

## A Child-Friendly City: How would Toronto look if it were planned through the eyes of children?



## A 2018 Student Engagement Initiative Summary

In the fall of 2018, children in grade four and five classes in Toronto were invited to participate in activities about creating a child-friendly city and to share their ideas and opinions with City staff.

### We asked them:

- What is child-friendly in your neighbourhood? And what is not child-friendly?
- What would a child-friendly Toronto look, feel and sound like?
- If you had one wish to make Toronto more child-friendly, what would it be?

Children from nine schools across Toronto responded with hundreds of submissions, from written responses, to drawings, photographs, and maps. They described the people, places and things that need to be involved and considered to create a child-friendly city.

## Through their submissions, children:

- Confirmed that they are enthusiastic to share their ideas and want to be involved in planning and decision-making in Toronto.
- Demonstrated that they are residents who spend time observing and thinking about their neighbourhood and city, identifying issues and considering possible solutions.
- Expressed consideration not just for how to improve our city for children but for Torontonians across the lifespan with a commitment to equity and a better city for all.
- Showed that they have a vision of how Toronto can be a more child-friendly city.

## Do you have a role in planning or making decisions that impact Toronto's neighbourhoods?

What would you do differently if you saw the city through the eyes of an eight year old?

In order to create neighbourhoods that are child-friendly and truly supportive of child development and wellbeing, we need to engage and listen to children.

This document provides a glimpse of the things that are important to children across Toronto. What else might you hear if you engaged children about your area of work?

## Are you listening?



The students' ideas were displayed in City Hall and Metro Hall, along with posters about the importance of listening to children and of ensuring child rights. This display was viewed by City Councillors and City staff.

## What does a child-friendly Toronto look like?

In order to build a child-friendly city, we must understand what living in the city is like for a child. Children are experts in child-friendliness and we must listen to them carefully. The summary below provides an indication of the ideas that are important to the children who participated, however, it cannot be considered representative of all Toronto's children.

### 1. It's a Toronto where children feel safe

A majority of children shared issues of safety and fear in their submissions. This ranged from gun violence, to discomfort around teenagers, to garbage, to the use of substances in public spaces, to crowded, noisy and busy streets.

"The problem is theres [sic] too much gun violence in Toronto. People are getting hurt and dying. My wish for Toronto is that I could walk the streets of Toronto without being scared that I'm going to see someone getting shot or I might get shot myself."

"In a kid-friendly city, kids need to feel safe, happy, joyful and unharmed."

"If I had one wish to make Toronto more child friendly it would be...to have free safe hangouts for kids"

"I wish that the streets would be cleaner and there would be less garbage on the grounds. This would make Toronto more child-friendly because it would be safer for smaller kids who could get hurt by the garbage..."

"Ban marijuana from public places"



## 2. It's a Toronto that protects the environment and promotes nature

Green spaces are important to children. They talked a lot about the benefits of being outside, playing in parks, and that flowers and trees make them feel at ease and happy. They are worried about pollution and litter and stressed the importance of a clean environment.



"In a kid-friendly city: Kids hear the chirping of a hummingbird and the sound of people laughing with each other. Kids see beautiful flowers, fun parks, and activities for us kids to participate in"

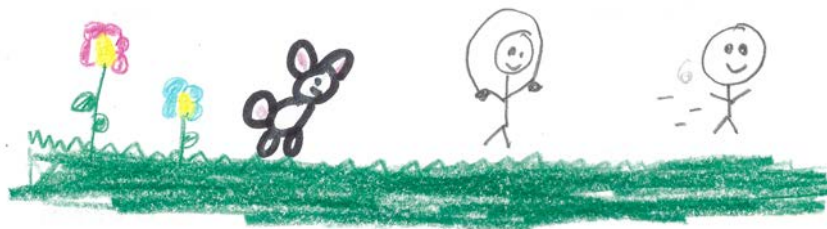
"I wish for pollution to be solved"

"A way to make Toronto more child friendly is reduce single-use plastics."

"I would wish for a few more parks, soccer feilds [sic] and bike trails". ... "Kids would have fun while the envirimt [sic] is still good and wealthy"

"A child-friendly city needs more places to run. We want to play running games like tag. We don't have enough places to do that. We have a lot of playgrounds but we don't have a lot of green space. We need green space so we can run and stay healthy."

I would wish for more green space for gardens, wildlife and for kids to play in.



### 3. It's a walkable Toronto with good public transportation

Children wished for a Toronto with more bike lanes, wider sidewalks, more crosswalks with lights, more crossing guards and fewer cars where everyone can move around the city safely and efficiently.



"We think that the speed limit should be decreased to ten and there should also be a crossing guard to make it easier crossing the street after school."

"I wish for more bike lanes and cars to go slower."

