

Consolidated Clause in Community Services Committee Report 5, which was considered by City Council on July 25, 26 and 27, 2006.

6

### **Learning from Each Other: Early Learning and Child Care Experiences in Canadian Cities**

*City Council on July 25, 26 and 27, 2006, adopted this Clause without amendment.*

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**The Community Services Committee recommends that City Council:**

- (1) forward a copy of the report (June 19, 2006) from the General Manager, Children's Services, together with the study "Learning From Each Other: Early Learning and Child Care Experiences in Canadian Cities" and the [City's Best Start Plan](#), to the Prime Minister of Canada and the Minister of Human Resources and Social Development Canada with the request that the federal government restore the \$5 billion in federal funding to support child care;**
- (2) request the federal government to hold one of its planned public hearings sessions in Toronto and consult with the City of Toronto on its proposed federal Child Care Spaces Initiative; and**
- (3) forward copies of the study "Learning from Each Other: Early Learning and Child Care Experiences in Canadian Cities" to Toronto area federal and provincial parliament members.**

**The Community Services Committee submits the report (June 19, 2006) from the General Manager, Children's Services.**

Purpose:

This report outlines the research results of the study: Learning From Each Other: Early Learning and Child Care Experiences in Canadian cities.

Financial Implications and Impact Statement:

There are no financial implications from this report.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that this report be received for information.

Background:

At its July 19, 20, 21, 2005 meeting, Council granted authority for the City to sign a contract with Social Development Canada for up to \$35,000.00 to carry out a review of programs for children in 11 cities across Canada. The research is now complete.

Comments:

Early learning and child care (ELCC) is a key element of local social infrastructure. Cities are the place where most Canadian children and families experience ELCC services. Although child care is managed and cost-shared by municipalities in Ontario, in most jurisdictions, it is funded by federal/provincial/territorial cost-sharing but delivered by local organizations. Cities provide recreation programs, libraries and public health programs and services. Kindergarten is provided by school boards, one of the key institutions of local government. The local level is also where the integration of services for children and families – schools, recreation, and health as well as early learning and child care – occurs. It is also at the local level that public-community partnerships, as well as cross-administrative partnerships, are most likely to be built.

The City of Toronto, with 10 other Canadian municipalities, (Vancouver, Edmonton, Whitehorse, Saskatoon, Winnipeg, Sudbury, Montreal, Sherbrooke, Halifax and St. John's) and the Association of Native Friendship Centres, have worked with Dr. Rianne Mahon and Dr. Jane Jenson to collect and analyse the first collection of national data on the provision of three types of children's programs – child care, kindergarten and recreation - locally in our largest cities.

The study provides a number of conclusions regarding children's services in cities:

- (1) None of the cities in the study have sufficient service coverage for children ages 0-12, with the exception of kindergarten provision, which is universal and in three provinces, compulsory.
- (2) Child care, the piece of ELCC with the least local control, is particularly problematic. Montreal, in the province with the most extensive provision, has child care for just under 45 percent of children aged 0-12. Most of the other cities cluster in the 10-16 percent range, with the exception of Saskatoon with child care available to 6.9 percent of children. Toronto has over 50,000 licensed child care spaces. However, its large child population of 378,925 means that it has enough spaces for only 13.6 percent of 0-12 year-olds.
- (3) It is apparent that the current poor and inconsistent levels of service in communities across Canada will continue if the federal government implements its current plan to cancel the funding negotiated through the 2005 federal-provincial bilateral ELCC agreements to create and operate new child care spaces.
- (4) Municipalities hold the key to recreation programs that play an important, if de facto, role in providing out of school hours care.

- (5) In a number of cities, local schools are a popular site for existing or proposed integrated children's service hubs. The facilities are purpose-built for children and encourage integration between the two main programs for children under six – child care and kindergarten. Schools are also sites of important recreation facilities, which can be used for summer programmes for 6-12 year olds.
- (6) Local/regional planning capacity is essential to ensure equitable development of services across cities. The situation where the communities with the greatest social capital obtain the most resources is far too common. While community consultation in the creation of services is important, a bottom-up exercise is insufficient on its own. Proactive central planning is required if age and class-geographical inequalities are to be addressed. Municipalities, as elected governments, have an essential role to play here.
- (7) Adequate, stable levels of funding are essential. As the Toronto and Vancouver stories show, even with a strong vision, a clear plan and a well-developed local infrastructure, inequities will arise as long as there is insufficient funding to provide a place for all who want and need it.
- (8) The limited municipal property tax base will not sustain the cost of initiating and maintaining a broadly-accessible ELCC program and the research shows that purely local solutions do not result in equitable access to services. Municipalities now fund large parts of recreation and could expand in this area. School boards can continue to enhance ELCC through kindergarten and other supports to school-based child care. Ultimately, the building of a strong web of ELCC services may mean integrating funding as well as services.
- (9) Service integration, following the hub or other designs, is important and is most effective when supported by a strong vision, shared by all, and organisational and fiscal mechanisms that create a plus-sum game.
- (10) ELCC "Hubs", organised around non-profit child care centres and responsible to elected boards composed of users and community representatives, can respond to community needs. Hubs have the capacity to integrate many types of children's services, including child care, parent supports, recreation and other services such as those provided by public health and libraries. Integrated service hubs build in transitions as children move throughout the day and as they grow and develop over time. They can also provide a unified point of access when parents are looking for services. To succeed, they need stable and adequate funding and a lead organisation with the administrative support needed to play a coordinating role.
- (11) A number of local initiatives have been shown to work and the most successful have these features in common:
  - (i) they are created for all children and not targeted to special population;
  - (ii) they allow for local flexibility and local accountability; and

- (iii) there is ongoing commitment from all partners and the support of a cross-cutting form of organization established in the community sector, by the province, or by the municipality.

The research conclusions of the *Learning From Each Other* study will provide guidance in the development of ELCC programs to all of the cities that participated. In Toronto's case, the research is timely as the City proceeds with the integrative directions in *The Best Generation Yet*, the expansion of integrated services for 0-6 year-olds under *Best Start* and the development of new after school program models for school-aged children. The study also complements the findings in the recently-released *Toronto First Duty* evaluation.

Conclusions:

The research for *Learning From Each Other: Early Learning and Child Care Experiences in Canadian Cities* is now complete. It is the first collection of national data on the local provision of three types of children's programs – child care, kindergarten and recreation - and provides very useful guidance to municipalities in the future development of services for children

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List of Attachments:

To be distributed at committee:

- (1) [Learning From Each Other: Early Learning and Child Care Experiences in Canadian Cities.](#)
- (2) [Technical Document. Learning From Each Other: Early Learning and Child Care Experiences in Canadian Cities.](#)

(Copies of the documents referred to above were distributed at the Community Services Committee meeting on July 5, 2006, and are on file in the City Clerk's Office, City Hall.)

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***City Council – July 25, 26 and 27, 2006***

*Councillor Moscoe declared an interest in this Clause, in that his daughter is employed as an early childhood educator, part-time, in the Children's Services Division.*