

Hello

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to share our lived experience in our children's recreational and out of school programs.

We are parent leaders with the Middle Childhood Matters Coalition Toronto, which is an active group of social service agencies and community members working together to increase access to high quality out of school programs for all children ages 6-12 in Toronto.

I am a working mother, who lives in Parkdale neighborhood, with my 2 children (7 and 12 years old) who attend out of school programs every Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday from 4:00 pm to 6:00 pm.

I can tell you that out of school programs fulfill an urgent need for low income parents and children living in my neighborhood that has many newcomers and racialized families.

It is very hard for us, as caring parents, to find high quality, accessible, and affordable programs for our children. We want our children to be enrolled in programs that support their social and personal skills and impact their lives positively while we are working more than one shift, 5-6 days a week to ensure our basic needs are met and we are able to pay our rent and other expenses.

Tania: I am a single mom with two boys who are 5 & 6 years old living in the Dundas and Bloor West neighborhood. I have a part-time survival job. I am well engaged in my community and had heard from other families that some children's programs in our neighborhood might be shut down sometime this fall, so I came to speak on behalf of my children and other parents.

I might not understand the reasons behind closing some programs, or what the difference between expensive ones and other affordable ones are, however I believe, it is important to make sure that successful programs are sustainable and continue to be available for low income, newcomer and underserved neighborhoods/communities.

Both of my children are in licensed childcare offered by the City. This, would not be possible without the subsidy I receive. Toronto has very expensive childcare, which I couldn't afford, if it wasn't for the City's support. I feel lucky to receive this; however, I know many families in Toronto must do without.

I would like to see that children are taken care of, learning new skills, building friendships and sense of belonging while parents work and continue to be productive.

In the end, we hope that you will remember our stories as you take decisions regarding authorizing programs and shutting other ones that are already doing a great job at different communities. Families always want sustainable, affordable, accessible and high quality programs for our children 6-12 years in our communities.

Jahy and Tania: Thank you again for listening to us.