



February 22, 2010

Dear Premier Dalton McGuinty,

I am writing this letter in support of the many women who, over the past 5 years, have attended the Women Moving Forward Program (WMF) in the Jane/Finch Community. As young, single mothers, our participants have repeatedly expressed frustration and concern about the lack of access to subsidized child care spaces in the City of Toronto. Some have expressed feelings of hopelessness at the possibility of remaining stay-at-home moms on welfare, if they are unable to access affordable childcare.

As I'm sure you are aware, female led sole-support families make up the highest percentage of those living in poverty. As a result, **when working to end child poverty, it is essential that these efforts begin with the poverty of their parents.** Our program is successfully working towards this goal.

Women Moving Forward is an innovative program that works to **break the cycle of poverty.** Since its launch in 2005, we have worked with 106 young mothers who are Ontario Works clients. Through working with the women to develop clear and realistic career plans, WMF supports them in their journey from welfare dependency to financial self-sufficiency. We not only prepare our participants to enter college or university, we help them to transform their lives. The WMF program has been proven to strengthen women's confidence and self-esteem, improve their parenting skills and address the many social determinants of women's health, such as housing, poverty and education.

Despite all the challenges and barriers they face, 80 women are still in touch with the program, a retention rate of 75.5%. Of the women who were unable to complete the program, barriers around accessible and reliable child care was one of the greatest contributing factors. Over and over again, women in the program have reiterated that their **participation and success in the program is dependant on their ability to access child care subsidies.**

If the Ontario Government does not adequately address child care in its next budget, these young women, working to leave the welfare system, will be the hardest hit by cuts to child care subsidies. Toronto stands to lose 5000 subsidized child care spots, as early as July 2010. For low income families, this makes it even more difficult to participate in programs such as Women Moving Forward, or to actively work towards finding employment. At this moment in time, when our economy is struggling, the Government of Ontario **needs to invest in more subsidized child care spaces across**

the province in order to assist low-income parents in their search for meaningful employment.

I am enclosing copies of letters that participants of the Women Moving Forward program have written regarding the lack of affordable child care and its impact on their lives. As you will learn, **affordable and accessible child care is essential to allowing young, single mothers realize their potential and achieve their dreams. It is an essential step in helping them to break the cycle of poverty for themselves and their families.**

We at the Women Moving Forward Program trust that you will re-examine your decision to exclude funding for childcare from the upcoming budget. If you would like further details regarding the outcomes of our program, I would be pleased to share them with you. It would also be a privilege to arrange for you to meet participants of the Women Moving Forward program. I know they would be open to sharing, first hand, their stories of success, and why it is essential for them to be able to access subsidized child care. I look forward to hearing from you about your decisions regarding this matter. I can be contacted at 416-663-2733 ext. 228 or by e-mail at annp@janefinchcentre.org.

Sincerely,

M. Ann Phillips, B.Sc., M.Sc. PhD.
Manager, Women Moving Forward Program

- cc. Honourable Dwight Duncan, Minister of Finance
- cc. Honourable Laurel Broten, Minister of Children and Youth Services/Women's Issues
- cc. Honourable Madeleine Meilleur, Minister of Community and Social Services
- cc. Honourable Deborah Matthews, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care
- cc. Honourable John Milloy, Minister of Training, Colleges and University
- cc. Honourable Leona Dombrowsky, Minister of Education
- cc. Honourable Peter Fonseca, Minister of Labour
- cc. Mario Sergio, M.P.P. York West
- cc. All Other Members of Provincial Parliament
- cc. Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care

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