we will reduce the cost of before- and after-school child care to \$10 a day. We will implement the full plan by 2024, a full year ahead of Ford Conservatives. The sooner Ontario can implement it, the higher the savings will be for parents.

We will provide ECEs with better wages and benefits, bringing in a compensation grid that will be in alignment with full day kindergarten. We will also provide free tuition for all ECE programs at Ontario's colleges. We'll enhance the Childcare Access and Relief from Expenses (CARE) tax credit by 50 per cent to an average of \$2,000 and will provide it in regular advance payments.

### DEVON ST. DENIS-RICHARD — NONE OF THE ABOVE DIRECT DEMOCRACY PARTY

One strategy that I think could help is a community daycare system. This takes the form of a school building idea, with professionals and volunteers working together. We would have to work on reforming the current laws that surround this industry currently, to allow for this sort of concept. The real savings are in the volunteerism, as well as the centralized location(s), rather than many singular locations that have collectively much higher overheads.

## OTHER CANDIDATES

Candidates Christine Lewis-Napolitano (New Blue party), Tommy Ward (Green Party), and Wesley Kavanagh (Ontario Party) did not respond to our requests for comment in time for the press deadline.

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

**Tags:** child care <sup>[4]</sup>  
affordability <sup>[5]</sup>  
labour shortage <sup>[6]</sup>

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