

Ontario bans 'unfair' wait-list fees for daycare spots ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

Parents will no longer have to pay “unfair” wait-list fees for daycare spots starting in September, Education Minister Mitzi Hunter said as she announced the long-awaited ban Tuesday.

“We share parents’ concern,” she told reporters after playing in a sandbox with children at the West End Y’s rooftop daycare play area.

“It takes advantage of them.”

Regulations are being changed to make the fees illegal and daycare centres will have until January to develop public wait-list policies that “transparently” explain how the queue works, Hunter said.

The fees, which ranged up to several hundred dollars in some cases, did not guarantee child care spots, and some parents would pay them at several daycares as they sought to increase their chances for landing a spot for their child or children.

“It gives families a false sense of hope,” said YMCA general manager Jillian Sewell, who noted the Y has not charged wait-list fees in years.

Premier Kathleen Wynne’s government had promised in May to end the wait-list fees in licensed daycare centres and homes by Sept. 1, following a petition launched by two Toronto lawyers slamming the fees — particularly in Toronto, where daycare spots are available for just over 20 per cent of children.

New Democrat MPP Peter Tabuns (Toronto Danforth) also proposed an end to the fees in a private member’s bill.

“I’m glad that after more than a decade in government the Liberals are finally listening to parents on this issue and following the lead of the NDP,” said Deputy NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh.

“This is a step in the right direction, but there is more to do, like creating more affordable child care spaces so moms and dads don’t face these wait lists in the first place.”

-reprinted from Toronto Star

Region: Ontario ^[3]

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