



STAFF REPORT ACTION REQUIRED

Implementation of Early Learning Program and Toronto's Child Care Funding Risks and Pressures

Date:	December 17, 2009
To:	Community Development and Recreation Committee
From:	General Manager, Children's Services
Wards:	All
Reference Number:	

SUMMARY

This report seeks to reaffirm the City's principles and objectives related to the Provincial government's Early Learning Initiative; clarify strategies and requirements to effectively advance the program; clarify Provincial intentions with respect to implementing Early Learning and addressing other issues impacting child care services; formalize our working relationship with Provincial and educational stakeholders regarding implementation of Early Learning; and outline fiscal risks and pressures facing the child care system and recommended strategies to address them.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The General Manager, Children's Services recommends that:

- 1) Council support the full vision (direction and scope) of the Charles Pascal Report, which articulates strong municipal responsibility for systems planning, system management and governance through an accountability framework with the province for services from prenatal to 12 years of age;
- 2) Given expertise within the City of Toronto as manager of the second largest child care system in Canada, and in the spirit of the Toronto-Ontario Cooperation and Consultation Agreement (T-OCCA) and stated positions and priorities of the Ontario Municipal Social Services Association (OMSSA), Council authorize staff to support and assist Provincial ministries in development and implementation of the Early Learning Program (ELP);

- 3) Notwithstanding a phased in implementation, Council request that the Province of Ontario confirm by February 2010 its intent to move forward with the full vision for the ELP, and reaffirm the role of municipalities in service system management;
- 4) Council reaffirm the importance of families having centralized access to subsidies and encourage the Province to recognize the City as the one centralized subsidy administrator for families accessing children's services in Toronto;
- 5) Council request that the Province of Ontario provide all necessary tools to support the transition to an ELP and ensure that the child care system remains stable and sustainable. These tools and processes should include, but are not limited to:
 - (i) detailed implementation plans and processes
 - (ii) a supportive implementation framework that includes:
 - simplified and more flexible funding formulas that enable base funding of programs affected by implementation of ELP
 - necessary regulation changes and
 - clarified roles and responsibilities
 - (iii) transitional funding for capital and operating expenses in the 2010 Provincial Budget
 - (iv) inclusion of planning and associated resources for Ontario Early Years Centres (OEYCs) under the municipal system management formula with a view to integrating services into a single system
 - (v) creation of an inter-ministerial policy and implementation table to address the full range of implementation issues;
- 6) Council direct City staff, in consultation with community partners, to develop criteria for supporting child care programs impacted by the introduction of ELP; such criteria to be based on Service Planning principles, program quality and cost effectiveness;
- 7) Council direct staff to put in place a joint process with the Boards of Education to address implementation and operational issues;
- 8) Council request that the Province of Ontario ensure that the provincial funding formula provides sufficient funding to maintain existing service levels of 24,000 child care subsidies; and recognize cost of living and other legitimate increases in operating costs;

- 9) In the event that the Province does not confirm the vision and municipal role for ELP by the end of February 2010, transitional funding for early learning, and a strategy to address the end of Best Start funding by the time of the Provincial budget in 2010, Council direct City staff to develop contingency plans for gradual child care service level reduction of 2,000 subsidies by 2011 and 3,000 by 2012, such plans to be based on client attrition and respect the principles of the Service Plan, such as age and geographic equity;
- 10) Council request the General Manager, Children's Services to report back mid year on implementation of ELP and strategies for addressing fiscal challenges; and
- 11) Council request that the Government of Canada recognize the national importance of sustainable child care and restore the National Child Care Plan.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

The recommendations will have no financial impact beyond what has already been approved in the current year's budget.

However, should the Province fail to provide additional resources to maintain the existing Council approved service level of 24,000 child care fee subsidies, and transitional funding related to implementation of ELP for capital and operating expenses in 2011, there will need to be gradual service level reductions beginning in July 2010 for a 2,000 space reduction by January 2011, followed by a further 3,000 by January 1, 2012 for a total of 5,000 spaces or 21%.

