

Only 22 per cent of Ottawa child care centres have registered for \$10-a-day program ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

Fewer than one quarter of Ottawa's child care centres have signed on to the \$10-a-day child care program, meaning thousands of parents may not be eligible for a reduction in child care fees this fall.

The city of Ottawa says enrolment by local child care providers has been "slow", in part due to questions about the program and the initial timelines to register. Now, staff are encouraging all licensed child care providers to opt-in to the program to ensure families have access to "affordable child care."

The federal and Ontario governments signed the new Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care System program, with the ultimate goal of reducing child care costs to \$10-a-day over four years. Municipalities must enrol licensed centres and agencies into the new system and distribute money, which will be used to reduce the fees charged to parents for child care.

The city of Ottawa launched the application process on July 18. As of Friday, only 22 per cent of eligible service providers in Ottawa (39 licensed child care providers) have opted-in to the new Canada-wide system, according to a memo from Jason Sabourin, Director of Children's Services with the city of Ottawa.

"Since the launch of the application, local enrolment uptake has been slow, due to the short timelines, additional clarity required and the prolonged COVID-19 pandemic impacts," Sabourin said.

The original deadline for child care providers to register for the \$10-a-day program was Sept. 1, but the Ontario government extended the deadline to Nov. 1.

"While recently we have seen an increase in service providers opting in as a result of the added clarity provided by the Province, many are still reviewing the updated information and completing the application as quickly as possible," Sabourin said. "The summer and early fall months are a busy time for service providers as they navigate competing demands including operational pressures, prioritizing daily service, staffing and placing children into care for the start of September."

Under the program, fees will be reduced by 25 per cent as of April 1 of this year and by 50 per cent as of Jan. 1, 2023.

Starting in October and continuing through December, families with eligible children enrolled with a licensed child care program that opted into the \$10-a-day program will begin receiving fee rebates of up to 25 per cent, retroactive to April 1. Fees will also be reduced by 25 per cent for the rest of the year.

"Children's Services is encouraging all licensed child care providers in Ottawa to opt-in to the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care System to ensure that all eligible families in licensed child care have access to affordable child care and early learning and that compensation is provided to the eligible child care workforce," Sabourin said in a memo to council.

"Staff will provide resources and supports for the sector to assist in answering questions to support enrollment in the new system."

Service providers must notify families and staff about its intent to enrol in the Canada-Wide system by Nov. 1. The city says service providers are required to provide rebates or credits to families within 20 calendar days of receiving funding from Children's Services.

In June, Council allocated \$60 million in provincial and federal funding to implement phase one of the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care System in Ottawa.

The program is designed to reduce the average parent fee to \$10-a-day by 2025-26 for licensed childcare spaces.

Region: Ontario ^[3]

Tags: child care ^[4]

\$10 a day ^[5]

Canada-wide agreement ^[6]

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