

BX8.1 - Public Presentations on the 2026 Capital and Operating Budgets Scarborough Civic Centre, January 21, 2026 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Thank you to the Budget Committee for this opportunity. I decided to speak today in Scarborough because this community is known as a child care desert.

Not having access to child care means women, especially marginalized and racialized women, are kept out of the workforce and thousands of young children are denied an opportunity to engage in high quality early learning.

All wards in Scarborough are deemed a high priority for child care expansion. A concerning trend is that we are actually seeing LESS growth in the non-profit sector. In Toronto between 2019 and 2024, there were fewer children being served in non-profit centres. More alarming is the stat from the TCS Service Plan that during this 5-year period, the system grew by only 2000 spaces, most of which were commercial.

Under the Ford government we know that commercial child care is gaining a stronghold. I implore City Council to continue Toronto's long-term prioritization of non-profit childcare. Nobody should be making a profit off of children. With so much public money flowing to Toronto for child care (to the tune of over 1 ½ billion dollars), it's essential that the city actively advocate and support the non-profit sector.

Olivia Chow used to be our child care champion but this role has been vacant for many years.

There is a strong correlation between high quality and non-profit child care. When our most vulnerable populations are treated like a commodity, society suffers. We saw this during the pandemic with cataclysmic results in for-profit assisted living communities.

For the city to truly support non-profit expansion, the child care sector requests Toronto to invest more of its own funds into child care and to support the following initiatives:

- **Create a dedicated capital fund for non-profit expansion**
- **Allow for flexibility on the expansion application and provide a longer application window. Some City requirements limit growth by creating unreasonable barriers.**
- **Implement a Made in Toronto wage grid for child care staff, with pay-equity-compliant, wages. This would really help with hiring and retention in the sector.**
- **Integrate child care into the city Building Agenda.**

The City is not keeping up with subsidy targets. Over 7000 subsidy spaces went unfilled in 2025. I fear we will see this repeat this year.

Budget Note 17 attempts to explain this but it boils down to the city simply not prioritizing child care. We need more child care spaces. PERIOD. The creation of only 2,500 spaces last year is ridiculously inadequate.

Budget details note that Every Child Belongs Program served fewer children in 2025 than promised. While Briefing Note 17 describes HOW the money was spent on fewer children, I am here to say that MORE MONEY IS NEEDED in this Program. Without an influx of City

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funding, children will continue to suffer by not getting the supports they need and more early childhood educators will leave the field due to burn-out. Neither are acceptable outcomes. The province isn't going to give us more funding so the city should be stepping up.

We already know there is a reduction of 98 million in provincial funding to the child care budget. The City should call on the Province to allow the City to redirect this \$98 million to allow for an increase of funding for the Every Child Belongs or towards more expansion dollars for the non-profit sector. We knew money would be clawed back if not spent. It's so unfortunate that the city was unable to put this money into creating child care spaces.

I'll leave you with one question: What is the City recommending to the province to help us achieve our expansion targets and provide greater inclusion of low income families through subsidies?

Since I still have 1 minute on the clock, I want to put a plug in for a few budget items I support:

Non-child care-related, I do see some good in this budget. We are thrilled that TCC fares are not going up. The majority of early childhood educators depend on mass for work. The new fare structure is a great start towards making commuting more affordable for ECEs.

TCBCC also supports school food programs. Child care programs incorporate meals into the learning day and it's so important that school aged children have access to nourishing snacks and meals to support their growing brains. We call upon the City of Toronto to reconvene the Middle Years Committee. With CWELCC only benefitting children under 6, this leaves older children falling through the cracks.

Finally, I am very willing to pay more taxes for more services.

Thank you to the Budget Committee and to all the staff that have worked so hard on the budget process.