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

DECISION HISTORY

Council at its meeting of November 23, 24 and 25, 1999 approved the Toronto Vision for Children/City's Strategy for Children. <http://www.toronto.ca/children/pdf/strategy.pdf>

City Council at its meeting of July 19, 20, 21 and 26, 2005 approved Best Generation Yet-Toronto Vision for Children. <http://www.toronto.ca/children/pdf/bestgenerationyet.pdf>

Board of Health, Health of Toronto's Young Children, Volumes 1, and 2 February 13, 2006. These two reports focus on the health of Toronto's children from birth to age 6.

<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/2006/agendas/committees/hl/hl060227/it001.pdf>

Council, at its meeting of April 25, 26 and 27, 2006 received for information a report on Integration of Children's Service Plans.

<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/2006/agendas/council/cc060425/cofa.pdf> Clause 12

Board of Health, Health of Toronto's Young Children, Volume 3, October 29, 2007. This third report describes the City's population of young children, selected aspects of their health, and the ways in which their families and their neighbourhoods contribute, positively or negatively to their health.

<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2007/hl/bgrd/backgroundfile-8043.pdf>

Council at its meeting of July 16, 17, 18 and 19, 2007 approved Best Start Update to the Child Care Service Plan.

http://www.toronto.ca/children/pdf/bs_update_ccsplan_2007_inctest.pdf

Council at its meeting of July 15, 16 and 17, 2008 endorsed principles from the Full-day Learning Forum co-sponsored by the Children's Services Advisory Committee and Toronto Best Start Network.

http://www.toronto.ca/children/pdf/fullday_learning.pdf

Council at its meeting of December 1, 2 and 3, 2008 adopted draft principles for the 2010-2014 Child Care Service Plan.

http://www.toronto.ca/children/pdf/serviceplan_2010-2014.pdf

Council at its meeting of August 5 and 6, 2009 adopted a Middle Childhood Strategy Framework.

<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2009/cd/bgrd/backgroundfile-21743.pdf>

Board of Health, 2009 Update on Public Health Programs Funded by the Ministry of Children and Youth Services. This report focuses on funding levels for four Ontario Best Start programs delivered by Toronto Public Health.

<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2009/hl/bgrd/backgroundfile-21897.pdf>

All of these documents emphasized the importance of integrated children's services and early learning, to provide a better service system for families and children, and provide better outcomes for children.

ISSUE BACKGROUND

There are two issues addressed in this report. The first is the beginning of the provincial implementation of the Charles Pascal report, With Our Best Future in Mind: Implementing early learning in Ontario. The Province has endorsed the report and announced gradual implementation, starting with full day kindergarten for four- and five-year-olds with an extended day in September 2010. This will bring about many changes to the child care system. We do not know enough at this time about the Provincial implementation plans including transitional funding to fully assess these changes and their impacts.

The second is the precarious financial situation of child care funding for Toronto Children's Services as a result of the loss of Best Start funding, and the annualized pressure created by the actual cost of delivering services. The intersection of the

implementation of ELP and the funding crisis for child care at this juncture is very important. The City needs to receive clarification from the Province about ELP details and confirmation of the funding that it can expect to receive.

Implementation of the Early Learning Program (full day kindergarten)

In June 2009 Dr. Charles Pascal, the Premier-appointed early Learning Adviser (ELA) tabled a report commissioned by the Province of Ontario on the design of a new Early Years Service System intended for children from age prenatal to 12 years.

Dr. Pascal's report recommends that municipal authorities take the lead in developing Early Years Service Plans, which address the integration of services for children prenatal to 12 years old. Municipal authorities – directly operated by local or regional governments, school boards, postsecondary institutions or non-profit agencies – would provide an integrated network of Best Start Child and Family Centres (preferably located in schools) providing families with flexible, part-time/full day /full year early learning and care options for children up to age 4; prenatal and postnatal information and supports; and family and support programming. Highlights and recommendations from Dr. Pascal's report can be found in Attachment A of this report.

