

## **Toronto Report Card on Children 1999 and the Children and Youth Action Committee's Action Plan for the Report Card**

*(City Council on November 23, 24 and 25, 1999, adopted this Clause, without amendment.)*

**The Community Services Committee recommends the adoption of the joint communication dated October 20, 1999, from Councillor Olivia Chow and Councillor Pam McConnell.**

The Community Services Committee, reports for the information of Council, having requested the Medical Officer of Health to investigate the cause of the higher rates of children being hospitalized for respiratory illnesses in the large portion of Scarborough south of Highway 401, South Etobicoke, and any other large clusters identified in the City of Toronto.

**The Community Services Committee submits the following joint communication (October 20, 1999) from Councillor Olivia Chow and Councillor Pam McConnell:**

### Purpose:

To seek Council's adoption of the Toronto Report Card on Children 1999 and the Children and Youth Action Committee's (CYAC) Action Plan, and to request that the Commissioners of Community and Neighbourhood Services and Economic Development, Culture and Tourism report back through the Community Services Committee and the Economic Development and Parks Committee, respectively, on the program details and budget implications of the CYAC Action Plan during the 2000 budget process.

### Financial Implications and Impact Statement:

It is requested through this report that the financial implications of the CYAC Action Plan be identified by the Commissioner of Community and Neighbourhood Services and the Commissioner of Economic Development, Culture and Tourism and reported through standing committees during the 2000 budget process.

### Recommendations:

It is recommended that:

- (1) Council adopt the Toronto Report Card on Children 1999;
- (2) Council adopt the Children and Youth Action Committee's Action Plan;
- (3) the Commissioners of Community and Neighbourhood Services and Economic Development, Culture and Tourism report back through their respective standing committees on the program details and financial implications of these recommendations during the 2000 budget process; and

- (4) the appropriate City officials be authorized and directed to take the necessary action to give effect thereto.

#### Background:

In Spring 1998, the Children and Youth Action Committee gave its approval to the production of a Report Card on Children. Following a process that included a one-day meeting of children's services professionals and politicians, and a series of community meetings, a framework for the new report card was developed and then approved by Council early in 1999.

Since January 1999, a technical working group, composed of staff from City departments and representatives from other organizations in the children's services sector, met regularly to identify indicators, discuss the handling of the data, and to shape the final structure and content of the report card. The working group was led by Toronto Children's Services, and included representatives from Toronto Public Health, Toronto Public Library, Toronto Parks and Recreation, Social Development and Administration, the Toronto Police Service, the Toronto District School Board, the Toronto Catholic District School Board, the Children's Aid Society of Toronto, the Catholic Children's Aid Society of Toronto, and the Jewish Family and Child Service of Toronto.

This spring, the Policy Sub-Committee of the Children and Youth Action Committee, chaired by Councillor Pam McConnell, began identifying areas for investment, service co-ordination and advocacy in response to the findings from the report card. As well, the Sub-Committee also spearheaded a CYAC initiative to produce ward level reports, which contain demographic and services information on children for each ward in the City.

On October 14, 1999, a press conference was held to release the Toronto Report Card on Children 1999, the Children and Youth Action Committee's Action Plan (attached) and the ward reports. The Toronto Report Card and the local ward reports are being distributed broadly throughout the City. Each Councillor will receive copies of their local ward reports for distribution.

#### Comments:

The Toronto Report Card on Children 1999 uses a variety of indicators considered to be significant measures of the health and well-being of children and maps them at the local-area level. The distribution of programs and facilities serving children is also mapped. In some cases, targets for improvements, or benchmarks, have been linked to the indicators.

As identified by the CYAC in its action plan, the Report Card provides confirmation that the situation of many children in this City desperately needs improving. Risk factors like poverty are rising for families (38 percent of children under 10 live in poverty, up 66 percent since 1991), while health outcomes and access to services like affordable childcare, (where there is a 13,000 child waiting list) are inadequate. The report card identifies that 40,000 children are on waiting lists for affordable housing, and over 1,000 children live in shelters for the homeless.

The CYAC Action plan is based on the objectives set out in the Children's Charter, and the related goals adopted by City Council in February 1999. The CYAC has worked to identify areas where the City can begin work now on improving the situation for children. Our Action Plan focuses on three areas: program investments to reduce risk factors and expand services that mitigate those risks; service co-ordination; and advocacy. We believe this plan is the necessary first step for Council to take in meeting its commitments to the children of this City. The CYAC asks that Council adopt the recommendations outlined in our Action Plan. Further, we are recommending that the Commissioners of Community and Neighbourhood Services and Economic Development, Culture and Tourism report through their respective standing committees on the program and financial implications of these recommendations for the 2000 budget process.