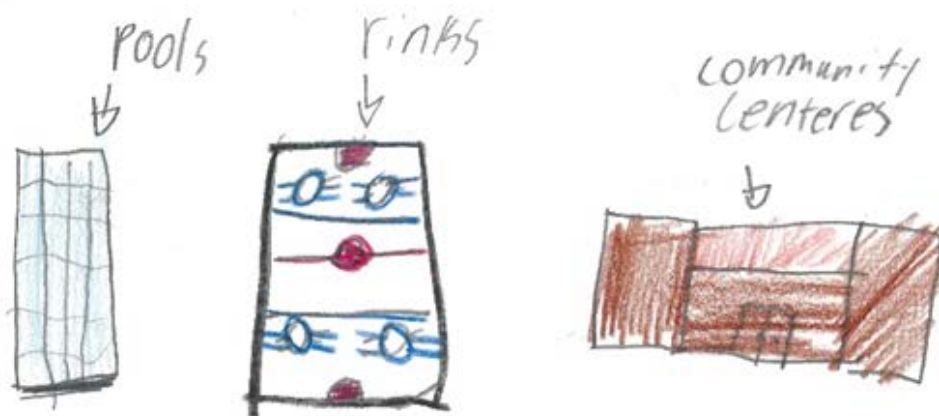
"I want more public transport, please. There will be more ways to school for kids and to work for adults. And it's eco friendly to have public transit and that's child friendly."

"I would wish for gates in front of the subways that open when the subway stops so that you do not fall into the tracks. This will not only be safe for kids but for everybody."

#### 4. It's a Toronto with programs and spaces fit for children

Children identified libraries, recreation centres, pools, parks, and child care as important and expressed a desire for more programs for them to participate in. They want "fun elements" in city buildings and thought a "City app for kids" and a "Kids Council" would make them feel more included.

I would wish for more  
Recreation.



"If I could have one wish to make Toronto more child friendly it would be... more libraries!"

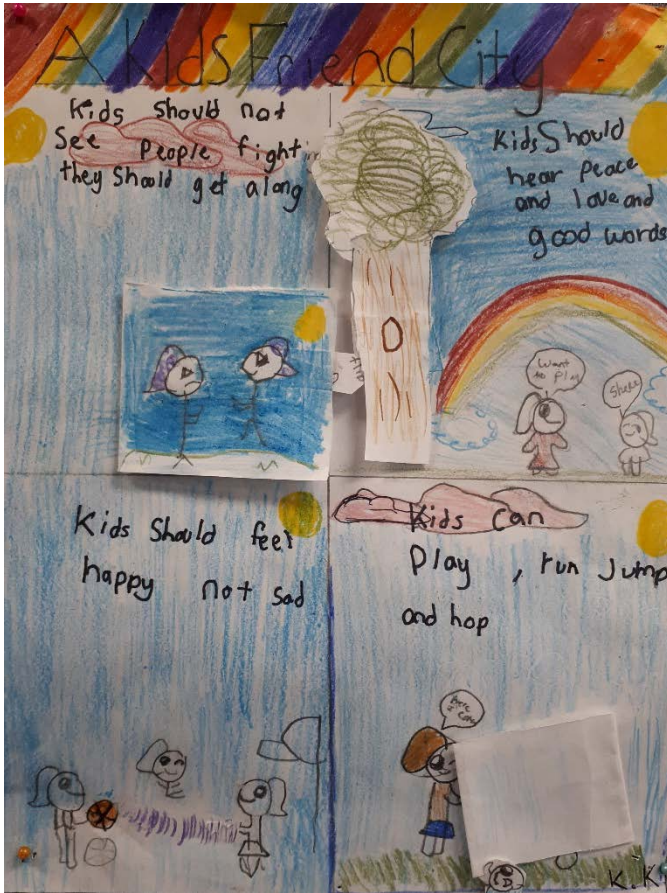
"I hope (and probably many others) that you can increase the # and maintenance of the pools...I am asking for these things as it is important for pools since they are kid swarmed areas, therefor,[sic] we need to keep them safe, clean and secure."

"Community centres need more activities and classes so kids can engage in physical activities."

"I wish for more child friendly activities like parks, pools, ice rinks and fields. Children need to have different activities to help them grow. And they should be able to walk to them."

## 5. It's a healthy Toronto for all

Children shared a desire for a Toronto that supports health, where they can be physically active, have access to health information and social services, and be protected from injury. Children talked about the importance of their relationships with family and friends and feeling engaged with their community. They expressed concern and consideration for younger children, babies, seniors, and people living in poverty and wanted to improve our city for everyone.



"...imagine everybody has a home! Nobody on the streets begging for money. Nobody starving. Nobody in fear to sleep, no kids having no home because there [sic] parents have not [sic] money. This will make Toronto more child friendly so not [sic] kids will be homeless and no kids will have to see people suffer"

"I wish for everyone in Toronto would be respected by everyone no matter what race, gender, disabilities, or style of clothing and boy stuff and girl stuff."

"In a child-friendly city, kids feel: Positive, engaged, treated with respect, Safe, protected, happy"

"I would wish to make more affordable housing and make more food banks."

I wish for all children to be taken care for, so all children have a happy life.

## Conclusion

Children are important residents with unique ideas and perspectives of their neighbourhoods and their city. They are enthusiastic to share their ideas and want to be involved in planning and decision-making in Toronto.

### Are you listening?

As one child asked:

"Would you rather...

a. Have a kid-friendly city

OR

b. Have a non-kid friendly city?

Choose wisely,

Please & Thank you"

What is a child friendly City?

1. No Guns
2. More Play space
3. Shelter for home less people
4. More Library time and more librarys
5. More hospitls
6. More safe space
7. No kidnapers

Toronto

has  
a lot of Gray  
it really  
needs colour



**We would like to acknowledge and thank children from the following schools for their contributions:**

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