

# **Toronto 2010–2014 Child Care Service Plan**

Approved by Toronto City Council, **DATE**

Prepared by Toronto Children's Services  
April 2010

For more information please visit our website at [www.toronto.ca/children](http://www.toronto.ca/children)

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## **Toronto's 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.

## **Toronto's Strategy for Children**

The City's Children's Strategy is based on the belief that society shares with families responsibility for their children, and therefore that efforts to improve children's well-being are legitimately part of the City's public service agenda. It is also generally well recognized that all families will likely require some measure of public support during their children's developmental years. The City's Children's Strategy recognizes that a universal albeit scaled municipal response to this need is required.

The key components of Toronto's Children's Strategy may be summarized as follows:

1. The City demands a holistic as opposed to a sectoral or program response to issues affecting children's well-being.
2. The City sets aggressive but achievable annual benchmarks to secure progress towards desired outcomes for children.
3. The City demonstrates public accountability for improvement in children's well-being by publishing an annual report card on the state of this City's children.
4. The City promotes both equity of access and responsive service approaches to children through integrated service planning at the neighbourhood level.
5. The City's plans and investments in children are actively informed and supported by the most current theory and research.
6. The City promotes innovation and aggressively pursues improvements in policy and programs based on best practices.
7. The City uses its influence and resource base to broaden commitment for a children's agenda and lever contribution from other government and community partners.
8. The City builds and strengthens local community partnerships and negotiates the fullest and most prudent use of shared community resources.
9. The City actively focuses media attention on children's issues and advocates publicly for needed change.
10. The City highlights and celebrates achievements in the children's services field and uses each incremental success to help achieve its broader vision for children.

**Adopted by Toronto City Council, November 1999**

## **Children's Services Mission Statement**

Toronto Children's Services is the service system manager of child care within Toronto. In partnership with the community, the division promotes equitable access to high quality care for children and support for families and caregivers. An integrated approach to planning and management ensures that services to children promote early learning and development, respond to families' needs and choices and respect the diversity of Toronto's communities.

### **Children's Services is:**

Committed to children

Supportive of families

Building community capacity

## Executive summary

The 2010-2014 Child Care Service Plan, is the City's fourth service plan since 1993. This plan was developed anticipating significant change and transition for the child care system in Toronto in the coming years. In fact, completion of this plan was delayed while waiting for the release of *With Our Best Future in Mind—Implementing Early Learning in Ontario*, a report to the Premier by the Special Advisor on Early Learning, Charles E. Pascal and the subsequent announcement on early learning from the Province of Ontario.

Though this is a time of transition and transformation for the child care system, this child care service plan has been developed to "stand the test of time" and lead Toronto Children's Services for the next five years. It is a tool for guiding the funding and the management of Toronto's child care system. The plan proposes ways in which service can be delivered in a rational, accountable and equitable manner that maximizes the use of the resources available to the system.

This report is organized into three sections:

1. Toronto's child care system
2. Pressures on the child care system
3. Setting Directions

Within these sections is information on the services and programs available in the current child care system, the pressures and challenges impacting the system and the five year goals for the division with the corresponding actions to achieve the identified goals.

This service plan has been developed within the framework of the City's Children's Strategy. It adheres to the following eight principles as approved by Toronto City Council at its session on December 1, 2, 3, 2008:

- a. Service access based on age and geographic equity
- b. Publicly planned and accountable service outcomes
- c. Service options consistent with informed parental choice
- d. First-come, first-served admission to subsidized care
- e. Recognition that child care services provide developmentally appropriate beneficial care for children as well as important family and community support

- f. Recognition that services for children and families should be planned and delivered in an integrated way that promotes seamless service transitions
- g. Agreement that expansion of the child care system take place through public and/or not-for-profit delivery
- h. Commitment to advancing quality and directing resources to the improvement of quality for children's services in Toronto.

In addition to moving forward, this plan builds on the progress achieved during 2005-2009. Some of the **notable achievements** are:

- Advancements in the use, availability and validation of the City's Operating Criteria including the launch of Criteria results on the City of Toronto website
- Expanded and integrated early learning and care through Best Start expansion of child care in schools. This has resulted in an additional 3,400 licensed child care spaces for children aged 0 to six, developed in accordance with the service plan principles and directions
- Launch of the After-School Recreation Care (ARC) program in 2006 in partnership with Parks, Forestry and Recreation which has expanded to 27 sites and has received a Public Sector Quality Award
- Improved level of compliance with first-come first-served and equity of access policies through the development of a centralized application process for fee subsidy
- Introduction of a centralized intake process to support children with special needs and their families. Developed with community partners, CITY KIDS provides a single point of access, coordinated intake and service delivery. The number of children being supported each year has grown from 3,200 children in 2005 to 4,390 in 2009.
- Established partnership agreements for several capital initiatives aligned with City priorities, including Native Child and Family Services and Crescent Town
- Increased the online services through the implementation of the CSIS on the Web and the completion of the attendance module

## **Highlights of some the broad issues and pressures facing the child care system**

- Loss of provincial Best Start funding and federal Early Learning and Child Care Funding  
This has significantly impacted the ability of the City to increase the number of licensed child care spaces
- Depletion of the Child Care Expansion Reserve Fund  
The City is currently using funds from the Child Care Expansion Reserve to maintain existing service levels.
- Early learning implementation  
The child care system is in a time of transition and transformation while the phased-in implementation of early learning occurs.
- Increased demand for child care subsidy  
Changes to eligibility rules under income testing resulted in growing wait lists for child care subsidy.
- Increased demand for special needs resources
- Governance of the family support sector  
City of Toronto believes and advocates that the authority for planning and funding of Ontario Early Years Centres should be transferred to the municipality as a part of its child care system management role.
- Improving access and equity  
Communities with inadequate licensed child care services continue to face insufficient access to both licensed care and fee subsidy.

## **Directions**

1. Strategic leadership
2. Advancing quality
3. Improving access and equity to services for children
4. Developing a system of integrated services
5. Transition to early learning

## **Goals from the 2010-2014 Child Care Service Plan**

### **1. Strategic Leadership–Goals**

- 1.1 To deliver the highest quality of service that balances system accountability and sustainability with local needs and accessibility
- 1.2 To advance delivery of a fully integrated and seamless system of services for children aged 0 to 12 years and families, by developing and implementing a framework that:
  - focuses on successful outcomes for children and families
  - recognizes resource requirements
  - generates outcomes in locally appropriate ways
- 1.3 To enhance the role of Children's Services and the child care system in addressing broader City and intergovernmental policy objectives and priorities
- 1.4 To be recognized among all stakeholders and partners as a leader in service system management
- 1.5 To foster and lead research initiatives with the educational community intended to measure, evaluate and improve the quality of child care and children's services in Toronto
- 1.6 To encourage federal support of family and children's services

### **2. Advancing Quality–Goals**

- 2.1 To utilize the Operating Criteria to evaluate and articulate the City's expectations of quality
- 2.2 To promote *Early Learning for Every Child Today (ELECT)* as a curriculum framework
- 2.3 To develop a Middle Childhood Strategy within the framework that defines and sets direction of a system of high quality out-of-school-time programs for children aged six to 12
- 2.4 To establish Children's Services as a lead in the infrastructure planning and development of services for children in the City of Toronto through municipally led initiatives and partnership opportunities
- 2.5 To develop universal design guidelines for child care spaces that are developmentally appropriate, safe and accessible physical environments
- 2.6 To continue to develop and invest in a comprehensive system of support for children with special needs



### **3. Improving Access and Equity to services for children–Goals**

- 3.1 To improve geographic equity at the individual ward level so that each ward is within 10 per cent of equity
- 3.2 To continue to support the principles of age equity and ensure equitable access to child care for infants and toddlers
- 3.4 To improve access to service and communication of information for families through the use of technology
- 3.5 To ensure that a capital program for building new child care sites meets provincial standards for accessibility

### **4. Developing an Integrated System of Services–Goals**

- 4.1 To promote collaborative practices and partnerships to support the alignment of our service planning activities with other service planning initiatives to move towards an integrated system of services
- 4.2 To align the Middle Childhood Strategy with early learning

### **5. Transition to Early Learning–Goals**

- 5.1 To support full implementation of the early learning system articulated in *With Our Best Future in Mind–Implementing Early Learning in Ontario*, a report to the Premier by the Special Advisor on Early Learning, Charles E. Pascal
- 5.2 To develop strategies to maintain service sustainability and system stability during and following the transition to early learning
- 5.3 To engage in transitional planning processes that are transparent to families and the child care service system
- 5.4 To provide leadership in the implementation of an integrated early learning system for children 0 to 12 years of age and their families

For further information, facts, figures and maps please read the full document, Toronto 2010-2014 Child Care Service Plan.

Current service information including equity levels, enrolment and program locations is available on our website at [www.toronto.ca/children](http://www.toronto.ca/children) or contact 416-392-8297.

## **Introduction**

The 2010-2014 Child Care Service Plan is the City's fourth service plan since 1993. The City in its role as Consolidated Municipal Service Manager (CMSM) of child care services in Toronto is required to develop and submit a service plan to the Province of Ontario for approval. Once approved by Toronto City Council, the service plan forms the basis of the contract between the City and the Province for provincial cost sharing. The service plan is much more than a statutory requirement of provincial funding. The plan forms the foundation – and is the framework – that guides planning and decision making in Children's Services. The plan provides a comprehensive overview of child care service needs, gaps, issues, goals and actions and identifies the mix and level of child care services appropriate to local needs and priorities.

