

Clause embodied in Report No. 2 of the Policy and Finance Committee, as adopted by the Council of the City of Toronto at its meeting held on March 1, 2 and 3, 2004.

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2004 Action Plan for Children

(City Council on March 1, 2 and 3, 2004, adopted this Clause, without amendment.)

The Policy and Finance Committee recommends:

- (1) the adoption, in principle, of the recommendations contained in the communications (Undated) and (February 20, 2004) from Councillor Olivia Chow;**
- (2) that in any City of Toronto negotiations with the Federal and Provincial governments for a “new deal” for the City, that the City give consideration to including child care and children’s services as one of the priority items; and**
- (3) that the Chief Administrative Officer, the Commissioner of Community and Neighbourhood Services, and any other Commissioners as may be appropriate, be requested to submit a report to the Budget Advisory Committee on those recommendations having budgetary implications, and to incorporate any new funding from the Federal and Provincial governments.**

The Policy and Finance Committee submits the following communication (Undated) from Councillor Olivia Chow, Children and Youth Advocate:

Recommendations:

It is recommended that:

- (1) the non-budgetary recommendations in the 2004 Action Plan for Children be approved; and**
- (2) the recommendations with budgetary implications be sent to the Budget Advisory Committee for consideration and information.**

Background:

Please find attached the 2004 Action Plan for Children. It was drafted in response to the findings of the 2003 Report Card on Children.

Torontonians have a strong history of valuing social programs that benefit and ameliorate people’s well-being. Unfortunately, the state of children today does not reflect that. Toronto children’s quality of life continues to worsen. If we wish to continue our tradition, we must

invest in our children. By doing so, we will create a better quality of life for all who will feel the effects of those investments, instilling those values in them in the process.

We believe that fulfilling the Children's Action Plan's recommendations are an instrumental first step in this process.

Non-Budgetary Recommendations:

- (1) explore feasibility of a joint pilot project between Toronto Shelter Services and Public Health to do deep dental cleaning for high-risk pregnant women living in shelters. This may reduce the number of low weight birth babies in Toronto;
- (2) request the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care to cover the cost of dental cleaning for uninsured, low income pregnant women as a means of reducing the incidence of pre-term births;
- (3) advocate the province to fully fund the Healthy Babies Healthy Children Program;
- (4) advocate the province to sustain the Early Childhood Development Initiative funded projects beyond the current five year plan;
- (5) continue to advocate the provincial government to contribute its fair share of the Early Childhood Development Initiative so more licensed childcare spaces can be created;
- (6) advocate the provincial government to restore its contributions to subsidized childcare and fund the 1800 spaces that were cut;
- (7) adjust the requirements for subsidized childcare to realistically meet families' circumstances;
- (8) the City must equalize the distribution of Early Years Centres' funding across the ridings. This will ensure each child has access to an equal amount of resources as every other child;
- (9) continue to support the Toronto First Duty Project to ensure that the children and families served now can continue to benefit from this program.
- (10) explore the provision of licensed childcare during non-traditional childcare hours, as well as flexible hours of care, to support the needs of families who have to work nights, weekends, shifts and/or multiple jobs;
- (11) continue to advocate the federal government to help create a municipal-federal partnership to build on the national childcare strategy;
- (12) advocate the provincial government to adapt the school funding formula so schools have more funding for needed resources and programs;

- (13) advocate the provincial government to increase social assistance rates to reflect families' cost of living and to increase the minimum wage more swiftly than the current three year plan.
- (14) advocate the federal and provincial governments to create initiatives that allow parents to achieve a better work-family balance, which will help them meet the multiple demands placed on them;
- (15) adapt the shelter by-law to allow shelter development in all parts of the city, not just major arterial roads;
- (16) the Shelter, Housing and Support Division, through the "Let's Build Program", must continue to support non-profit and private organizations' efforts to build and sustain new permanent affordable housing;
- (17) continue to be at the forefront in the development of affordable housing, through the "Let's Build Program", by providing property-tax money to this program;
- (18) continue to implement the Housing First policy for surplus city lands by developing/retrofitting unused space into affordable housing;
- (19) remove the cap placed on Housing First land value;
- (20) continue to advocate the federal and provincial governments to contribute their fair share of investment into affordable housing development.
- (21) continue the efforts made to coordinate all planning and services that effect children. New efforts should also be made to assess whether such coordination and service linking have effectively been meeting children's and families' needs;
- (22) initiate the process of establishing service benchmarks and measuring outcomes; and
- (23) the City should continue to find "Made In Toronto" solutions that help serve children and families, while respecting local priorities and needs.

