

# TORONTO STAFF REPORT

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January 22, 2003

To: Community Services Committee  
From: Commissioner of Community and Neighbourhood Services  
Subject: Childcare Needs of Young Adult Learners

## Purpose:

This report outlines the childcare challenges faced by young adult learners as a result of the provincial policy concerning eligible hours of care and identifies how the City has responded to their need for flexible child care services.

## Financial Implications and Impact Statement:

There are no financial implications resulting from the receipt of this report

## Recommendations:

It is recommended that this report be received for information.

## Background:

At its June 12, 2002 meeting, the Children and Youth Action Committee heard a presentation from the Language Equity and Literacy Working Group identifying challenges faced by young adult learners requiring child care and identifying their need for flexible services. The Community Services Committee at its meeting on June 24, 2002 directed the department to meet with the Language Equity and Literacy Working Group and provide a report to Community Services Committee.

## Comments:

Staff met with representatives of the Language Equity & Literacy Working Group and discussed childcare access problems experienced by young adult learners as a result of the provincial policy concerning eligible hours of care. On August 31, 2000, the Ministry of Community and Social Services issued a policy directive to all Consolidated Municipal Service Managers (CMSMs) advising that fee subsidy for full-day child care must only be provided to

parents engaged in approved full-day activities (employment, education, training or other employment assistance activities) of six hours or more duration. A strict Ministry interpretation of in-class time meant that not all student parents continued to qualify for full time childcare and there were insufficient part-time care options to flexibly meet their needs.

A report discussing the service implications of this provincial policy change, including the impact on student parents was adopted by Toronto Council at its regular meeting held on April 23, 24, 25, 26, and 27 and its special meeting held on April 30, May 1 and 2, 2001. On November 21, 2001 the Chair and a member of the Community Services Committee, Councillors Brad Duguid and Suzan Hall met with then Minister of Community and Social Services, John Baird to discuss the hardship on students created by the Ministry's new eligible hours of care policy. As a result of this meeting the Ministry agreed that the full time spent by students on school-related activities could be considered as in class time for the purpose of the child care eligible hours of care policy.

This clarification by the Ministry allowed City staff additional flexibility in the interpretation and application of the provincial guidelines for eligible hours of care. Students experiencing child care access problems as a result of the provincial eligible hours of care policy were encouraged to appeal their case to the City's Children's Services Appeal Committee. In 2001 all twelve such appeals were granted and these families' childcare needs were met. In 2002, following the City Councillors' discussion with the Minister, the Children's Services Appeal Committee did not receive any appeals from students related to the eligible hours of care policy. Children's Services staff continue to apply the maximum level of discretion allowed under the provincial policy to meet the childcare needs of student parents.

Conclusions:

This report confirms that the department discussed the issue of flexible childcare service for young adult learners with representative of the City's Language Equity and Literacy Working Group as directed by Community Services Committee. The report also explains that through political discussions the City secured some flexibility in the interpretation of students' in-class time within the Ministry policy and is showing students the maximum discretion allowed under Ministry guidelines to meet their childcare needs. It is recommended that this report be received for information.

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General Manager of Children's Services

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Commissioner of Community & Neighbourhood Services