

Next election, let's make childcare the issue and the legacy ^[1]

Author: Elliot, Matt

Source: Metro News (Toronto)

Format: Article

Publication Date: 9 Dec 2013

EXCERPTS:

More than 150 Torontonians signed up last week to speak at a city hall budget meeting. That wasn't a surprise. Public engagement has been on the rise since Mayor Rob Ford took office. People feel they need to show up for fear that otherwise someone will point to a service they rely on and bellow, "GRAVY!"

What was more notable was the issue many of them came to talk about. They were there to talk about child care. They were there to fight for it.

And they had a point. Daycare costs in this city are enormously expensive. For most families, putting a kid in child care works out to the financial equivalent of taking on another mortgage payment. That'll put the squeeze on even middle- and high-income earners. For those below the poverty line, it's hopeless.

The city does offer child-care subsidies for low-income families, but they're doing a lousy job of keeping pace. In January 2009, the waiting list for child-care subsidies was 14,720, according to numbers provided by the city's open data initiative. Just four years later, the wait list had grown to 19,790 - a 34 per cent increase.

Under current trends, the waiting list for affordable daycare will soon exceed the total number of affordable child-care spaces available.

There are lots of reasons for this. Part of it has to do with the prevalence of critics that wonder why parents can't just take care of their own children. These perspectives ignore the economic realities facing a lot of families. For single parents especially, the only alternative to having affordable child care is unemployment. And with that comes greater demand for other social programs - and greater costs.

Even amongst those in government who understand that, there's a blame game that stands in the way of a permanent fix. The municipal government rightly wants provincial funding help. But the provincial government wants Ottawa to step in. And the federal government, of course, seems stuck in a belief that child care should really be a local government issue.

It's like a carousel. But not a fun one.

Mostly, though, I think the biggest obstacle to real progress is that child care is not an issue anyone ever wants to talk about. Politicians and people with soapboxes - me included - prefer to rattle on about shinier issues: Subway trains and development and Rob Ford blunders.

That should change, but I don't have confidence that it will. There's a municipal election coming, but it seems hard to imagine child-care investment at the top of any candidate's platform.

Instead, I expect more of the same: They'll talk about building and budgeting, and leaving a great civic legacy. But isn't it hard to talk about civic legacy without a plan to take care of our kids?

-reprinted from the Metro

Region: Ontario ^[2]

Tags: election ^[3]

Source URL (modified on 27 Jan 2022): <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/13/12/next-election-lets-make-childcare-issue-and-legacy>
Links

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/13/12/next-election-lets-make-childcare-issue-and-legacy> [2]

<https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/7856> [3] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/election>