## **Development of the 2010–2014 Child Care Service Plan**

This plan sets directions to address strategic leadership, quality, access and equity, system integration, and the transition to an early learning system. It is organized into three sections:

1. Toronto's child care system
2. Pressures on the child care system
3. Setting directions

This plan has been developed within Toronto's Strategy for Children. Through the plan's principles, it sets the course for managing resources to address new policy directions and pressures over the next five years (or term of this service plan). It adheres to the following principles and policies approved by Toronto City Council in December 2008:

- a. Service access based on age and geographic equity
- b. Publicly planned and accountable service outcomes
- c. Service options consistent with informed parental choice
- d. First-come, first-served admission to subsidized care
- e. Recognition that child care services provide developmentally appropriate beneficial care for children as well as important family and community support
- f. Recognition that services for children and families should be planned and delivered in an integrated way that promotes seamless service transitions
- g. Agreement that expansion of the child care system take place through public and/or not-for-profit delivery

- h. Commitment to advancing quality and directing resources to the improvement of quality for children's services in Toronto.

In developing the Child Care Service Plan, Children's Services embarked on community engagement with its stakeholders, including service providers and users. In the spring of 2009 stakeholders were asked to provide feedback on the principles of the service plan. This included a web-based survey for users and operators (Appendix A), face to face meetings with users and presentations to existing networks and planning groups. These groups included Children's Services Advisory, Child Care Advisory, Best Start Network, Aboriginal and French Language Networks, and various City divisions. The feedback was considered in developing the plan and a summary of responses is found in Appendix B.

The development and release of the 2010-2014 Child Care Service Plan was postponed due to the anticipated release of *With Our Best Future in Mind—Implementing Early Learning in Ontario*, a report to the Premier by the Special Advisor on Early Learning, Charles E. Pascal, and the subsequent Provincial announcement on early learning. Following the Provincial announcement, Children's Services presented an overview of the plan's principles and an update on its goals and key strategies in the spring of 2010. These presentations were given to existing networks and planning groups across the city. Feedback from these sessions is reflected in the strategies outlined in this report. In addition, an amendment to the principles to address special needs was recommended.

Although not all services are legislatively mandated in the Province, Children's Services performs the following roles:

- **System planning** – improving equitable access to child care services through:
  - Service planning
  - Capital development
  - Co-ordination of planning activities with other municipal divisions and non-government organizations
  - Support for service delivery, planning and advocacy through technology
  - Placement of eligible clients in accordance to the principles of equity

➤ **System management**

- Determining eligibility, financial assessment and placement of subsidized clients
- Payments to service providers on behalf of subsidized clients
- Funding of family support programs
- Support to children with special needs attending child care programs
- Funding of wage subsidies for programs providing child care services

➤ **Quality assurance** – promoting and ensuring quality child care services through:

- Operating Criteria for child care centres, licensed home child care, family support programs, special needs agencies and After School Recreation Care programs (ARC)
- Maintaining a Serious Occurrence Reporting System as a quality assurance and training tool
- Training opportunities for child care providers including, anti-racism, anti-bullying, child abuse reporting, inclusion, financial management and Early Learning for Every Child Today framework.

➤ **Direct Delivery** – Municipal Child Care Services

- Operating 57 child care centres and one home child care agency in Toronto
- Setting priorities to address the child care needs of the city's youngest and most vulnerable children
- Planning and delivery of services following the principles of the Toronto Child Care Service Plan

## Toronto's Child Care System

Toronto is home to 268,575 children aged 0 to nine living in 181,805 families. The majority of children live in two parent families, while 20 per cent live in single parent families. These families rely on a range of services to meet the early learning and care needs of their children.

In Toronto, programs and services are offered and funded by a wide range of community agencies and organizations, including the federal, provincial and municipal governments.

### Child care services

Toronto Children's Services is responsible for managing a system of services that includes:

- Licensed child care
- Fee subsidy management
- Supporting children with special needs in licensed child care
- Supporting Aboriginal and Francophone families to access licensed child care
- Family support programs
- After-School Recreation Care (ARC)
- Summer Day Programs

Children's Services also collaborates with other City divisions, school boards, Toronto Public Health, Toronto Public Library and community organizations to meet the changing needs of children and families.

### Licensed child care

Licensed child care is vital to families, both as a support to employment or schooling, and as an early learning experience for children. Licensed child care is offered at 946 child care centres and 21 home child care agencies providing over 56,500 spaces, but still accommodates only 21 per cent of Toronto's children aged 0 to nine years.

**Children in Toronto**

Age	Number of children	Cumulative number of children
Under 1 year	28,275	28,275
1 year	27,410	55,685
2 years	26,915	82,600
3 years	26,345	108,945
4 years	26,035	134,980
5 years	26,110	161,090
6 years	26,780	187,870
7 years	26,010	213,880
8 years	27,145	241,025
9 years	27,550	<b>268,575</b>

Statistics Canada 2006 Census

**Licensed spaces in child care centres ~ March 2010**

Type	# of centres	%	infant spaces	toddler spaces	preschool spaces	school age spaces	total spaces
Municipal	57	6%	346	525	1,535	525	2,931
Non-profit	655	69%	1,405	3,491	18,123	12,900	35,919
Commercial	234	25%	872	2,303	9,027	2,151	14,353
<b>Total</b>	<b>946</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>2,623</b>	<b>6,319</b>	<b>28,685</b>	<b>15,576</b>	<b>53,203</b>

Sixty-nine percent of child care programs are operated by non-profit organizations, 25 per cent are operated by commercial operators and 6 per cent are municipally operated. Approximately 70 per cent of child care operators have a service contract with the City and receive some government funding in the form of fee and/or wage subsidies. Detailed information about licensed child care can be found in the Children's Services Fact Sheet (Appendix C).

**Fee subsidy management**

Low income is a significant barrier for families who need access to licensed child care. Each child care program is responsible for setting their public fee. The cost of care varies across age groups and between programs.

The table to the right shows the wide range of public fees charged by child care centres located in Toronto. While the majority of fees fall within these ranges, there are some centres that charge higher or lower fees. Even at the low range, many Toronto families must rely on fee subsidy to help with all or part of the cost of child care.

**2010 Daily Public Fee**

Age group	low range	mid range	high range
infant	\$54.00	\$70.00	\$89.00
toddler	\$43.50	\$56.00	\$79.00
preschool	\$32.50	\$40.00	\$59.00
school age	\$18.00	\$28.00	\$44.00

Based on current funding levels, 24,000 full time child care fee subsidies are available. Only 28 per cent of families with the lowest incomes can access a child care fee subsidy. There are over 15,800 children on the wait list.

Due to the limited number of fee subsidies, Toronto City Council approved an equitable distribution whereby each City ward receives a share of the 24,000 full time fee subsidies based on the proportion of children in the ward who are living below the low-income cut-off (LICO) as shown in the adjacent table.

Fee subsidy is allocated to the child and not to a specific child care program. Families who are approved for a child care fee subsidy can choose to place their child in any one of the 652 centres or with one of the 10 home child care agencies that have a service contract with the City.

### Supporting children with special needs in licensed child care

Toronto Children's Services, in collaboration with 22 community agencies, provides enhanced services so children with extra support needs are included in licensed child care programs. The City's "Every Child Belongs" philosophy allows families to place their child in any one of Toronto's licensed child care programs and receive the

**Children 0 to 9 years living below the Low Income Cut-off (LICO)**

Ward	Children living in the ward	Ward's share of Toronto's children	Children living below LICO	% of children in ward living below LICO	Ward's share of Toronto's LICO children
1	8,995	3.4%	3,230	35.9%	3.7%
2	7,130	2.7%	2,890	40.5%	3.3%
3	5,005	1.9%	1,200	24.0%	1.4%
4	5,160	1.9%	1,365	26.5%	1.6%
5	5,830	2.2%	975	16.7%	1.1%
6	5,090	1.9%	1,325	26.0%	1.5%
7	6,910	2.6%	2,890	41.8%	3.3%
8	7,095	2.7%	3,535	49.8%	4.1%
9	5,305	2.0%	1,835	34.6%	2.1%
10	6,265	2.3%	1,825	29.1%	2.1%
11	7,575	2.8%	3,035	40.1%	3.5%
12	7,080	2.7%	3,040	42.9%	3.5%
13	5,330	2.0%	965	18.1%	1.1%
14	5,245	2.0%	1,780	33.9%	2.1%
15	7,045	2.6%	2,355	33.4%	2.7%
16	6,585	2.5%	500	7.6%	0.6%
17	5,210	2.0%	1,515	29.1%	1.7%
18	4,330	1.6%	1,585	36.6%	1.8%
19	3,445	1.3%	830	24.1%	1.0%
20	3,370	1.3%	1,000	29.7%	1.2%
21	4,550	1.7%	795	17.5%	0.9%
22	4,540	1.7%	550	12.1%	0.6%
23	6,040	2.3%	1,460	24.2%	1.7%
24	4,045	1.5%	1,060	26.2%	1.2%
25	5,280	2.0%	595	11.3%	0.7%
26	8,940	3.3%	3,970	44.4%	4.6%
27	3,665	1.4%	980	26.7%	1.1%
28	5,800	2.2%	3,470	59.8%	4.0%
29	4,640	1.7%	1,035	22.3%	1.2%
30	5,190	1.9%	1,585	30.5%	1.8%
31	6,265	2.3%	2,180	34.8%	2.5%
32	6,420	2.4%	1,145	17.8%	1.3%
33	5,855	2.2%	1,845	31.5%	2.1%
34	6,560	2.5%	2,455	37.4%	2.8%
35	7,390	2.8%	3,525	47.7%	4.1%
36	5,915	2.2%	2,090	35.3%	2.4%
37	7,575	2.8%	3,135	41.4%	3.6%
38	7,770	2.9%	3,045	39.2%	3.5%
39	5,215	2.0%	1,885	36.1%	2.2%
40	6,895	2.6%	2,630	38.1%	3.0%
41	6,425	2.4%	1,990	31.0%	2.3%
42	10,595	4.0%	3,040	28.7%	3.5%
43	7,320	2.7%	3,335	45.6%	3.9%
44	6,140	2.3%	1,095	17.8%	1.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>267,075</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>86,590</b>	<b>32.4%</b>	<b>100%</b>

Statistics Canada 2006 Census

20% sample data - persons in private households

(1,500 less children than total population count)

supports and resources to assist both the family and the child care program.

