

# TORONTO STAFF REPORT

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February 21, 2006

To: Community Services Committee  
From: General Manager of Children's Services  
Subject: Integration of Children's Service Plans

## Purpose:

This report provides an update on the integration of Children's Services Plans; the City's ongoing involvement with Toronto First Duty, and seeks endorsement of the Best Start Plan- Toronto Vision for Children developed by the Best Start Network.

## Financial Implications and Impact Statement :

There are no direct financial implications to this report.

## Recommendations :

It is recommended that Council endorse the Best Start Network's *Best Start Plan- Toronto Vision for Children*, attached as Appendix 3.

## Background :

At its meeting of October 26, 27, 28 and 31, 2005 Council approved the Best Start Service and Transition Plan amendments to the 2005-2009 Child Care Service Plan and the Best Start Transition Infrastructure Plan and directed the General Manager of Children's Services to report to the Community Services Committee on the integration of various plans supporting children and families including Best Generation Yet, Best Start, and Toronto First Duty into the City's Child Care Service Plan. In addition, the General Manager was asked to report on how the Best Start initiative can best incorporate First Duty program directions and how the City will remain involved with the First Duty prototype at Bruce School.

The Best Start Implementation Planning Guidelines require that Best Start Networks develop plans for how communities will integrate services as Best Start moves forward in addition to the plans mentioned above.

Best Generation Yet, adopted by Council on July 19, 20, 21 and 26, 2005, is a policy framework, developed by the Mayor's Roundtable Children, Youth and Education that provides the impetus for the integration of children's services across the City of Toronto.

The Toronto First Duty Project initially approved by Council in May 1999 includes five pilot projects that demonstrate the integration of key children's services.

Comments:

The Integration of Children's Services Plans

In order to understand the relationship of the various plans the following section begins with a review of the Best Generation Yet (BGY), the City's 2005-2009 Child Care Service Plan, the Best Start Strategy and Toronto First Duty Project (TFD). Appendix 1 provides an overview of the four initiatives.

Best Generation Yet

The City's *Best Generation Yet* (BGY) is a 10-year plan, Toronto's vision for its children. It is a framework for the future development of children's programs and services in Toronto developed by the Children's Working Group of the Mayor's Roundtable on Children, Youth and Education. BGY provides a framework for:

- 1) The expansion and integration of Toronto's services for children 0-12 and for the implementation of Best Start.
- 2) City divisional plans for children.
- 3) The development of benchmarks, indicators and outcomes.
- 4) The development of integrated children's service plan to inform the 2007 municipal budget.

The ongoing progress of BGY will be guided and monitored by the Integrated Children's Services Advisory Committee. A proposed terms of reference and structure is being prepared and will be on the April 2006 Policy and Finance agenda.

The Child Care Service Plan

The *City's 2005-2009 Child Care Service Plan* adopted by Council in May 2005 and amended in October 2005 to incorporate Best Start funding sets direction to guide the child care system over a period of time and forms the framework for service planning and resource allocation over the next five-year period. Recommendations identified through the service planning process focus on four key areas:

- improving quality of services
- developing a system of services for children
- access and equity
- building public support for child care

As a result of the end of July announcement by the Minister of Children and Youth Services of three-year allocations to the City of Toronto for Best Start funding, the service plan had to be amended. The allocations - a total of \$125 million over the next three years - are to expand the number of licensed child care spaces, increase access to subsidies and improve wages for child care workers. The announced funds are for both capital and operating, and are tied to corresponding child care space expansion targets. The Best Start Child Care Service and Transition Plan and the Best Start Transition Infrastructure Plan were approved by Council as amendments to the 2005-2009 Child Care Services Plan.

## Best Start

The *Best Start Strategy* is a 10-year plan to strengthen healthy development through the provision of early learning and child care services for children and their families. It is designed to give Ontario's children the best start in life and to help them achieve success in school by providing a comprehensive system of services that support children from 0-6 years and their families.

Ontario is funding Best Start with funding from the federal government. The federal budget announced \$5 billion to be spent over five years to support a national program of Early Learning and Child Care. Toronto's share is \$125 million over the next 3 years. These funds are in addition to the 2003 multilateral framework on early Learning and Child Care previously announced. The Province has waived any requirement for municipalities to cost share the new money for the length of the federal/provincial agreements (until March 2010).

On February 6, 2006, the newly sworn in Prime Minister Harper announced plans to move forward on child care choices for parents by:

- (1) introducing a new Choice in Child Care Allowance of \$1,200.00 per year for each child under 6, effective July 1, 2006 (provided the Act passes Parliament);
- (2) phasing out the early learning and child care agreements signed by the previous government with the Provinces effective March 31, 2007; and
- (3) introducing new measures to assist employers and community organizations to create new child care spaces.

Council passed a motion to "Preserve the National Child Care Program – Protect High Quality Accessible Child Care in Toronto" on February 14, 2006 directing that "Mayor Miller, on behalf of Council and the residents of the City of Toronto, is requested to work as a partner with the federal and provincial governments to preserve the national child care program and the Ontario federal-provincial child care agreement. It is to be hoped that the efforts of City and its partners will be successful and that the City will be able to move forward to implement its Best Start Service and Transition Plan as well as its Best Start Infrastructure Transition Plan. These plans together with the Best Start Plan-Toronto Vision for Children fulfill key components of the first Phase of Best Start including:

- expansion of child care for four- and five-year-olds;
- moderate expansion of the system for children 0-4 years;
- wage enhancements for child care workers in the regulated sector; and
- the development and implementation of community hubs that will pull together screening, assessment and treatment, child care and parenting programs, and will have direct links to other children's services such as mental health, child welfare and speech and language resources.

Other programs and strategies in Best Start include an enhanced 18-month developmental assessment using primary care providers for every child in Ontario, a maternal postpartum depression strategy and expansion of Pre-school speech and Language and Infant Hearing Services to the end of Senior Kindergarten. A new College of Early Childhood Educators will also be established to ensure high professional standards for quality child care and early learning programs.

All of the pieces of Phase 1 of the Best Start initiative: the Best Start Service and Transition Plan, the Best Start Infrastructure Plan and the Best Start Plan itself are completely consistent with the Toronto Vision for Children as described in BGY and other City documents related to children.

#### Best Start Vision

The creation of the Best Start Plan – Toronto's Vision for Children was the responsibility of the Best Start Network and lays out the Network's vision for building a community/neighbourhood hub delivery system to bring together child care, kindergarten, parenting programs, screening and assessment and access to a range of children's support services such as pre-school speech and language and mental health services. The Network adopted the City's Vision for Children Best Generation Yet as the framework and its vision in their plan. The plan is built on the core components of First Duty and envisions using the Best Start Network and a Memorandum of Understanding between the core service providers to drive integration. This document is designed to build upon the existing service structure and integrated early childhood strategies in Toronto.

The Best Start Plan completes the three requirements of Best Start in Phase 1. Other Phase 1 activities included development of the Best Start Service and Transition Plan and the Best Start Infrastructure Plan.

The Best Start Service and Transition Infrastructure Plan outlines strategies for implementing Best Start in 2005 and 2006 with a more general outlook for 2007-2009. The plan outlines how the City will increase licensed child care spaces, increase child care fee subsidies, improve supports for children with special needs and provide wage subsidies. Through these amendments to the 2005-2009 Child Care Service Plan, the City is incorporating Best Start components into its current child care service plan.

The Best Start Vision lays out the vision for future planning and service integration, and provides a framework for community/neighbourhood planning and implementation. The Vision document is further described below and is Appendix 3.

### Toronto First Duty

The *Toronto First Duty Project* (TFD) is a project that brings together the three early years streams— regulated child care, kindergarten and parenting supports – into a single accessible service for children prenatal to six. The project vision begins with a blending of child care, kindergarten and parenting support programs anchored at school sites, with other services joining the hub depending on the different needs of the particular community.

The project has developed through the leadership of the City of Toronto, The Atkinson Charitable Foundation, and the Toronto District School Board and demonstrates working models of integration at the neighbourhood level.

