



January 9, 2017

Councillor Gary Crawford, Chair
Members of the Budget Committee
2nd floor, Toronto City Hall
100 Queen Street West
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

Dear Councillor Gary Crawford and Members of the Budget Committee,

Re: How the proposed budget impacts children ages 6-12

Middle Childhood Matters Coalition Toronto (MCMCT) is an active group of concerned social service agencies and community members with a long-standing commitment to working together with parents across the GTA to increase access to high-quality out-of-school programs for all children ages 6-12 in Toronto. Our vision is for Toronto to have a comprehensive, integrated, and accessible system of programs and services for all children to enhance their optimal development and to strengthen families.

In 2012, City Council made a commitment to ensuring children ages 6-12, and their families, have access to high-quality, appropriate, and locally-situated programs and supports by adopting the *Middle Childhood Strategy. TO Prosperity: Toronto Poverty Reduction Strategy* further supported this commitment by identifying the need to improve access to high quality programs for children and youth.

Better support and integration of programming opportunities for children 6 to 12 will mean that more Toronto parents can be more productive between the hours of 3-6:00 p.m. and during the summer, knowing their children are well-cared for and safe.

We ask that in this budget you make choices that reflect your concern for children and their families. Below are some of the proposals included in the preliminary budget that we find alarming:

- **Student Nutrition:** The preliminary budget does not include funding for Year 5 of 6 for expansion and enhancement of the student nutrition program. Toronto persists as the child poverty capital of Canada. When children are hungry they struggle to concentrate, suffer from headaches and stomach aches, and may withdraw or act out. This effects their social, emotional and physical development and we cannot allow this to happen in our great city.
- **Community Partnership and Investment Program (CPIP) funding:** Non-profit groups depend on CPIP to operate children's programs and should be able to rely on consistent, inflation-adjusted



City funding, so they can continue to provide quality programs for 6 to 12 year olds. The proposed budget does not include inflationary increase.

- **Recreation User Fees:** When user fees increase, fewer residents can access these programs. We are deeply concerned about the 10% increase to introductory and subscriber programs, which is in addition to the inflationary increase, as well as the increase to the extended care camp fees. These increases are bound to impact low-income residents and those families with multiple children the hardest. Access to socio-recreational programs supports the development of healthy and prosperous individuals, families, and communities.
- **Child Care User Fees:** If the City decides to eliminate its child care rent subsidy to school boards, the cost will likely be downloaded to parents. Fees may increase by \$1.35 a day or \$351 a year per child based on the worst-case scenario; this affects parents of 3,500-4,000 younger children and 7-8,000 school-age children (albeit less).
- **Licensed Child Care Subsidies:** \$750,000 for 75 new subsidized child care spaces was identified as a need and not included in the budget. While there are plans to create about 2,000 new child care spaces, there are no new subsidies for these spaces. Over 18,000 children are on the waiting list for subsidized child care, a growing number despite being an actionable area in *TO Prosperity*.
- **Toronto Middle Childhood Strategy:** We urge you to ensure that the 2017 budget includes at least one full-time staff person is dedicated to overseeing the implementation of this Strategy and related policies and initiatives. Middle childhood is an important stage in a child's life and the City, as Toronto's largest recreation service provider, has a valuable role to play in ensuring children receive high-quality supports and services.

We thank you in advance for placing children and families at the heart of your budget conversations. For more information about Middle Childhood Matters Coalition Toronto or to meet with us, please contact our project coordinator, Shaden Jabahi at shaden@middlechildhoodmatters.ca or 647-210-4105.

Sincerely,

Ian Edward

Chair, Middle Childhood Matters Coalition Toronto