

'It keeps me up at night': Child-care providers in Ontario unsure if they will opt in to federal plan ^[1]

Ontario guidelines have been creating some confusion, as some child-care providers find there are too many grey areas as the Sept. 1 deadline looms

Author: Lévesque, Catherine

Source: National Post

Format: Article

Publication Date: 8 Jun 2022

AVAILABILITY

Access online ^[2]

EXCERPT

Kim Yeaman, director of Innisfil's Simcoe Childcare Services, does not know if she will be opting in the federal deal that was signed with Ontario earlier this year.

The province released guidelines in late April, days before it went into a month-long election, that left service providers with more questions than answers. Those guidelines were handed down to municipalities, which have the responsibility to manage child-care services.

Child-care providers like Yeaman are now awaiting some clarity on the way forward, as the September 1 deadline to opt into the program for the current year is fast approaching.

"It keeps me up at night that I possibly will not be offering this to my parents. It just... keeps me up at night. That's not something that I want to do, but at the same time, we still have to be able to pay our bills," said Yeaman in an interview with the National Post.

"Right now, there's just not enough information to know what to do."

The federal government committed to a national child-care system in its 2021 budget and managed to sign an agreement with all provinces and territories. Ontario was the last jurisdiction to sign on to the deal, negotiating to receive \$13.2 billion over six years to fund the program.

The goal is to reach an average parent fee of \$10 a day by 2025-2026 for licensed child-care spaces and create 86,000 spaces relative to the 2019 levels.

But operating details as laid out in the Ontario guidelines have been creating some confusion, as some child-care providers find there are too many grey areas concerning "unreasonable" or "ineligible" expenses that could give the right to service system managers to deny funds.

Valerie Smith, president of Sessila Academy Inc. in Ottawa, recently sent out an email to parents who have children in one of their two private daycares stating these issues and explaining why they might also opt out of the agreement struck with the federal government.

"Why does Joe from the city get to decide what expenses are reasonable for the children at Sessila Academy and which expenses are too luxurious?" she wrote.

Smith also took issue with the wage increase touted by the province, which represents an extra \$1/hour in addition to the \$2/hour wage enhancement from the current funding program. But that will only apply to childhood educators who earn the minimum wage, she said.

"The problem is, no one makes minimum wage," she wrote in the email.

A source within the federal government who was granted anonymity to discuss internal matters explained to the National Post that child-care providers in Nova Scotia had also voiced similar concerns at the beginning of the process, but they managed to have a high uptake in the end.

"So we expect to see something similar in Ontario."

The source conceded there is "a lot of bureaucratic language" in the 74-page document given by the provincial government with its guidelines, but "the only thing that's missing is the ability for the government to communicate each of those pieces" now that the election has passed.

Ingrid E. Anderson, spokesperson for Ontario's Ministry of Education, insisted that the "2022 funding allocations are sufficient to support the full cost of reducing parent fees and improving compensation for qualified workers and have been indexed to address the impact of

inflation.”

The City of Ottawa, for its part, simply referred to a memo sent last month saying that “additional information” and “proposed policy approvals” will be provided to the council before June 30.

That will leave only two months for child-care providers, in the middle of the summer, to determine if they want to opt in the federal regime. But it might be too short of a timeline, according to Andrea Hannen, Association of Day Care Operators of Ontario.

“They say the devils in the details, and that really is right. There’ll be a lot of specifics in there. And it’s going to be important for child-care owner operators to have enough time to take a look at what municipalities are presenting and determine whether or not they want to participate.”

Yeaman, who said that the county of Simcoe is holding consultations at the moment, also agrees that the deadline of September 1 is “way too fast” and that many providers could decide to not come to the table because of the short timeline.

“You’re trying to make a decision for the next five years. And if you don’t know what that looks like, how can you make that decision financially ... without a clear understanding of what the rules and regulations are?”

Region: Ontario ^[3]

Tags: Canada wide agreement ^[4]

child care ^[5]

\$10-a-day child care ^[6]

wages ^[7]

Source URL (modified on 5 Apr 2025): <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/22/06/it-keeps-me-night-child-care-providers-ontario-unsure-if-they-will>

Links

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/22/06/it-keeps-me-night-child-care-providers-ontario-unsure-if-they-will> [2]

<https://nationalpost.com/news/politics/it-keeps-me-up-at-night-child-care-providers-in-ontario-unsure-if-they-will-opt-in-to-federal-plan> [3]

<https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/7856> [4] <https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/9224> [5] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/child-care> [6]

<https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/10-a-day-child-care> [7] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/wages>