Conclusions:

The Toronto Report Card on Children has shown that an increasing number of children are exposed to increasingly severe risk factors. The Children and Youth Action Committee has developed an action plan that the City must adopt to effectively counteract some of these risk factors, and improve the well-being of children in this City. These are steps that Council has the power to take now, in the 2000 budget process. We recommend Council adopt the Toronto Report Card on Children 1999, and the CYAC Action Plan. Further, we recommend that the Commissioners of Community and Neighbourhood Services and Economic Development, Culture and Tourism report through their respective standing committees on the program and financial implications of these recommendations for the 2000 budget process.

Contact:

Councillor Pam McConnell  
Tel: 392-7916

Councillor Olivia Chow  
Tel: 392-4044

List of Attachments:

Appendix A: Action Plan for the Children's Report Card 1999

---

Recommendations Contained in the Children and  
Youth Action Committee's Action Plan

The CYAC asks that Council adopt the following recommendations in the areas of investment, service co-ordination and advocacy, and direct staff to develop specific proposals in accordance with these recommendations, including program details and budgetary requirements, and report through the appropriate Standing Committees to the Budget Advisory Committee during the 2000 budget process:

(1) Investment:

Public Health:

(a) Expanded Access to Prenatal Nutrition Programs:

The CYAC proposes to increase the number of women attending Canada Prenatal Nutrition Programs by 10 percent, by expanding services in 18 sites and creating services in 9 new sites.

(b) Social Marketing Campaign on Pre-Pregnancy Health:

To help give all our children a good start, the CYAC proposes increasing awareness of the factors affecting the health of newborns through a multi-faceted communications campaign aimed at all women of childbearing age and their partners, using targeted information disseminated through physicians, health centres, workplaces and schools, as well as radio advertisements, subway, streetcar and bus shelter posters.

(c) Child Nutrition Programs:

The CYAC proposes that Council reaffirm its commitment to healthy children and good nutrition by restoring its funding to cover 24 percent for the expanded Child Nutrition Program.

(d) Peer Nutrition Worker Program:

The CYAC proposes the establishment of the Peer Nutrition Worker Program to reach over 700 parents and 1,200 children often missed by traditional nutrition programs.

(e) Early Childhood Caries Prevention Program:

The CYAC proposes the establishment of an Early Childhood Caries Prevention Program.

(f) Expansion of Children At-Risk Mentoring Program:

The CYAC recommends the addition of one staff person to support the addition of three mentoring programs, including one program based in the private sector.

(g) School-aged Children's Vision and Hearing:

The CYAC proposes that the Department of Public health initiate a research program to develop a sound basis for addressing children's hearing and vision problems, and report to the CYAC with recommendations regarding effective strategies to identify and support those children.

(h) Children's Mental Health:

The CYAC proposes the initiation of a needs assessment and review of best practices to determine the appropriate program changes for integrating children's mental health programs into the delivery of Family Health.

The CYAC also proposes the immediate updating of the "Learning Through Play From Birth to Three Years" calendar and other parent-education tools for promoting mental health among children.

Parks And Recreation:

(a) Preschool Recreation Programs:

The CYAC proposes the creation of new, and the expansion of existing preschool programs, (including parent and tot programs, drop-in play programs, specialized preschool programs, swim programs and tiny tot programs) by 5-6 percent, to provide an additional 11,000 program hours, serving 14,000 more children, especially in identified high-needs areas.

(b) Recreation Programs for School Age Children:

The CYAC proposes increasing before and after school programs for children by 2.5 percent to provide an additional 14,000 program hours, serving 21,000 more children, especially in identified high-needs areas, and incorporating more enrichment and skill development opportunities in these programs.

Public Health, Children's Services and Parks and Recreation:

(a) Improve Children's Physical Fitness:

The CYAC proposes expanding the delivery of Rainbow Fun to all licensed child care program (increasing the number of children involved by 15,000) and to 40,000 more children through Parks and Recreation. Specific activities include expanded training of children's program workers and the development of a program model that is based on best practices and is appropriate to ethno-racially diverse communities.

Housing:

The CYAC proposes that Council direct the Shelter Housing and Support Division to initiate housing development in the year 2000 that would house 200 children, moving 20 percent of the children already in shelters to permanent housing.

Children's Services:

(a) Expanded Access to Child Care:

The CYAC proposes reducing waiting lists by approximately 15 percent by expanding child care subsidies by 2,000 spaces next year, and moving to a 50 percent reduction by continuing that expansion in each of the next two years.

