



'This is me and where I am'
A Story by Joanne Fitzgerald

Hello, my name is Cathy Crowe. I have been a community health nurse in the City of Toronto for over 30 years, more recently working as a street nurse.

In recent weeks I have observed an incredible despair, anxiety and a fear experienced by people of all ages who worry that the services and programs they rely on in their community might be cut, cancelled or made more costly and therefore not accessible to them and their neighbours.

I have to admit to being shocked when I realized that children as young as four years old were also worried and talking about this subject. Children who have heard about these deliberations on television and radio news, or from overhearing adults, their parents, grandparents or caregivers talking about these proposed cuts.

Hearing about the fears of some of these children, I was prompted to read the story by Joanne Fitzgerald, a Governor General Award winning illustrator. Her first book is called 'This is me and where I am.'

It's about a young child discovering and appreciating where they are situated, protected and loved in their community.

It begins:

"In the world there is a country.
In that country there is a city.
In that city there is a neighbourhood.
In that neighbourhood there is a street.
In that street there is a yard.
In that yard there is a house.
In that house there is a room.
In that room there is a bed.
On that bed there is a blanket.
Under that blanket is me!"

The story carries on from there, but moves backwards, from the child's bed, to their neighbourhood to their city. The young child realizes they are part of a community, a neighbourhood and a city.

The pastel pictures in this book leave a lot to the imagination but let me fill in the images as I think children do. That little child's moment in time is about their neighbourhood, it's about their city, with:

- parks to play in with a lot of trees, some which shed acorns or pine cones for collecting
- a public zoo and an inner city farm to explore, especially in spring when the babies are born
- good public transit, including exciting streetcars and subways, even special night buses that their dad can take home from work and Wheel Trans that grandma will use to visit
- ice arenas, swimming pools and recreation centre programs for fun, for health and for learning new skills
- breakfast programs that will help them learn better in school
- day care centres that keep them safe, happy and well fed
- sirens from fire trucks, police and ambulance
- garbage eating trucks driven by our brothers and sisters in Local 416
- and last but not least public libraries that are the heart and soul of reading, exploring, and imagining life during the time of Tyrannosaurus Rex or Pterodactyls

In the film Home Safe Toronto, which I produced, children talk about what it's like to be homeless. One kid, when asked what home meant to him, said: "Being able to say you have one is important."

Maybe we should be thinking today about what makes a community, and that being able to say you have one is also important.

Our city, our people, our kids cannot move forward with the cuts I hear you contemplating. They will diminish opportunity. They will hurt the most vulnerable. They will negate what this city has been built upon. Please do the right thing.

I was hoping to purchase a copy of this book for each of you on this committee however was unable to find it. You might be interested to know, however, that there are 37 copies of this book currently available in the Toronto Public Library.

Cathy Crowe, RN