

Doug Ford government cuts are hurting immigrant and refugee communities ^[1]

Author: Asalya, Sara

Source: Toronto Star

Format: Article

Publication Date: 25 Jul 2019

AVAILABILITY

Access online ^[2]

EXCERPTS

My husband and I are expecting our third child next year and we are so excited. Yet, we can't help stressing about child care. The child-care system in Ontario is already broken.

When I came to Canada six years ago, I experienced first-hand the challenges associated with finding and affording child-care services in Toronto. We were put on a waiting list for years. No spots were available for our first kid or the second, who came four years later.

I am now more concerned about the impact of Ford government decisions as they will further worsen the child-care situation for Ontarians in general, and for immigrant and refugee communities in particular.

The Conservatives announced they would be putting an end to a \$50 million fund meant to help child care centres across Ontario in covering the increasing labour costs. As a result, many of the increased labour costs will be passed to families. Does it make sense for Ontarians to pay more for child care when we it's already costing us so much? Torontonians pay the highest infant care fees in the country, according to a study conducted by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, estimated at \$1,685 per month.

But child care has long been an issue in this province. A growing number of children are placed on endless waiting lists for government subsidy. Yet, as child care becomes a pressing priority for a growing population, more than 3,000 new Toronto child care spaces are at risk due to provincial cuts.

Child care services shouldn't be a privilege for those who can access and pay for it. It should be a right for everyone. It constitutes a huge barrier for many immigrant families trying to build their lives in Canada.

I had to drop out of an administrative program when I first arrived here due to lack of child care for my 3-year old son. Many newcomers continue to face similar challenges and with the recent cuts, more stressful conditions. At that time, junior and senior kindergarten were part time as well, which is problematic for all working parents. Even volunteer work was difficult to manage. Now, the Ford government is floating the idea of returning a half-day kindergarten. How are women supposed to work and have a thriving career?

Many newcomer mothers identify child care as a major barrier to pursuing their own career in Toronto, causing many immigrant mothers to give up on their careers or drop out of school, volunteering or internships.

In less than a year under the Conservative government, we have seen cuts to not only child care, but also to education, health care, and more. What's next? As a mother, I worry about my kids' future in Ontario. I am concerned about the quality of their education with increased classroom sizes, less interactions with teachers, more blended classes, and the repealing of sex education and discovery math, to name a few.

This also comes at a time when Ford government cuts are targeting and negatively impacting immigrants and refugees' communities. In May, the Conservative government announced the elimination of the Transition Child Benefit Program (TCB), which provides low income families on the welfare system with \$230 per month per child. According to the Star "critics are characterizing this cut as the "nastiest attack on children." This will negatively impact refugee claimants since they don't qualify for the Canada Child Benefit.

Furthermore, the Ford government announced funding cuts to all legal aid for refugee and immigration cases. By this unexpected cut, many refugee claimants have found themselves in limbo after knowing their applications have been put on hold and they are at risk of deportation. As refugee claimants can't work in Canada for six months after arriving, having access to legal aid services and support is essential. As a result of these cuts, Legal Aid Ontario is no longer accepting refugee claimant cases.

I wanted to offer an immigrant voice and perspective to shed light on one of the disadvantaged communities in Ontario, a community that is falling in the cracks as a result of electing a conservative government.

Related link:

Region: Ontario ^[3]

Source URL (modified on 27 Jan 2022): <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/19/07/doug-ford-government-cuts-are-hurting-immigrant-and-refugee-0>

Links

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/19/07/doug-ford-government-cuts-are-hurting-immigrant-and-refugee-0> [2]

<https://www.thestar.com/opinion/contributors/2019/07/26/doug-ford-government-cuts-are-hurting-immigrant-and-refugee-communities.html> [3]

<https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/7856>