

Let's talk

child care

C A M P A I G N U P D A T E



This report summarizes the feedback received from Toronto parents during the Let's Talk Child Care campaign.

The City of Toronto launched the Let's Talk Child Care campaign on November 4, 2013. The objective was to obtain parent feedback about child care in Toronto, which will be used to inform the development of the new Child Care Funding Model and the Children's Services 2015-2019 Service Plan. The Let's Talk Child Care campaign had two components: four in-person consultations with parents (the Toronto Parent Summits); and an online survey which was available from November 4 – December 16, 2013. Over 1600 parents of children ages 0-12 provided feedback to the City during this campaign.

Executive Summary

In November 2013, the City of Toronto launched a parent engagement campaign called Let's Talk Child Care.

The objective of the campaign was to obtain parent feedback about child care and children's services in Toronto. The Let's Talk Child Care campaign had two components: four in-person consultations with parents (the Toronto Parent Summits); and an online survey which was available from November 4 – December 16, 2013. One hundred sixty-seven parents of children ages 0-12 attended the in-person consultations and 1435 parents of children ages 0-12 completed the online survey during this campaign.

Key Findings from the Let's Talk Child Care Campaign

- Parents stated strong support for a universal child care system funded through public investment.
- Parents described the difficulty in paying for child care in Toronto, due to high fees and limited fee subsidies.
- Parents described the struggles they face to access licensed child care spaces due to high demand.
- Quality child care is important to parents. Parents stated that quality includes health and safety, well-paid and well-trained staff, and an enriching curriculum.
- Parents identified issues as their children age and transition from child care into the school system. Parents described their struggle to find before- and after-school care for their kindergarten aged children, and a lack of available after-school programs for children ages 6-12.
- Parents described the need for more information about accessing child care spaces and fee subsidies. Generally, parents were not satisfied with the type of information available on these subjects.

Looking Back

The Let's Talk Child Care campaign is the City's most comprehensive consultation with parents about child care since the 2001-2003 Child Care Service Plan.

The feedback from parents during 2001-2003 Child Care Service Plan consultation is very similar to the feedback received during the Let's Talk Child Care campaign.

The 2001-2003 Service Plan describes the feedback from parents: "(there is a) need for substantial numbers of new spaces and improved financing (for child care) as a whole...lack of capacity, long waiting lists and high cost of care present a major deterrent for many families to obtaining the quality of care they wish for their children. Lack of spaces and lack of subsidies make effective parenting difficult. Parents are too often forced to choose between employment or adequate child care."¹

¹http://www1.toronto.ca/city_of_toronto/childrens_services/files/pdf/CPRN_Project_F62.pdf



Outreach strategy for the Let's Talk Child Care campaign

Children's Services conducted a broad outreach strategy to promote the Let's Talk Child Care campaign to Toronto parents. The campaign was marketed in the following ways: 144 transit shelter ads across the city; media releases; a media conference hosted by Councillor Anthony Perruzza and Councillor Janet Davis; information on toronto.ca/children and on City of Toronto social media; communication by Councillors to their constituents; email blasts to thousands of parents on the waiting list for child care fee subsidy and parents in receipt of child care subsidy; email blasts to hundreds of child care operators and family support programs; hundreds of posters and postcards distributed to facilities frequented by families, including libraries, parks and recreation facilities, child care centres, coffee shops and local businesses; advertising at City Hall and Metro Hall; and media advertisements in local publications in French, Mandarin, Spanish, and Tagalog, Tamil and Bengali.

The feedback that was gathered from parents will be used to inform the directions and actions in the Children's Services 2015-2019 Service Plan and to inform the new Toronto Child Care Funding Model, both of which will be tabled at Community Development and Recreation Committee in 2015.

Introduction of the Let's Talk Child Care Advisory Group

At the Toronto Parent Summits, Children's Services asked parents to evaluate the effectiveness of the sessions. Eighty-seven per cent of participants agreed that they had the chance to learn about City services related to child care and children. One hundred per cent of participants agreed that they had the chance to contribute their perspective and point of view. Ninety-two per cent of participants agreed that Children's Services should hold events like the summit annually. As a result, Children's Services is establishing a *Let's Talk Child Care Advisory Group*, which will meet once a year to advise the City and the Children's Services division on policy and programs. The Advisory Group will be open to all interested Toronto parents. Regular updates about the Advisory Group will be posted to toronto.ca/children and on the Facebook page *Toronto Family Connections*.