Every licensed child care program and home child care agency has an assigned special needs resource professional who is available to provide support and resources to the child care program so that every child can take part in the program. Services include individual consultation for children with identified special needs and program consultation to enhance organizational capacity, staff training and support. In addition to specialized professionals, child care centres can also access funding to hire additional staff to address short term needs.

Families may enrol their child in a specialized nursery school where services tend to be more intensive and may include occupational therapy and physiotherapy. Specialized consultation is also available in home child care.

### **Supporting Aboriginal and Francophone communities**

The Aboriginal and Francophone communities in Toronto are recognized as unique. While children in these communities make up a small percentage of the total child population, they are dispersed across the city making access to culturally appropriate child care services difficult. Children's Services supports the early learning and care needs of Aboriginal and Francophone families through the provision of fee subsidies to families looking for culturally-specific child care programs. In addition, the Aboriginal Advisory Group and Regional French Language Network for Best Start ensure that the needs of the Aboriginal and Francophone communities are taken into account when planning new child care facilities.

There are currently three Aboriginal child care programs and four Aboriginal Head Start Programs serving 155 children in Toronto. A new Aboriginal centre, scheduled to open in 2011 will serve an additional 56 children. A report produced in collaboration with the Aboriginal Advisory Group for Best Start profiles the Aboriginal community and is available on the Toronto Best Start Network website at [www.toronto.ca/children/bs\\_network\\_b.htm](http://www.toronto.ca/children/bs_network_b.htm).

There are 17 programs dedicated to the Francophone community currently serving 1,056 children. All but one Francophone elementary school has a child care centre located in it. A report produced in collaboration with the French Language Network profiles the Francophone community and is available on the Toronto Best Start Network website at [www.toronto.ca/children/bs\\_network\\_b.htm](http://www.toronto.ca/children/bs_network_b.htm).



**Family support programs**

Family support programs are neighbourhood meeting places that offer an environment for children to play, learn and make new friends while providing opportunities for parents and caregivers to meet and develop social networks.

These programs provide a range of services and resources that help strengthen parenting skills, support parent education and foster healthy child development. The services vary from program to program and may include: parent/child drop-in, moms and tots programs, playgroups, toy, equipment and book lending, information and referrals to other resources, parent workshops, family literacy/numeracy, parent/caregiver relief and child care registries.

Most programs are offered free of charge although some may encourage a voluntary donation. Hours of operation vary but most programs are open a few mornings or afternoons each week and some programs are open in the evenings and on weekends.

There are over 170 family support programs serving Toronto families and children. The programs are operated and funded by various levels of government as well as by community organizations and include Ontario Early Years Centres, Parenting and Family Literacy Centres, Family Resource Programs, and Community Action Programs for Children (CAPC).

**After-School Recreation Care**

After-School Recreation Care programs are unlicensed programs operated by Toronto Parks, Forestry and Recreation for children aged six to 12 years. There are 28 sites in Toronto with 810 children enrolled. The programs operate Monday to Friday from school dismissal to 6 pm from September to June. Children participate in a variety of activities such as outdoor play, games, drama, sports and arts and crafts. There is a nominal fee for the program and eligible families may receive fee assistance through Parks, Forestry and Recreation's Welcome Policy.

**Summer day programs**

Summer day programs are unlicensed programs that operate full day during the summer and are generally offered to school-age children from high-need areas. The City, in partnership with other agencies, provides some funding to operate these programs.

## Funding of child care services

Toronto Children's Services manages its service contracts in accordance with provincial legislation and policy including the

*Day Nurseries Act* and the

Provincial Child Care

Service Management

Guidelines. City policies

approved by Toronto

Council, including the

Service Plan for Child Care

2005–2009, Operating

Criteria for Child Care

Programs, and Operating

Budget Guidelines guide

public expenditures on child

care. The approved policies

are designed to ensure that

high quality, financially

viable services are

delivered equitably

throughout Toronto in a

way that maximizes the use

of public funds. As the

Service System Manager,

the City is responsible for

the stability and quality of

care in the overall child

care system and cannot

ensure the ongoing viability of individual child care programs.

<b>Child Care Service</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2009</b>
	<b>\$ Millions</b>	<b>\$ Millions</b>
<b>Licensed Child Care</b>		
Regular Subsidies	193.2	249.3
Ontario Works (OW)	15.9	22.3
OW - Learning Earning and Parenting (LEAP)	0.4	0.4
	<b>209.5</b>	<b>272.0</b>
<b>Special Needs</b>	<b>7.4</b>	<b>10.4</b>
<b>Family Resource</b>		
Cost Shared	2.1	2.4
Non-cost shared	0.9	0.8
	<b>3.0</b>	<b>3.2</b>
<b>Other Programs</b>		
Summer Day Programs	0.3	0.3
York Before & After School	0.3	0.3
After School Recreation & Care (ARC)	-	1.3
First Duty Pilot Project	1.0	-
	<b>1.6</b>	<b>1.9</b>
<b>Support to Children System</b>		
Wage Subsidies	37.5	44.0
Pay Equity	4.4	4.3
Rents and other grants	6.3	6.5
Minor Capital	2.0	2.5
	<b>50.2</b>	<b>57.3</b>
System Management	<b>19.0</b>	<b>20.7</b>
<b>Total Child Care Budget</b>	<b>290.7</b>	<b>365.5</b>
Excludes expansion		

In April 2010, Toronto City Council is being asked to approve \$378.7 million within the Children's Services 2010 operating budget to manage its child care system. The funding responsibility is shared between the Province, the City and child care users.

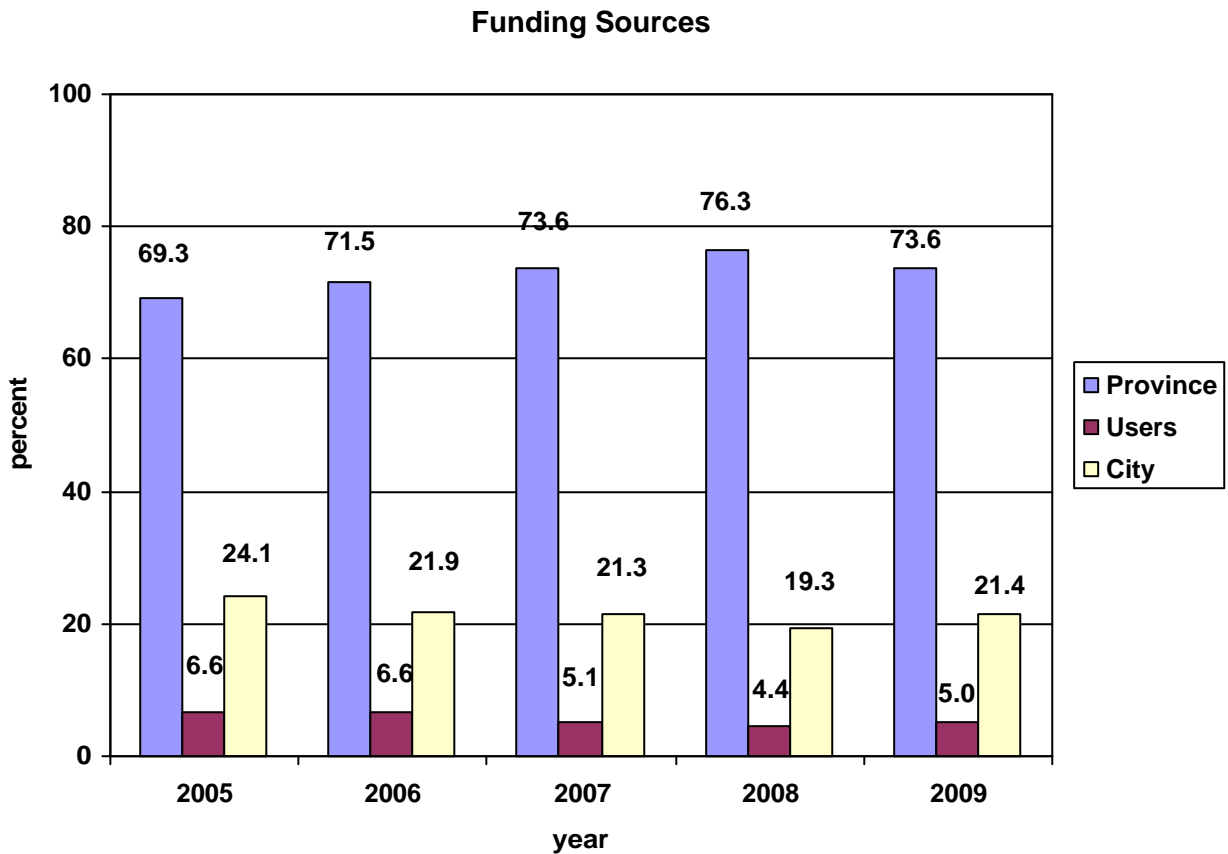
The Province of Ontario funds services and costs up to a predetermined ceiling as follows:

- 80 per cent of the net cost of the following “prescribed services”:

  - regular child care fee subsidies
  - Ontario Works (OW) child care
  - family resource programs
  - special needs resourcing
  - wage subsidy
  - Health and Safety expenditures

- 100 per cent of net costs for programs covered under the Best Start Strategy
- 50 per cent of approved administrative costs, not including Ontario Works administration

See Appendix D.



The City of Toronto funds services and costs as follows:

- 20 per cent of the net cost of “prescribed services”
- 50 per cent of approved administrative costs
- 100 per cent of any costs not approved through a negotiated service contract or costs above the approved ceiling even if eligible for cost sharing, including:
  - school occupancy costs
  - solid waste management fees
  - summer day programs
  - child care capital reserve fund
  - minor capital expenditures in child care centres
  - York Before and After school program
  - child care grants for occupancy and operating costs
  - additional family resource programs
  - additional child care spaces.
- 49 per cent of After-School Recreation Care programs using Social Services Reserve funds with 36 per cent of the cost from the Provincial Ministry of Health Promotion and 15 per cent from user fees.

