



Changes in Before and After School Programs

Date: May 29, 2018

To: Community Development and Recreation Committee

From: Acting General Manager, Children's Services

Wards: All

SUMMARY

This report responds to Community Development and Recreation Committee direction for a report on reductions in before and after school programs and opportunities for restoring the service.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Acting General Manager, Children's Services recommends that:

1. Community Development and Recreation Committee receive this report for information.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

This report has no financial implications.

The Interim Chief Financial Officer has reviewed this report and agrees with the financial impact information.

DECISION HISTORY

The Community Development and Recreation Committee at its meeting of April 12, 2018, requested the General Manager, Children's Services to work with the Middle Childhood Matters Coalition Toronto and the Ministry of Education to identify any reductions in services and report to the June 13, 2018 Community Development and Recreation Committee meeting with any recommendations for restoring or replacing this service.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2018.CD27.1>

City Council at its meeting of April 24, 25, 26 and 27, 2018, directed the General Manager, Children's Services, not to exercise the optional ability to authorize recreational and skill building programs under the Child Care and Early Years Act. <http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2018.CD27.1>

At its meeting of July 4, 5, 6, and 7, 2017, City Council directed the General Manager, Children's Services to not exercise the option to authorize Recreational and Skill-Building programs for the 2017-18 school year and to report to the Community Development and Recreation Committee by Spring 2018 on whether or not to exercise this option in the future. <http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2017.CD21.10>

COMMENTS

Background

With the introduction of the *Child Care and Early Years Act*, the Ministry of Education has made progress towards increasing clarity about which programs for children require a child care licence. As part of this development, the Ministry of Education created a new category of program called authorized recreational and skill-building programs. These programs may operate for up to three hours a day, once per day, for children between the ages of six to 12 without a child care license.

The legislation sets out many options that enable these programs to operate. These programs can be provided if they are:

- Operated by a school board, First Nation, the Métis Nation of Ontario, or a municipality;
- Operated by the YMCA or Boys and Girls Club of Canada;
- An Ontario After School Program funded by Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport (MTCS);
- A member of a provincial sports or multi-sport organization recognized by MTCS; or
- Operated by an MTCS agency or attraction.

In addition, the Ministry of Education provided service system managers in Ontario an optional ability to authorize these programs. Based on the risks, unfunded costs, and expected demand for municipal authorization, Children's Services recommended not taking on the option, and City Council endorsed this direction in April 2018.

At part of its consideration of the item, Community Development and Recreation Committee directed Children's Services to work with the Middle Childhood Matters Coalition Toronto and the Ministry of Education to identify reductions in services and report back on any opportunities to restore the service. The risk of service reductions in this context would arise from service providers making changes in order to be exempted from licensing requirements, if they were not able to obtain a child care license.

Comments

To identify reductions in services, Children's Services distributed a survey to service provider members of the Middle Childhood Matters Coalition Toronto. The survey questions were reviewed in advance with the Coalition's leadership team. Members of the Coalition include school boards, Boys and Girls Clubs, and other community-based service providers. Members and organizations that contacted Children's Services about the survey were encouraged to distribute it to additional programs or groups that may have reduced services in before and after school programs. The survey was open from May 3 to May 16, 2018. Coalition members received a written reminder and a verbal one at its May 14 meeting.

The survey received a small number of responses, three of which indicated that a program had reduced services and identified the program and details of the reduction (additional responses were received from other programs that either did not reduce before and after school program services, or provided no details). The low number of responses is consistent with indicators previously reported to City Council that showed a small impact related to the provincial changes. These indicators included the number of Ministry of Education compliance orders issued, the outcomes of a review of Toronto District School Board permitted programs, and previous inquiry into community knowledge of any affected programs.

Because the purpose of the survey was to identify service reductions in before and after school programs, most organizations would have not completed it as they had no service reductions. Changes to licensing expectations at the Ministry of Education have shown a low impact on services to date, and there is simply not a large pool of affected service providers in Toronto.

The three service reductions identified were:

- One program reduced its operating hours in order to operate for only three hours per day, whereas previously the program had operated later into the evening (up to 110 children affected);
- One service provider stopped providing a morning program at one location (12 children affected);
- One program will continue to operate five days per week, but will only allow children to register for up to three days per week, on advice from the Ministry of Education. This change is expected to take effect this coming school year and could affect 29 children.

To supplement this information, Children's Services also asked the Ministry of Education for any updates since the April report. The Ministry responded that no new compliance orders for before and after school programs have been issued in Toronto since that time. In total, only six provincial compliance orders have been issued to before and after school programs in Toronto under the new approach to child care licensing. The Ministry indicated that several of these decided to modify their program in order to continue offering after school programs from Monday to Friday. One of these programs complied by reducing the number of children in the program by 18.

Respondents to the survey did not identify any specific opportunities for restoring the service. In general, opportunities for restoring services depend on the Ministry of Education's assessment of the program and the service provider's evaluation of the feasibility of any options that the Ministry provides. In most cases, service providers face a choice between obtaining a child care licence and thereby meeting provincial licensing requirements, and modifying their program (for example, by offering less frequent service) in consultation with the Ministry of Education.

Conclusion

The issue of before and after school programs being impacted by the Ministry of Education's approach to child care licensing continues to be minimal. Service providers can continue to work with the Ministry of Education to understand whether or not they need a child care license and what steps they may take to be exempted from licensing requirements.

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SIGNATURE

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