TFD comprises five sites with local elementary schools in communities across Toronto. The communities and the services in the TFD sites varied, allowing the project to test the effectiveness of different approaches. City of Toronto funding for the project is available until June 2006. The Atkinson Charitable Foundation will continue funding until 2008 the Bruce / Woodgreen Early Learning site.

TFD is evidence-based in that it builds on the results of the project evaluation, which started as the project was being developed. The final report of the TFD first phase (2001-2005) is nearing completion.

### The relationship of Best Generation Yet, 2005-2009 Child Care Service Plan amended to include Best Start, Ontario's Best Start Strategy and Toronto First Duty

Best Generation Yet provides the policy context and framework for future development and integration of services for children aged 0-12 in Toronto. Best Start, in its role as the primary program initiative for children 0-6, is completely consistent with BGY. The lessons learned from the Toronto First Duty evaluation have informed both BGY and Best Start. All three support service integration for all families through the development of neighbourhood hubs with child care, kindergarten and family support programs at their core and, taken together, provide a firm platform for future planning and service delivery. In addition, since BGY includes children aged 0-12, it provides a platform for new areas of advocacy and program expansion such as the “middle years” children – those aged 6-12.

To support the implementation of Best Start, the City was responsible for the establishment of the Best Start Network consisting of representatives of the provincial government, school boards and service sectors. The network has enhanced the ability of governments and community organizations to plan together. Although Best Start will not be fully implemented for a number of years, Best Start Networks were asked to describe their vision/plan for what Best Start – fully implemented – would look like in their communities.

As a result the Best Start Network has developed a Toronto Best Start Plan – Toronto Vision for Children. This document builds on the City’s Vision for Children and Best Generation Yet goals of service integration and provides a framework for community planning. The Best Start Network is responsible for supporting the implementation of Best Start and provides a structure to support the vision for service integration by:

- informing the development of an integrated system of services
- identifying and monitoring service, policy, resource and systems issues
- building cross-sectoral linkages
- involving key service providers in the community
- integrating plans to enhance early identification and intervention programs
- supporting the identification of existing and developing new service protocols to support service integration

As noted previously, Toronto’s Best Start Plan has adopted the vision set out in Best Generation Yet and focuses on the development of community/neighbourhood hubs to promote collaborative efforts among service providers across the children’s services system. By 2016 Toronto Best Start will put the vision into action for young children & families. It aims to:

- create a comprehensive system of services that supports children and families;
- develop community/neighbourhood hubs in, or linked to schools;
- increase access to a continuum of early identification & early intervention services;
- support parents;
- measure child outcomes; and
- identify policy, resource and systems issues and gaps.

In our efforts to move towards strengthening integration TFD has provided valuable information for planning and integration of early years services. The Best Start Plan has incorporated much of the learning from Toronto First Duty.

While Best Start deals only with children under age six and is more limited in its scope and depth than the City’s 2005-2009 Child Care Service Plan, the basic service planning principles, established by Toronto City Council, still apply:

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

## How the Best Start Initiative Can Best Incorporate First Duty Program Directions

Based on the recommendations of the McCain-Mustard *Early Years Study*, Toronto First Duty demonstrates the integration of the early childhood service streams – kindergarten, child care and family supports – into a quality comprehensive program for all families. Toronto First Duty is informing the expansion and operations of children programs and is reflected in the city’s and the Province’s Best Start directions.

Through the implementation of Best Start, Toronto First Duty now moves from a demonstration model to a new way of providing early childhood services and its leadership will continue to support integration. Representatives from the Toronto First Duty Steering Committee are members of the Best Start Network.

The research findings on Phase 1 of Toronto First Duty chart the development, implementation and impacts of the TFD model at five school-community sites. Changes, benefits and challenges are described at three levels: for practice, programs and policy; for families; and for communities.

### Practice, Programs, and Policy

- For programs, the rated quality of early childhood program environments (on the ECERS-R, a standardized measure of quality) generally increased as implementation of the TFD approach unfolded.
- For front line staff, working in integrated staff teams meant overcoming predictable professional barriers to find common purpose in improving program environments and improving results for children. Staff teams worked most seamlessly and effectively when they had time to meet on a regular basis, joint professional development, and concrete aims for program improvement and specific aims for children.
- For successful integrated early childhood school hubs, organizational change and leadership are required. For example, the TDSB reorganized its approach to the early years partly as a result of participating, which in turn supported the work at TFD school sites. At the school level, principal leadership and buy-in helped some sites move further towards the integrated model than others.
- Joining up existing early childhood programs is more difficult than starting new program activities. However, it is the redesign of existing program structures and funding that are likely to be sustainable beyond Phase 1.
- The TFD model influenced policy in Ontario and other jurisdictions. Ontario’s Best Start Strategy shares a common long term vision of a 0 - 6 year old system. It proposes neighbourhood hub models that combine child care, family support and kindergarten programs linked to, or located in, local primary schools. As in TFD, these hubs provide a platform for other services including early identification and intervention. The Toronto

Best Start Network is informed by TFD and has incorporated key components into the initial planning documents. TFD has been highlighted in two pan-Canadian initiatives - the Integration Network and the YWCA Building Community Architecture for Early Childhood.

#### Families

- For parents, experience with integrated preschool services in TFD appeared to increase their capacity and confidence in helping their children learn and in communicating with the school and teachers in kindergarten. This capacity-building worked for parents who are immigrants as well as for those born in Canada.
- Parents also reported high levels of satisfaction with TFD programming and with the concept of integrated services. From early implementation to full implementation, parents reported being consulted more about services and programming and they also reported better access to the range of programming as scheduling became more flexible.
- For children, the evaluation was not designed to directly test outcomes. However, both kindergarten teacher ratings of school readiness on the Early Development Instrument (EDI) and direct assessments by the research suggest that children have benefited socially and in pre-academic skill.

#### Community

- Sites began their work with community consultation and worked on outreach to all parents. Intake and tracking data show that they were successful in bringing in families who represent the diversity of neighbourhoods they serve. Despite broad participation of parents and children, awareness of the Toronto First Duty programs and “brand” was minimal among other community members.

#### Putting it all together

- Despite the demonstrated successes, barriers remain.
- Separate funding, governance and legislative structures for education, child care and other family and children’s services make it difficult to integrate people and programs at the local level. Differences in staffing requirements, regulations and funding structures become obstacles to making seamless environments. Long term change and sustainability requires an overhaul of legislative requirements, professional education and development of staff and local governance structures.
- The on-the-ground success of a TFD model will depend on the front-line staff. System redesign will remove many barriers. However, it is essential that staff are motivated to become part of an integrated early childhood workforce which means blending professional education and development as well as developing equitable compensation and working environments.

- Child care remains the program component that is most difficult to incorporate and expand in an integrated model. It is the only program that relies on parent fees (paid directly by parents or through child care fee subsidies) and is the most highly regulated component. It is also central to the range of options necessary to support young children and their families.

The application of the TFD research results will support the development of the newly-funded sites under Best start. TFD has developed a Phase 2 Innovation Strategy, which will provide a support system with a broad community focus to this.

TFD has developed a Guide to Early Childhood Service Integration to support the community and the TFD Phase 2 Innovation Strategy will expand the TFD learning beyond the existing five sites, in order to support the service integration policy direction of the three early childhood streams of child care, kindergarten and parenting supports.

The support system that is being developed in Toronto First Duty Phase 2 will include various activities including but not limited to:

- introduction/overview of Toronto First Duty;
- training Sessions/Workshops; and
- tools: How to Manual, Site Assessment Checklist, etc.

These activities will be coordinated centrally and delivered across the city on a community/neighbourhood basis.

Participants will include all the stakeholder sectors and their staff:

- School Boards
- City of Toronto
- Parenting/Family Resource/OEYC's
- Child Care
- Community Agencies

In addition, the City of Toronto will continue as a member of the TFD Steering Committee and will:

- support continued limited research into best practices and accountability and support the Toronto wide conference using existing resources and expertise and share the lessons learned by TFD sites; and
- support communication s and evidence based story-telling in order to expand the TFD profile as well as support the integrated strategies and ongoing development of plans to offer families a range of supports.