Parent Feedback – What we asked

Children's Services asked parents about current child care arrangements; the issues and concerns they had about accessing child care; information about affordability of child care; and needs for other programs and services for children and families. The complete set of questions and answers from the in-person consultations and online survey are attached to this document as Attachment 1.

Parent Feedback – What we heard

The feedback received from parents in the Let's Talk Child Care campaign is themed under three categories: 1) Universal Access to Child Care; 2) Transitions through the Early Years system; and 3) Communication and Information. Parents indicated that they value child care both as a contributor to participation in the labour force and as a contributor to positive child outcomes. Parents stated strongly that there is a need for a comprehensive child care program in Canada: a system that will support families and provide high-quality care for children. Parents stated that child care should not be a private, family responsibility. Parents view child care as an essential support for families, and one that should be supported by public investment. Parents described the desire for an early learning system for children ages 0-12, that supports transitions for children as they age from early learning child care programs, to kindergarten, and into the middle childhood years. Parents articulated the need for better information about programs and services available to children and families in the early years.



The themes that were identified and analyzed in the feedback from parents are described below.

Universal Access to Child Care

Parents who participated in the Let's Talk Child Care campaign described their support for a universal child care system: an affordable system that is supported by public investment and that meets the needs of families. Many parents cannot afford the cost of care or cannot find child care for their children. The monthly cost of child care in Toronto is often more than monthly housing costs, and parents described the difficulty in making ends meet. Parents described the challenges they face in obtaining child care, and the stress it has placed on their families. They believe that if they require child care, they should be able to find it. The struggles presented by parents (unaffordability, lack of licensed child care spaces) are persistent and onerous for families. A universal child care system, which requires significant investment from all orders of government, would address many of the barriers that parents described when trying to find child care, including access, affordability, quality, and women's participation in the paid labour force.

Question: Affordable child care can mean different things to different people. Which of the following comes closest to what you think affordable child care means?

- Match the Quebec system (eg. universal, low cost, flat daily fee) **21%**
- Daily or monthly maximum **18%**
- Free child care – universal program **16%**
- No need for subsidy **10%**
- No need to change my work or school schedule to afford care **10%**
- Easier to qualify for a subsidy **9%**
- No hardship on the family **9%**
- Not having to settle for lower standard of care **4%**
- Able to afford other programs (music, sports, other) **2%**
- Other **1%**

**At the
Parent
Summit**

Voice of Parents – Universal Child Care

“Considering how much we know about the importance of child development in the early years, there should be more opportunities for families of all income levels to participate in stimulating, organized, group child care.”

“Affordable child care means not-for-profit daycare and preschool centres. Affordable child care means well-paid, well-supported, well-educated staff. Affordable child care is accessible to all, in every neighbourhood in Toronto, without anxieties about wait-lists, without having to commute across the city with a child because that is where you found decent child care. Affordable child care is not just a safe place for your child to be while you are at work but an enriching, learning environment. Please make affordable, quality child care available to every child in Toronto.”



“Parents ought not to be priced out of having children because of the high cost of child care and the lack of availability of affordable, quality child care...there ought to be a national child care policy. The cost of child care ought not to be merely a “private” expense in the sense that only the parents/ legal guardians are responsible for the cost of child care. Society at large is responsible for funding child care, especially as adults today will be supported in retirement by current children who will be the adults of tomorrow. Children today are taxpayers tomorrow.”

Access

There is not enough child care to meet the needs of working parents in Toronto. As of January 31, 2014, child care centres operate 58,025 spaces and home child care agencies manage approximately 3,100 spaces in over 1,100 private homes. Together, they operate over 61,000 licensed spaces. In January 2014, there were 16,381 children on the waiting list for a child care fee subsidy.

The available funding provides 24,932 child care fee subsidies. The total number of children ages 0-12 in Toronto is 346,320, based on the 2011 census. The licensed child care system can only accommodate 18% of Toronto’s children.

Further, 78.6% of women ages 20-54 participate in the labour force in Toronto. (2013 StatsCan data). The growth of the licensed child care system has not kept pace with demand from parents, and is not meeting the needs of parents in the labour force.