(b) Preservation of Existing Child Care Services:

The CYAC proposes that the City preserve the existing child care system by replacing any child care spaces lost as a result of school closures, meeting the actual costs of child care providers and funding the replacement of playgrounds that are closed under the new Provincial regulations.

Libraries:

(a) Increased Reading to Children:

The CYAC proposes delivering a book "Read to Your Bunny", along with information on library registration to each child born in Toronto. The importance of reading to children is stressed in this colourful and useful book. This campaign follows the successful poster campaign launched by the CYAC and the Toronto Public Library in 1998.

(b) Expanded Access to Leading to Reading Programs:

The CYAC proposes expanding the Leading to Reading Programs to nine new locations in high needs areas during the summer of 2000. This will provide 200 children with the opportunity to develop their reading skills and discover the joy of reading.

(2) Service Planning:

(a) Co-ordination of Service Planning:

The CYAC proposes that the City pursue strategies to improve service co-ordination for all City divisions serving children, including the establishment of an integrated internal planning system, the creation of an integrated early childhood development system and the continuation of efforts to link our service planning to that of other organizations serving children.

(b) Toronto Report Card on Children:

The CYAC proposes that the City of Toronto regularly issue a report card which monitors progress in improving children's health and well-being. Additional indicators should be added to the Report Card and more benchmarks should be developed. These

benchmarks should be formally adopted by Council as the City's goals for improvement. The Report Card should be made an increasingly important tool in determining what resources are necessary to improve the situation of children and how those resources should be allocated.

(c) Data Collection:

The CYAC proposes that all City divisions serving children work together to develop consistent methods of data collection and record keeping to ensure that there is accurate, interdepartmentally consistent information with which to plan the delivery of children's services.

The CYAC also proposes that the City work with outside agencies to encourage the adoption of these data collection protocols across institutions.

(3) Advocacy:

The CYAC proposes that the City of Toronto take an increasingly active role in advocating on behalf of children with senior levels of government and with the community. The advocacy should be aimed at building financial and moral support for effective children's services.

The CYAC also proposes that the City seek to form partnerships in its advocacy efforts with other locally based organizations concerned with children including agencies and coalitions.

(Copies of the "Toronto Report Card on Children 1999" and the "Children and Youth Action Committee's Action Plan" were forwarded to all Members of Council with the agenda of the Community Services Committee for its meeting on November 4, 1999, and a copy thereof is on file in the office of the City Clerk.)

**The Community Services Committee submits the following communication (November 2, 1999) from the City Clerk:**

Recommendations:

The Children and Youth Action Committee recommended to the Community Services Committee, and Council, the adoption of the following recommendations contained in the communication (October 20, 1999) from Councillor Chow and Councillor McConnell:

- (1) Council adopt the Toronto Report Card on Children 1999;
- (2) Council adopt the Children and Youth Action Plan;
- (3) the Commissioners of Community and Neighbourhood Services and Economic Development, Culture and Tourism report back through their respective standing committees on the program details and financial implications of these recommendations during the 2000 budget process; and

- (4) the appropriate City officials be authorized and directed to take the necessary action to give effect thereto.

Background:

The Children and Youth Action Committee on October 29, 1999, had before it a communication (October 20, 1999) from Councillor Chow and Councillor McConnell submitting the "Toronto Report Card on Children 1999" and the Children and Youth Action Committee's (CYAC) "Action Plan for The Children's Report Card 1999".

The Committee also had before it the following communications:

(October 14, 1999) News Release, titled "Toronto Report Card on Children and CYAC Action Plan Released"; and

(October 1999) Toronto Report on Children, 1999 - Executive Summary.

Councillor McConnell gave a presentation on the Children's Report Card.

The Committee extended its appreciation to staff, Councillors and all participants who were involved in compiling and producing the Children's Report Card.

The Committee's recommendations are noted above.

---

The following persons appeared before the Community Services Committee in connection with the foregoing matter:

- Councillor Pam McConnell, Children and Youth Action Committee;
- Ms. Annie Kidder, People for Education;
- Ms. Susan Butler, Toronto Community Partners for Child Nutrition;
- Ms. Laura Pummell, Foundation for Student Success, Toronto District School Board;
- Ms. Debbie Field, Parent Representative, Fern Avenue Public School; and distributed a communication respecting its Hot Lunch Program;
- Ms. Jane Mercer, Toronto Coalition for Better Child Care.
- Mr. Colin Hughes, Campaign 2000; and submitted a brief in regard thereto;
- Ms. June Callwood; and
- Ms. Fiona Nelson.

*(Councillor Pantalone, at the Council meeting held on November 23, 24 and 25, 1999, declared his interest in the foregoing Clause, in that one of his children is registered in a day care centre which has a purchase of service agreement with the City of Toronto.)*