

To: [councilmeeting@toronto.ca](mailto:councilmeeting@toronto.ca)

**Subject: My comments for 2021.DM38.1 on December 15, 2021 City Council**

To the City Clerk:

Please add my comments to the agenda for the December 15, 2021 City Council meeting on item 2021.DM38.1, Affordable and Accessible Childcare for All - Update on Federal-Provincial Negotiations - by Councillor Joe Cressy, seconded by Councillor Michael Thompson.

My name is Neena Locke and I am the ED at Red Apple Day Care (Overlea), we provide critical early learning and care for 199 children in the Flemingdon/Thornccliffe Park Community.

Currently, Toronto families pay the highest child care fees in Canada. The cost of child care is often the equivalent to carrying a second rent or mortgage each month. Many families struggle to access a space, let alone afford one. We are seeing every other province sign the federal child care agreement, yet Ontario is falling behind. Toronto child care centres have yet to fully recover from the pandemic and we continue to face a staffing crisis.

Since the pandemic, we have had trouble hiring and retaining staff due to RECE's leaving the field due to low wages and unpredictable hours of work. We have families who are losing subsidy and having to pay full fee. If families cannot afford full fee, they have withdrawn their children and have had to stay home to take care of them as they cannot afford such high fees that they have to pay in Toronto. Our enrollment is down and we are having a hard time managing our finances. Without increase funding, we will need to raise our fees 3-5% next year. Toronto needs Universal Childcare to help women get back to the workforce and to help with the economy.

We need the Mayor and City Council to negotiate with the Ontario government to get the federal child care agreement signed. Or, to seek out getting an agreement signed directly with the federal government. Our families and community are counting on you to advocate for our needs. We can't wait any longer.

I look forward to seeing the city take swift action to prioritize the children, families and the child care workforce in our community by getting the federal child care agreement signed.

Sincerely,  
Neena Locke  
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