## The Form By Which The City Will Remain Involved With The First Duty Prototype At Bruce School

Although the City's funding for TFD ends in June 06, the Atkinson Charitable Foundation is continuing to fund the Bruce School site until 2008. The partnerships between the City of Toronto, the Atkinson Charitable Foundation and the Toronto District School board will be sustained and supported through ongoing development at the Bruce-Woodgreen Early Learning site which represents the best example of achieving service integration of licensed care, kindergarten and family resource programs.

The City of Toronto will:

- continue to provide both management and operational support to the Bruce-Woodgreen site to further develop the integrated model that will cover children 2.5 to 6 years (current and expanded part day, full day and extended day programs with flat parent fee that will be waived for low income families and continue to incorporate parenting supports; and
- support the implementation of a fee subsidy model that relies on a simplified income test.

In approving the BGY recommendations, Council set the City on the road to achieving "a comprehensive system of integrated, inclusive and high-quality services for children that will support best outcomes for Toronto's children". Toronto City Council received a progress report on BGY (J/F06), as did the Roundtable on Children, Youth and Education. The integration of the Children's Services Plans will be further guided and monitored through the Advisory Committee on Integrated Services for Children. A proposed structure, Terms of Reference and membership are being prepared for the April Policy and Finance Committee meeting. The General Manager of Children's Services will continue to implement the City's children's agenda. As well, a joint plan for children's services will be developed to inform the 2007 budget. The plan will be based on BGY goals and objectives as well as existing divisional strategic and service plans and will contain outcomes, indicators and costings. The joint service planning process will be ongoing to support subsequent city budgets. All divisions delivering services for children that are building or renovating space will assess the possibilities for developing facilities for integrated programs.

Toronto is putting to good use the experience gained through TFD. The City has learned that the creation of integrated hubs takes time, community readiness and resources to support the progress towards integration. Early learning and care hubs will be developed under Best Start and in communities where clusters of services and community readiness combine to provide environments that will support integrated service provision.

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 in how to make system shifts and how to integrate programs on a day-to-day basis. The Best Start Network's Vision Plan builds on the City's BGY plan and provides 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 from kindergarten, child care and family support, parent participation and a continuum of supports.

Conclusions:

This report provides an overview of the four initiatives addressing the integration of Children's Services Plans: Best Generation Yet, the City's Child Care Service Plan 2005-2009, Best Start Strategy, and the First Duty Project, and the relationship between them. These initiatives have common elements and intersect with each other with the shared goal of providing enhanced and integrated children's services in Toronto, as envisioned in the overarching framework of the City's BGY plan. This report then demonstrates how the preliminary findings from Toronto First Duty are being implemented in the Best Start initiative, and comments on how the findings of TFD will continue to inform the rollout of Toronto's Best Start plan. Finally, the report discusses and seeks endorsement for Toronto's Vision for Best Start.

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General Manager of Children's Services

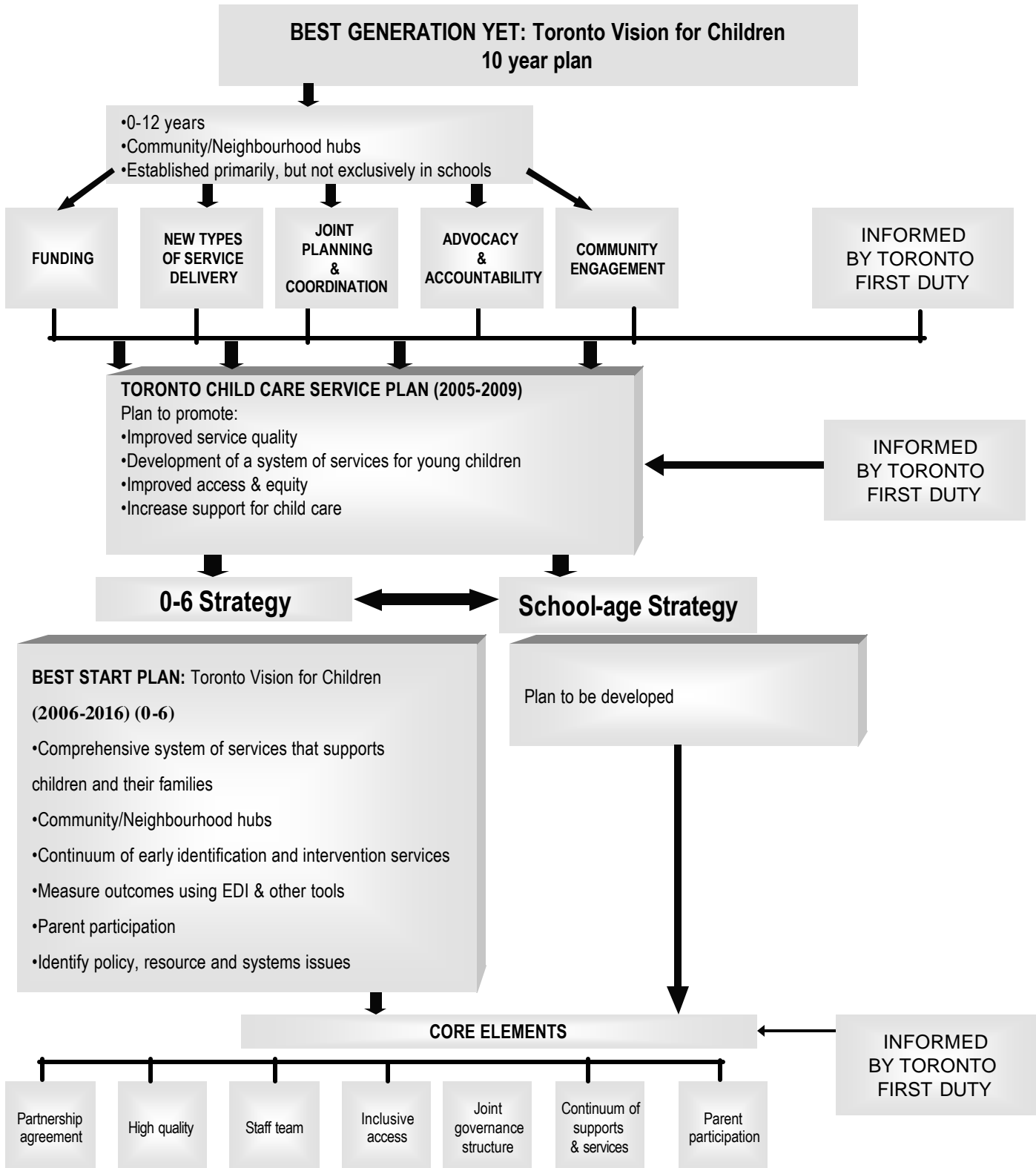
List of Attachments:

- Appendix 1 - Children's Services Plans Chart
- Appendix 2 - Flow Chart – City of Toronto: Integrated Children's Planning Initiatives
- Appendix 3 - Best Start Plan Toronto Vision for Children January 2006 Toronto Best Start Network

Appendix 1  
Children's Services Plans

<b>Initiative</b>	<b>Best Generation Yet</b>	<b>First Duty Project</b>	<b>Best Start Strategy</b>	<b>2005-2009 Child Care Service Plan</b>
Lead Agency	City of Toronto	City of Toronto, TDSB, Atkinson Foundation & community partners	Province of Ontario	City of Toronto Children's Services Division
Time Period	10 years	Started in 1999, continued to June 2006	10-15 years to implement	5 years
Age of Children	0-12 years	0-6 years	0-6 years	0-12 years
Scope	All City services for children	5 pilot sites in Toronto	Throughout the Province of Ontario	Children's Service Division

# City of Toronto: Integrated Children's Planning Initiatives



“Regardless of the socio-economic status of his/her family and community, every child has the right to childhood experiences which promote the changes of developing into a healthy, well-adjusted and productive adult” Adopted by Toronto City Council, November, 1999

# **Best Start Plan**

## **Toronto Vision for Children**

**January 2006**

**Toronto Best Start Network**

January 31, 2006

Dear Community Partner:

The Toronto Best Start Network is pleased to submit the attached Best Start Plan: Toronto Vision for Children. This plan should be read as an accompanying document to the *2005-2009 Child Care Service Plan* (May, 2005), and *The Best Start Service and Transition Infrastructure Plan* (November, 2005).