Budgetary Recommendations:

- (1) increase funding for the Student Nutrition Program by \$2.338 million, which will restore the municipal funding contribution in existing programs, subsidize food programs in highest needs areas of the city and fund nutrition programs for youth;
- (2) fully fund the Food Security Grants. They will enable low-income areas to access healthy meals and foster neighbourhood solidarity;
- (3) expand the number of Peer Nutrition programs and add a Nobody's Perfect education component in order to meet the nutrition and parenting education needs of an additional 900 families and 1400 children (\$262,800 net, \$525,500 gross);

- (4) expand the Children's Before and After School Recreation Program across 24 sites. This will enable more children to have fun in a safe, supervised place that is affordable for parents. Total request for additional Before and After School Recreation Programs is \$255,192.26;
 - (5) expand the Preschool Recreation Program across 99 additional sites in all four districts. This will provide 27,535 children and parents with registered and drop-in preschool program opportunities, 10,200 outreach referrals, 13,280 preschool drop-in opportunities, and 4,900 opportunities to participate in special events. In total, the Preschool Recreation Program will serve 42,635 children and families. Total request for additional Preschool programs is \$701,107.60;
 - (6) expand the Children's Recreational Program across an additional 65 sites. This will provide children with 38,194 recreational opportunities. Total request for Children's Recreation Programs is \$438,014.40;
 - (7) expand the Children's Recreational Camp Program to reach 11,158 children. This will help children make new friends and learn new skills, as well as provide a form of quality childcare for working parents. Total program cost is \$503,385.32 for 44 additional programs;
 - (8) Create Girls' Recreation Programs across 28 sites to provide 10,166 girls with registration and drop-in opportunities. The estimated cost is \$237,337.81;
 - (9) expand the childcare program to include another 2000 subsidized spaces in order to reduce the wait list of eligible children, on the condition that they are cost-shared 80/20 by the provincial government.
 - (10) increase the number of childcare spaces so more children have access to quality care;
 - (11) ensure the quality of care provided and the affordability of childcare service in Toronto by maintaining all lines of funding, including wage subsidy;
 - (12) commit the next annual increment to the phased-in return of actual costs in order to achieve full payment of actual costs by 2006;
 - (13) maintain the 98 Toronto Public Libraries' current service levels by renegeing the proposed \$1,253,000 funding cut in the 2004 municipal budget;
 - (14) place the sale of surplus residential properties into the Capital Revolving Fund in order to create new affordable housing;
 - (15) continue to provide five year capital funding to the "Let's Build Capital Revolving Fund".
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(A copy of the 2004 Action Plan for Children referred to in the foregoing communication was forwarded to all Members of Council with the February 24, 2004, agenda of the Policy and Finance Committee and a copy thereof is also on file in the office of the City Clerk, City Hall.)

The Policy and Finance Committee also submits the following communication (February 20, 2004) from Councillor Olivia Chow, Children and Youth Advocate:

Please accept the following as the final list of housing recommendations for the 2004 Action Plan for Children. The additional recommendations were only received today. We apologize for any inconvenience or confusion this may have caused.

Final Housing Recommendations:

- (1) the City requests the provincial government to expedite the reform of landlord and tenant legislation by repealing the Tenant Protection Act, including the reinstatement of rent control for vacant units to prevent high rent increases;
- (2) the City requests the provincial government to substantially increase the shelter allowance component of social assistance, particularly the shelter allowance for families with children, to help social assistance recipients cover their housing costs in Toronto's rental market;
- (3) the City requests the province to immediately increase per diem payments for the operation of emergency shelters to cover the real costs for shelter beds and services in Toronto, and also to provide the City with more flexibility in the use of such funding;
- (4) the City requests the province to initiate a review of the existing funding structure of per diem payments to determine the long term funding level needed for the operation of emergency shelters in Toronto;
- (5) the City requests the province to invest in capital funding to meet the City's targeted need for new shelters;
- (6) the City requests the provincial government to follow-through on the commitment to create 35,000 housing allowances in Ontario and that the program design include rent supplements to improve the affordability of rental housing for low income tenant households;
- (7) the City requests the provincial government to follow-through on the commitment to fund 6,600 new supportive housing units and provide funding for ongoing support services for supportive and transitional housing;
- (8) the City requests the province to expedite the creation of a Provincial Rent Bank to provide emergency relief to tenants with short-term arrears and thereby prevent evictions;
- (9) the City continues to advocate the federal and provincial governments to contribute their share of investment into affordable housing development in order to build a minimum of 2000 units of affordable housing per year;

- (10) continue to be at the forefront in the development of affordable housing, through the “Let’s Build Program”, by providing property-tax money to this program;
- (11) continue to provide five year capital funding to the “Let’s Build Capital Revolving Fund”.
- (12) continue to implement the Housing First policy for surplus city lands by developing/retrofitting unused space into affordable housing;
- (13) remove the cap placed on Housing First land value;
- (14) place the sale of surplus residential properties into the Capital Revolving Fund in order to create new affordable housing; and
- (15) adapt the shelter by-law to allow shelter development in all parts of the city, not just major arterial roads.

Ms. Fiona Nelson appeared before the Policy and Finance Committee on behalf of the Children and Youth Action Committee in connection with the foregoing matter.

The following Members of Council also appeared before the Policy and Finance Committee in connection with the foregoing matter.

- Councillor Janet Davis, Beaches-East York; and
- Councillor Giorgio Mammoliti, York West.