Parents describe the challenge of accessing child care spaces. Many parents reported settling for any child care arrangement they can find, because they did not have options, as there were not enough spaces available. Although regulated child care was the preferred option reported, some parents stated that they would have no choice but to settle for any care they could find, because child care is an enabler to work force participation. Parents reported that child care is often not available when they require it. For example, many parents reported that they are either ending parental leave early, or extending it, due to their inability to find licensed child care.

Parents described frustration about having to register on multiple waiting lists at child care centres, and frustration at having to pay administration fees at many centres. The parents who described paying registration fees stated that they frequently did not hear back from centres and questioned the validity of the practice of collecting administration fees. Due to the existing demand for child care, parents also described that many centres have closed their waiting lists. This issue reinforces the reality that the licensed system can accommodate less than 20% of children in Toronto, and the system is under increased pressure to meet demand.

Question: What is the most significant problem or issue you have had as it relates to care?

- Lack of availability **30%**
- Cost (too expensive) **24%**
- Long waiting lists (for subsidy and/or space) **16%**
- Transitioning as child ages **10%**
- Lack of information **7%**
- Hours of operation **4%**
- Other **9%**

***At the
Parent
Summit***



Question: Which of the following is/was most important to you when selecting child care for your children? (you may select up to three responses)

- Cost **64%**
- Location **56%**
- Health and safety (quality) **50%**
- Caregiver/Staff (quality) **36%**
- Hours of operation **33%**
- All my children who need child care could be cared for in one place **28%**

**From
the online
survey**

Voices of Toronto's Parents – Access to Licensed Care



“The reality is that many parents are “making do” with substandard care because they have no other choice. Finding available quality child care was the single most stressful experience as a parent I have had to date.”

“Affordable child care first and foremost means access.

Right now there is a lack of availability of child care in our area that is safe, comfortable and promotes learning. As a result, parents have to scramble to find ad hoc solutions and often have to lower their standards in order to find someone who will care for their children while they work. It is a terrible feeling to go to work not feeling confident about who is looking after your children.”

“Finding affordable, quality child care is like a game of roulette in this city - and even if you “win” by getting a licensed, quality spot near your home or work, you lose - and lose big - with the high cost. All citizens of Toronto - parents or not - should have a vested interest in providing quality care to our littlest citizens in their first years. We must support parents and children in order to build a brighter economic future for our city.”

“Virtually every parent I know is blindsided when they realize that getting licensed child care in Toronto is like winning the lottery. It should not be this way. Parents should not need to put their children on a child care list 2 years before they require the service (in some cases, that would mean putting your child on a list before you are pregnant). Parents should not have to spend sleepless nights wondering if someone, anyone, in child care will take their money and care for their children so they can continue to work. And parents



certainly should not have to wait until 3 days before the school year begins to learn that their child actually got a spot in the school daycare (as happened to us). The number of nightmare stories is unbelievable - and this is for parents who are financially comfortable and willing to pay virtually any reasonable amount for child care. I cannot imagine what it is like for those who are not so fortunate. Something needs to change.”

Affordability of Child Care

Toronto is the most expensive city in Canada.² In 2010, median household income in Toronto was \$58,381.³ Toronto’s average personal income for men was \$52,716, 42% higher than that of women at \$37,015.⁴ In 2010, there were 207,097 renter households paying 30% or more of their income for rent. This represents 43.5% of Toronto renter households and 19.8% of all households in the city.⁵ Parents reported that significant monthly housing costs, coupled with expensive child care (which can be upwards of \$2000 for an infant and \$1800 for a toddler space per month, place a significant financial burden on families.

There is a long wait for child care subsidy in Toronto, and there are not enough subsidies to meet the needs of all families. Low to middle income earners describe the struggle to make ends meet in an expensive city like Toronto while paying very high child care fees.

Parents receiving fee subsidies for child care state that subsidies allow them to participate in the labour force – in many cases, parents stated that, without subsidy, they would have little or no incentive to work, as the cost of care would be higher than their monthly wages. Child care subsidies are an equalizer for low-income parents and help them remain in the paid labour force or in school. As a result, child care subsidies contribute to the overall economic health of the city.

Full-fee paying parents in licensed care describe the struggle to pay for the cost of care, especially in the early years. Parents describe changing their work and school schedules to accommodate care, being unable to pay other household bills, sacrificing savings, and having no money to spend on necessities or family activities.

Many parents stated that the high cost of child care is forcing them to delay having a second child, or to have only one child. Further, the high cost of care is forcing some parents to relocate to less expensive areas of Toronto.