Provincial Action:

On October 26, 2010 the Premier of Ontario announced the government's response to the Pascal report. Ontario will start phasing in only the full-day learning for four-and five-year-olds beginning in September 2010 and reaching full maturity by 2016. There was no formal commitment to implement the full vision of an integrated early learning system for prenatal to 12 years. An Early Years Division in the Ministry of Education has been established to expedite implementation. The highlights of the announcement included:

- Up to 35,000 kindergarten students across Ontario will be enrolled in full-day learning in September 2010 – this translates to 6,500-7,000 spaces for Toronto
- The goal is to have the program for four-and five-year-olds fully implemented in all schools by 2015-2016
- The model includes blended staffing, with a teacher and an early childhood educator (ECE) working in partnership with an average of 26 children per classroom, providing more overall attention over a full day than children receive now over half a day.
- The program will include fee for service funded extended day portion where sufficient demand exists – defined as when fifteen families or more request it.
- The extended day program, operated by the school boards, will offer before and after school programming for a reasonable fee, with subsidies available for families that need help with the cost of the program.
- The Province will collaborate with school boards and municipalities to develop and implement full day learning for four-and five-year-olds.

The Premier's announcement did not specifically endorse Dr. Pascal's recommendations nor did it address how the pressures placed on the child care system as a result of this transition would be addressed.

This report is the City's response to Dr. Pascal's report and the Premier's announcement. Council has previously endorsed the principles from a Full-Day Learning Forum co-sponsored by the Children's Services Advisory Committee and the Toronto Best Start Network. See Attachment B.

COMMENTS

The City of Toronto Perspective:

The City supports the overall vision and direction of Dr. Pascal's report, With Our Best Future in Mind: Implementing Early Learning in Ontario, and the strong municipal governance and management role. The report is consistent with the City's policy as referenced in Best Generation Yet, Middle Childhood Strategy Framework, Toronto First Duty, the Child Care Service Plan and Ontario's Poverty Reduction Strategy. The Report builds on the success of the Best Start Plan and Toronto Vision for Children by proposing a comprehensive, continuous and integrated system for children from birth to 12 years and their families. The report is also consistent with recommendations from Provincial-Municipal Fiscal and Service Delivery Review (PMFSDR) which speaks to shared accountability and integrated human services. City staff identified previously the potential for stabilizing the child care system and developing an integrated system of services if the principles previously identified through First Duty projects and endorsed by Dr. Pascal were fully implemented.

Early Learning Program

City staff has participated in preliminary meetings with the two provincial ministries and with the boards of education. Specifically, City staff met with the Deputy Ministers and Assistant Deputy Ministers of Education and Children and Youth Services to highlight the City's position as a leader in service system management and an expert in child care.

Since the announcement, City staff has met with all 4 school boards as they identify their school sites for the early learning program for four- and five-year-olds.

School boards were required to submit to the Ministry of Education plans for the first two years of implementation by November 30, 2009 and the Ministry of Education will be releasing its list in January of schools chosen for implementation in September, 2010 (Phase 1).

School Selection and Impact

The provincial announcement of the Phase 1 roll-out reflects the provincial funding realities and realization that sufficient space might not be available within all schools to accommodate full day learning. In such cases, capital funding might be required in future years. School boards were asked not to develop the program in the locations where a

child care program currently exists and would be negatively affected.

City staff met with their counterpart in the four school boards and provided them in mid-November with data on all child care centres, including information on neighbourhood level child poverty, equity of access and operating characteristics of individual service providers.

Although several consultations have followed, the Boards were ultimately responsible for generating the lists which were submitted to the Ministry of Education on November 11, 2009. The lists from the TDSB and TCDSB exceed the required number of classrooms for 2010-2011 in order to allow the Ministry to make a final selection and a subsequent announcement in January 2010.

The combined list produced by the TCDSB and TDSB includes a total of 113 schools of which 40 contain child care centres; however of these 21 are school age only child care programs operating in a shared classroom space and should not be affected by the introduction of ELP. The remaining programs are 8 preschool only programs and 11 programs serving both preschool and school age children. Generally, these programs are small in size (usually only one room per school) and their ongoing viability will have to be assessed on individual basis.

Because of the urban nature of Toronto, it is difficult to find any child care program serving preschoolers that will not be affected by the Early Learning Program. In the first phase of implementation, there are 359 child care programs located within a one kilometre radius of the selected schools. These programs have operating capacity of 21,733 licensed spaces, including 12,362 spaces for preschool age children; approximately two thirds of these children are of kindergarten age.

At this point little consideration has been given by the provincial ministries to the effect of the full day learning on community based providers. There are, however, expectations that the extended year portion of the program (i.e. service days outside of the 188 instructional days) will be provided by these providers. This is inconsistent with the vision put forward by Dr. Pascal whereby these programs were to be operated by the Boards of Education.

