

What is not being said about the national daycare rollout ^[1]

The challenges that lay ahead in Ontario have more to do with the size and scope of the government bureaucracy.

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EXCERPTS

In its 2021 budget, the federal government promised to rollout a national child care program along the lines of the Quebec model. It then began negotiating shared funding agreements with each province and territory toward this goal.

What the federal government didn't acknowledge was that only about a third of Quebec's children under age 5 who were enrolled in licensed care were actually covered under that province's \$8.50/day system.

The rest were in other forms of care, including centres run as small businesses that were excluded from participating in it.

Nor did the federal government acknowledge that in Quebec, the families who use these centres also receive considerable Provincial support, mostly in the form of tax credits.

When Ontario signed on, it sought to broaden its \$10/day program beyond the quasi-public sector so more families could benefit from the fee reduction.

Ontario's rollout is still a work in progress. But the challenges that lay ahead have more to do with the size and scope of the government bureaucracy that is being proposed to administer the program than they do with trying to include commercial child care centres as part of it.

Many commercial centres already work with their local municipalities to deliver services to families in receipt of fee subsidy. To do so, most have to provide audited financial statements each year. They are used to operating with a high degree of transparency.

These centres aren't sounding the alarm about accountability issues, but rather about the level of government micro-management that is currently being proposed as a condition of their ongoing participation in the \$10/day system.

There are many not-for-profit centres that are just as apprehensive.

Montessori schools and centres operated by faith-based organizations are also questioning whether having to negotiate every conceivable expense with a municipal bureaucrat could potentially undermine their ability to deliver the quality of day-to-day experiences parents expect them to provide for the children in their care.

Centres also question whether their operations can remain sustainable under such a system.

The core issue is practicality. Is the goal to transplant one part of a decades-old government program from Quebec into the much larger province of Ontario, or is it to provide cost-relief to families?

If it's the latter, there are better implementation options than those being considered so far.

Region: Ontario ^[3]

Tags: child care ^[4]

Canada wide agreement ^[5]

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

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