



## STAFF REPORT INFORMATION ONLY

### Part-time and After Hours Child Care

<b>Date:</b>	September 24, 2007
<b>To:</b>	Community Development and Recreation
<b>From:</b>	General Manager, Children's Services
<b>Wards:</b>	All
<b>Reference Number:</b>	

#### **SUMMARY**

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This report examines commitments made regarding part-time and after hours child care in the current 2005-2009 Child Care Services Plan. It looks at ways in which Toronto currently supports part-time and after hours child care including initiatives the City has undertaken to encourage it. The report concludes that it is not particularly timely to consider new policies and incentives to increase the availability of part-time and after hours child care. It recommends that Children's Services hold consultations with stakeholders, including parents, to determine the demand for part-time and after hours child care and opportunities to provide it, as part of the service planning process for the 2010-2014 Child Care Service Plan.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

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The General Manager of Children's Services recommends that:

- 1) As part of the service planning process for the 2010-2014 Child Care Service Plan, Children's Services hold consultations with stakeholders, including parents, to determine the demand for part-time and after hours child care and opportunities to provide it.

#### **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

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This report will have no financial impact beyond what has already been approved in the current year's budget.

## DECISION HISTORY

At the June 5, 2007 meeting, when considering the *2007 Best Start Update to Child Care Service Plan and Report Back on Income Testing* report, the Committee recommended that the General Manager, Children's Services, be requested to report back to the September 7, 2007 meeting on possible new policies and incentives to increase the availability of part-time and after hours child care.

See <http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2007/cd/decisions/2007-06-05-cd06-dd.pdf>

## ISSUE BACKGROUND

One of the principles adopted by Council to provide a framework for the 2005-09 Child Care Service Plan was "service options consistent with informed parental choice". Parents were consulted as part of the development of the Child Care Service Plan. Sixteen parent meetings were held across the City. During these consultations, parents identified what is important to them, including "flexible hours of care including part-time and after-hours care". A consultation was also held with approximately 10 home child care agencies at a meeting of the Home Child Care Association of Toronto. During this consultation, agencies identified "premium service rates for evening and weekend care" as an issue for them.

The City's 2005-2009 Child Care Service Plan identified the need to look at part-time options and after hours care as follows:

### Recommendations – Access and Equity

Recommendation # 1 - The City will ensure equitable access for all children by developing a range of programs and services, including part-time options, and by actively pursuing development in communities that are under-served.

Recommendation # 7 - The City will undertake a comprehensive assessment of the Home Child Care rate structure to improve fair and equitable access for children of all age groups to quality home child care experiences.

### What constitutes part-time child care and after hours child care?

For infants, toddlers and pre-schoolers, part-time child care includes part days, e.g., Tuesdays and Thursdays, or part week e.g., mornings or afternoons. For school age, part-time child care includes before and after school, or just after school care.

After hours child care is child care that is provided outside the 7 AM to 6 PM day, and includes any combination of evenings, overnights, and weekends to accommodate parents generally working shift work, or a combination of days on and off that do not follow either a regular pattern e.g., 4 days on, 3 days off, or the regular work week e.g., Monday to Friday 9 to 5.

## Ways in which Toronto Currently Supports Part-time and After hours Child Care

The City currently supports part-time and to a lesser extent after hours child care by offering a range of child care options to clients applying for child care fee subsidy. These include:

Child Care Centres – Of the 650 licensed programs with purchase of service contracts with the City, 424\* or 65% offer some type of part-time care as follows:

Infant Programs - 39  
Toddler Programs - 61  
Preschool Programs - 173  
School-age Programs – 352\*

\* 246 of these are school age only programs

### Home Child Care

Home Child Care can offer a more flexible child care arrangement than group child care with respect to days and hours of operation. Premium rates are paid after a child is kept for 12 hours in one day. Home Child Care was seen by the City as an opportunity to support part-time and after hours child care.