Voices of Toronto Parents – Struggling to cover the cost of care

“Child care in Toronto is hard to afford and budgeting for it requires sacrifices. I have three years of experience with a child in full time child care centres, and this service has always cost more than rent. We use the assistance of food banks and family and friends to be able to afford quality care.”

²<http://www.torontolife.com/tag/cost-of-living/>

³City of Toronto 2011 census backgrounder: Income and Shelter. Web January 2014.

⁴Ibid

⁵Ibid



“Currently child care is a larger portion of our household budget than food, insurance, car, electricity, phone and heat... combined. Affordable child care means a low enough rate that we could choose to have more than one child without going broke.”

“I hope change is coming for the middle class, or working poor. We’re not poor enough for subsidies but we’re rich enough to go into debt to pay for quality care.”

“(Affordable child care) means I can still afford to pay rent and eat. This means for people earning approximately \$2000/month, like me, paying \$900-\$1000 monthly for child care leaves approximately \$1000 for rent and food. In Toronto that means I need to make the choice of not paying for food, or not paying my rent ... neither is a solution. Subsidy exists, and I am fully eligible, but the waitlists are too long. People who are eligible should receive subsidy as soon as they need it (as soon as they apply and have child in daycare).”

“(Affordable) means fee subsidy geared to income, as I currently receive (Thank God!) It means if and when my income rises, the fee will rise, but only in proportion to my single-parent’s income. Anything else would spell disaster to myself and my child.”

Quality

“I am one of the lucky ones who has benefited from high quality licensed child care. It allows me to focus on the things I need to when I’m at work, knowing my children are happy, safe, healthy and growing emotionally, mentally and physically. I wish it were so for all children.”

The survey results demonstrate that parents value quality child care. When parents described “quality” child care, they referred to obtaining access to licensed child care spaces as their preferred child care option, an adequate number of licensed child care spaces to meet the demand in the city, well-trained and well-paid early childhood educators, an enriching curriculum that promotes child development, nutritious meals and snacks, and a safe environment. Many respondents referenced the risks of accessing unlicensed care, and indicated that oversight and licensing are critical in the care of young children. Many respondents described the fear of leaving their children in unlicensed home care, but stated that they had no choice due to the lack of a sufficient number of licensed spaces. Further, some higher income parents described hiring nannies instead of opting for unlicensed home care, due to the unavailability of spaces in licensed child care settings.

The Early Learning and Care Assessment for Quality Improvement is used by the City of Toronto to assess quality in early learning programs. Parents described the City’s child quality assessment ratings, which are available on toronto.ca, as informative and helpful as they made choices about child care.



“When we were searching for day care it was useful to have day care quality reports published online so we could see how day cares scored.”

“There should be no unlicensed daycares...It is illegal to sell a hot dog without a license, but it is legal to provide the most demanding and accountable service such as child rearing without a license?”



Women's participation in the labour force

“Being a working mother is my choice and a choice that should be fully supported by all levels of government.”

Affordable, licensed child care promotes women's equality. A theme that emerged from the feedback from parents was the struggle women with young children face in continuing to participate in the labour force.

In coupled families, parents indicated that child care fees often prohibit both parents from working, because there would be no economic benefit to the family to have two salaries, after paying monthly child care costs. The respondents who identified this issue all stated that their preferred choice was to remain in the labour force after parental leave, to contribute to the economy, to keep a foot in the door of the labour market, to ensure career progression and the other benefits associated with labour force participation, but are unable to do so due to the high cost of child care. Respondents also stated that the lack of available child care spaces for infants in Toronto was a deterrent to returning to the labour force. Parents in coupled families described that it is typically the mother who gives up her job to stay home with the children, because her entire salary would go towards paying for child care, and families determine that is not an economically viable option. As previously stated, in Toronto, the median income for women is \$15,000 less than that of men. For women, opting out of the labour force for long periods creates a long-term financial penalty.

Mothers responding to the survey also described downskilling; that is, returning to the labour force in lower skilled or part time positions than ones previously held, in order to accommodate their child care requirements.

“Affordable child care means everything to me. I am a working single mom that does not have much family support and I depend on daycares and after-school programs for my children. I have worked hard to support my kids and would like to be able to lessen my stress, and know that my children are cared for while I am working to support them, so they can have a good life and not know the struggles I face every day.”



