

# A \$2 daily head tax on children <sup>[1]</sup>

**Author:** Editorial

**Source:** Toronto Star

**Format:** Article

**Publication Date:** 7 Dec 2011

## EXCERPTS:

Toronto mayors have long been dedicated to city-building, but not Rob Ford. He advocates city-tearing down. A callous proposal to jack up daycare costs for thousands of working families comes as yet another example of Ford's pinched and shrinking vision of what Toronto has to offer. And it's up to city council to change it.

Parents of 12,000 children in Toronto's school-based child-care centres would be charged an extra \$2 a day under Ford's proposed budget. That means a yearly cost of more than \$500 per child. It's a significant burden for the average family, and an intolerable increase for families with more than one child in such care.

The fee would result from cancelling a long-standing agreement with Toronto's school boards under which the city pays heat, hydro and other occupancy costs for 380 school-based child-care centres. With city hall no longer covering that bill, it will be up to parents to do so through the new fee. Low-income families receiving daycare subsidies would be exempt.

In an obvious effort to blunt criticism, the Ford administration is attempting to spin its money grab as a measure delivering fairness. According to this political line, since the city doesn't cover occupancy costs for child-care centres that aren't in schools, the new fee is simply an effort to make the system more "equitable" for all.

What nonsense. Child care is a fundamental need, not a luxury, and a great many daycares are under severe pressure to raise their fees, putting them out of reach of even more Torontonians. Instead of constructively addressing this problem by helping more parents get decent child-care, this administration's solution is to make life harder for families who already have it. That's progress toward equity - Ford-style.

And for what? The annual net gain for the city would amount to about \$3.3 million by 2013. Ford and his penny-pinching backers insist Toronto is in a financial crisis and has no alternative but to cut costs, raise taxes and impose higher fees. At the same time, city hall is looking at an estimated surplus of almost \$140 million at the end of this year. And it has no intention of using that to save services or spare the public from painful new costs.

Money isn't what's ultimately lacking at Toronto city hall. What's absent is a fundamental respect for public services and the benefits they provide. That's why Ford finds it acceptable to cut and slash and burden city programs with excessive fees. And it's why he should be stopped.

-reprinted from the Toronto Star

**Region:** Ontario <sup>[2]</sup>

**Tags:** funding <sup>[3]</sup>

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