### Nursery Programs

Nursery programs offer a half-day introductory group learning experience usually for pre-schoolers 2 1/2-5 years of age and are often used when full-time child care is not required. A limited number of specialized nursery programs provide a half-day child care program for children with special needs.

### Infant Therapeutic Programs

These municipal child care programs provide early intervention and support for high-risk, high-needs families for children 0-30 months. Programs are currently operating in three specific areas of the City: North Albion, Galloway and Regent Park. They operate at a half-day rate and are licensed.

### Hostel Programs

In partnership with several municipal hostels throughout Toronto, Children's Services operates drop-in child care programs for the residents in the hostel.

### School-age Child Care

Even though we may not think of school-age child care as part-time child care, it is, and represents almost 1/3 of our subsidy spaces. Although subsidized child care is available for children 0-12 years, very few children over age 9 use it, except maybe in the After-School Recreation Care (ARC) programs. And not all centres offer care for all age groups, particularly school age.

Client data from the Child Care Service Plan 2005-2009 indicates that 6,909 children or 29% of the 23,664 receiving subsidy were school age. This is consistent with today, where 29% of the licensed capacity is for school age children.

### After School Recreation and Care Program (ARC)

In partnership with Children's Services, Parks Forestry and Recreation operates After School Care and Recreation Programs. These programs are available to children 6-12 years of age after school and during professional activity days and March break but not during the summer holidays. The first year of operation was for the 2006/07 school year, and Willow Park Public School in Scarborough District, one of the initial 13 programs, offered a part-time enrolment option as a method to increase enrolment.

### York Before and After School programs

The City entered into a partnership with the TDSB to fund 21 before and after school programs during the 2000/01 school year as a result of changes in the Ministry funding formula, and continues to do so. Approximately 400 children are served.

### Summer Camps

Summer day programs provide a range of activities for children during the summer. Children's Services provides limited funding to some summer day programs to support the cost of the program for children in Ontario works households. Approximately 4,540 children age 3 to 17 participate annually in summer day programs.

The Ontario Works (OW) program, administered through Toronto Social Services, is designed to help employable people move as quickly as possible from social assistance to work. It offers OW clients full child care fee assistance if they are participating in employment assistance activities. 29% of subsidized spaces are currently used by OW clients (Child Care Service Plan).

### Informal Child Care

OW clients sometimes use informal (unlicensed) care (up to an approved ceiling) until they can access licensed care. Clients use informal care on a part-time basis and for after-hours work e.g., shift work.

### Initiatives the City has undertaken to encourage Part-time and After hours child care:

For clients applying for subsidized child care, when choosing child care, the caseworker informs prospective clients of available child care options, including part-time child care, and supports them in making informed choices about child care.

While the Children's Services Information System (CSIS) has been adapted so that part-time child care is a choice, rates are posted and at intake a caseworker can offer part-time as a choice, the reality is that most families applying for fee subsidy want full-time child care.

### The development of a policy framework for Middle Childhood

Children's Services has over the past year held forums on middle childhood examining the research on child development for children ages 6-12 years followed by a showcase of exemplary, integrated, collaborative models. The next step is to develop a policy framework and vision document for programs and services for children 6-12 years in Toronto. Children's Services is working in partnership with the Middle Childhood Matters Coalition on this. The focus will be on options and choices for children 6-12 years from 3-6 PM, that are healthy, safe and secure and provide opportunities to learn, be socially engaged and responsible. Best Generation Yet – Toronto Vision for Children envisioned before and after school programs for 6-12 year-olds, which could be licensed child care, recreation or library activities that could take place in hub sites or in the community.

### Where part-time child care thrives

Home Child Care plays a significant role in the provision of part-time and after hours child care, largely because of its flexibility.

Currently, part-time child care thrives in full-fee centres in areas of the City than can support them e.g., North Toronto, and where parents demand them and are willing to pay for them. These centres may not necessarily have a service contract with the City if they don't receive some government funding in the form of fee and/or wage subsidies, but they all are required to report serious occurrences to Children's Services. We do not have any data on how many offer part-time programs, but anecdotally, it is significant.

