

**Consolidated Clause in Community Services Committee Report 4, which was considered by City Council on June 27, 28 and 29, 2006.**

**4**

**Toronto First Duty Phase 1 Final Report**

*City Council on June 27, 28 and 29, 2006, adopted this Clause without amendment.*

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**The Community Services Committee recommends that City Council adopt the staff recommendations in the Recommendations Section of the report (May 24, 2006) from the General Manager, Children's Services.**

Purpose:

This report provides information on the Toronto First Duty Phase 1 Summary Report, describes sustainable elements of the First Duty Projects and recommends changes to the City's Operating Criteria and Purchase of Service Budget Guidelines.

Financial Implications and Impact Statement:

This report has no direct financial implications.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that:

- (1) the City's Operating Criteria for Child Care Programs be amended to include program integration;
- (2) the staffing costs related to integration, including professional development, planning and staff release time be included as allowable expenditures under the City's Purchase of Service Budgets Guidelines; and
- (3) the appropriate City official be authorized and directed to take the necessary action to give effect thereto.

Background:

The Toronto First Duty Project initially approved by Council in May 1999, was developed through partnership between the City of Toronto, The Atkinson Charitable Foundation and the Toronto District School Board. Through five school-based community sites the project has

demonstrated the integration of key children's services: child care, kindergarten, family resource programs and other services that support the wellbeing of children and their families. A key element of TFD has been a thorough and ongoing evaluation so that all partners would learn what works and begin to apply these learning's in the development of children's services in communities.

At its meeting of June 14, 15 and 16, 2005, Council directed that the Children's Services General Manager report back on the final evaluation of Toronto First Duty following the completion of the pilot project. Preliminary research findings of Phase 1 of Toronto First Duty were included in a report titled the Integration of Children's Service Plans considered by Council at its meeting of March 29 and 30, 2006. At this meeting Council further directed that the General Manager, Children's Services, report back to Community Services Committee as early as possible, but no later than June 8, 2006, on options for continuing components of the First Duty Projects that the First Duty pilot evaluation showed were successful and that would otherwise be discontinued at the end of June, 2006, such report to include options for expanding those programs across the City.

In addition Council approved unspent funding from the Child Care Expansion/First Duty Reserve of up to \$25,000.00 be directed for each of the First Duty Projects operated by Macaulay Child Development Centre, Not Your Average Daycare, the Child Development Institute and East York/East Toronto Family Resources to fund summer programs at a total cost of \$100,000.00, and that the contracts with these organizations be extended to September 1, 2006, for this purpose. The Atkinson Charitable Foundation will continue to fund the fifth project, Bruce Woodgreen Early Learning Centre, operated at Bruce Public School, until 2008.

Comments:

The research findings of Phase 1 of Toronto First Duty (TFD) are outlined in Toronto First Duty Phase 1 Final Report: Evidence-based Understanding of Integrated Foundations for Early Childhood. The report and technical appendices will be released on June 8, 2006. Copies of the report will be distributed at the Community Services Committee meeting on the same date. The initial findings have been previously reported in a report titled The Integration of Children's Services Plans. The findings focus on three key areas:

- (1) practice, programs and policy;
- (2) children and families; and
- (3) communities.

and provide directions on sustaining successful elements of Toronto First Duty.

The researchers found that some of the activities implemented in the pilots sites such as healthy child screens, drop-in programs were an effective outreach mechanism to attract families. Additional resources such as cultural-linguistic workers and special needs resources teachers may have translated into changed practices that can be sustained beyond Phase 1. However, the most important finding is that "joint professional development and planning time supported by paid staff release time were identified as critical elements in implementing any aspects of the

TFD model. This is the number one resource needed on the ground to move forward with the integration of programs.”

Through professional development and planning time aimed at results for children, staff teams work on program innovation and quality improvement. The report cites that integration is based on a mix of opportunity, need and direction. To support this direction it is recommended that the City’s Operating Criteria for Child Care Programs be amended to include requirements for integration. Further it is recommended that the costs for staff release time for professional development and planning be allowed as expenses under the Purchase of Service Budget Guidelines.

Toronto First Duty is informing the expansion and operations of children’s programs and is reflected in the City’s and Province’s Best Start directions. The core program elements – child care, kindergarten and family resource centres – will continue in all five TFD sites. Most important, through the implementation of Best Start, Toronto First Duty is moving from a demonstration model to a new way of providing early childhood services and its leadership is continuing to support integration. Representatives from the TFD Steering Committee are members of the Best Start Network. The City of Toronto will continue as a member of the TFD Steering Committee.

The City will also remain involved with the First Duty prototype at Bruce school, where the Atkinson Charitable Foundation is continuing to provide funding until 2008. The partnerships between the City of Toronto, Atkinson and the Toronto District School Board will be sustained and supported through ongoing development at the Bruce Woodgreen Early Learning Centre. The City of Toronto will continue to provide both management and operational support to further develop the integrated model, and will support the implementation of a fee subsidy model that relies on a simplified income test.

The City, with its partners in the Best Start Network, is embarking upon system-wide integration through the implementation of the Best Start Vision. TFD has provided valuable lessons on how to make system shifts and how to integrate programs on a day-to-day basis. The Best Start Network’s Toronto Vision for Children which was launched on May 18, 2006 calls for the creation of neighbourhood hubs all across the City. The hubs will have the core elements of TFD including early years staff teams, a common governance structure, high quality early learning environments with combined expectations, activities and routines for kindergarten, child care and family support, parent participation and continuum of supports.

The legacy of Toronto First Duty is being continued through Toronto’s Best Start Plan. The emphasis now is on forging the kind of systemic change necessary to move from pilot sites to community/neighbourhood hub delivery system citywide. The plan for Toronto’s Best Start centres on the TFD approach and applies of the learnings from TFD to the City and school boards’ systems. The development of a TFD manual and ongoing training sessions are promoting integration and the transmission of TFD earnings into Toronto Best Start. This direction is supported by the TFD Final Report which suggests that Toronto First Duty tools, including training programs and workshops, can be effective in preparing communities to move forward with Best Start.

Conclusions:

This report reviews the findings from the Toronto First Duty Pilot Project and how components of TFD will be continued across the City through Best Start Plan: Toronto's Vision for Children.

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Janette Pelletier, Associate Professor, University of Toronto, OISE Institute of Child Study, gave a presentation to the Community Services Committee, and filed a copy of the Toronto First Duty Phase 1 Summary Report entitled "Evidence-based Understanding of Integrated Foundations for Early Childhood."