



Ontario's early years revolution

- Ontario has become the first jurisdiction in North America to make early learning and child care an entitlement for all children, setting a new bar for child care policy.
- Central to the announcement is a no fee, full day program for children starting at 2.5 years until they are eligible for kindergarten. The program begins in September 2020.
- Unlike traditional initiatives that offer more generous subsidies -- fuelling the child care market -- free, publicly funded access establishes child care as a right for children. Also unlike traditional approaches where eligibility is tied to the parents' labour force participation, free care is for all children. No longer is there the need for small children to cycle in and out of child care in tandem with their parents' precarious work arrangements.
- The plan includes 100,000 new spaces, doubling access for children 0-4 years, as well as enhanced subsidies for infant and toddler care and the elimination of fee-subsidy wait lists.
- The expansion also doubles the size of the early childhood workforce, creating another 25,000 jobs. To support staff recruitment and retention, a wage grid for all program staff working in the early years and child care sector begins in April 2020 aligning compensation with early childhood educators working in full-day kindergarten.
- Ontario is leaping over Ottawa's stalled promises; dedicating \$40 million over three years to support the expansion of licensed child care programs in First Nations communities. New capital funding is also available to First Nations to support the construction or retrofit of new and existing child care facilities.
- The plan provides a living wage for workers in a traditionally under-valued, female dominated sector. The government estimates the plan will save families \$17,000 per child in child care fees; a major contribution to the social wage. By allowing more women to work, it promotes gender equality and reduces income inequity. By supporting children's early development, it diminishes achievement gaps between advantaged and disadvantaged children.



- Supported by \$2.2 billion in new investment over three years, the plan includes over \$930 million in 2020-21 to fund free child care for preschoolers. When fully implemented, Ontario's early years spending will reach \$6.8 billion annually, a commitment on par with those countries known as early learning and child care leaders.
- Free child care for preschoolers was a key recommendation coming out of [the child care affordability report](#) by Dr. Gord Cleveland, and the implementation of a wage grid is a key recommendation in the [Workforce Study](#).
- Making child care more affordable and accessible was one of the key recommendations from the Gender Wage Gap Steering Committee's [final report](#) and supports Ontario's Strategy for [Women's Economic Empowerment](#).

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