Implementation Concerns:

The role of the municipality as a system manager with clear leadership and accountability lines is unclear. As the experts in the field of child care and as a municipal leader, Toronto is eager to work with the Province and Boards of Education to address barriers to the successful implementation of the ELP.

The Ministry of Education has determined that the early learning program be offered during regular instructional school days. This means 188 days which does not include PD days, holidays or summer. Dr. Pascal's report recommended the full program (extended and early learning program) be available every day for 50 weeks. The extended program

that is to be available to parents and accompanies the early learning program is to be delivered and operated by school boards. Since the announcement, some boards have indicated that they will not be prepared in time for the September implementation date. They have asked for allowances to contract out this service for the first year. A decision will be forthcoming early in 2010. The contracting out of the extended day has a number of implications for both child care and the early learning program. A wrap around extended day is contrary to the intent of early learning being seamless, to the continuity of professionals and to enhancing service and learning for children.

Very little information is also available on implementation beyond the initial announcement by the Premier, although meetings with provincial staff from the Ministries of Education and Children and Youth Services, as well as the local school boards are ongoing. The importance of extended year coverage and the role child care provides in supporting children and working families must be recognized.

It is likely that implementation in 2010 and 2011 will focus on meeting the provincially set targets on the number of children and classrooms to be included in the roll-out.

There are questions about the availability of subsidies and concerns related to the possible creation of several subsidy systems. Complex navigation for parents between the two systems must be avoided. Unless a single subsidy manager is approved, by way of example, a family with an infant and a 4 year old would have to be eligible and assessed for fee assistance by both the City and the school board. With 4 school boards in the City there could potentially be 4 school subsidy administrators and the City providing fee subsidies for the child care sector. Integration is critical to the success of providing client focused and streamlined services to families.

While there are numerous technical issues related to a centralized process that must be addressed, such as allocation and management of subsidy envelopes, the City has the expertise in managing such systems and on ensuring that there continues to be equitable access to subsidies.

There are also structural issues to be addressed, including those related to labour contracts. The Ministry of Education is proposing an ECE wage of \$19.48/hour. While recognizing that this may work in smaller communities, it is almost \$2.00 below the average for community based, non-profit child care programs in Toronto. This will make it difficult to recruit and retain staff and to develop the extended day/year program components. A different approach to compensation must be taken in Toronto and possibly in other urban centres. City staff can work together with the Ministry to address and resolve these issues at a local level.

Toronto has offered several of its municipally operated school-based programs for inclusion in the first phase of the ELP roll out. However, this offer was conditional upon maintenance of the service throughout the full year and operation of the programs by the TDSB. It is unlikely that this transfer of programs will actually proceed in 2010 because the Board may only operate extended day programs on the 188 days that the school is open for instructional purposes.

If not properly implemented, full day learning will destabilize and fragment a fragile system while reducing the City's ability to manage it. The City role in the planning of the ELP is crucial.

Transition resources must be available to facilitate integration. Within the City, staff must identify capital funding required to renovate child care programs capable of converting to serving younger age groups. In addition, a flexible funding model is needed that allows the City to address and support centres impacted by loss of kindergarten children due to the phased-in implementation. Often fees from school-age children cross subsidize younger age groups. Moving older children out could significantly increase the cost of care for the younger children, making child care unaffordable for many families.

Adequate and additional fee subsidies will be needed to address the increased need related to the extended day component of the full day early learning program. This 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 earlier. In addition, the existing demand for child care fee subsidy continues with approximately 16,000 families currently on the waiting list.

Service planning, system management and administration will also require additional resources during the transition stage. Planning and associated resources associated with Ontario Early Years Centres should be transferred to the municipality to facilitate integration into one system of services for children and families, while improving efficiency of the existing processes.

A close working relationship with the Province and Boards of Education will be paramount.

City Strategy in Preparation for ELP

An Integrated Children's Services Management Committee has been established to provide strategic leadership to the implementation of the Early Years Service System. The members include the Medical Officer of Health, General Managers from Children's Services and Parks Recreation and Forestry, and it is chaired by the Deputy City Manager. This committee will be developing an integrated inter-divisional approach to implementing the full scope of the Early Learning vision which includes many public health programs, e.g. Healthy Babies Healthy Children, Pre-school Speech and Language, Blind / Low Vision etc. and other prenatal and post natal information and supports as well as services for the 6-12 age group.