“As a woman, I am glad I earn enough to be able to justify continuing to work otherwise I’d have to give up my career and stay home. Many educated women I know are forced out of the labour market because they would have to earn at least \$50,000 a year just to be able to cover the cost of daycare for 2 kids. Affordable daycare is fundamental to economic progress for this city and should be a priority.”

Transitions through the Early Years System

The early learning system for children ages 0-12 may include many transitions, as children age and move through the system. Parents identified issues and complexities they face as they navigate these transitions.

The transitions for families can include: returning to work after parental leave; accessing child care for young children; finding family support programs for young children and their parents and caregivers; entering full-day kindergarten; accessing before- and after-school child care programs for full-day kindergarten students; and locating after-school programs for children ages 6-12.

Family Supports in the early years

Families in Toronto need to access services and programs throughout their child’s growing years. Family support programs are sometimes the first point of contact for families with young children. Family support programs are community-based organizations working with children, families and caregivers to support and promote healthy child development. Family Support programs in Toronto are represented by a variety of service providers that include, Family Resource Programs (FRP), Ontario Early Years Centres (OEYC), Military Family Resource Centres, Parenting and Family Literacy Centres (PFLC), Community Action Program for Children (CAPC), and Canada Prenatal Nutrition Program (CPNP).

Family support programs vary depending on their size, mandate and resources. Services are flexible, accessible and offered in an informal atmosphere. These services may be provided in partnership with other groups.

Some parents reported that they do not choose child care, but they value and depend on drop-in family support programs, as gathering places for young children to socialize and play, and for caregivers to make connections with others and to obtain information. Some parents reported that grandparents are acting as caregivers for the youngest members of the family, and appreciate family support programs for their connection to the community - to prevent isolation for both the caregivers and the children. Many of the respondents who provided these comments requested that the availability of family support programs be expanded in Toronto, as they are often filled to capacity, and cannot accommodate all of the participants who would like to use the service.

“I would like to see more satellite locations of Ontario Early Years Centres available and accessible on TTC, preferably subway as there are many kids in my local play group who have nowhere to go in the cold winter months as the church heating system where we usually go breaks down frequently and makes us apartments dwelling/ non-driving parents desperate for a meetup and play space.”



Ontario Early Years Centres (OEYCs) were established by the provincial government. Some of the original family resource programs became OEYCs and others became unique satellites of OEYCs. Currently the City of Toronto is the system manager for 45 family resource programs, excluding OEYCs.

“With regard to Ontario Early Years Centres and Parent and Family Literacy Centres, I would like to see more centre locations (for example, there is no PFLC in my ward) and ones that are accessible to those of us without cars. (My local centre) is always overcrowded and families must line up early and take a number to find out if they can participate in that day’s program. It would be helpful if a community’s needs could be regularly assessed so that there are sufficient programs available for families.”

Full-Day Kindergarten Implementation and Before- and After-School Programs

Parents reported that they were pleased with the introduction of full-day kindergarten (FDK) in Ontario. Many parents stated that their difficulty with full-day kindergarten was the lack of before- and after-school care for children. The parents that described this issue overwhelmingly desired the provision before- and after-school care at schools, which was originally a key component of the implementation of full-day kindergarten. Children’s Services, school boards and child care operators have been working collaboratively to plan and coordinate as much as possible to meet the needs of families. Children’s Services continually raises implementation issues with the Province who set the guidelines around FDK.

This comment is consistent with many other responses from parents about the transition to FDK:

“My child is supposed to start JK next year but some schools do not seem to do anything about before- and after-school care. We were informed that, theoretically, the school should ask parents whether they need before- and after-school care, and if they have 20 parents or more, they have to provide it. But the school actually does not do that, probably because they do not want to deal with this mess. Its either you determine that schools have to provide this service, or you rethink the whole system and provide full- day care. “

Children’s Services has been actively working with local school boards to address before- and after-school care needs, since full-day kindergarten began implementation in 2010. FDK will be available in all elementary schools in September 2014. To date, 441 of 590 elementary schools in Toronto, or 75 per cent, have undergone the transition to FDK, with 176 or 40 per cent of those having an integrated before- and after-school program. While the implementation of FDK during the regular school day will be complete in September 2014, the child care transition will continue beyond the 2014-15 school year as more before- and after-school programs are established and child care centres continue to reconfigure.

