

Toronto mothers cry out for child care ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

Toronto mothers feel panic and a sense of hopelessness when faced with finding affordable, high-quality child care, says a new report ^[2] being released at city hall Friday.

Quality, location and cost are the most important factors when looking for child care, says the report, based on a survey of almost 800 mothers conducted this spring.

Long waiting lists for spots, both subsidized and full-fee, are "by far the biggest concern," says the report by Mothers for Child Care ^[3], believed to be the first mother-led group to examine the issue.

"The current approach seems to cause parents a great deal of stress, as they are required to place their names on multiple lists - paying a fee to do so in some instances - and wait years to secure a space in a licensed municipal or non-profit child-care facility," says the report, entitled "I Should Have Applied Before I was Pregnant."

The group, supported by more than two dozen non-profit agencies including the YWCA, Campaign 2000 and the Toronto Coalition for Better Child Care, is urging municipal, provincial and federal governments to build a comprehensive system of regulated, high-quality, affordable care.

"Mothers, as a group, still have primary responsibility for child care, yet their voices and concerns aren't heard in debates on child care in Toronto," said Alex Mandelis, coordinator of the group, launched on Mother's Day this year.

The high cost of regulated care is also taking a toll on families, with many parents paying fees that are higher than their mortgages, says the report, being released to coincide with Father's Day on Sunday. As a result, many middle-class families are using unregulated babysitting or teaming up with other mothers to hire nannies.

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About 80 per cent of survey respondents didn't have a daycare subsidy. But those with subsidies said subsidy waiting lists aren't coordinated with spaces, meaning they could get a subsidy and still be without a child-care spot. More than 18,000 Toronto children are waiting for subsidies.

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About 68 per cent of Ontario mothers whose youngest child is under age 3 are in the workforce, while the percentage jumps to 79 per cent for those whose youngest child is under age 5. However, there are licensed child-care spaces for just 21 per cent of Toronto children under age 10, the report notes.

- reprinted from the Toronto Star

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