

It is time for Ontario to support Child Care



As Armine Yalnizyan recently wrote of Ontario: “No jurisdiction in Canada is better equipped to create a system of high-quality, accessible early learning and child care; a system that can reduce inequalities in a way comparable to schools and health care.”¹ Ontario must act now to address high fees, lack of regulated spaces, and the undervaluing of the Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) workforce.

British Columbia, Nova Scotia, Yukon, Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland and Labrador, Quebec, Manitoba and Saskatchewan have all partnered with the federal government to advance a universal public system of ELCC. In Ontario, where child care fees are among the highest in the country², and where there is a shortage of licensed and accessible spaces, the benefits of this federal funding are even greater. The seven most expensive cities for child care are all in Ontario, with eight out of the 10 highest annual infant fees in the country coming from in cities in Ontario.³ The federal plan to get to \$10 a day would be a game changer for parents, particularly mothers.

Investing in quality child care doesn't just benefit parents, it benefits the early learning and development of children. It is one of the most effective interventions to narrow the gap between rich and poor children. Children deserve quality care.

Aside from the individual benefits, the broader economic benefits to the province are clear. Expanded non-profit licenced child care will contribute to job creation, increased spending power, increased productivity, and a boost in government revenue.

The federal plan moves away from the patchwork of programs and toward a strong foundation for a truly affordable, accessible, inclusive and quality, not-for-profit and publicly managed ELCC. This includes supports for the child care workforce. Any workforce strategy must include early childhood educators as well as all of the additional staff and supports that make centres work.

Unifor is calling on the Ontario government to immediately sign on to build an ELCC system ELCC with the federal government that includes:

- A commitment to the right of all young children to access regulated, inclusive, culturally safe ELCC; including embedding anti-racism and anti-oppressive frameworks
- An affordability strategy that caps fees at \$10 per day per family
- A workforce strategy that improves wages, working conditions and a learning framework
- An expansion strategy with explicit targets that curtails for-profit and creates new public & non-profit programs. This must prioritize expansion in underserved communities and populations
- Full and sufficient operational and capital funding⁴

To learn more about Unifor's campaign to bring quality, affordable child care to Ontario and to take action, go to: www.unifor.org/childcareontario

1 <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/business/commentary/article-ontario-not-quebec-holds-the-model-for-child-care/>

2 The average fees for a full-day infant spot in Toronto are \$22,400, and that is after tax dollars. The cost savings to parents of the federal plan would be substantial

3 David Macdonald (2021). “A \$10-a-day national child care plan will mean big savings for parents.” The Monitor, Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

4 For more information see <https://www.childcareontario.org/roadmap>