

London begins rollout of \$10-a-day child-care program next week ^[1]

Families could see child-care rebates as early as September, southwestern Ontario city says

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EXCERPTS

The City of London, Ont., is launching the application for licensed child-care operators to opt into the \$10-a-day child-care funding program next week as part of a phased rollout plan.

The program will allow Ontario to offer eligible children up to age six an average of \$10-a-day child care by September 2025, through the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care funding program.

London families could see more money in their pockets as early as September this year, though times will vary, said Trevor Fowler, director of child care and early years at the City of London.

Families will have "increased affordability and access" to child care through the program, he said.

"We recognize how valuable the affordability measures are. This is a historic investment and it's a transformational time for the sector."

The first phase of the program will give eligible families a 25 per cent child-care fee reduction along with a retroactive rebate to April 1.

Eligible child-care operators must opt in to the program by Sept. 1 through the City of London. The process from application to fund distribution is expected to take around 30 days after eligibility is confirmed.

Benefit to families

"We are really hoping that as many operators as possible take advantage of it so that families can also benefit," Fowler said.

Kara Pihlak, executive director at Oak Park Co-operative Children's Centre, is eager to see families at her centre save on costs through the program.

"It's so important to give so many parents and families a break in their pocketbooks for critical things like perhaps mortgages, vehicles, swimming lessons, activities and groceries," she said.

She has been advocating for a national child-care program for two years through her work as chair of the advocacy subcommittee with the Licensed Child Care Network.

"We're obviously very excited that now it's starting to come to fruition."

There is still another barrier to accessing affordable child care in London: long wait lists, an issue Pihlak said could be remedied with more staffing and increased compensation for early childhood educators.

About 26 centre-based and 72 licensed home-based child-care operators are in the London-Middlesex region.

"We depend on the leaders and the professionals in the child care sector," Fowler said. The city is committed to "working with operators so that we can build an even stronger childcare and earlier sector locally."

Although \$10 a day is the target average across the province, he expects to see differences between regions as the program rolls out.

What to expect in the coming months:

- Next week, licensed child-care operators in London can opt in or out of the program with a deadline of Sept. 1.
- Once approved, eligible families can expect a 25 per cent child-care fee reduction retroactive to April 1 as early as September.
- In December 2022, fees will be reduced further to about 50 per cent on average.
- In September 2024, fees will be reduced even further.
- A final reduction in September 2025 will bring fees down to an average of \$10 per day.

Region: Ontario ^[3]

Tags: child care ^[4]

\$10aDay ^[5]

Canada-wide agreement ^[6]

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