Child Care Funding Pressures

Best Start is a ten-year plan to strengthen healthy development through provision of early learning and child care services for children and families. Provincial Best Start funding originated in 2005 as a result of the Federal government's National Child Care Plan. The City of Toronto deposited the Best Start funds into a specially created Child Care Expansion Reserve Fund (CCRE) in 2005. The CCRE was used to fund some capital projects and cover base funding deficits.

The change of Federal governments in January 2006 resulted in notice of termination of the 2005 Early Learning and Child Care agreements effective March 31, 2007. The Provincial government paid out the final year in 4 installments over the 4 years that ends March 31, 2010. Best Start funding is 100 per cent funded by the Provincial government via flow-through of Federal funds, with no City contribution. Other child care is funded with the Provincial government on an 80/20 split, with the Province paying 80% and the City paying 20%. Children's Services is facing funding pressures related to both reduction of Provincial Best Start funding and an increasing gap between fixed base funding and legitimate increase in service delivery costs.

Provincial funding for Best Start has been cut by \$15.4 million on an annual basis, although the 2010 reduction will be \$9.2 million from the budgeted 2009 level. In June 2009, the province announced a one-time funding relief of approximately \$4.4 million, to enable programs to operate until the end of June 2010. These funds were a transition measure intended to stabilize the system prior to implementation of the early learning program. The system impact is that they will delay by a few months only the draw on the CCRE in 2010, but there is no long term impact since these funds represent one time funding.

For several years, there has been a gap between funding provided through legislated provincial and municipal share and the Council mandated service levels for various child care services. Council direction includes the provision of 24,000 subsidies and payment of actual cost of services delivered by community based providers. Actual cost of service represents a cumulative annual pressure of approximately \$8 million. Currently fixed provincial funding levels do not support all legitimate operating cost increases, making it impossible to maintain service levels approved by Council without funding from the CCRE. The Provincial contribution is capped and the system must absorb the inflationary increases while maintaining service levels.

In 2009, the operating budget provided for a \$12.6 million draw from the CCRE. In 2010, the projected draw on the CCRE will be approximately \$21.7 million; leaving approximately \$17.0 million left at the end of 2010.

Reduction of Best Start funding, coupled with the annualized pressure created by the actual cost of delivering is the basis for the current funding crisis.

2010 will be the last year in which Council mandated service levels can be maintained. This will be accomplished through injection of \$22 million from the CCRE, leaving approximately \$17 million for use in 2011 and later. The overall gap is estimated to grow to approximately \$38 million in 2011, resulting in \$20 million shortfall of revenue from all sources and a corresponding service level reduction of approximately 2,000 child care subsidies by 2011.

Planning for Service Reductions

To minimize service reductions, Children's Services is examining a number of cost reductions as part of the 2010 Operating Budget process. Despite this, without implementing a provincial funding formula that provides sufficient funding to maintain

existing service levels by recognizing cost of living and other legitimate increases in operating costs, a 2,000 spaces reduction effective January 1, 2011 and a further reduction 3,000 on January 1, 2012, for a total of 5,000 spaces will be required.

Service reductions are best accomplished through natural attrition of clients rather than actual termination of service to clients actually in care. Based on historical patterns, the service reductions should start no later September 2010 in order to achieve the January 2011 target. Also, based on historical patterns and existing Service Planning principles, this approach would be limited to over-served wards and age groups while placements would continue for infants and toddlers in most areas.

If the service level was reduced to 22,000 subsidies, all but 9 wards would lose subsidies and 2 wards (23 and 26) would continue to be eligible for substantial increase in subsidies to achieve equity.

Should the Province not address these fiscal pressures in its spring 2010 budget, staff will report back on how to manage service reduction and mitigation measures.

Children's Services is analyzing the impact of full day learning on the child care system as new information becomes available. An internal steering committee is addressing operational issues in relation to implementation of the first phase as well as the full vision. Children's Services will be working with its community partners to further discuss and plan for the implementation over the next 6 years.

