

Canada is promoting child care for \$10 a day ^[1]

Could it work in the US?

Author: Cohen, Rachel M.

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Excerpts

A massive social policy experiment is unfolding in Canada to provide families throughout the country with child care for an average of \$10 a day. The plan, which was introduced in 2021 amid the turmoil of the pandemic, aims to spend up to \$30 billion Canadian by 2026 to bring down child care costs for parents and to create 250,000 new slots.

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Consequently, US activists and lawmakers are looking to this dramatic shift in Canadian child care policy for inspiration, and leading congressional Democrats even began this year to incorporate the successful "\$10 a day" idea into their own political messaging. The Child Care for Every Community Act, introduced in Congress in February, pledges to cap costs for all families and ensure that at least half of families nationwide pay no more than \$10 a day.

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"I've been defending private markets all my life. I'm not an extreme leftist. But you also have to be pragmatic," Pierre Fortin, an economist at the University of Quebec at Montreal, told Bloomberg in 2021. "Child care is an area where private markets don't do a very good job."

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Martha Friendly, who in 1982 founded the Childcare Resource and Research Unit, a small Toronto-based policy institute, has watched the social movement for child care grow in her country over 50 years. "A lot of the social infrastructure in Canada was developed post-World War II, and child care then wasn't viewed with a feminist lens, it was established before women were really entering the workforce in a large way," she told Vox. "Child care was long conceived as a welfare program for the deserving poor, but in the 1980s and 1990s a real movement emerged to reframe child care as an important policy issue for women."

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"The goal of offering child care spaces at \$10 a day is not the most difficult part. The difficult part is to create new child care spaces because it requires more people working in the sector," Sophie Mathieu, an appointee on Canada's national advisory council on early learning and child care, told Vox. "Currently, child care workers are not very well paid, even in Quebec."

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"Our neighbors to the north have shown it is possible to cut across party lines and invest in a child care system that works for more families," said Jessica Sager, CEO of All Our Kin, a national group that trains and supports family child care educators. "The vision of a mixed-delivery system, which offers a variety of options to families, is already taking hold in parts of the US. While we can consider Canada's efforts, we can also find remarkable efforts across our own country."

Related link: The history of child care in the U.S. ^[3]

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