

# OTTAWA'S CHILDCARE SQUEEZE

## FAST FACTS

### As of April 2016

**8830** children are on the City of Ottawa centralized waitlist for a licensed child care space, including 984 children who have already approved for a fee subsidy but are waiting for a space.

### Child Care is Expensive in Ottawa

In Ottawa, licensed child care ranks in the **top seven** of the most expensive government funded facilities in the country.

### Child Care Workers

And in spite of high child care fees, child care workers have some of the **lowest** average wages of any occupation.



## So you're expecting a baby!

When you're having a baby, there's never ever shortage of well-meaning mothers looking to share their stories about the pain of child birth.

The truth is, the real pain comes when you try to find child care you can trust. The thought of leaving your precious baby with a total stranger, well, there's really nothing worse for a new mom.

While parents are willing to do just about anything to find caring, quality child care, sadly, for many, money can stand in the way.



**In Ottawa**, licensed child care ranks in the top seven of the most expensive government funded facilities in the country.

And that's just one reason why CUPE 503 is working to improve public-funding for public and not for profit child care, so that all parents and not just the ones who can afford it have quality care for their children.

A 2015 study by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA) examined median unsubsidized child care fees in Canada's biggest 27 cities for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers, as well as the different subsidy programs that reduce costs for low-income families. "There is a huge variation in the cost of child care between Canadian cities, which verges on the absurd when you compare the \$987 per month Ottawa parents pay for a preschool space that costs just \$174 per month across the river in Gatineau," CCPA Senior Economist David Macdonald was quoted as saying at the time. "While child care is a provincial responsibility, there is clearly room for federal leadership and funding to close the large differences in fees and availability across Canada."

The seven most expensive cities for preschooler care are all in Ontario: Toronto, Markham, Ottawa, Vaughan, Mississauga, Brampton, and London.

And in spite of high child care fees, child care workers have some of the lowest average wages of any occupation. Even working full-time, early child care educators and home care providers earn \$25,000 and \$18,000 a year, respectively.

Money, though a huge and often insurmountable obstacle, isn't always the only problem.

Even if families can afford child care they often face long waiting lists due to significant shortfalls in available spaces.



**On April 27<sup>th</sup> 2016** the City of Ottawa Child Care Service Plan was released to the Community and Protective Services Committee and City Council stating that 8830 children are on the City centralized waitlist for a licensed child care space, including 984 children who have already approved for a fee subsidy but are waiting for a space. "In a city like ours, with a growing population, with almost 9000 children on a wait list for a licensed child care space, it is bewildering why the City is not looking to not only strengthen the centres we have, but also look at an expansion in our sprawling city. Investing in quality, licensed, public and not for profit child care is an investment in our children's future and offering stability for families," says Brian Madden, President CUPE 503.

In a submission to the province, CUPE Ontario outlines its position on government funded child care system. "CUPE Ontario believes all four principles of access, responsiveness, affordability and quality are best achieved within a publicly- funded, planned and managed system for all children rather than our current market-based approach."

"The changes we are proposing in our submission would involve a fundamental shift in how child care is structured and delivered in Ontario. It would make fees more affordable by introducing a sliding scale for parent fees with reasonable caps and the remainder of funding provided through operational base funding to licensed child care centres," the submission reads.

The truth is, studies show - not surprisingly - that quality child care programs are associated with substantive benefits for children.

"Research has shown high quality Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) can help childrens' cognitive and social development. These benefits exist for all children but can be even more pronounced for disadvantaged or marginalized children. Programs staffed with trained and knowledgeable educators can help children develop physically, emotionally, culturally, cognitively, and creatively. ECEC is not only a right for children but also helps promote their healthy development. These programs should be available to all children and families in our communities," the CUPE Ontario submission states.

And isn't that what every parent hopes to provide for their children?



## **Other key recommendations** from the CUPE Ontario submission:

- The government expand spaces through a publicly funded, planned and managed system for all children rather than our current market-based approach;
- Ensure a significant investment in the first two years of the five year child care expansion plan to ensure the benefits to children, parents and communities happen as soon as possible;
- All future public investment in child care be made in the public and not-for-profit sectors.
- Strengthen the public policy and planning that will guide the creation of new child care spaces with attention to the proximity to public transit and in prioritizing underserved areas including lower- income and rural communities;
- Create the policy and planning structure within which child care spaces for workers who work non- standard hours are prioritized.
- Provide funding and create policy that will support the inclusion of children with special needs;
- The government transform the funding and fee structure by providing operational base funding to licensed child care centres and introducing a sliding scale for parent fees with reasonable caps;
- The provincial government should highlight the role of municipal child care as best practice innovative approaches through supporting the continuation of municipal centres and prioritizing space expansion in them;
- The government should develop a comprehensive workforce strategy with labour and community partners that will strengthen recruitment and retention of current child care staff and support the hiring of new staff required by the expansion of spaces.