User fees fund approximately four per cent of the overall cost of the child care system and in 2009 accounted for approximately \$18.2 million in revenue. User fees are subtracted from the total eligible expenditures to determine the net amount to be cost-shared between the Province and the City.

## Achievements and Challenges

The 2010-2014 Child Care Service Plan builds on the progress made through the previous service plan. While there have been a number of achievements, there continue to be significant challenges facing the City's child care system in the next five years.

### A. Developing a system of services for children

#### Best Start Strategy

In November 2004, the Ministry of Children and Youth Services (MCYS) announced the Best Start Strategy. This ten-year plan was designed to give Ontario's children the best start in life and to help them succeed in school by providing a comprehensive system of services to support them from birth to transition into school. The Best Start Strategy proposed a major expansion of the licensed child care system with more than 5,300 spaces (including 2,060 spaces for children 0 to 3.8 years old) to be funded through the 2003 Multilateral Framework on Early Learning and Child Care and the new 2005 Federal Early Learning and Child Care agreement.

The City's planned expansion of the licensed child care system under the Best Start Infrastructure Plan was severely curtailed when the National Child Care Plan was terminated effective 2007. In the end, only 3,400 new spaces were created with much of the growth occurring in programs serving preschool and kindergarten-age children. The second phase of the City's ambitious program to further expand licensed child care in areas of high child poverty and address the inadequate supply of facilities for children aged 0 to four had to be canceled.

#### Early Learning

In 2007, the provincial government commissioned a report to provide advice on how best to implement full day learning for children aged four and five and how to reinvest and redirect resources to build a comprehensive, continuous and integrated system for children and their families from birth through age 12. Dr Charles Pascal, the Provincial advisor on early learning, released the report, *With Our Best Future in Mind—Implementing Early Learning in Ontario* in June 2009. ([http://www.ontario.ca/en/initiatives/early\\_learning/ONT06\\_018865](http://www.ontario.ca/en/initiatives/early_learning/ONT06_018865)).

In September 2009, in response to Pascal's report, the Province announced a plan to implement full day learning for children aged four and five. The first phase of implementation begins in September 2010 and by 2015-2016 all children aged 4 and 5 will have access to full day learning with an extended day option available in some schools.

Children's Services presented a report to Toronto City Council on the provincial announcement on full day learning and received the full support of Council to work towards implementation of the full vision as articulated in the Pascal report. Toronto supports a fully integrated system of early learning and care for children aged 0 to 12 years.

As the experts in the field of child care and as a municipal leader, the City will continue to work with the Province and boards of education to address barriers to the successful implementation of early learning and to confirm the role of the municipality as a system manager with clear leadership and accountability lines.

To ensure seamless and equitable access, the City supports a single access subsidy system administered municipally. This is critical to the success of providing integrated, client-focused and streamlined services to families. Subsidies will continue to be available on a first-come, first-served basis with placement governed by the principles of age and geographic equity.

The new program is likely to generate higher labour force participation by parents, and therefore, more demand for child care subsidy as parents re-enter the workforce. To support the transformation of the system, additional fee subsidies will be needed to address the increased demand related to the extended day component of early learning and increased demand for school age subsidies as the four- and five-year-olds graduate to grade one.

Children's Services continues to work in partnership with the provincial government to transition the existing child care system to a new early learning and care system and to ensure the continuity of service levels and other priorities. The City recognizes that there will be systemic changes well beyond four- and five-year-olds. This will impact the City's priorities in community well-being and fighting child poverty.

### **Middle Childhood Strategy Framework**

In 2009, Toronto City Council approved the Middle Childhood Strategy Framework. The framework examines the current service system and proposes a set of guiding principles and directions that provide the foundation for the development of a system of high quality programs for children aged six to 12. The strategy is grounded in a commitment to providing opportunities for all children to have equitable access to a full range of quality services and programs that align with City divisional service plans and provincial initiatives.

- In 2006–2007, Children's Services, in partnership with the Middle Childhood Matters Coalition conducted information gathering sessions which led to a better understanding of the needs of families of children aged six to 12 years.
- In 2006, the After-School Recreation Care program was launched in partnership with Toronto Parks, Forestry and Recreation
- The Middle Childhood implementation strategy will respond to changes in the child care system for six- to 12-year-olds created by the introduction of the provincial early learning program

## **B. Quality of care**

The Toronto Operating Criteria is a tool used to evaluate quality and assess key elements that are essential for a high quality child care program. Several initiatives contributed to improvements in the quality of care as demonstrated by the results from the Operating Criteria visits:

1. Advancements have been made in the use of the Operating Criteria which was revised and updated in 2007. Training was provided to operators, and Consultants who conduct the assessments, to ensure that the tool is being used in a consistent and reliable manner across the city,
2. Criteria ratings are now available on the City's website for parents to consider when they choose a child care program and for parents to monitor ongoing quality once their child is enrolled
3. A major research study was undertaken in 2008/2009 to validate that the Operating Criteria is a reliable measure of child care quality
4. Criteria scores have improved continuously by 2.5 percent between 2007-2009
5. Through directed funding, wages for child care program staff increased beyond the rate of inflation between 2004 and 2008. This is particularly important as research shows a direct correlation between high quality child care and higher salaries. The median hourly wage increased by 15 per cent for early childhood educators and 19 per cent for child care assistant staff. In order to qualify for Wage Improvement Funding, child care providers were required to develop and maintain salary scales and ensure fair and equitable compensation within the workplace.
6. Payments of actual cost of service were maintained in each of the years enabling the operators to support the level and quality of service they budgeted.

Future improvements to quality of care are dependent on ensuring a stable system that is built on fair compensation, ongoing training and implementation of a common curriculum framework.

### **C. Ensuring access and equity**

Equitable access to child care fee subsidy is an important principle of managing Toronto's child care system. There have been some notable steps to improve access to services including:

- Development of a centralized application office and management of the wait list for fee subsidy
- Introduction of a centralized intake process to support children with special needs and their families. Developed with community partners, CITY KIDS provides a single point of access, coordinated intake and service delivery
- Introduction of online services for business transactions through a web-based application that was awarded a Showcase Ontario and Toronto Innovation Award. This is the first phase of developing online services for families and businesses.

More children are accessing regulated child care in Toronto than ever before and there has been a significant growth in the number of physical spaces available as well as the number of fee subsidies.

#### **Increased demand for child care subsidy**

Changes to eligibility rules under Income Testing have resulted in growing wait lists for child care subsidy. Since 2005, the wait list for child care subsidy has grown from just over 4,000 to over 15,800 children in March 2010.

#### **Improving access and equity**

The City faces significant challenges in its goal to improve geographic equity and increase the capacity of the child care system in areas of the city lacking child care. Communities with inadequate licensed child care services continue to face insufficient access to both licensed care and fee subsidy. Since the end of 2004 to March 2010, the net growth within the child care system resulted in an additional 100 centres and 6,100 licensed spaces.



The City plans to improve geographic equity at the individual ward level so that each ward is within 10 per cent of its equity target by 2014. Improved access to child care in these communities will require additional funding not only to build child care spaces but to support new fee subsidies.

Substantial investment in subsidies is a key factor in achieving equity through growth in under-served areas.

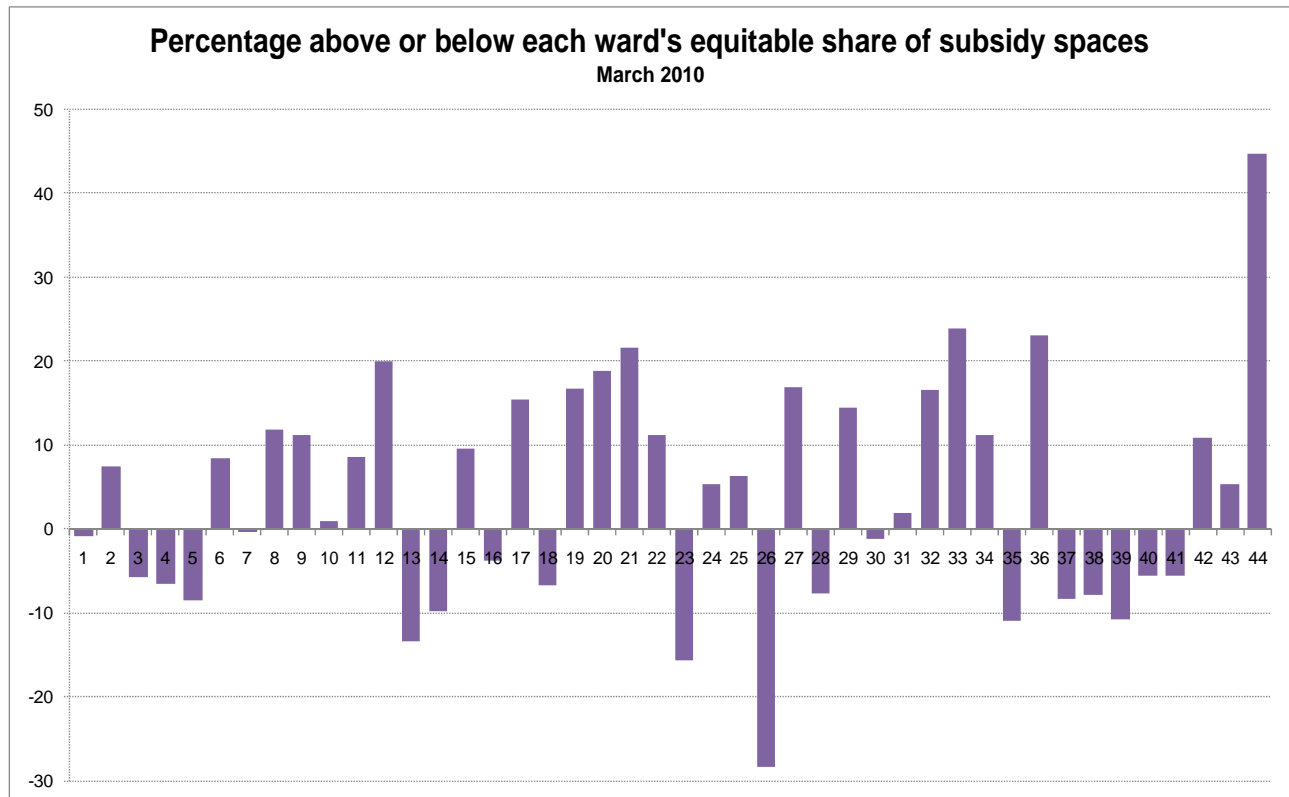
Age equity targets are established to ensure equitable access to all children. To ensure equitable access to the youngest and most vulnerable, 15 per cent of all subsidies have historically been allocated to infants aged 0 to 18 months. However, the child care system in Toronto has never been able to achieve the age equity targets for infants for a number of reasons including:

- limited number of physical spaces due to high capital costs
- limited number of physical spaces due to high operating costs

Substantial investment in new facilities is a key factor in achieving age equity.