Middle childhood

Parents reported a need for more after-school programming for children ages 6-12. Whether it is licensed child care or other types of supervised arrangements, parents articulated this as a gap. Parents described their anxiety over finding child care spaces or after-school programs for children when they leave full-day kindergarten and enter Grade 1. The parents surveyed indicated that their preferred location for after-school programs was in schools. This finding is consistent



with the research in the report: “An Opportunity for Every Child: Realizing the Potential of after school programming for children ages 6-12 in Toronto,” prepared for Children’s Services and Parks, Forestry and Recreation.

Parents describe having to make difficult decisions as they relate to the lack of available after-school programs for children. Parents describe their anxiety around having their children walk home from school unescorted, because there are no available after-school programs, or they are unaffordable.

“Quit excluding older children. They still need high quality services. Parks and Recreation’s After-School Recreation Care is not the only choice (and cannot accommodate the demand in the community). There should be a regulated service that is accountable and has staff trained in child development, a medium between ARC and the DNA and Operating Criteria.”

“My challenge is being able to afford to pay for a program that keeps my child safe, rather than dropping her off at school before there is playground supervision, or having her spend unsupervised time at the library after school instead of a supervised after-school program.”

Special Needs

Parents identified the importance of special needs resources in the early years system. In the online survey, 15% of respondents required early identification screening services, 14% of respondents required speech and language services, and 11% required behavioural support services.

Parents described systemic issues related to special needs, including lack of resources, multiple assessments, and long waiting times for referrals to services like speech and language and mental health supports.

Parents stated that Children’s Services should review special needs resourcing in child care centres. Parents do not want to have to face multiple referrals before interventions can proceed.

“The whole system is a long series of assessments with very little therapeutic interventions. When I paid for occupational therapy and speech and language out of my pocket, they provide therapy and assessment at the same time. Why does each new system player need to reassess? I have a huge stack of assessments on my son- what a waste of money. Lastly, daycare staff is really not able to provide the kind of interventions needed... Just because my kid has a disability doesn’t mean I still don’t need to work.... many times I have found myself choosing between income or spending time addressing my son’s needs. It seems to me that daycare staff are more prone to focusing on behaviour interventions (special needs) because it causes problems in the centre.”

Parents described the importance of inclusion for children with special needs.

“Let children with speech problems/autism go to daycare because daily interaction is key for their success in life.”



Communication and Information

Parents described the difficulty about obtaining information about the child care system in Toronto. They described their confusion in accessing information about child care subsidies, having to navigate through multiple waiting lists at child care centres, and a need for one place (online or by phone) to obtain information and answers to questions. Children's Services revamped the "Family" section of its website in December and will continue to work to improve information about the fee subsidy system and other services for children and families on toronto.ca/children. Children's Services welcomes feedback from parents via the website or by email at childcare@toronto.ca. Children's Services provides information to parents and caregivers on the Facebook page Toronto Family Connections and is developing an enhanced social media presence, which will include Twitter, in 2014.



The information identified by parents as they move through the early years system include: accessing child care space, accessing information and services related to child care and fee subsidy, and placing their children on multiple waiting lists for spaces or services. Children's Services will continue to work with parents to ensure that the information parents need to make decisions about child care, fee subsidy, and services, is available and articulated in an accessible manner.

"Please make the system more easy to navigate"

"You need a (better?) step-by-step guide to accessing child care. I have a 9 month old and am preparing to go back to work, but the entire process of applying for subsidy, and finding child care is a huge mess. I didn't know where to start and I don't know what to do now, actually. With city programs like this I shouldn't have to try to crowdsource all my mommy friends to figure out what they did. The entire process should be more transparent (including what to do, waitlists, subsidy, etc.)"



Next steps – Addressing parents’ concerns

Toronto Children’s Services thanks all of the parents who took time to attend the Parent Summits or to complete the online survey. It is critical to receive feedback from parents to understand the system from their perspective.

The survey results and feedback from parents will be used to develop the new Toronto Child Care Funding Model and Children’s Services 2015-2019 Service Plan, which will be presented to Community Development and Recreation Committee in 2015.

In the short term, the Let’s Talk Child Care Advisory Group will be introduced in 2014. The Advisory Group will include in-person meetings and an online space on toronto.ca/children, for parents to receive information and provide feedback. Children’s Services will consult with the advisory group about the feedback in this report, to discuss next steps, and to work together on solutions.

The City of Toronto recognizes that the development of a publicly funded, universal child care system requires the support of all orders of government. A copy of this report will be sent to Ontario’s Minister of Education and to Canada’s Minister of Employment and Social Development for their review and consideration.

