

# Ontario child-care operators warn of closures if province doesn't soon revise funding <sup>[1]</sup>

Demand for spaces could outstrip supply by 220,000, budget watchdog warns

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**Source:** CBC News

**Format:** Article

**Publication Date:** 15 Jan 2024

## AVAILABILITY

Access online <sup>[2]</sup>

## Excerpts

Child-care centres are at risk of closing across Ontario if the province doesn't soon update how it compensates them under the national \$10-a-day program, the largest operator is warning.

The plea from the YMCA and other providers comes as the province seeks to significantly boost the amount of child-care spaces. When Ontario signed on to the program in 2022 it committed to creating 86,000 spots, though the province's budget watchdog estimates demand will outstrip that supply by more than 220,000 spaces.

YMCA child-care programs represent one-fifth of all licensed spots in the province, and while the non profit is a big supporter of the \$10-a-day program, it says the way it is currently being funded is not sustainable.

...

"We are hearing more and more operators who are ready to close their centres and leave this profession behind," said Sharon Siriboe, director of the Ontario Association of Independent Childcare Centres, who also runs a child-care centre in Peel Region.

...

A spokesperson for Ontario Education Minister Stephen Lecce said the province is pushing for more federal money.

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Operators are also waiting for funding from the province to boost the wages of early childhood educators, as Lecce announced late last year. In the meantime, a workforce crisis persists, with many centres — including the YMCA — unable to recruit and retain enough staff to operate at full capacity.

That money should come soon, as well as funding to increase the wages of non-ECE child-care staff, who represent about 40 per cent of the workers in licensed child care, say advocates and operators.

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