Equitable distribution of subsidies at the ward level ensures that each ward is allocated a share of the available fee subsidies. Although equity has been traditionally measured and controlled at the ward level, closer analysis reveals that because of the size of wards, inequities in access can occur within a ward creating the need to review equity at a local neighbourhood level. Managing access to subsidy at the local level within a ward is difficult to implement and requires development of clear policies for targeting service to high need areas within the ward.

Equity of access could however be greatly improved by targeting capital development to under-served neighbourhoods. Many of the new child care facilities built in Toronto with funding from developers generally are not built in high need or under-served areas. A more proactive role for the City in planning for development of new child care capacity in under-served neighbourhoods is crucial to improving access at the local level.



#### D. Fiscal pressures

Following a change of federal government, the 2005 Early Learning and Child Care agreements were terminated effective March 31, 2007. The provincial government paid out the final year in four installments over the four years that ended March 31, 2010. The City of Toronto deposited the Best Start funds into a specially created Child Care Expansion Reserve Fund in 2005. The reserve fund was used to fund some capital projects and to cover base funding deficits.

Best Start was 100 per cent funded by the provincial government via flow-through of federal funds. All other child care is funded on an 80:20 split, with the Province paying 80 per cent and the City paying 20 per cent. With the reduction of provincial Best Start funding and an increasing gap between fixed base funding and the increases in the actual cost of services, Children's Services is facing funding pressures.

The loss of federal Early Learning and Child Care funding and Best Start capital has significantly impacted the ability of the City to increase the number of licensed child care spaces. In addition, the approved service level of 24,000 subsidized spaces is threatened by the lack of stable funding of inflation-related costs and the possible impact of the introduction of early learning for four- and

five-year-olds. The City is currently using funds from the Child Care Expansion Reserve to maintain existing service levels. The reserve fund is expected to be exhausted by 2012.

On March 25, 2010, the Province of Ontario announced an investment of \$15 million (annualized) for child care in Toronto. This investment will protect 1,500 child care subsidies that were previously funded through the Best Start program. This does not eliminate our base funding pressures, but it means that the City will not have to reduce service levels by eliminating subsidized spaces in 2010. In December 2009, the City presented a report to Council identifying fiscal pressures (*Implementation of Early Learning Program and Toronto's Child Care Funding Risks and Pressures* <http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2010/cd/bgrd/backgroundfile-26135.pdf> )

### **Impact of income testing on user fees**

In January 2007, the Province moved from needs testing to income testing as the method of determining eligibility for child care fee subsidy. Income testing resulted in more families being eligible for fee subsidy and generally reduced the user fee. This reduced the revenue received by the City from user fees from \$21.7 million in 2006 under needs testing to \$18.2 million in 2009 under income testing.

### **Lack of physical spaces and capital**

Improving access to child care will continue to be restricted due to a lack of capital funding to address the limited physical spaces available in underserved wards. The City will continue to follow Council direction related to committing funding to the non-profit and public child care sectors.

Improving access to child care will continue to focus on the not-for-profit and/or public sector. Commercial child care operators currently with a fee subsidy agreement are held to the same service levels each year. Operators may reconfigure or change their license as long as the number of staff employed to deliver the program does not increase from the previous level. The City uses staff as a proxy to maintain service levels and ensure fee subsidies remain in the not-for-profit or public sector.

Access to subsidized infant care (serving children from birth to 18 months old) has not improved. While infant spaces almost doubled in programs with no service contract, minimal infant growth occurred in centres with a service contract, thereby limiting the access for subsidized families to infant spaces. The lack of facilities for infant care is reflected in the wait list as well. As of March 2010, more than 4,100 infants were waiting for subsidy.

## **E. Special needs resources**

Increased demand for support for children with special needs is stretching the capacity of the child care system. While funding to support children with special needs has increased since the last service plan, the number of children being supported each year has grown from 3,200 children in 2005 to 4,390 in 2009. Child care programs continue to struggle to meet the complex demands of today's children and in particular children with social/emotional and mental health issues.

Generally accepted research indicates that 10 to 12 per cent of any given population will have extra support needs and therefore the licensed child care system should be prepared to support 5,600 to 6,700 children with special needs each year instead of the just over 4,000 or 8.5 per cent who currently receive support.

These numbers indicate that further growth and investment in services to support children with special needs in child care must remain a priority. As Children's Services continues to invest and expand services for children with special needs, the current model of service will be evaluated to ensure that it remains efficient and effective at meeting the needs of this vulnerable population.

## **F. Governance in the child care and family support sector**

As the Child Care System Manager, the City of Toronto has the authority for planning and allocation of funds for child care services. The City will review contract obligations and requirements for both not-for-profit and commercial operators, developing enhanced criteria to ensure that operators maintain a high level of quality, remain financially viable and operate within existing legislation. This applies to all child care programs that receive funding from the City of Toronto.

Of particular concern are family support programs which are operated and funded by different orders of government, as well as by community organizations with no joint planning process or coordination of services. The City of Toronto as service system manager requires that the governance of Ontario Early Years Centres be transferred to the City to ensure services are planned, universally accessible, integrated and accountable.

## Setting Directions

The directions in the 2010–2014 Child Care Service Plan articulate an agenda for continuous improvement in program delivery and management. They ensure collaborative work among the various divisions in the City, other orders of government and community partners and focus on the following:

1. Strategic leadership
2. Advancing quality
3. Improving access and equity to services for children
4. Developing an integrated system of services for children and families
5. Transition to early learning

### 1. Strategic leadership

Children’s Services will continue to provide leadership in planning and managing a comprehensive quality child care system that is delivered at the local level and sensitive to local service pressures and demands. As the demand for child care continues to grow, it has become increasingly important for all government and community partners to work together to create a culture of shared responsibility. This sets the stage for greater strategic investment that focuses on securing the appropriate level of funding required to meet the needs of children and families.

#### Goal:

- 1.1 To deliver the highest quality of service that balances system accountability and sustainability with local needs and accessibility

#### Action statements

- strengthen intergovernmental, school board and community partnerships
- work with government partners to secure stable and sustainable base funding to meet system demands and community needs
- encourage all orders of government to dedicate the funding required to maintain/expand current service levels
- strengthen and enhance contract requirements for all service providers receiving funding from the City of Toronto

**Goal:**

1.2 To advance delivery of a fully integrated and seamless system of services for children aged 0 to 12 years and families, by developing and implementing a framework that:

- focuses on successful outcomes for children and families
- recognizes resource requirements
- generates outcomes in locally appropriate ways

**Action statements**

- continue to build support for implementation of the full vision of the report *With Our Best Future in Mind—Implementing Early Learning in Ontario*, a report to the Premier by the Special Advisor on Early Learning, Charles E. Pascal with community and government partners, advance service integration in at-risk communities through pilot projects and other initiatives
- resolve governance issues in the family support services sector by clearly positioning the City as the lead government in advancing these programs

**Goal:**

1.3 To enhance the role of Children's Services and the child care system in addressing broader City and intergovernmental policy objectives and priorities

**Action statement**

- continue to work across City divisions and governments to ensure that the needs of families are considered and to advance priorities in poverty reduction, employment creation, recreation and middle years program planning and delivery

**Goal:**

1.4 To be recognized among all stakeholders and partners as a leader in service system management

**Action statements**

- proactively participate in regional, provincial and national initiatives intended to advance services for children and families
- demonstrate a commitment to innovation in the design and delivery of services, including exploring new strategic partnerships
- reaffirm and advance the lead role of the municipality in systems planning, expanding application of the Operating Criteria and awareness of the Report Card

**Goal:**

1.5 To foster and lead research initiatives that measure, evaluate and improve the quality of child care and children's services in Toronto

**Action statement**

- work with academic and education partners to advance research and performance measures that assess the quality of child care programs and other children's services
- provide access to the Children's Services database for research purposes

**Goal:**

1.6 To encourage federal support of family and children's services

**Action statements**

- communicate the importance of sustainable services for children and families
- encourage reintroduction of a National Child Care Strategy
- communicate the financial requirements of families in accessing sustainable quality child care

## 2. Advancing quality

Every child benefits from a quality early learning and care experience. Families should expect that licensed child care will deliver a high quality program that allows children opportunities for play, socialization, exploration and developmentally appropriate learning in a safe and nurturing environment.

The Toronto Operating Criteria is a validated tool used to evaluate child care quality and it promotes an integrated approach to planning and management that ensures services to children/families are accessible, inclusive and promote equity in an early learning and care environment. In addition, the Operating Criteria draws on the following key elements that are essential for a high quality child care program:

- program content and development
- health and safety standards of the physical facility
- training, experience and stability of caregivers
- group size (ratio of children to caregivers)
- family involvement in the program
- sound management practices

Children's Services is committed to ensuring that all child care centres and home child care agencies with a service contract for fee subsidy maintain a high level of quality of care by assessing them for standards outlined in the Toronto Operating Criteria and posting the results on the City's website.