The Best Start Plan: Toronto Vision for Children responds to the Implementation Planning Guidelines for Best Start Networks (June, 2005). Toronto's Vision is designed to build upon the existing service structure and integrated early childhood strategies in Toronto. The Best Start Plan lays out the vision for future planning and service integration, and provides a framework for community/neighbourhood planning and implementation.

Preliminary consultation with a cross-section of parents, service providers and networks within Toronto provided initial direction. The Best Start Plan lays the foundation for the establishment of a broad stakeholder consultation process that will ensure the Toronto Vision for Children is implemented in a way that meets the needs of Toronto's diverse community.

Our collective task now is to build on the strengths of our communities and consolidate our commitment to building communities where children and their families are supported and have access to the services they need and deserve. We are confident that the Best Start Plan: Toronto Vision for Children will provide the direction and vision to accomplish that mission.

Sincerely,



Brenda Patterson  
General Manager  
Toronto Children's Services  
Chair, Toronto Best Start Network

attachment

## **Preamble**

The Toronto Vision for Children builds on the Best Start strategy that focuses on early learning and care, primarily on meeting children's and family's needs by strengthening, enhancing, building on and integrating existing programs and services.

The Vision set in this document will be driven by the community. Given the unique characteristics of the different populations including Aboriginal and Francophone, the unique needs of children and families will be addressed through the planning and implementation process and may look different in various communities. The Vision provides a framework for how to best organize and integrate services with the goal of improved outcomes for children.

***Basic to a good society is that children are welcome, are given a good environment during childhood and are the concern of the whole society. Children have a right to secure living conditions that enhance their development. Preschool has an important function in children's lives. It offers a comprehensive programme and is a source of stimulation in the children's development. It gives them a chance to meet other children and adults and to be part of an experience of fellowship and friendship. It is a complement to the upbringing a child gets at home (Family Aid Commission, Sweden, 1981, cited in Moss and Penn, 1996, p.1)***

# Best Start Plan: Toronto Vision for Children

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## **Best Start Plan: Toronto Vision for Children**

### **1. Introduction**

The document covers the following areas:

1. The Toronto Vision for Children
2. Building a system and community capacity for Best Start
3. Getting Started

This document responds to Ontario's Best Start Strategy which provides a total of \$1.1 billion in funding, with Toronto receiving \$125 million, over the next 3 years to:

- Expand regulated early learning and child care spaces and subsidies. The first priority for expansion will be for children in junior and senior kindergarten for non-school hours with the gradual expansion of early learning and child care spaces and subsidies for younger children
- Plan for community/neighbourhood hub delivery system (predominantly in Ontario's publicly-funded schools) to bring together screening, assessment and treatment, child care and parenting programs, with direct links to other children's services, such as mental health services and speech and language resources to be implemented by 2016.

Responding to the above priorities, this report lays out the vision and framework for the planning and delivery of child and family services in the City of Toronto, and provides the platform for future advocacy for a comprehensive and equitable system of integrated, inclusive and high quality services for children aged 0 – 12. It is a companion document to the Best Start Service and Transition Infrastructure Plan (November 2005) and the City of Toronto 2005 – 2009 Child Care Service Plan (May 2005).

The Best Generation Yet, (June 2005) provides the framework for the expansion and integration of Toronto's services for children 0 – 12, and for the implementation of the Toronto Best Start Plan (0 – 6). It provides the framework for City plans for children, and ties this together with the initiatives from other orders of government.

## **2. The Toronto Vision for Children**

**“Regardless of the socio-economic status of his/her family and community, every child has the right to childhood experiences, which promote the chances of developing into a healthy, well-adjusted and productive adult”.<sup>1</sup>**

**Toronto shall be a City where:<sup>2</sup>**

- Children are recognized as unique human beings with differing needs for nurturing and support from their families, communities and society
- All children have adequate income, health, housing, food and nutrition, care and education, safety and security, recreation, leisure and cultural experiences. The supports necessary to achieve this will be available at all stages of childhood: pre-conception, pre-natal, post-partum, pre-school and school age. They will ensure the healthy physical, intellectual and social development of children “in the here and now” as well as build the foundation for their development into competent adults
- Families with young children have timely access to a range of universal, high-quality, developmental and affordable programs which support them, throughout the family-life cycle, in their roles as parents, workers and urban citizens
- Communities welcome children and are fully engaged in the creation and operation of neighbourhood-based service “hubs” that provide expanded, comprehensive, culturally-appropriate, high-quality environments and programs built on the best available knowledge of child development and provision of services for children
- Clean air and water and a sustainable environment are understood by everyone as integral to a healthy childhood
- All governments, authorities and organizations involved in programs for young children and families work together to plan, develop, administer, fund, regulate, deliver and are accountable for a new service system built on goals and targets for quality, expansion, accessibility and effective use of resources. Their task will be to turn separate services into a coherent system of services.

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<sup>1</sup> Adopted by Toronto City Council, November, 1999

<sup>2</sup> Adopted by the Mayor’s Roundtable on Children, Youth and Education (January, 2005)

## **2.1 Best Start goals**

**By 2016 Toronto Best Start will put the Toronto Vision into action for young children and their families. It aims to:**

- Create a comprehensive system of services that supports children and their families with specific plans to address the needs of Francophone and Aboriginal populations and children with special needs from birth to age twelve
- Establish access for all children and families to community/neighbourhood hubs that are located in, or linked to, elementary schools wherever possible
- Increase access to a continuum of early identification and intervention services
- Support parents to participate in their child's early learning and development as they pursue work, study, family, and community responsibilities
- Measure outcomes for children using the Early Development Instrument and other measurement tools to identify patterns, needs and future directions in programs and services for young children
- Identify policy, resource and systems issues, and gaps.

**The Best Start plan will be consistent with Toronto's Vision for children and Best Start goals, and will support the development of services that are:**

- Based on knowledge of the importance of the early years and early child development
- Publicly resourced for long-term sustainability
- Flexible and coordinated to maximize resources and facilitate access
- Delivered by qualified, professional staff supported by pre- and post-employment training and development, and paid at a level that reflects the value of their work
- Responsive to neighbourhood needs, with additional supports for children in special circumstances due to socio-economic status, family structure, race and ethnicity, ability, or other such grounds.

### **3. Building the vision**

#### **Building the Toronto Best Start Plan**

Information and consultation sessions were carried out in Toronto from October to December 2005. Sessions were designed to update the community on Best Start activities taking place at both Provincial and Municipal levels, and to solicit initial recommendations from the community on general principles and implementation strategies being considered for Best Start in Toronto.

Feedback from the consultation sessions informed the development of the Toronto Best Start Plan, and will provide direction for future consultation and implementation strategies. A working-group of the Toronto Best Start Network was charged with formulating surveys and focus group questions, and to develop the Toronto Best Start Plan, with further input from the broader Best Start Network.

While timelines restricted the extent of this preliminary consultation stage, every effort was made to meet with a cross-section of parents, service providers and networks within Toronto. Sessions were held in various locations across the city, with a number of stakeholders.

#### **Parents**

<b>Representation</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Date</b>
Ontario Early Years Centre (O.E.Y.C.)	North York	November 23
Parent Action Network	Downtown - west	November 17
Community centre	Downtown - east	December 3
Child care board of directors	Scarborough	December 5

Focus group questions and responses (Appendix B)

### Service provider community – quadrant-wide sessions

Representation at these sessions was cross-sectoral, including but not limited to; child care, children's mental health, special needs, O.E.Y.C.