As part of the Child Care Service 2010-2014 Plan development, there will be strategies to deal with the impact of ELP in terms of dealing with system de-stabilization and possibly changing age group priorities. It will reinforce Service Plan principles of age and geographical equity and restrictions on the growth of the commercial sector – see Attachment C for the draft principles approved by Council.

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ATTACHMENTS

Appendix A - Highlights and Recommendations from Charles Pascal report, *With Our Best Future in Mind: Implementing Early Learning in Ontario*, June, 2009

Appendix B - Principles from the Full-Day Learning Forum co-sponsored with the Children's Services Advisory Committee and Toronto Best Start Network, approved by Council July /08

Appendix C - Draft Service Plan Principles for the 2010-2014 Child Care Service Plan approved by Council Dec/08

Appendix A

Recommendations from Charles Pascal report, *With Our Best Future in Mind: Implementing Early Learning in Ontario*, June, 2009

- 1) The Province should create a continuum of early learning, child care, and family supports for children from the prenatal period through to adolescence, under the leadership of the Minister of Education.
- 2) The Ministry of Education should establish an Early Years Division to develop and implement an Early Years Policy Framework that will create a continuity of early learning experiences for children from 0 to 8 years of age.
- 3) The Early Years Policy Framework should mandate school boards to offer:
 - a two-year, full-day Early Learning Program prior to Grade 1, available to all children who turn 4 by December 31. Children's participation would be by parental choice, with parents having the option of a half, full (school hours), or a fee-based extended day of programming;
 - at the request of 15 or more families in a school, a fee-based Extended Day Primary program, offering developmentally enriched programming for children from 6 to 8 years old;
 - at the request of 15 or more families in a school, fee-based after-school programming for children from 9 to 12 years old. School boards may deliver the programming directly or enlist the support of municipal parks and recreation services or community agencies; and
 - extended programming that operates 50 weeks a year, including fee-based activities during school breaks and summer vacations. Daily hours of operation would be determined by school boards in response to the needs of families in their communities.
- 4) The Early Years Policy Framework should also guide the transformation of programming for Ontario's youngest learners. Municipal authorities, with the necessary resources, should be mandated to plan, develop, support, and monitor an integrated network of Best Start Child and Family Centres providing families with:
 - flexible, part-time/full-day/full-year early learning/care options for children up to age 4;
 - prenatal and postnatal information and supports;
 - parenting and family support programming, including home visiting, family literacy, and playgroups;
 - nutrition and nutrition counseling;
 - early identification and intervention resources; and
 - links to special needs treatment and community resources, including libraries, recreation and community centres, health care, family

counselling, housing, language services, and employment/training services.

- 5) To support the service continuum and support children's transitions to the Early Learning Program, the preferred location for Best Start Child and Family Centres is schools. Non-school locations would be partnered with a school or family of schools.
- 6) Under the systems management of municipal authorities, the direct operation of Best Start Child and Family Centres could be provided by local or regional governments, school boards, postsecondary institutions, or non-profit agencies.
- 7) Non-profit and commercial providers may continue to operate licensed child care in accordance with current program standards. All service expansion would take place through Best Start Child and Family Centres and school boards.
- 8) The expectations set out in the Early Years Policy Framework should be operationalized through local Early Years Service Plans developed by municipal authorities in partnership with school boards and community partners. Outcomes and targets should be developed through provincial-municipal collaboration and funding flowed through municipal authorities and school boards to meet targets.
- 9) The Province should build on existing maternal and parental leave options to design a made-in-Ontario Parental Leave and Benefit Program that:
 - provides parents with paid leave after the birth or adoption of a child for up to 400 days;
 - expands coverage to include self-employed parents;
 - provides flexibility to allow parents to extend and supplement their leave by returning to work part-time;
 - provides 10 days annually of job-protected family leave for parents with children under the age of 12; and
 - designates six weeks for the exclusive use of the father or other non-birthing parent; if not used, this time would be deducted from the 400 days. This provision would not reduce the leave of single parents.
- 10) The Early Years Policy Framework should contain:
 - Early Learning for Every Child Today (ELECT) as the curriculum and pedagogical framework for Best Start Child and Family Centres, the Early Learning Program, and the Extended Day Primary program;
 - the Continuum of Development in ELECT as the central tool for ongoing individual observation and documentation in programs for children from 0 to 8 years old;
 - based on ELECT, guidelines for facilities and outdoor spaces, scheduling, and appropriate behaviour guidance practices to accommodate programs for children from 0 to 8 years old and their families;

