



SOUTH ASIAN WOMEN'S RIGHTS ORGANIZATION

108-10Teesdale Place, Scarborough ON M1L 1K9 416.686.0701 sawro.office@gmail.com

MEDIA RELEASE June 16, 2010 Contact Person: Sultana Jahangir 416.227.3780 moni.drum@gmail.com

EAST TORONTO WOMEN ANGRY OVER EXCLUSION FROM FULL-DAY CHILDCARE

Lots of people (almost hundred) turned out to a public meeting at Oakridge Jr PS last night to protest against the exclusion of their community schools from Phase 2 of the Toronto District School Board's role out of full-day kindergarten. Schools selected for Phase 2 will be able to offer full-day kindergarten for 4 and 5 year olds starting in September 2011. The meeting was called by the South Asian Women's Rights Organization (SAWRO), a grass-root community organization of immigrant women living in the Danforth/Victoria Park area of Toronto's east end.

Most of those attending the meeting are low-income immigrant women from the Teesdale Place/Crescent Town neighborhood. Teesdale/Crescent Town is one of Toronto's designated neighborhoods with one of the highest poverty rates in the city. Also attending the meeting were: TDSB trustees Gary Crawford and Sheila Cary-Meager and TDSB staff ; Councilor Janet Davis, who chairs the committee overseeing Toronto Child Services and MPP Michael Prue. Social activists Uzma Shakir of the *Colour of Poverty* campaign and Laurel Rothman of *Poverty 2000* and Andrea Calver of the *Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care* attended to support the community's women.

"Premier McGuinty's promise of priority for low-income families in the implementation of its Early Learning Program (ELP) created a lot of excitement and hope in our community." said Sultana Jahangir, Executive Director of SAWRO, " But this promise is turning out to be a cruel joke on our community's low-income women."

"We immigrant women came here to work. We have lots to contribute but the low-paid jobs we can get don't pay enough for child care. The child care subsidies we are entitled to aren't funded by the Ontario government. We were putting a lot of hope in getting access to full-day kindergarten and all-day childcare in schools. Now we are getting pushed to the back of the line."

Beaches-East York MPP Michael Prue supported Ms. Jahangir's opinion, "Everyone knows the needs are greatest in Toronto's poor neighborhoods. Toronto is getting just 26 schools in Phase 2. McGuinty has chosen to put a full-day kindergarten in every small town in Ontario instead of using the ELP to seriously tackle poverty reduction and at risk children in Toronto."

Ward 31 City Councilor Janet Davis called federal and provincial underfunding of child care and the neglect of low-income families , "A disgrace."

"There are over 17,000 low-income children on the City's child care subsidy waiting list. Ontario isn't even paying its share of the 24,000 subsidies administered by Toronto Child Services." said Councilor Davis.

" Earlier this year Child Services announced 4,500 subsidy cuts by 2012. The Ontario government's March budget replaced \$63 million of cuts in federal money. But this only maintains the current level of underfunding. 3000 low-income child care subsidies will still have to be cut."

Many women at meeting also expressed concern about their children missing the opportunity for early learning in full-day kindergarten and all-day child care in schools.

"From the time we arrive in Canada, immigrant women are pushed into highly racialized poverty on the margins of society. But what is most unacceptable is that our precious children also be pushed to the back of the line. We came here for our children's future. We will not accept our children being left behind" said Ms. Jahangir.