

**Clause embodied in Report No. 6 of the Community Services Committee, as adopted by the Council of the City of Toronto at its meeting held on July 22, 23 and 24, 2003.**

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**Five-Year Service Plan for Child Care**

*(City Council on July 22, 23 and 24, 2003, adopted this Clause, without amendment.)*

**The Community Services Committee recommends the adoption of the following report (June 18, 2003) from the Commissioner of Community and Neighbourhood Services:**

Purpose:

Authority is sought to develop the next five-year Service Plan for Child Care within the framework of the City's Children's Strategy and in keeping with the principles of equity, accountability and high quality, developmentally appropriate service for young children and their families. This report outlines the scope, objectives, and timeline of this planning process including the strategies for community engagement and involvement.

Financial Implications and Impact Statement:

There are no financial implications beyond the spending approvals already provided in the approved 2003 Operating Budget. The Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer has reviewed and concurs with this financial impact statement.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that:

- (1) authority be granted to initiate the development of the next five-year Service Plan for Child Care covering the period 2004 to 2008;
- (2) this Service Plan for Child Care be developed within the framework of the City's Children's Strategy and in keeping with the principles of equity, accountability and high quality service outlined in this report;
- (3) this Service Plan for Child Care be broad enough in scope to meet the provincial requirements as outlined in "The Ontario Child Care Service Management Guidelines" and also to address issues arising out of Council approved and funded initiatives supporting child care;

- (4) this Service Plan be developed in accordance with the process and timeline outlined in this report and in such a way that full opportunity for community engagement and involvement is provided; and
- (5) the appropriate City officials take the necessary action to give effect thereto.

Background:

Service Planning for Child Care predates both amalgamation and the provincial local service realignment process. It is an approach first developed by the former Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto and implemented in 1993. The original 1993 Service Plan for Child Care focused exclusively on the licensed child care system. Following amalgamation and provincial service realignment, the City was given service system management responsibility for a broader range of child care services including family resource programs and special needs resourcing as well as licensed care, wage subsidy and fee subsidy. Provincial requirements to develop a service plan commensurate with this increased level of local responsibility were outlined in "Ontario Child Care Service Management Guidelines". In the same year as amalgamation, Council, at its meeting held on November 23, 24, and 25, 1999, approved the City's Children's Strategy which provided the policy and program framework for the new City's first Child Care Service Plan. The Service Plan was approved June 26, 27, and 28, 2001, and covered a three-year timeframe from 2001 to 2003. While that Service Plan addressed the important issue of better integration of services for young children and families, achievement of many of its progressive goals and objectives was hampered by subsequent reductions in provincial funding for child care. This situation has been fully discussed most recently in the May 21, 2003, staff report, entitled "2003 Service Cut and Revised Spending Strategy for Child Care resulting from Provincial Underfunding."

Although not all aspects of the previous Child Care Service Plan have been implemented, the City must develop a new Child Care Service Plan for the period 2004 and beyond to comply with provincial requirements. While provincial guidelines minimally require a three-year planning forecast, this report recommends a five-year planning cycle to conform with the City's new financial directives. It is important to recognize that each year of the City's Service Plan will form part of the City's annual request for provincial cost-sharing and will be a required component of the City's annual Service Agreement with the Province for the provision of child care services.

Comments:

- (a) Objectives of Child Care Service Plan:

The Child Care Service Plan and the process used to develop it serve a multitude of purposes. It provides a comprehensive overview of child care service needs, gaps and issues facing the City. Many of these have already been identified in a series of reports previously considered by this Council. But the Service Planning process ensures that the community stakeholders and elected representatives of the new City Council will have a clear understanding of the challenges being faced and ample opportunity to help develop strategies to address these challenges. The Service Plan also clearly states the policies and principles which guide the management of the child care system, advocates for necessary changes and will help to influence future reform of child care funding and service delivery by senior levels of government.

The Child Care Service Plan also forms the basis of the annual City funding request and puts the funding request in the context of a longer term financial forecast. The Child Care Service Plan affirms the City's continuing commitment to and role in the management of child care and clarifies its relationship with its main funding partner, the Province. Finally, the Child Care Service Plan helps set a research agenda by identifying important issues and evaluative studies that can lead to improvement of service effectiveness, efficiency and equity.

(b) Principles and Policy Framework:

Consistent with Council's direction governing the City's First Child Care Service Plan, the 2004 Service Plan for Child Care will be developed within the framework of the City's Children's Strategy and will be consistent with the following basic principles and policies:

- equity of service access;
- publicly planned and accountable service outcomes;
- service options consistent with informed parental choice;
- first come-first served admission to subsidized care;
- recognition that child care services provide developmentally appropriate and beneficial care for children as well as important family and community support; and
- recognition that services for children and families should be planned and delivered in an integrated way that promotes seamless service transitions.

(c) Scope of Service Plan:

The 2004 to 2008 Service Planning process will be sufficiently broad to address not only the provincial requirements for annual child care service level and service mix targets but also to address City service and funding issues. Many of these have already been identified in previous reports and include non-cost shared services, such as the York Before and After School Program, summer day camps, school occupancy cost agreements, child care capital funding, as well as a new strategy and timetable for payment of actual costs, improved equity of service access, rationalization of City/provincial roles, the future of the First Duty pilot projects, home child care rate reform and child care's interface with the Ontario Early Years Centres.

(d) Timeline and Process:

It is proposed that a comprehensive report discussing the many service and funding issues facing child care in the City be developed for presentation to the newly elected City Council early in 2004 and be used to begin detailed service planning discussions with the community.

It is further proposed that the comprehensive report to Council early in 2004 outline a working group process for engaging community stakeholders in the development of a draft Service Plan that can be ready for political review and approval by June 2004.

Following Council approval, the new Service Plan will be submitted to the Province for consideration. Ward-based meetings will then be held to develop neighbourhood implementation plans.

Conclusions:

This report provides a brief synopsis of the history of Child Care Service Planning in Toronto and seeks approval to begin the development of the next five-year plan with the preparation of a comprehensive child care issues report for presentation early in 2004 to the newly elected Toronto Council.

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