### **Goal:**

2.1 To utilize the Operating Criteria to articulate the City's expectations of quality and evaluate child care programs

### **Action statements**

- complete the validation of the Operating Criteria as an accurate measure of child care quality
- advocate for the use of the Operating Criteria in all child care programs in Toronto beginning with those that receive funding
- participate in the development of a regulatory quality framework for all child care programs and child and family centres



**Goal:**

2.2 To promote "Early Learning for Every Child Today" (ELECT) as a curriculum framework

**Action statements**

- establish an advisory group to provide leadership during the implementation of the ELECT curriculum framework
- oversee the development and implementation of a leadership course for child care operators and home child care agencies on ELECT
- ensure congruence between ELECT and the Toronto Operating Criteria guidelines.

**Goal:**

2.3 To develop a Middle Childhood Strategy within the framework that defines and sets direction of a system of high quality out-of-school-time programs for children aged 6 to 12

**Action statements**

- develop best practices/standards guide for out of school programming
- research and develop a quality measure that is applicable to the full range of programs for middle childhood children
- complete a needs and environmental scan to determine family needs, service distribution on gaps
- align the Middle Childhood Strategy with the full vision of *With Our Best Future in Mind—Implementing Early Learning in Ontario*, a report to the Premier by the Special Advisor on Early Learning, Charles E. Pascal
- support the development of an expanded model of quality recreation and care to meet the needs of school age children.

**Goal:**

2.4 To develop universal design guidelines for child care spaces that are developmentally appropriate, safe and accessible physical environments

**Action statements**

- develop design guidelines for use by child care operators to build new and retrofit existing child care space
- develop costing guidelines for transforming space to support new or changed age groupings

**Goal:**

2.5 To continue to develop and invest in a comprehensive system of support for children with special needs

**Action statements**

- direct future resources to promote, expand and sustain inclusive environments by achieving service growth that reflects the population of children with special needs
- reconfigure and adjust services for children with special needs as required during the introduction of the Early Learning program
- ensure that capital and operating funding for new programs is contingent on programs being inclusive of children with special needs
- develop a plan to increase the number of special needs resource staff supporting children with special needs in all areas of the city.

### 3. Improving access and equity to services for children

In 1999, Toronto Council adopted the principles of age and geographic equity to ensure equitable access to the limited supply of fee subsidies. These principles will continue to guide the allocation of fee subsidies through the 2010–2014 Child Care Service Plan. To sustain the system within a changing landscape, fee subsidies will continue to be allocated using the principles of age and geographic equity with a greater emphasis on age equity.

**Age Equity:** the limited number of subsidy spaces is currently allocated by age group as follows: 30 per cent to infants and toddlers (0 to 30 months), 45 per cent to preschool (30 months to kindergarten), and 25 per cent to school age (grade 1 and up). These allocations may need to be revisited given Early Learning and fiscal pressures.

**Geographic Equity:** each city ward is allocated a share of the limited subsidy spaces based on the proportion of children living in the ward below the low-income cut-off (LICO). However, allocation of subsidy is on a first-come, first-served basis to families who qualify under the income test and is not just restricted to families whose incomes are below LICO.

#### Goal:

3.1 To improve geographic equity at the individual ward level so that each ward is within 10 per cent of equity

#### Action statements

- develop geographic ward plans so that each ward is within 10 per cent of its equity target by 2014

#### Goal:

3.2 To continue to support the principles of age equity and ensure equitable access to child care for infants and toddlers

#### Action statements

- continue to support and manage age and geographic principles through centralized management of the waitlist for fee subsidy
- review home child care rate structure to improve fair and equitable access

#### Goal:

3.3 To improve access to service and communication of information for families through the use of technology

**Action statements**

- continue to enhance the Children's Services website and online services to support families and the community in accessing information about child care
- expand opportunities for families to directly interface and access services through online services
- ensure that the division is well-positioned to support changing business requirements through the implementation of the next phase of the Children's Services Information System (CSIS 3)
- align with the City's e-services strategy and 311

**Goal:**

3.4 To expand the Child Care Capital Strategy to include a 10 year Capital Plan that will identify capital investment needed to improve access to child care across the city. The plan will address:

- new facility requirements
- retrofit requirements
- long-term systems needs
- financial commitment required to implement plan
- age and geographic equity targets

**Action statements**

- develop a 10-year Capital Plan to improve access to child care as part of the Child Care Capital Strategy

**Goal:**

3.5 To lead in the infrastructure planning and development of services for children in the City of Toronto through municipally led initiatives and partnership opportunities

**Action statements**

- support growth in the child care system through public and not-for-profit delivery
- identify capital requirements for child care across the City
- allocate capital dollars according to service plan directives
- implement a Capital Strategy that promotes collaborative approaches to enhance investments
- develop criteria to be used in determining when a new child care program should be delivered by the public or not for profit sector
- identify opportunities for capital investment and expansion to support equity principles

through revitalization initiatives and partnerships with other City divisions, agencies, boards and commissions, school boards and other community partners.

- target capital funding in accordance with the Capital Strategy to support age equity principles and improve access for infants and toddlers

**Goal:**

3.6 To ensure that a capital program for building new child care sites meets provincial standards for accessibility.

**Action statements**

- ensure that the guidelines for capital development address the need to remove barriers to physical accessibility for children and families
- develop principles for capital development that support legislative requirements for a safe and healthy workplace

#### 4. Developing an integrated system of services for children and families

Children's Services continues to demonstrate leadership by championing strategies to enhance linkages between existing planning bodies, networks and service planning initiatives. No one division, service or strategy can alone address the needs of children and families in Toronto. Focusing on innovation and partnerships between governments and service providers will create an environment to support the development of a comprehensive system of services for children and families at the neighbourhood level. The City and various community partners have been working together for many years. The Neighbourhood Action Teams and Partnerships and the Best Start Network are examples of Children's Services commitment to building on collaborative integrated approaches.

**Goal:**

4.1 To promote collaborative practices and partnerships to support the alignment of our service planning activities with other service planning initiatives to move towards an integrated system of services

**Action statements**

- encourage and advance partnerships with school boards, Public Health, Parks, Forestry and Recreation, and Toronto Community Housing to support integrated planning and collaboration for services
- continue to support collaboration of City-managed services through the Children's Services Integrated Management Committee
- partner with school boards to develop strategies to support the ongoing needs of families for extended care for the full year for children aged four to 12 years
- continue to highlight services to families and children at a neighbourhood level through Neighbourhood Action Teams and Neighbourhood Action Partnerships
- develop opportunities built on research and findings from the First Duty model
- identify opportunities and resources needed for Municipal Child Care Services to continue to take the lead in providing integrated services
- develop principles to guide and support the development of child and family centres including the selection of demonstration sites to be early leaders

**Goal:**

4.2 To align the Middle Childhood Strategy with Early Learning

**Action statements**

- develop an implementation plan within the context of Early Learning
- secure funding for After-School Recreation and Care programs to ensure stability of programs beyond 2011 for children six to 12 years
- align the Middle Childhood Strategy with the service plan to ensure greater collaboration and coordination for local service planning and delivery
- develop the Middle Childhood Strategy as outlined in the Middle Childhood Strategy Framework passed by Toronto City Council August 2009

## 5. Transition to Early Learning

Children's Services is working with the Province and boards of education to implement Early Learning and transition to an integrated early learning system. The effectiveness of the transition is contingent upon sufficient resources and tools to support new funding models, address service levels, ensure high quality of services and establish an integrated service system that is seamless and accessible to families and their children aged 0 to 12 years.

### Goal:

5.1 To support full implementation of the Early Learning Program articulated in *With Our Best Future in Mind—Implementing Early Learning in Ontario*, a report to the Premier by the Special Advisor on Early Learning, Charles E. Pascal

### Action statements

- through an intergovernmental strategy, request that the Province confirm its vision for an early learning system and reaffirm the role of Children's Services as service system manager
- seek opportunities where there is existing municipal interest to operationalize the recommendations in the report
- with municipal partners, develop a multi-year strategy for seamless service access and integration of municipal and community services
- provide models that demonstrate how the full vision in the Pascal report can be applied throughout the service system

### Goal:

5.2 To develop strategies to maintain service sustainability and system stability during and following the transition to early learning

### Action statements

- provide a transition plan to the Province that requests sufficient resources, tools, operational and capital funding to effectively implement early learning
- apply the service planning principles to determine where to strategically invest resources

### Goal:

5.3 To engage in transitional planning processes that are transparent to families and the child care service system

### Action statement

- work with community groups and networks as a forum to discuss planning for an early



learning system

- analyze the impact of gradual implementation of early learning on the child care system and develop mechanisms to mitigate any unintended consequences resulting from implementation

## **Conclusion**

This Service Plan was developed during an unprecedented time of change and unknowns in the child care field. The child care system could be on the verge of transformation as Children's Services works with the Province to implement Early Learning and transition to an integrated early learning system. However, the success of this transition is contingent upon sufficient resources and tools to support new funding models, address service levels, ensure high quality of services and establish an integrated service system that is seamless and accessible to families and their children aged 0 to 12 years. The child care system is also facing financial pressures which further threaten the stability of the system.

The service plan is a tool to guide the funding and management of the child care system, allowing planning and delivery of services in a rational, accountable and equitable manner that maximizes the use of the resources available to the system. Regardless of the pressures, changes and unknowns, this service plan has been developed to "stand the test of time" and lead Toronto Children's Services through the next five years.

## Appendix A – Web-based survey for parents and operators

Child care services are vital to families, both as a support to parents who are working or in school, and as an early learning experience for children.

