

To: 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 Amy O'Neil and I am the Director of Treetop Children's Centre in Toronto. We provide critical early learning and care for approximately 155 families (pre COVID), in Ward 8, Eglinton – Lawrence.

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.

Our centre is currently facing a severe staffing shortage. We could expand our school age program, however we cannot find qualified staff to work a split shift. In addition, we currently have low enrolment in our preschool and kindergarten programs due to COVID. Without increased funding we may need to increase our child care fees. Increased funding could go towards compensating staff and help with recruitment and retention. We need increased funding for our centre to thrive and continue offering quality child care to families in our community.

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,
Amy O'Neil
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