Representation	Location	Date
Cross-sectoral	North York	October 28
Cross-sectoral	Etobicoke	October 19
Cross-sectoral	Downtown	October 17
Cross-sectoral	Scarborough	October 26

### Coalitions/networks

Representation	Location	Date
Action for Children Today and Tomorrow (A.C.T.T.)	Downtown - East	October 24
Scarborough 0 - 6 Committee	Scarborough	October 31
York South-Weston riding table	York South-Weston	November 16
Black Creek Community Partners	North/West Toronto	December 7
North Toronto 0 - 6 Coalition	North/Central Downtown	December 6

### A series of questions were posed to networks/coalitions:

- What recommendation did they have regarding local planning and implementation?
- How would this structure ensure broad community/neighbourhood input?

### Aboriginal & Francophone community

The Best Start Network has been working with representatives in the Francophone and Aboriginal communities to begin outlining a meaningful process for consultation and implementation of the community/neighbourhood hub delivery system within their communities. A Francophone working group and an Aboriginal advisory group have been formed to facilitate this process.

#### **4. Building a system and community capacity for Best Start**

Service integration is essential to developing a high quality early learning and care system for Toronto.

- The Toronto Best Start vision promotes service integration for all families through the development of the neighbourhood hub delivery system - child care, kindergarten and family support programs will be at their core
- The neighbourhood hub delivery system will promote and strengthen collaborative efforts amongst service providers.

##### **4.1 Toronto Best Start Network – systems level**

**Successful implementation of the community/neighbourhood hub delivery system will require strong leadership, willingness to collaborate, community focus, school involvement, adequate resources and information, and effective communications. To achieve this it is important to:**

- Have at a systems level, an organizational structure that supports integration – one that creates a foundation and linkages; identifies opportunities, barriers and successes and, that informs and facilitates strategic planning across the system.

**The Toronto Best Start Network provides a structure to support the vision of service integration to best meet the needs of families in the community.**

**The Best Start Network will:**

- Inform the development of an integrated, comprehensive system of services that supports families and their children from conception through the transition into school (0 – 6 years) including provisions for children with special needs, Francophone and Aboriginal populations
- Identify and monitor service, policy, resource and systems issues
- Build cross-sectoral linkages and agreements to increase service integration
- Involve key service providers in the community
- Integrate plans to enhance early identification and intervention programs
- Support the identification of existing and development of new service protocols to support service integration

- Support the engagement of parents in the planning and implementation of the community/neighbourhood hub delivery system
- Build on existing Regional and local coordinating networks, addressing Francophone/Aboriginal realities.

### **Shared accountability and declaration of commitment**

It is important to ensure that there is accountability in decision-making processes and monitoring of the impact that planning outcomes may have on the children's service system.

#### **This will be achieved through:**

- A shared *Memorandum of Understanding* between the core service providers – the City of Toronto Children's Services, the four School Boards and Toronto Public Health – describing partner roles and responsibilities and their commitments to service integration.

#### **Key components of the *Memorandum of Understanding* will include:**

- Partnership description
- Declaration of commitment
- Description of roles and responsibilities in the service delivery process in building and maintaining a comprehensive multi-year focus on service integration
- Endorsement from the Best Start Start Network members.

### **Monitoring and accountability**

Achieving the vision will require shared political commitment, public and institutional support and accountability mechanisms to measure our progress. In order to track progress from co-existence to collaboration and consolidation of early learning and child care programs, it is proposed that a management tool be implemented as an integral component for monitoring and accountability. The *Indicators of Change*, a management tool developed by Toronto First Duty is used to track progress along the continuum.

### **5. The community/neighbourhood hub delivery system**

Strategies to implement the community/neighbourhood hub delivery system will happen across the children's service system and are not solely tied to the expansion of child care or any specific funding allocation. Implementation strategies will build on what exists, and move forward based on opportunities and community need. The community/neighbourhood hub delivery system is predicated on adequate and stable funding; however the initial stages of moving forward will be built on existing resources.

In addition, there is a recognition that the system of services to the Aboriginal and Francophone community may be different, in keeping with the unique characteristics and needs of those communities. The community/neighbourhood hub delivery system must be responsive to the challenges and obstacles of these communities, given their provincial responsibility and socio-demographic make-up.

Central to the community/neighbourhood hub delivery system is the collaboration/integration of the three core early childhood services – child care, kindergarten and family supports. From this service platform, families can be linked to more specialized services as required. Lessons learned from projects such as Toronto First Duty will inform the development of service integration.

#### **Through the development of community/neighbourhood hubs, communities may benefit from the following outcomes:**

- Improved outcomes for children.
- Greater awareness of child development
- Increased participation of children in the enjoyment of quality early childhood learning, care and support services
- Improved access by families to a comprehensive range of services
- Enhanced parent participation in their children's early learning
- Enhanced links and coordination between education, child care and family support services
- Innovative practice in the provision of services which are responsive to the needs of families and children

- Cross-government commitment to the provision of services

**Families with children with special needs will benefit from:**

- Greater awareness of the services available to support inclusion of children with special needs
- Enhanced coordination between community service providers to ensure services are responsive to the needs of children with special needs
- Simplified access to services that support children with special needs.

### **5.1 Community/neighbourhood hub core elements**

“Hub-like” activity exists presently in Toronto. In many communities, organizations integrate and/or coordinate services for families and children. Although the core elements (kindergarten, child care and family support) form the platform for integrated service delivery, local need and resources will determine how programs work together and what additional services are available. There are currently over 300 sites where services are collocated and could serve as natural building blocks for integration. (Appendix E)

**The core elements of community/neighbourhood hub service delivery include:**

- A community/neighbourhood **partnership agreement** reflecting the vision and goals of Toronto Best Start
- A **high quality learning & care environment** that combines learning expectations, activities and routines from existing kindergarten, child care and family support programs
- An **early years staff team** including teachers, early childhood educators, educational assistants and family support staff and others who work together toward common goals
- **Inclusive access**, meeting the needs of all children and families
- A **governance structure** to support community/neighbourhood planning, service integration and local decision making

- A **continuum of supports and services** responding to the changing needs of all families and children, and making the most efficient use of resources
- **Parent participation** in their children’s early learning and development through direct involvement in programs, planning and decision-making, and an opportunity for participation at the governance structure.

### **Community/neighbourhood hub service locations**

Wherever possible, community/neighbourhood hubs will be located in schools. The hubs will include the core early childhood services: child care, kindergarten and family support programs, and will incorporate the community/neighbourhood hub service delivery framework to achieve service integration.

- Services may take place under one roof or through multiple locations and may be provided by one organization or several working in collaboration. This approach is consistent with Ministry priorities and builds on the considerable work already done by the municipality and school boards and recognizes the ongoing efforts among service providers to co-ordinate service delivery for families
- Parents may choose to use services in their home neighbourhood or their work community, and can expect the same high quality service regardless of location.

### **The activities of the community/neighbourhood hub include:**

- Licensed child care for children from birth to 4 years
- An integrated licensed child care/kindergarten program with option to attend a half-day, a full day or an extended day for 4 and 5 year-olds
- A variety of wide ranging, high quality, developmentally and culturally appropriate before and after school programs, such as licensed child care, social – recreational programs, sports, arts, music, and library services that could be offered as part of the hub site or in the community as appropriate
- Family support providing a range of parenting resources, links to other community services, as well as early learning and school readiness programs
- Links to public health programs, such as, Healthy Babies Healthy Children, Preschool Speech and Language, Healthiest Babies Possible, Parent Education, Early Identification and Dental Care

- Nutrition programs such as breakfast, lunch, healthy snacks, Peer Nutrition
- The ability to facilitate access for families to other services
- Links to public libraries such as Baby Time, Toddler Time, Preschool Story Time, Leading To Reading and parenting programs, as well as the collections and services of the public library.

It is recognized that in some locations it may not be viable to offer the full spectrum of early learning and care programs and flexible approaches to service delivery must be considered in the planning and delivery of services. (Appendix D – Map of child care programs for 4 & 5 year olds located in elementary schools and Appendix E – Map of services for children which are collocated).

## **6. Getting started**

### **February through June 2006**

The Toronto Best Start Network will move forward in developing strategies to support the planning and implementation of the Toronto Vision for Children once the plan is formally endorsed. Strategies will include establishing the community/neighbourhood planning process.

