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OUT AND ABOUT

# Moms put down routes

**Toronto moms' website flags baby-friendly spots in various neighbourhoods**

Jul 16, 2008 04:30 AM

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**DIANA ZLOMISLIC**  
LIVING REPORTER

Two Toronto moms are launching a national offensive against Canada's stroller snobs.

Neighbourhood by neighbourhood, Sydney Loney and Nancy Ripton, both 35, are guiding mothers to baby-friendly spas, restaurants, shops and play areas. Looking for somewhere to breastfeed or do a quick diaper change? Their mission is to clear it with store owners first, so other mothers won't have to.

Loney, former managing editor at *Glow* magazine, didn't believe how discriminating Toronto could be with a Bugaboo, until she had Charlie 18 months ago.

"We found it was difficult to get around the city with strollers. We would find one place that had a change table or a nursing station and that would become home," Loney says.

Treating herself to a spa treatment with Charlie in tow was near impossible.

"I would never walk in with a stroller and say, 'Can I have a manicure?' You feel like you're a time bomb," she says. "They're just waiting for something terrible to happen."

Loney and Ripton, former editor-in-chief of *Oxygen*, a women's fitness magazine, teamed up to create a novel website for new mothers, called [justthefactsbaby.com](http://justthefactsbaby.com).

The "Just Baby Routes" section is devoted to helping moms get around the city. So far, they've charted 12 neighbourhoods in Toronto and Westdale Village in Hamilton. They plan to work their way across Canada over the next few years. Baby-friendly spots are flagged on the maps with up to eight different symbols. At a glance, a mother can see whether a restaurant provides high chairs, which parks have splash pads or which shops offer change stations.

Loney walks the routes herself, hitting every shop, park and library along the street, a notepad in hand.

Right now, the intersection formerly known as Yonge and Eligible holds rank on the website as the



RON ALBERTSON/HAMILTON SPECTATOR FILE PHOTO

The founders of the website, [justthefactsbaby.com](http://justthefactsbaby.com), have launched a map feature that shows moms where to find stroller-friendly cafes and shops all over the city.

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baby-friendliest area in the city.

Maybe not so surprising considering that the latest census data, released last year, revealed that marriage growth rates at Yonge and Eglinton far exceeded national and provincial averages. Since 1996, the number of married people in the area has grown 34.6 per cent. Nationally, the marriage growth rate was 6 per cent.

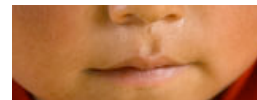
When asked if her mapping quests have yielded any particularly important victories, her answer comes quickly.

She was mapping Queen St. W. when she discovered a spa – which uses only organic and vegan products to boot – that welcomes moms and their babies. Loney found Aliviar Spa to be "very open and accommodating."

Lately, though, her favourite sighting has been the inside of a working elevator.

"I had no idea how many stairs there are in this city."

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**Sometimes we have to let go**

I'm a mom,I know exactly how challenging going out can be. I am happy and grateful for those places (and people who inform/organize them), but sometimes we have to understand the needs of the other parties. Having kids is our choice, isn't it? Sometimes we have to let go things that we used to enjoy. I'm fully agree with jenfromtoronto's comment that there could be a reason some places are just not for babies/little kids. And strollers should not be an option for lazy parents to tow their bigger kids.

Posted by Ira Gani at 8:18 PM Sunday, July 20 2008

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**Consideration is key**

It will be great to have a listing with so many welcoming places for parents - right on. Unfortunately, while there are plenty of considerate and polite parents out there, I too have so often experienced the over-entitled yuppie with a giant stroller, parking it in a main walkway and then scowling at or ignoring anyone who needs to get by. Also, in terms of places being child-friendly, I agree, but find myself wondering if can't we have some places where it is o.k. to have adult time? It wouldn't be so bad if some parents didn't ignore their kids' bad behaviour, allowing them to run all over the place, yelling and banging things. It's so hard to have a quiet meal out... when I was a kid, that behaviour was fine while playing outside, but no-one I knew would have been allowed to behave like that in a restaurant, shop, or gallery. If kids don't learn consideration early on, peers, teachers, bosses, and other members of society will end up with a much heavier load than is fair.

Posted by jjsmith at 7:45 PM Wednesday, July 16 2008

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**What about the Monster Strollers?!**

Well, of course it's difficult to navigate sidewalks and shops with a Bugaboo, a stroller the size of an SUV! I remember having strollers that were much smaller, and seeing children walking alongside mom at a much younger age. Now, I'll see kids in kindergarten (and older!) in these wheeled monstrosities. What kind of message does this send to kids? You'll be wheeled around by mommy or daddy until you're old enough to drive? By then, having been sheltered from one's surroundings will seem the norm. How sad.

Posted by treehugger at 6:15 PM Wednesday, July 16 2008

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**WAA WAA WAA**

What is it with people and their constant whining? Moms, just consider this: you have monster strollers compared to the simple buggies moms had only two to three generations ago. You expect way too much. I for one get fed up with having strollers run into my feet, ankles and back

of legs simply because you feel you have the right to hog a whole sidewalk with your monsters (kids included in "monster). Makes it hard for those of us who are childless-by-choice to enjoy an evening stroll.

Posted by licketysplit at 6:15 PM Wednesday, July 16 2008

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#### **Anti-stroller rules not as simple as people think...**

I used to work at a gallery that had a strict "no stroller" rule. The reason we did this was not to make life difficult for parents and kids, but because our space was limited and the powers that be deemed strollers a fire hazard if we had ever needed to evacuate the gallery in a hurry. This probably would have led Loney to describe our place as "child unfriendly", which would have been both unfair and untrue, considering that we welcomed families and arranged for nursing stations and changing rooms. Perhaps Loney should go back to these places and ask them just WHY they do not permit strollers. She may be surprised by the responses. Moreover, when she goes about town in her "takes up the space of two people" stroller, does she spare a thought for the people that she pushes out of the way on subways and sidewalks?

Posted by jenfromtoronto at 3:34 PM Wednesday, July 16 2008

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#### **re: 'what about access and equality for all?'**

Of course you're correct. The city should be more Everyone Friendly, indeed. But this article was about mom's with strollers and people who have chosen this particular cause. Perhaps you can spearhead an initiative to make the city more friendly for seniors and people with physical challenges of all kinds... Sounds like a lot of work to me, and will more then likely spread you so thin that very little will actually be accomplished. Perhaps then you'll see that maybe the more practical solution is to choose one cause that is particularly important to you and make a difference there.

Posted by MojoBetty at 10:22 AM Wednesday, July 16 2008

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#### **what about access and equity for all?**

I realize that this is crucial to ensuring a mom's wellness and well-being. No mother should be isolated because of her parenting duties. But what about general access for all--seniors, those who are blind, those with physical challenges? Years ago, I had a visitor from out of province who was blind. We went for a walk together and it was then that I realized that I take sloping sidewalks for granted and don't think about the dangers of travelling through a busy city.

Posted by Zengirl17 at 7:51 AM Wednesday, July 16 2008

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