

Toronto moms want city to show them the love by spending more on child care ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

Toronto moms handed out valentines, pink paper hearts and chocolates Wednesday at city hall, but the tokens of affection came with a clear message to councillors: have a heart and don't cut any child-care spending.

Carolyn Ferns, of the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care, said parents are concerned about the mayor's plan to cut occupancy grants paid to local schools that house daycares. Several mothers who spoke at the event said they've already been warned their fees will be going up if the city moves ahead with the cut.

School board trustees and city councillors have warned parents to brace for a spike of up to \$350 per month. Parents in this city already pay the highest child-care fees anywhere in the country.

To help, Mayor John Tory plans to create 300 new child-care subsidies to support families in need, and has asked the province to step up and pay for the occupancy grants local school boards rely on to maintain child-care spaces.

Ferns was quick to blast that move.

"I don't think we should be treating our children as a political football," she said, earning a round of applause from the mothers who stood behind her during a news conference.

Previously, Tory said the cut was justified because the occupancy grants aren't divided fairly among all of the city's child-care centres. Ferns said if that's the case, the city should be "funding up," not down.

There are currently some 18,000 families in Toronto on a waiting list for subsidized child care.

Immigrant families hit hard by child care costs

Sultana Jahangir, of the South Asian Women's Rights Organization, said while her children are now in university, she's helping some 100 Scarborough families try to get child-care support from the city.

"We are fighting every single day," she said.

Jahangir said child care is especially important in immigrant communities, as many people don't have extended family to rely on. She said the women who can't afford child care are either stuck at home looking after their children — something that's a major barrier to fitting into their new country — or they have to turn to informal daycares, which aren't good for their kids.

She said she wants all three levels of government to fully fund child care, something that would give women in her community more freedom.

City council to debate budget this month

Amanda Munday, who works at a local tech start-up focusing on supporting child-care workers, said she's worried the increase will mean it's cheaper to stay home and look after her two children than go to work.

"I'm so frustrated by the child care situation in this city," Munday told CBC Toronto.

"The last thing I want to do is leave my job."

City council is set to debate the proposed child-care changes later this month.

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Region: Ontario ^[3]

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