Attachment 1 - Results

Who participated in the campaign?

- **87%** of the respondents were women
- **13%** of the respondents were men

Age of respondents:

- Under 25: **3%**
- Ages 26 to 35: **41%**
- Ages 36 to 45: **48%**
- Ages 46 to 55: **6%**
- Ages 56 to 65: **1%**
- Over 65: **1%**

Of the participants:

- **25%** had no children aged 0-3
- **57%** had 1 child aged 0-3
- **16%** had 2 children aged 0-3
- **2%** had 3 or more children aged 0-3

Of the participants:

- **70%** had no children ages 4 and 5 years
- **27%** had 1 child aged 4 or 5
- **2%** had 2 children aged 4 and 5
- **1%** had 3 or more children aged 4 and 5

Of the participants:

- **68%** had no school age children (grade 1 and up)
- **22%** had 1 child (grade 1 and up)
- **8%** had 2 children (grade 1 and up)
- **2%** had 3 or more children (grade 1 and up)



Questions and Answers from Let's Talk Child Care Campaign - Toronto Parent Summit

The Toronto Parent Summit consultations were a series of four in-person meetings with parents which consisted of a) facilitated small group discussions, b) electronic voting by participants on the discussion topics, to determine priorities, and c) plenary discussions on themes. 167 participants attended the in-person consultations.

The facilitated small group discussions were structured around the following questions:

- *Why did you choose your current caregiver(s)? If you could make any changes to this arrangement what would they be?*
- *What problems did you have finding child care?*
- *What would help you get the child care you want?*
- *What does affordable child care mean to you? The City is looking for better ways to coordinate services for children. Thinking about this, tell us a bit about other programs, services, and resources you and your children use? What, if anything, do you need? What, if anything, could improve these types of programs?*

Participants used electronic voting keypads to vote on the topics discussed at the summits. The questions and responses are listed in the section below.

The most common child care arrangements for children 0 – 3 were as follows:

- Child care centre **42%**
- Cared for by parents **23%**
- Other (including cared for by a relative, nanny, friend, or home child care) **35%**

Which of the following is most important to you when selecting child care for your child(ren)?

- Quality (staff, programming) **27%**
- Cost **18%**
- Convenient location **16%**
- Finding care that is licensed **11%**
- Finding available care when it is required **9%**
- Having all my children in one place **5%**
- I only had one option (lack of choice) **5%**
- Accommodating my child's special needs **5%**
- Hours of operation **4%**

What is the most significant problem or issue you have had as it relates to care?

- Lack of availability **30%**
- Cost (too expensive) **24%**
- Long waiting lists (for subsidy and/or space) **16%**
- Transitioning as child ages **10%**
- Lack of information **7%**
- Hours of operation **4%**
- Other **9%**



Affordable child care can mean different things to different people. Which of the following comes closest to what you think affordable child care means?

- Match the Quebec system (eg low cost, flat daily fee) **21%**
- Daily or monthly maximum **18%**
- Free child care – universal program **16%**
- No need for subsidy **10%**
- No need to change my work or school schedule to afford care **10%**
- Easier to qualify for a subsidy **9%**
- No hardship on the family **9%**
- Not having to settle for lower standard of care **4%**
- Able to afford other programs (music, sports, other) **2%**
- Other **1%**

How should the City spend its limited funding?

- Increase access to fee subsidies **45.5%**
- Reduce fees by a small amount for all age groups **50.7%**
- I do not have an opinion **3.8%**

What programs, services, or resources are most important to you and your children outside of child care?

- Parks & Recreation, Pools, Sports combined **47%**
- Drop in centres (eg OEYCs, Family Parenting Centres etc) **19%**
- Library **11%**
- Services at schools **6%**
- Weekend programming **5%**
- Arts and music **4%**
- Parent Support **4%**
- Health **4%**

What would make it easier to access these types of programs, services, or resources?

