

Taking Care of Our Children

How do City services touch women's lives?

Women who live in Toronto are affected daily by the decisions made by the City. This includes sorting and taking out the garbage, walking with their children in the park, riding the bus to work, accessing essential services like transit, community centres, housing, and much more.

In 2010, the TWCA released a research report on women's experiences of City services.

Affordable, high quality child care is critical for women who want to work outside the home, or pursue education or training. Early learning and quality child care are also important for infants, toddlers and children as they are provided with stimulating and caring environments that enhance their development and well-being. Lack of affordable and accessible childcare is taking a toll on family life, affects relations between parents, and sometimes locks women inside their homes undermining their income generating capacity, community engagement and well-being.

"You know, when we are both working, leaving home at 7:30 am, for a 7 or 8 year old, it is no way to live. At 7:30 you cannot leave your child anywhere. It's very difficult... I could take care of some of the friends who could take my child from morning till 7:30 in the evening

when I get home. And it's a very long time. I don't know sometimes even if I'm getting later than that. I used to call her and she used to literally feed and do everything. It's very difficult because now my husband has given up his job because we cannot both afford to go out from morning till evening. We cannot keep our child out for that long so one person has to give up either their total career, everything, or otherwise..." – Working immigrant mother

Accessibility

Without access to adequate childcare, many women are forced to give up opportunities that would otherwise be available to them. Women and their families are bound by childcare options that do not meet their needs. For those who do shift work or work far from home, finding care for one's children is a major challenge and places stress on both the parents and the children. Some parents are forced to stay home and forego employment opportunities because of lack of accessible and affordable childcare.

"I cannot go outside because I have kids... I cannot go anywhere, I cannot see anything. Just like for work, just like for tourist, nothing because I have kids. [If the] government give us lots of subsidy, we take subsidy, then we can go outside for our educations and job..."

So, first we need lots of subsidy and then we can do things properly and in full concentration. I realize this is my problem. Not only my problem, lots of women suffer from this problem.” – Newcomer mother

Affordability

Daycare fees per child are about \$40 - \$60 per day. While just over 114,000 children, age 12 and under, live in low income families in Toronto, available funding provides for only 24,000 child care subsidies. As of June 2010, over 17,800 children are on the waiting list for subsidies. Lack of affordable child care disproportionately affects women who have lower incomes and bear the major responsibility for rearing children.

Women want:

- Adequate and sustained funding for child care from all levels of government.
- A National Child Care Programme.
- The expansion of child care services and the number of subsidized spaces to include universally accessible, high quality, and regulated child care.
- Equity of access and quality for all families.

TORONTO WOMEN'S CITY ALLIANCE

Making Equality Matter...

TWCA calls for the establishment of a Toronto Women's Equalities Office that could spearhead the development of an action plan for equality for women in all their diversity. This office could monitor city services, create recommendations to end the systemic discrimination against women, prepare a Report Card and connect with and provide support to organizations working with women across the City.

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For the complete research report, go to:
http://www.twca.ca/TWCA-publications/uploads/TWCA_June_2010a.pdf