### Workplace Child Care

One might think that workplace child care would be more receptive to offering after-hours or weekend care. A study of workplace child care in Canada in 1993 found that "few centres operated for the extended hours that parents may need – 11% operated after 6:00 PM and a few were open weekends and none overnight."

See <http://www.childcarecanada.org/pubs/op3/op3.pdf>

A 2001 study by the Government of Canada, Human Resources Development Canada Labour Program found the same thing –

See [http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/en/lp/spila/wlb/pdf/child\\_care\\_en.pdf](http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/en/lp/spila/wlb/pdf/child_care_en.pdf)

See the Childcare Resource and Research Unit's (CCRU) website for a full list of articles on work-related child care, at

<http://www.childcarecanada.org/res/issues/Workrelatedchildcare.htm>

The Report from the Ministerial Advisory Committee on the Government of Canada's Child Care Spaces Initiative released earlier this year indicates that "Consultations with employers through the summer 2006 showed that generally employers do not want to be child care providers". However, they are receptive to various measures to assist employees with accessing child care such as policy, practices and /or a workplace culture that is responsive to the needs of employees with family responsibilities.

See

[http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/en/publications\\_resources/social\\_policy/mac\\_report/Child\\_Care\\_Spaces\\_Strategy.pdf](http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/en/publications_resources/social_policy/mac_report/Child_Care_Spaces_Strategy.pdf)

## **COMMENTS**

While part-time and after hours care remains an issue for many parents, it is not particularly timely to look at new policies and incentives to increase the availability of part-time and after hours child care for a number of reasons.

The waiting list for child care fee subsidy is currently 12,235 (current as of Sept. 16/07), and most of those families are waiting for full-time child care so that the parent(s) can work or participate in an activity. We do not anticipate that this list will subside because of the impact of the implementation of income testing earlier this year, which resulted in many more families applying for and qualifying for subsidy. Because there is significant demand for full-time care, child care operators have little incentive to offer part-time options. Furthermore, as a result of income testing, the Province has imposed a weekly fee on families regardless of the number of days a family is in care. Families might be unwilling to pay this fee for accessing part-time child care.

As mentioned previously, there are basically two ways to provide part-time child care – half days or part week. For operators, the administrative costs associated with providing part-time child care are essentially the same as for those providing full-time care, child care fees reflect the cost per day of service. Many of these costs are fixed and do not vary with a number of children enrolled. Operators set their fee structures based on assumptions of full enrolment and when they experience vacancies where a period of the week/day does not have a child enrolled, the operator loses revenue. Further, the City sets the rates it pays based on an assumption of optimal or 98 per cent enrolment, and as a result, operators must achieve full enrolment to meet their operating expenditures. In general, operators are not interested in providing part-time care if they have a full-time space and a child to fill it; and operators, including Municipal Child Care Services (MCCS), often put the onus on families only seeking part-time care to find another

family to share a space in order to ensure that they have full enrolment.

Offering “incentives” to increase the availability of part-time and after-hours child care would inevitably mean providing financial incentives whereby part-time rates are paid at a disproportional level. As a note, part-time care, where two or more children do not take up the full space drives up the cost of care per day for the remaining children or results in lost revenue and renders programs less viable. With limited funding and high demand for full-time care, higher rates for part-time care reduce the number of children that could be served.

Toronto Children’s Services will continue to collaborate with key partners to assess the demand for part-time and after hours child care, collect and analyse data to inform service planning and delivery, and will integrate these new findings into the 2010-2014 Child Care Services Plan. This process will enable Children’s Services to get a better picture of the demand for part-time and after hours child care, the barriers to offering it, as well as some options for meeting the demand for those parents who would choose it.

Provincial policies will have significant impact on the future directions for child care. Depending upon the outcome of the provincial election, the current focus on early learning and child care as articulated under Best Start may change. Future provincial directions may provide opportunities to increase part-time child care options by increasing overall supply of child care subsidies.

## **CONTACT**

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## **SIGNATURE**

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