### **Establish an implementation coordinating group**

The Toronto Best Start Network will establish an implementation group responsible for guiding implementation of the Toronto Vision for Children and resolving key issues, barriers and obstacles to developing a community/neighbourhood hub delivery system. This group will be a subcommittee of the Network. To develop the group, the network will re-constitute the original signatory group which includes; 4 school boards, Public Health, Ministry of Children and Youth Services, Consolidated Municipal Service Manager and the Ministry of Education. Additional members will be identified building on existing partnerships and planning structures. The First Duty Project Steering Committee could provide some leadership in this area.

### **6.1 The Toronto Best Start planning process**

A planning process will be established to guide the development of a community/ neighbourhood hub delivery system; ensure equitable distribution of services throughout Toronto; and ensure equity and access for all families with children aged 0 – 6. The planning process will:

- Include and facilitate consultation with existing stakeholders, service providers and their networks
- Include and facilitate consultation with all members of the community concerned with children and families, particularly parents and caregivers
- Be open and transparent.

#### **Community consultation/planning**

Community consultation will include parents and caregivers, community members and sectors involved in planning and delivery of services for families and children.

<b>Parents</b>	<b>Service providers</b>	<b>Other</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working parents</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Licensed child care/home child care</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business representatives</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stay at home parents</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community &amp; faith groups</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Users of child care</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recreation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individuals</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Users of parenting/family resource</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specialized services (including, but not limited to: children’s mental health, PSL, IHP, special needs resources)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local children/family service planning networks and coalitions</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Families with children with special needs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family resource/parenting/O.E.Y.C.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elected officials</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Users of recreation programs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Health</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aboriginal and Francophone parents</li> </ul>		

## **6.2 Parent engagement strategy**

Ongoing parental engagement is an important component of Best Start and the Toronto Vision for Children. A comprehensive parent engagement strategy will be developed to inform parents and the community on the Vision for Children. Caregivers and the community will need to be informed of the importance of early learning and child care and the benefits of a community/neighbourhood hub delivery system. Parent participation in the planning and implementation of Best Start is essential.

### **The parent engagement strategy will aim to:**

- Inform parents about the importance of early childhood development
- Inform parents about the Toronto Vision for Children
- Seek input on the vision and identify how the community/neighbourhood hub service delivery system can support them
- Increase parent's participation in Best Start programs and services
- Increase parent's participation in the planning and governance of the community/neighbourhood hub delivery system.

## **6.3 Challenges to implementing Toronto's Vision for Children**

### **Funding barriers:**

- Lack of funding to implement the community/neighbourhood hub delivery system
- Availability of space in schools and occupancy costs
- Unfunded community agencies – agencies required to assume management and administrative costs
- Operating costs to accommodate coordination and facilitation activities
- Increased demand on existing programs without increased funding

### **Policy barriers:**

- Fractured funding structure and liability issues in integrated settings
- Combining universal and targeted programs for children 0 – 6 is a primary barrier to integrating services;
  - Kindergarten is available with no fee to parents for all children, ages 4 and 5

- Parenting/family support and other programs such as the Ontario Early Years Centres have no or very low fees. Where they are available, programs are open to all pre-schoolers attending with their parents.
- Families who cannot afford full fee child care and are ineligible for fee assistance currently face affordability barriers.
- Some provisions of Ontario's Day Nurseries Act limit program flexibility including sole recognition of the Early Childhood Educator credential in ratios and restrictions of age groupings
- Inconsistent pedagogy of early learning and child care
- Convergence of multiple plans and visions: Child Care Service Plan, Ontario Early Years Centres, City of Toronto Best Generation Yet, and community agencies
- Lack of integrated management information systems to support planning and monitoring
- Harmonizing of existing policies and operations.

**Institutional barriers:**

- Coordination among different service providers demands the harmonizing of existing policies and operations
- Convergence of different service providers from numerous mandates
- Opposing perceptions of imposed values and beliefs about early childhood development.

**Other:**

- Engagement of community
- Public education and training
- Incentives for people and organizations to act in a new way.

## **6.4 Key deliverables**

Critical Path (Appendix C)

**Year 1 to 5 (2006 – 2011) (not stated in order of priority)**

### **Consultation & planning**

- Develop and implement a consultation strategy
- Identify implementation planning mechanisms at the system and neighbourhood level
- Develop implementation action plan
- Develop a plan to monitor progress on the development of the community/neighbourhood hub delivery system
- Set targets and timelines
- Identify community development strategy
- Identify training needs.

### **Data collection/mapping**

- Develop benchmarks and service levels
- Create community profiles
- Identify community demographics
- Map clusters of services
- Establish an integrated data management system to support planning.

### **Neighbourhood level**

- Development of community/neighbourhood action plans
- Establish community development process to support planning.

## **Appendix A – Research indicates that service integration is supported by:**

- An understanding that all children benefit from quality early learning experiences
- A paradigm shift in service provision from separate silos to collaborative partnering in all sectors
- Service providers and their system leaders understanding the reasons for integration, and believing in it
- Sufficient time for inter-disciplinary staff teams to develop trusting, respectful relationships by providing opportunities for professional development, and to enable joint planning and programming
- The harmonization of staff qualifications and remuneration across sectors
- The creation of a formal process/structure for surfacing and addressing barriers and issues
- The leadership of school principals, family support workers and child care supervisors. They, along with other community champions, provide the top-down support and leadership
- Engaging key community stakeholders (families, service providers, advocates and elected representatives) early on in the groundwork phase, to ensure community understanding of early learning and care
- The professional development of staff, and the development of teaching materials that reflect research-based understandings of children’s learning and the development of public policies that support the provision of quality preschool experiences are key components to realizing the full potential of young children
- The presence of well trained staff as the most important predictor of quality in both child care and kindergarten
- Skills and expertise in facilitation and coordination to support community development.

## **Appendix B – Focus group questions and responses**

4 parent information/consultation sessions were held in late November/December 2005 to provide a snapshot of parent input. Parents involved in this preliminary consultation represent the following groups

- 1 group O.E.Y.C. parents
- 1 childcare board
- 1 parent advocacy group
- 1 community parent meeting

### **What do you consider are the most important services for families with children 0 – 12 years?**

- Free programs for infants and toddlers for 2 hours
- Free or low cost to family
- Early learning and care/child development programs
- Early identification of special needs (e.g. Autism), prevention, health
- More spaces for registered parks & recreation programs
- Part-time/flexible spaces
- Subsidy
- Quality childcare
- Having after school programs & out of school learning e.g. Kumon math/Sylvan
- Early years centres
- Integration of services: childcare & schools working together
- School age program with activities, sports, excursions, clubs atmosphere
- Child care should be available in (every child's) home-school
- Community use of school outside school hours
- Health screening/early identification
- In-service [training for staff] provided by Public Health
- Parent drop-in/parenting centre available in all schools
- Integration with existing services, so parents can easily be linked from one program to another

- Improve quality of Parks and Recreation.

**What issues affect accessibility for families to programs/services in Toronto, and what suggestions do you have to make this easier?**

- Location & distance
- Cost & [childcare] subsidy inflexibility
- Times/schedules (Satellite O.E.Y.C. programs need more hours)
- Proximity to school (for school-age children)
- Unaware of what services exist – don't know where to access information
- Language barriers - ESL can make it difficult to access services
- Those without status in Canada – can't access services (e.g. schools)
- Many newcomers are not used to the cold so traveling during the winter isn't an option
- Currently programs aren't connected so difficult to transition from one to another
- Competition between programs in the past has meant services don't refer as much as needed
- Getting around Scarborough is difficult if you don't have a car. Schools are the ideal infrastructure as they're in every community and walkable.

Suggestions

- Outreach in various languages
- TTC accessible
- Must be in the neighbourhood. Needs to be in walking distance [from home]
- Send information out through citizenship/immigration (would get to all new immigrants)
- Information available through Doctors offices
- Need short-term, part-time, overnight & weekend child care
- Reduce cost of child care
- Staff and programs should be representative of the community
- Programs that parents/children can relate to
- More options – history, music (not just choir or classical music)
- More inclusive, multi-cultural
- Flexibility, diversity
- Hours of childcare and lack of availability of part-time care

- Outreach needs to be done on a human scale – one to one communication. Too much on the internet.