The Toronto Child Care Service Plan is a tool for guiding the funding and management of the child care system. Children's Services is in the process of updating the Service Plan to guide us over the next five years. We are focusing on the following four directions:

<b>Strategic leadership</b>	Provide leadership to the child care community and engage with all levels of government and community partners to ensure that children and families have the necessary supports to ensure successful outcomes.
<b>Advance quality</b>	Invest in and champion continuous quality improvement in all child care services to ensure Toronto's children and families are offered programs of the highest quality.
<b>Improve access and equity to services</b>	Plan and manage resources to ensure that children, families and communities have access to their share of the available services.
<b>Develop an integrated system of services</b>	Champion strategies that encourage partnerships, coordination and integration in our efforts to develop a continuum of supports and services that meet the needs of children and families in their local community.

Let us know what you think: Note: Please do not enter your name or any personal contact information as no staff person will contact you about any comment submitted through this form. Comments will only be used for the purpose of considering your anonymous feedback regarding the Child Care Service Plan and not to contact you.

Yes, I support the four directions.

I somewhat support the four directions but would like you to consider the following:

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No, I don't support the four directions because of the following:

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Please let us know what type of organization you represent or let us know if you are a parent:

Child care

Family support

Education

Public health

Parent

Other

Enter the postal code of your program/organization or if you are a parent, enter your home postal code: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix B – Community engagement

Community engagement is an integral component of the service planning process and the development of Children’s Services Child Care Service Plans.

Between April to May 2009, communities across Toronto including Francophone and Aboriginal families were invited to share their views of the principles and directions of the 2010–2014 Child Care Service Plan. Information flyers were broadly distributed to group and home child care centres, family support programs, Ontario Early Years Centres, special needs agencies, Toronto Public Libraries, community centres, After-School Recreation Care Programs, Toronto Public Health, and clients on the waitlist for subsidized child care. Accompanying cover letters encouraged the distribution of these flyers including an invitation for public feedback using an online forum open to all Toronto residents.

### **Service Providers**

In addition to information flyers, service providers were further encouraged by City Consultants via caseload e-mail lists and various community/network meetings, to participate by visiting the online survey located on the Children’s Services website, examine an overview of the Service Plan principles and directions and offer their comments.

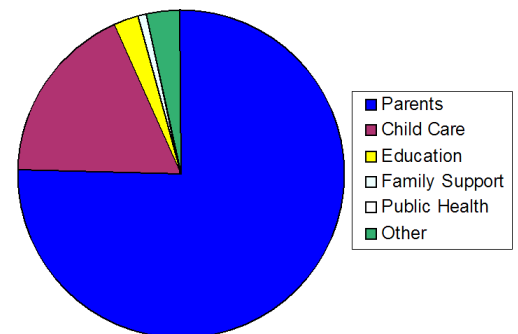
### **Parents**

Parents were engaged in-person by City Consultants soliciting feedback at various programs across all Toronto districts; they were provided with a concise one-page summary of the service plan objectives identical to the one found online, and asked to provide their level of support and comments. Invitations to the online forum were provided for additional feedback opportunities.

## **Results**

### **Demographics**

More than 200 entries were collected from online and Consultant engagement sessions combined. Of these, 161 were submitted by parents, while service providers supplied the remaining 53 responses (breakdown by sector: 39 child care, 5 education, 2 family supports, 0 Public Health, and 7 other designations). With the exception of five wards (6, 13, 14, 20, 40), at least one response was collected from each of the 44 wards across Toronto.



### **Support for the Directions and Principles of the 2010–2014 Child Care Service Plan**

Regardless of organizational affiliation or parent status, 98.54 per cent of respondents indicated their partial to full support of the 2010–2014 Child Care Service Plan directives including strategic leadership, quality advancement, improved service access and equity, and development of integrated system of services. The 1.46 per cent withholding support for the directives were all parents.

### **Additional Comments**

Despite the overwhelming support for the directives and the general consensus that they will provide a “great focus for going forward in the next five years,” a number of respondents had a few

comments to share regarding the service plan and their overall experiences with the Toronto child care system. In order to summarize this data, all responses were aggregated and assessed for emerging themes. All data are organized according to the following six resulting themes:

- **Modify, enhance, and extend existing programs – 24%**
  - Service gaps for toddlers and school-aged children require their own service plan. Existing programs should have more variety and enrichment activities such as physical education, and music, and parents should be provided with more flexibility. Collaboration can be facilitated by “dialogue and connection” amongst services (e.g., Toronto District School Board-daycares, parent-child services).
  
- **Affordable and accessible child care – 23%**
  - Child care is a “basic need” and should be accessible to all families regardless of income level, geography, language, or special education needs.
  
- **Increase child care spaces and reduce subsidy wait lists – 18%**
  - “Access to available daycare is at a crisis level.” With insufficient spaces and “ridiculous” waitlists sometimes as long as two years, parents are forced to find alternative care or stay at home.
  
- **More information and consideration regarding new initiatives – 16%**
  - There is a need to address upcoming initiatives such as full-day learning and the influences of the newly established College of Early Childhood Educators. New directions “sound” good, but are too “vague.” Examples should be provided to clarify what they would “look like” if implemented (e.g., subsidy attendance rules and four-weeks after child birth subsidy).
  
- **Enhance quality control and customer service – 10%**
  - Customer service including “people relations” and training of clerks and caseworkers requires further attention. “All centres/programs delivering services to young children should follow the same criteria regardless of whether they have a service agreement with the City or not.”
  
- **Funding concerns – 9%**
  - Funding goes to new initiatives but should be invested in existing programs, particularly those operated by non-profit organizations.

# Appendix C – Children’s Services Fact Sheet, Winter 2010

## Toronto’s licensed child care system

- Toronto’s licensed system is made up of **946** child care centres and **21** home child care agencies.
- Child care centres operate **53,203** spaces.
- Home child care agencies manage approximately **3,500** spaces.
- Together, they operate over **56,500** spaces.
- **57** child care centres and **one** home child care agency are operated by the City of Toronto.
- **385** child care centres are located in elementary schools.
- **652** child care centres and **10** home child care agencies have a service contract with the City of Toronto to provide child care to families receiving fee subsidy.
- 268,575 children 0 to 9 years live in Toronto and licensed child care serves only 21 per cent of these children.

Licensed spaces in child care centres ~ March 2010

Type	# of centres	%	infant	toddler	preschool	schoolage	total
			spaces	spaces	spaces	spaces	spaces
Municipal	57	6%	346	525	1,535	525	2,931
Non-profit	655	69%	1,405	3,491	18,123	12,900	35,919
Commercial	234	25%	872	2,303	9,027	2,151	14,353
<b>Total</b>	<b>946</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>2,623</b>	<b>6,319</b>	<b>28,685</b>	<b>15,576</b>	<b>53,203</b>

2010 Daily Public Fee

**Public fees:** Each child care is responsible for setting their public fee. These fees vary across age groups and between centres. The table to the right shows the wide range of public fees charged by centres located in Toronto.

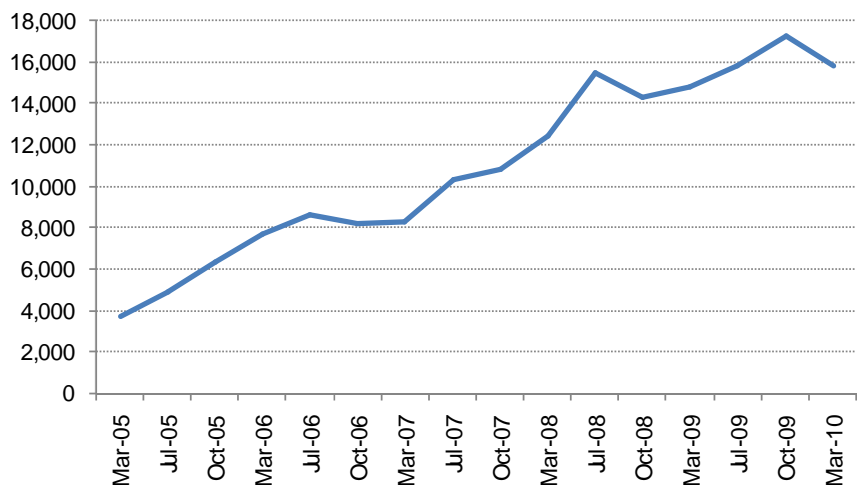
Age group	low range	mid range	high range
infant	\$ 54.00	\$ 70.00	\$ 89.00
toddler	\$ 43.50	\$ 56.00	\$ 79.00
preschool	\$ 32.50	\$ 40.00	\$ 58.00
school age	\$ 18.00	\$ 28.00	\$ 44.00

Note: While the majority of centres fall within these ranges, there are still some that may charge higher or lower fees.

**Fee subsidy** helps families with the cost of child care.

- The City’s budgeted **24,000** fee subsidy spaces currently serve only 28 per cent of Toronto’s low-income children.
- 39 per cent of children live in families with incomes below \$40,000 and would be eligible for full or partial subsidy.
- In March 2010, over **15,800** children were on the waiting list for a fee subsidy.