- Located in a single location **20%**
- Affordability **17%**
- Adequate space to meet demand **13%**
- Improved access to information **13%**
- Services for children of various ages located/programmed together **11%**
- Longer hours of operation **10%**
- Improving registration **7%**
- Adding more spaces to existing programs **6%**
- Other **3%**

Let's Talk Child Care Campaign - Online Survey Questions and Answers

The survey was designed to provide the opportunity for parents to provide feedback to Children's Services if they could not attend the in-person Parent Summit consultation sessions in November 2013. The online survey was available on toronto.ca/parentsummit in English, French, Spanish, Tagalog, and Mandarin. A printable PDF was also available for respondents to complete the survey in hard copy, and completed surveys could be dropped off at a Children's Services District Office or mailed in to the Children's Services office at Metro Hall. The survey was open from November 4 – December 16, 2013. 1435 responses were received.



The survey results are listed below. Some of the responses exceed 100%, as respondents were able to select more than one response to many of the survey questions.

Which of the following best describes the child care arrangements for any children ages 0-3 you may have (you may select up to three responses)

- Child care centre **60%**
- Cared for by parents **40%**
- Cared for by relative (includes older siblings) **16%**
- Nanny/babysitter in child's own home **12.7%**
- Child care provided in a home connected with a licensed agency **8.4%**
- Before/after school or recreation program **6.9%**

Which of the following best describes the child care arrangements for any children ages 4-5 you may have? (you may select up to three responses)

- Child care centre **54%**
- Cared for by parents **30%**
- Before/after school or recreation program **40%**
- Cared for by relatives (includes older siblings) **12%**
- Nanny/babysitter in child's own home **7%**
- Child care provided in a home connected with a licensed agency **5%**
- Child care provided in a home not connected with a licensed agency **3%**

Which of the following best describes the before- and after-school child care arrangement for any children grade 1 and up, you may have? (select all that apply)

- Child care centre **47%**
- Before/after school and/or recreation program **36%**
- Cared for by parents **32%**
- Cared for by relatives (includes older siblings) **14%**
- Child is able to take care of him/herself **10%**
- Cared for by friend/neighbour **7%**
- Nanny/babysitter in child's own home **6%**
- Child care provided in a home connected with a licensed agency **4%**
- Child care provided in a home not connected with a licensed agency **4%**

Which of the following is/was most important to you when selecting child care for your children? (you may select up to three responses)

- Cost **64%**
- Location **56%**
- Health and safety (quality) **50%**
- Caregiver/Staff (quality) **36%**
- Hours of operation **33%**
- All my children who need child care could be cared for in one place **28%**
- Consistency of service **19%**
- Communication between parents and caregiver/staff **18%**
- Facility **14%**
- Language/Culture **5%**





Please indicate which of the following you experienced while trying to set up child care (Select all that apply)

- Long wait for subsidy **75%**
- Child care program could not accommodate my schedule **45%**
- Not enough information on what is available **35%**
- Child care could not accommodate my child's special needs **12%**
- The child care program did not speak my language **7%**
- The child care program did not have role models from my culture **6%**
- My spouse and I are not fluent in English **5%**

The City of Toronto has limited funding to support child care. Child care fees differ across age groups, with infant and toddler fees costing approximately \$10,000 - \$15,000 more per year than fees for school age children. How do you think the City should support lower fees in Toronto?

- Reduce infant and toddler fees to make fees more affordable **55.2%**
- Reduce fees by a small amount for all age groups **27.4%**
- I do not have an opinion **6.7%**
- Other **10.7%**



What other program, service or resource is most important to you and your child(ren)? (You may select up to three responses)

- Physical activities or recreation programs **60%**
- Health care provider services **41%**
- Parent and child playgroup programs (ie parent family literacy centre, OEYC, FRP) **39%**
- Library services **28%**
- Cultural and arts activities **24%**
- Nutrition program (ie breakfast program, food bank) **16%**
- Early identification screening services **15%**
- Speech and language services **14%**
- Pre/post natal support services **14%**
- Parenting workshops/education services **13%**
- Behavioural support services **11%**

What would make it easiest to access these types of programs, services or resources? (select one)

- Affordability **23.9%**
- Adequate service available to meet demand **23.3%**
- The child care program could accommodate flexible hours/part time hours/my schedule **17.9%**
- More information about where they are **12.9%**
- Located in single/central location **10.5%**
- Services for children of various ages available together **8.7%**
- Other **2.8%**

In addition to the questions above, the online survey also included two open-ended questions:

1) “What does affordable child care mean to you?” and

2) “Do you have any other feedback that you would like to provide to Toronto Children’s Services?”
Survey respondents provided feedback about their personal issues related to accessing child care and services for children in Toronto. The results of these two questions were assessed for themes and have been analyzed and themed in this report.

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