**Where in your community would be the best place for families to go for programs/services?**

- The school – every neighbourhood has a school
- Not every neighbourhood has a child care or a community centre
- Community centre - different services currently available, close to home
- Home child care can be more flexible
- Bring services to the family (home visitors, or specialists to child care, etc.).

**As the funding available through Best Start is aimed at children 0 – 6 years, what suggestions do you have for us in how we should address the issue of caring for children 6 – 12 years?**

- After-school programs & place to do homework (otherwise children left home – alone)
- Workshops for parents
- Workshops for children
- Quality programs
- Summer & school holiday programs
- Spend money on prevention – keeping kids out of trouble (gang/gun issue)
- Children need options (chess club, sports, music, drama etc.)
- Free or low cost to family
- Homework club
- ESL for new & recent immigrant children & youth (cutbacks in elementary and ESL programs affect academics)
- Neighbours helping.

**Flexible hours**

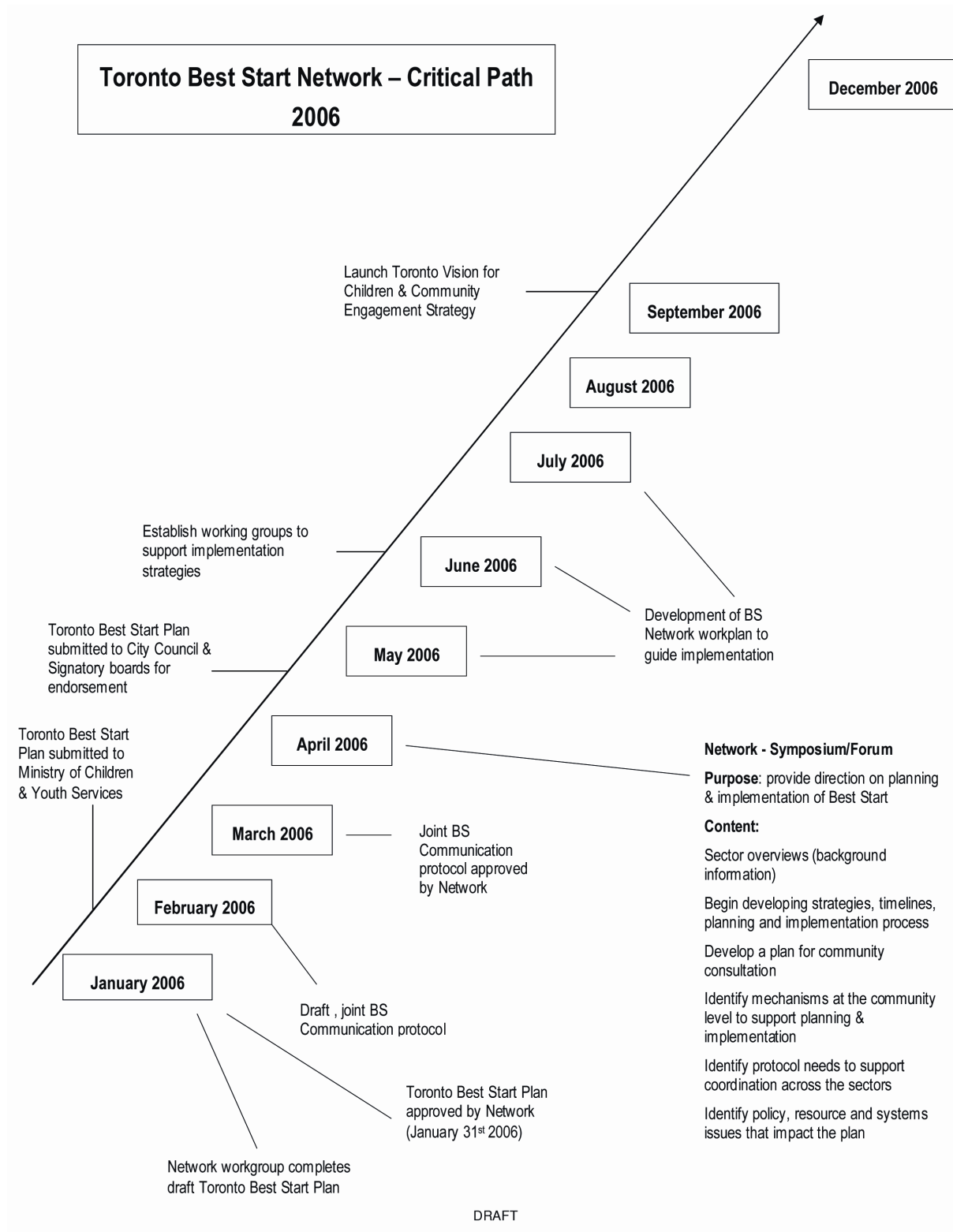
- Recreational/physical activity programs
- Programs to develop social skills, arts, and athletic skills e.g. dance, music, art
- Open up school gym, computer lab. Use existing space, don't create more space.
- Doesn't make sense to have parallel infrastructure (e.g. recreation facility next to school)

- Structured activity after school
- Staff qualifications, not 16 – 18 year olds left alone with children at Parks and Recreation
- Mentoring opportunities, and encouraging/promoting youth leadership, e.g. Boys & Girls Club (Leaders in Training).

