

## **Why is CASSA getting involved with the fight for child care? January 2009-May 2009**

Throughout the last few months, CASSA has held a number of public meetings with members of South Asian communities in order to assess and prioritize our community's poverty reduction needs and goals. One of the reoccurring issues that constantly emerged was the need for accessible, high quality and affordable child care. Income discrepancies for recent immigrants have been getting worse, with new immigrants receiving much lower wages for much longer periods of time despite high qualifications. This situation is particularly acute for women immigrants.

CASSA, and its partner organizations in this upcoming campaign (**The Toronto Coalition for Better Child Care, the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care, the Children's Aid Society, Campaign 2000, the South Asian Women's Centre and the South Asian Women's Rights Organization**) believe that a lack of affordable and culturally appropriate childcare plays a pivotal role in keeping immigrant women and their families in poverty. Many women seek education, credentialization, or meaningful work experience, but are forced to accept low paying part-time jobs that will accommodate their childcare responsibilities and financial limitations. Many women are also barred from being able to participate in society through volunteering or accessing services.

CASSA will attempt to mobilize the community to change this situation by:

- Holding community forums
- Linking up with other organizations in the neighbourhood, in the City and in Ontario which are working on access to childcare and other poverty reduction strategies
- Mobilizing organizations, groups and women across the city who want to advocate for the rights of mothers, children and immigrants
- Building the capacity of racialized communities to advocate on its own behalf
- Organizing local forums and actions on access to childcare, poverty reduction and policy change
  
- Bringing media and community attention to the issue of regressive childcare policies in Ontario
  
- Encouraging immigrant women from marginalized communities to be able to present their needs regarding childcare at the policy level

### **What will CASSA add to the current fight for Child Care?**

This year, CASSA will be launching a series of poverty reduction campaigns in local communities with the hopes of engaging South Asians across the city in the fight for accessible child care. Because racialized and immigrants suffer from poverty at disproportionate levels, we feel it is essential to ensure that local movements (such as the Ontario Coalition for Child Care) ensure that there is space for this voice, because poverty is a racialized process, and we must advocate for change collectively. We hope to create a "South Asian Women for Child Care" Committee, which will join broader campaigns around the city to ensure that childcare is on the government's agenda, and to ensure that racialized and immigrant communities have their voices heard in this larger

ongoing battle. Affordable child care is a critical bridge to the successful settlement, health and well-being of immigrant women and their families. As South Asians, we are one of Toronto area's largest immigrant groups, and we must unite to take a stance.

For more information, visit <http://www.cassaonline.com/index/> or email [fariah@cassa.on.ca](mailto:fariah@cassa.on.ca)

#### **Time Line of Project:**

**Feb 18<sup>th</sup>:** CASSA will host a press conference at Queens's Park to bring media and community attention to the upcoming Provincial Budget. We ask that the government recognizes the need for affordable and quality child care, especially during this time of recession.

**March:** CASSA will host a series of workshops in conjunction with the Toronto and Ontario Coalitions for better Child Care, Campaign 2000, the Children's Aid Society, and several member agencies. We hope to teach South Asian women how they can get involved at the grassroots level for changes in child care policy.

**April:** Women will visit their local MPP's, and make sure their grievances, needs and demands are heard loud and clear. We hope to ensure that childcare is on the government's agenda!

**How to get involved:** We invite women, organizations, agencies, service centres, activists and mothers from around the GTA to get involved in writing petitions and letters, attending workshops to learn how the political process works in pushing for legislative change, and visiting local MPP's. To get involved, please email community organizer Fariah Chowdhury at [fariah@cassa.on.ca](mailto:fariah@cassa.on.ca)

#### **CASSA's Partners in Campaign for Child Care**

- The Toronto Coalition for Better Child Care*
- The Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care*
- The South Asian Women's Rights Organization*
- The South Asian Women's Centre*
- The Children's Aid Society*
- Campaign 2000*
- Punjabi Community Health Services*
- Ontario Bangladeshi Cultural Society*
- South Asian Community Support Canada*
- Thornccliffe Neighbourhood Office*
- Social Services Network*
- United Muslim Women of Canada*
- Rexdale Women's Center*