Children waiting for a fee subsidy



## Appendix D – Provincial subsidy, per contracts 2005–2009

Description	2005		2006		2007		2008		2009	
	Fiscal	Annualized	Fiscal	Annualized	Fiscal	Annualized	Fiscal	Annualized	Fiscal	Annualized
Child Care Delivery Agent - Fee Subsidy	118,051.0	117,527.2	117,796.6	117,527.2	117,589.7	117,527.2	117,527.2	117,527.2	117,692.6	117,692.6
Ontario Works Child Care - Formal (Licensed)	9,937.6	9,367.8	9,367.8	9,367.8	9,497.8	9,367.8	9,569.4	9,367.8	9,621.3	9,367.8
Ontario Works Child Care - Informal	217.5	278.2	278.2	278.2	148.2	278.2	76.6	278.2	24.7	278.2
ELCD 100% Child Care Subsidy							4,394.1		5,329.8	
Child Care Deliv. Agent - Special Needs	5,944.6	5,610.8	6,087.6	5,610.8	6,205.8	5,610.8	5,610.8	5,610.8	5,623.7	5,623.7
Child Care Deliv. Agent - Resource Centres	1,689.2	1,765.3	1,739.8	1,753.3	1,739.8	1,753.3	1,753.3	1,753.3	1,700.4	1,700.4
Child Care Deliv. Agent - Wage Subsidy Non-	30,648.6	31,218.7	30,572.0	31,142.0	30,648.6	31,142.0	31,142.0	31,142.0	31,371.9	31,371.9
Child Care Deliv. Agent - Wage Subsidy	2,388.0	2,538.7	2,388.0	2,538.7	2,388.0	2,538.7	2,538.7	2,538.7	2,538.7	2,538.7
Delivery Agents - Pay Equity Union Settlement	3,877.5	3,877.5	3,877.5	3,877.5	3,877.5	3,877.5	3,877.5	3,877.5	3,877.5	3,877.5
ELCD Operating			18,808.5		42,536.5		53,445.8		51,496.6	
ELCD Planning			219.4		292.4		292.4		292.4	
ELCC Fee Subsidy (DNA)	16,474.5	16,474.5	16,474.5	16,474.5	16,474.5	16,474.5	16,474.5	16,474.5	16,463.6	16,463.6
Wage Improvement Non-Profit			997.1		4,295.7		5,387.4		6,287.8	
Wage Improvement Commercial			583.3		2,314.3		3,200.8		3,200.8	
Repairs & Maintenance Child Care			-		-		407.0		-	
ELCC H&S Min. Cap. Improvement - Preschool										
ELCC Health & Safety Minor Capital										
ELCC Administration	1,008.7	1,008.7	1,008.7	1,008.7	1,008.7	1,008.7	1,008.7	1,008.7	1,008.7	1,008.7
Child Care Administration	5,461.6	5,461.6	5,461.6	5,461.6	5,461.6	5,461.6	5,461.6	5,461.6	5,546.8	5,546.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>195,698.8</b>	<b>195,129.0</b>	<b>215,660.6</b>	<b>195,040.3</b>	<b>244,479.3</b>	<b>195,040.3</b>	<b>262,167.8</b>	<b>195,040.3</b>	<b>262,077.3</b>	<b>195,469.9</b>

## **Appendix E – Toronto child care capital strategy**

### **Child Care Capital Strategy**

Capital planning will be guided by the principle of equity of access tailored to the particular circumstances of the local neighborhood. With increased emphasis on place-based approaches to neighborhood well-being the Capital Strategy promotes collaborative approaches to enhance investments in the infrastructure of neighborhoods which include child care. Neighborhood infrastructure may include and provide opportunities for broader service delivery such as community hubs, community space and community development activities. Children's Services must have a lead role in the infrastructure planning of services for children in the city of Toronto.

The City recognizes the importance of the physical environment in the development of children and supports the improvement and development of environments based on best practice and research. Children's Services is developing Design Guidelines, which will be applied to all capital funded projects.

The Capital Strategy sets out principles and priorities for allocating capital funds. This strategy assumes a commitment of investment from senior levels of government and the City of Toronto that may include a variety of funding options.

### **Principles for allocation of funding**

1. Subject to upholding the equity, accountability and operating effectiveness principles of the service plan, the Capital Plan will address the following types of projects:
  - Relocation of child care centres that lose tenure due to closure of schools or other publicly operated facilities
  - Relocation/capital investment to respond to service system challenges
  - Development of new child care facilities, either stand-alone facilities or those integrated into larger developments
  - Renovations for the purpose of operating a more efficient child care site
  - Renovations for the purpose of introducing or enlarging the infant component to a child care centre
  - Renovations for the purpose of improving environments.
  
2. Not-for-profit or municipally operated programs will be considered for capital funding if they are



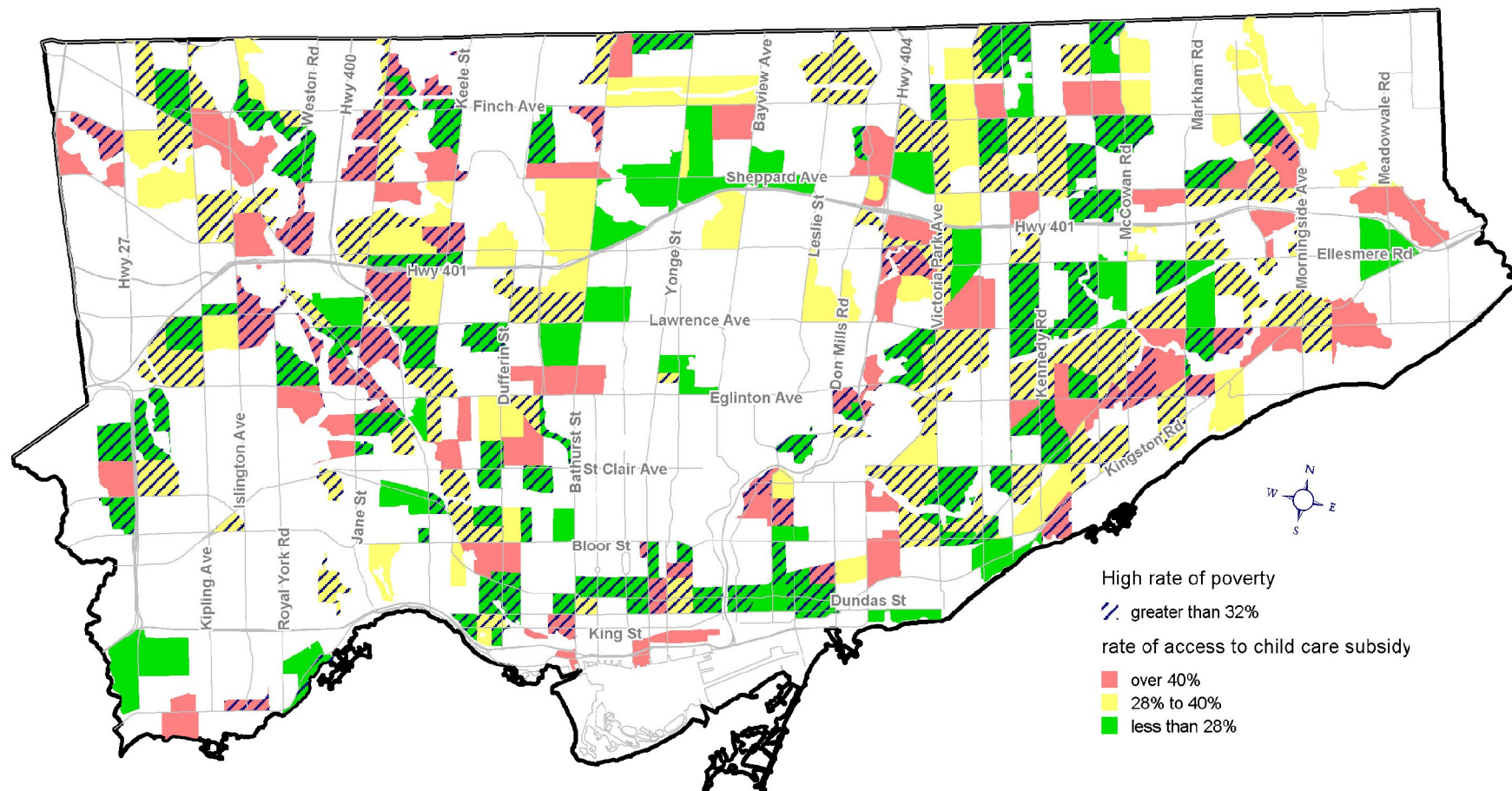
located in areas of high need as defined by the division's Equity of Access to Child Care Subsidy map. This map, which is updated regularly, identifies areas of the city where there are high proportions of children living in poverty who have limited access to both a licensed child care space and a fee subsidy (see Appendix F). Interested operators must meet all requirements as set out by the division, including demonstration of financial viability through a business plan.

3. Once an established commitment of investment is guaranteed by senior orders of government, Children's Services will issue an annual request for proposals to generate new service capacity with the aid of the Equity of Access to Child Care Subsidy map. Proposals will be assessed based on the principles noted in 1.
4. Although the purpose of the Strategy is to promote the growth in licensed child care spaces, priority and additional funding may be given to projects that build on synergies gained through the integration of services.
5. Children's Services will not include consideration for the purpose of building or renovating school-age space in single-use, stand-alone buildings. Only shared space will be permitted in multi-use buildings.
6. Children's Services will determine the operator for a child care centre through a public Expression of Interest or by providing direct service through its Municipal Child Care Services division.

#### **Capital Plan Directives: Conditions under which the City will fund Capital Projects**

- **Areas of high need** (areas identified by City to be further developed as identified on the Access and Equity to Child Care Subsidy map): These areas are identified as areas of need in accordance to the principles set out in the service plan. Capital funding will be allocated to these areas when funding is available.
- **Development opportunities** (projects which are identified by developers with an opportunity to develop child care, but not on priority map): Those that fit within the service plan, but are not a priority, will be eligible for support and contract for fee subsidy, but will not receive City funding.
- **Development opportunities that do not meet service plan priorities:** The City will provide general support, but will not provide funding or contract for fee subsidy.

## Appendix F – Access and Equity to Child Care Subsidy Map, January 2010



This map highlights census tracts with at least 50 low-income children and shows how the rate of access to child care subsidy varies from one area to the next. Areas highlighted in green have the lowest access rates to child care subsidy and will be targeted for improvements subject to available funding. Current funding allows for approximately 28% of children living below the low-income cut-off (LICO) have access to a child care subsidy.

This map will be updated on a regular basis. For up to date information go to [www.toronto.ca/children](http://www.toronto.ca/children)