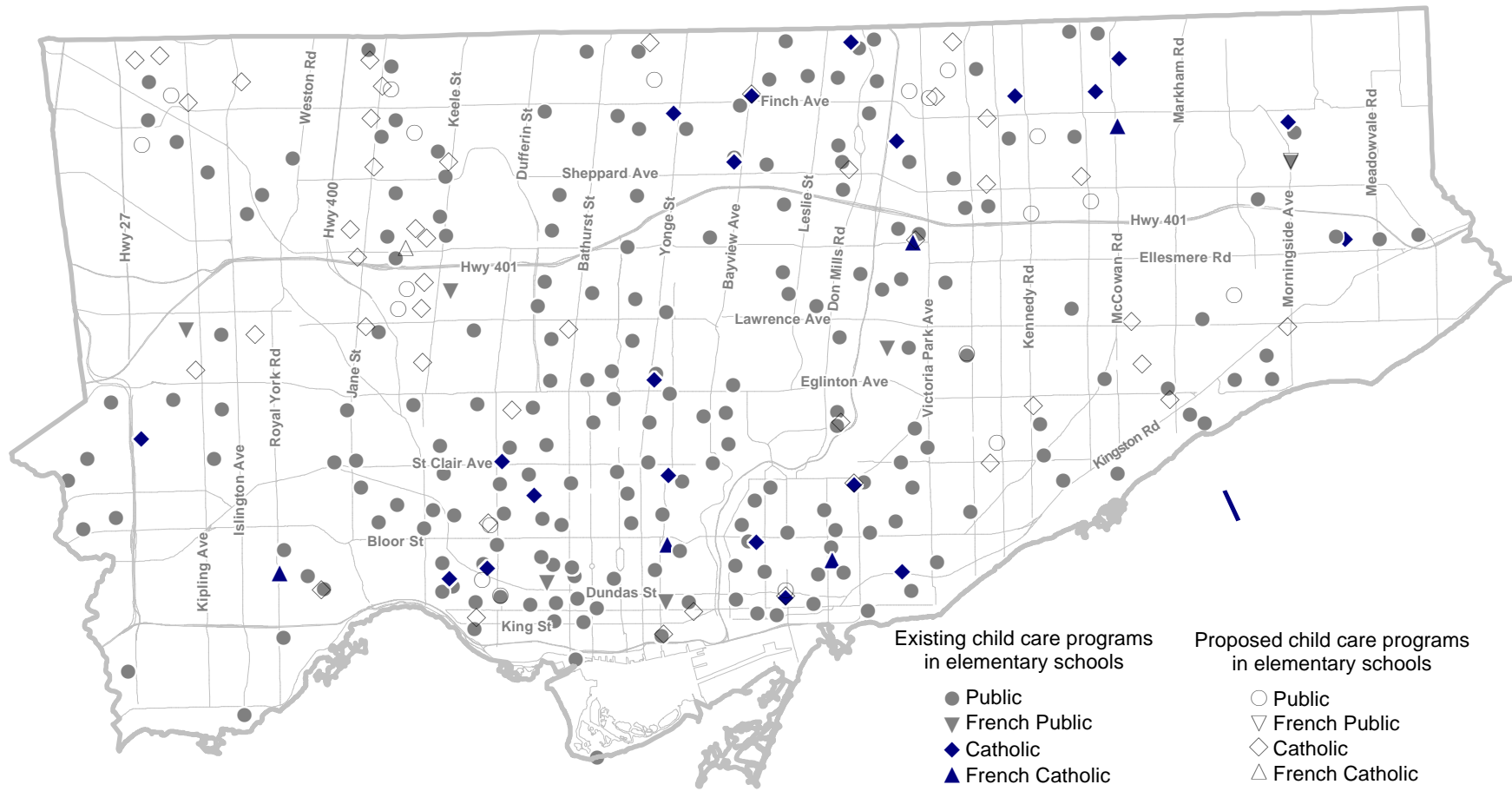
**Other comments/suggestions:**

- More resource educators/teaching assistants for children with specific needs
- More male staff
- Schools currently cutting costs. How will this affect them?
- Need to change existing structures/relationships (schools in particular) – school currently focused on 8 – 4pm. Need to have a holistic approach to programming, not just create more spaces
- Not every school is good to expand, need to work with the community
- How will this affect existing programs?
- What if my child isn't Catholic? They won't have access to the school/childcare in our neighbourhood
- Too many hurdles to get info for parents
- Need funding for 6 – 12 year olds
- Use leftover capital funding for 6 – 12 year olds
- Policy challenge – leadership roll
- Engage the business community – including service clubs
- Less territorialism & competition between services
- Review/revise subsidy eligibility, otherwise we'll have empty childcare centres
- Problematic to look only at areas with high child poverty areas. Parents are often willing/able to pay, but have little access to care.

**Appendix C – Critical Path**

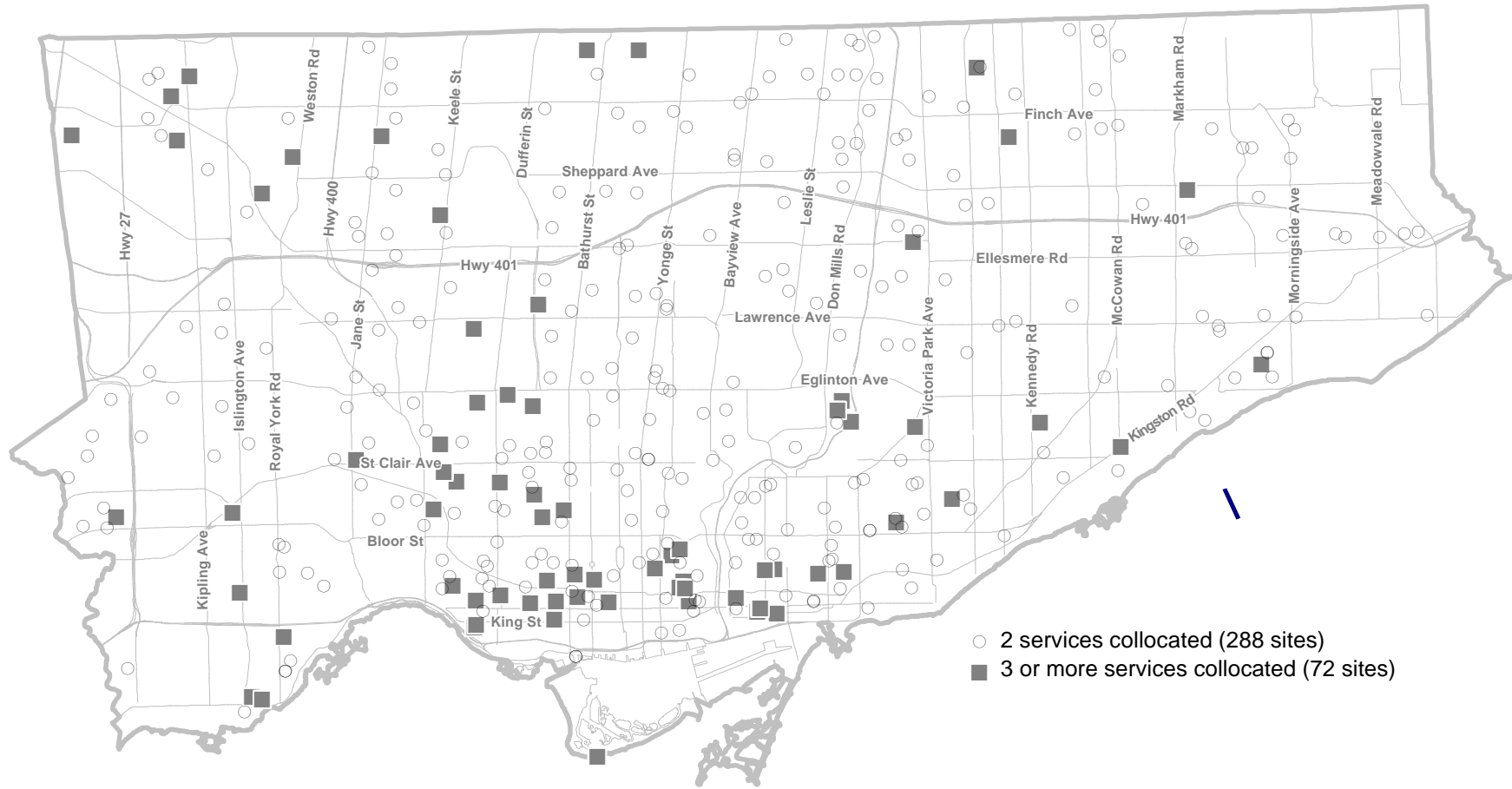


## Appendix D – Child care programs for 4 & 5 year olds located in elementary schools



This map illustrates the current system capacity to move towards integration between child care, kindergarten and family supports.

**Appendix E – Services for children which are collocated**



This map illustrates the current level of service collocation. Service clusters include any combination of: child care, school, community centre, library, family resource program, Ontario Early Years Centre or program and TDSB Parenting & Family Literacy program.

## ***Glossary of terms***

**Child care/early childhood education** – Child care centres, home child care, nursery schools, school readiness programs, and preschool programs, special needs resourcing, and preschool early intervention group programs. Children may attend without a parent or guardian.

**Kindergarten** – Junior & senior kindergarten offered to all children 3.8 to 6 years by school boards.

**Family support programs** – Parenting centres, family resource programs, Ontario Early Years Centres, prenatal/postnatal groups, family literacy, parenting groups, home visiting, community kitchens, and family health and nutrition programs. The focus is on parents and children. Parents may attend alone. Children are usually accompanied by a parent or caregiver.

**Family support practitioner** is the designation used for professionals working in family support programs.

**Partner programs** – Community-based child care and family support agencies, school boards, municipal children service managers, public health, recreation, public libraries etc., participating in a cross-sector partnership to form a community/neighbourhood hub delivery system.

**Integrated learning environment** – Combines the functions and elements of child care, kindergarten, and family support programs. Elements include combining space, pedagogical approach, daily routines and schedules, assessing children's development and progress, and establishing and monitoring program quality.

**Specialized services providers** – Resource teachers for children with special needs, public health nurses, children's mental health, and other intervention professionals.

**Frontline staff** – Those who provide direct service or programming to children and families, including Public Health nurses, children's mental health, and other intervention professionals.

**Early learning team** – Those who provide the daily program, including early childhood educators, early childhood assistants, kindergarten teachers, educational assistants, family support practitioners, and may include special needs service professionals if they are part of the daily program delivery.

**Early identification and intervention services** include specialized services for children 0 – 6 and their families offered by child welfare agencies, child treatment centres, infant hearing, infant development, children's mental health centres, developmental services, preschool speech and language and Healthy Babies, Healthy Children.

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