

Liberty Village facing 'extreme child care crisis' ^[1]

Author: Caton, Hilary

Source: Insider Toronto

Format: Article

Publication Date: 13 Jul 2017

AVAILABILITY

Read online ^[2]

EXCERPTS

Young families in Liberty Village are in the midst of an extreme child care crisis.

"There's no infant care, there's no toddler care, there's no preschool and it's extreme that these families are going through this," said Thea Cappellacci, the director of Garrison Creek Community Day Care, a non-profit, licensed child care located in Niagara Street Public School. "Liberty Village has become stroller city."

The Osborne family moved here four years ago and had to wait more than a year before they could secure a spot for their son at a nearby child care facility and by that time he was already two years old.

"My wife went back to work after two years because we couldn't find child care right away," Ed Osborne told The Villager. "We didn't get him into daycare until he was a toddler ... It was so stressful waiting and trying to co-ordinate when my wife would go back to work."

What the Osbornes experienced with child care doesn't differ from the other families in Liberty Village - though some experiences are worse.

Cappallacci said she has to tell prospective parents that if they're not already on the waiting list "the next time you'll get in is in four years in kindergarten."

And, she added, that's only "if you're within my boundaries."

It's these struggles, Osborne, Cappellacci and more than a dozen other families got to explain to Indira Naidoo-Harris, Minister Responsible for Early Years and Child Care, and Trinity-Spadina MPP Han Dong at a town-hall meeting held Thursday night in Liberty Village.

Issues of affordability and access were top of mind for the parents, while daycare service providers, established and emerging, urged them to provide incentives and further support.

"I didn't realize how critical the issue is and the magnitude of the problem," said Naidoo-Harris.

Dong said he's working with Naidoo-Harris and Coun. Mike Layton to help provide some solutions to the growing problem and added that he and Layton are "desperately looking for spaces and options."

A few that were mentioned include the old heritage building in Liberty Village Park, pushing the police station out of its current space, a portion of the parking lot at Lamport Stadium and Exhibition Place.

"Good planning isn't happening here, we're playing catch up," said Dong, who added he'd like to model Liberty Village after something similar to the City Place neighbourhood on Bathurst Street.

"It has a Catholic school, public school, community centre and library coming ... to me that's good planning," he said.

The reason Liberty Village is in this situation, said Cappellacci, is because "the city created this problem" by not making child care spaces a mandatory piece of development proposals in Liberty Village.

But Naidoo-Harris assured the crowd relief is on the way through the province's "ambitious plan" to spend \$1.6 billion over the next five years to create 45,000 affordable child care spaces in schools, workplaces and public buildings. And of that pool of money, \$200 million will be invested in 2017-18 to increase accessibility and affordability of licensed child care including expanding licensed home child care.

It will also help create more subsidies for about 60 per cent of the 24,000 new child care spaces expected to open across the province, where municipalities will determine their locations. But despite those numbers, Osborne is convinced the amount of child care spaces Liberty Village would receive is zero.

"I don't think there's going to be any in here at all, just by hearing her say it's going to be funded through the City of Toronto and the

schools," said Osborne.

"There are no schools here, no community centre, no library, no City of Toronto presence here at all.

Anything that goes on here is done through the private sector and will have to be moving forward."

Right now, Osborne sends his son to a before-and-after-school program at Liberty Kids on Western Battery Road, run by Saida Zakrzewski, a former preschool teacher who quit her job to open an unlicensed daycare in the neighbourhood. She fought hard to get the space that was slated to become a dry cleaner, she said.

"We don't need another dry cleaner or even another bar. I really advocated for the community to have this space because I knew how badly they wanted it," said Zakrzewski.

She hopes with the promise to expand licensed home child care spaces, comes leniency regarding the requirement of an outdoor space attached to your home.

"These spaces don't exist in downtown Toronto, it's not realistic. Who has outdoor space living in a condo? Nobody. So what space in Liberty Village will get licensed? None. Not unless the rules get tweaked," added Zakrzewski.

-reprinted from Insider Toronto

Related link:

Region: [Ontario](#) ^[3]

Tags: [accessibility](#) ^[4]

[affordability](#) ^[5]

[family child care](#) ^[6]

[child care](#) ^[7]

Source URL (modified on 27 Jan 2022): <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/17/07/liberty-village-facing-extreme-child-care-crisis>
Links

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/17/07/liberty-village-facing-extreme-child-care-crisis> [2] <https://www.toronto.com/community-story/7423509-liberty-village-facing-extreme-child-care-crisis/> [3] <https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/7856> [4]

<https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/accessibility> [5] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/affordability> [6]

<https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/8943> [7] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/child-care>