

Ontario dragging its heels on child care ^[1]

The \$10-a-day child care system is already making a big difference for some families. What will it take to make the promise a reality for all? Carolyn Ferns with the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care digs into the crisis.

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Excerpts

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The truth is that the new system is already making a huge difference for a lot of families, but the Ontario government could be doing much more to make it a reality for all. Currently over 92 per cent of Ontario’s child care programs are part of the CWELCC system, meaning that more than 400,000 families have seen their child-care fees more than cut in half over the past two years.

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Families who have seen fee reductions from the program share how life-changing more affordable child care is, especially during this time of high inflation.

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Most troubling of all, while Ontario has been happy to accept billions in federal funding to lower child care fees, it hasn’t upped its own provincial funding — critical operating grants that help child care programs pay the bills. In fact, during years of high inflation, provincial child care allocations under the Ford government are lower today than when Ford was first elected in 2018. This is what is making child care programs so financially precarious.

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An even bigger challenge in expanding spaces is recruiting and retaining educators to staff the programs. The low wages deter educators from making licensed child care their career.

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By contrast to the troubles in Ontario, other provinces are surging ahead. Half of provinces and territories have already reached an average of \$10-a-day fees. P.E.I. has a funding formula and wage grid to provide stable funding to child care programs. Nova Scotia recently committed to a defined benefit pension plan for ECEs to help with retention.

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We need our provincial government to start behaving like an equal partner. Ontario must develop a comprehensive childcare strategy, with more provincial child care funding, a fair funding formula, and a wage grid to retain and recruit more ECEs.

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It should be important to the Ontario government too. By investing in child care as a public good, Ontario can ensure that all families have access to the quality care and education our children deserve.

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