- the Early Learning Program Curriculum (for 4- and 5-year-olds) as the curriculum in the Early Learning Program and adapted for use in French language settings; and
 - strategies to promote the effective engagement of parents in their children's learning, with emphasis on regional and local efforts.
- 11) The Early Years Division at the Ministry of Education, in collaboration with Aboriginal educators and organizations, should adapt ELECT to reflect Aboriginal content for use in all early childhood settings in Ontario.
- 12) The Early Years Policy Framework should mandate municipal authorities to:
- establish a consistent early identification protocol that incorporates the Nipissing District Developmental Screens (NDDS) and the Continuum of Development in ELECT;
 - consolidate responsibility for early identification and intervention services; and
 - develop partnerships with public health, school boards, and specialized agencies to facilitate individualized intervention plans for children.
- 13) The Early Years Policy Framework should establish staffing for early learning environments as follows:
- The Early Learning Program for 4- and 5-year-old children should be staffed by teams of certified teachers and registered early childhood educators (ECEs). Local flexibility should be possible, but two "non-negotiable" essentials must always be included: educators skilled at applying child development knowledge and a strong and effective parent engagement strategy.
 - The Extended Day Primary program for children from 6 to 8 years old should have one registered ECE for approximately 15 children;
 - After-school programs should be led by staff knowledgeable about the developmental needs of children from 9 to 12 years old, and guided by current best practices in programming; and
 - Best Start Child and Family Centres should be staffed by registered ECEs and special needs resource teachers. Municipal authorities should establish appropriate staffing levels to meet programming needs. Day Nursery Act regulations currently governing child-staff ratios and age groupings should be reviewed and updated.
- 14) School boards should organize staffing to promote full-time employment for ECEs. ECEs should form a unique professional classification within school boards.
- 15) The Ontario College of Teachers should require all teachers who do not have early childhood knowledge to complete an early childhood Additional Qualification course (or equivalent experience) within five years in order to hold a position in the Early Learning Program.

- 16) To support the development of the early childhood workforce, the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, in consultation with the Minister of Education, should:
- refocus ECE diploma programs on children from 0 to 8 years old;
 - establish an early childhood specialty degree program focusing on children from 0 to 8 years old;
 - encourage French-language postsecondary institutions to increase the number of francophone ECEs, and intervention and family support professionals;
 - encourage postsecondary institutions to recruit students and education faculty reflective of the gender, race, and ethnicity needed in the early childhood workforce;
 - encourage postsecondary institutions to recruit Aboriginal students to become educators in early years programs;
 - require ECE diploma and early childhood specialty degree programs to apply transparent, accessible prior learning assessment and recognition processes;
 - ensure that ECE apprenticeship training is aligned with the Ontario Program Standard for the ECE diploma; and
 - fund postsecondary programs to expand bridging programs into ECE diploma and teacher education degree programs specifically designed to fast track people with out-of-country credentials.
- 17) The Early Years Division should support the development of management tools and establish a province-wide in-service training plan to assist school board and municipal managers, school principals, and centre directors in the establishment and operations of the Early Learning Program, Extended Day Primary program, and Best Start Child and Family Centres.
- 18) The Early Years Division should:
- build on existing information sources to develop and implement a consolidated integrated accountability mechanism, the Early Years Index, focused on the systems monitoring of inputs, measurable outcomes, and transparent public reporting. The index would include a standard program evaluation tool that links the developmental outcomes in ELECT and the operation of Best Start Child and Family Centres, Early Learning Programs, and Extended Day Primary programs; and
 - provide mechanisms to foster learning and expertise by promoting the exchange of best practices and staff knowledge about how outcomes are measured and how the information can be used to improve performance.
- 19) The Province should:

- adopt a three-year time frame, beginning in September 2010, to implement a two-year full (school) day Early Learning Program prior to Grade 1, for every child who turns 4 years old by December 31;
- provide sufficient funding for operations and staffing levels for the Early Learning Program for 4- and 5-year olds to support the recommendations in this report;
- allocate equitably across all regions and school boards, including boards that now offer full-day learning;
- provide sufficient funding to school boards to cover occupancy and related costs for the operation of extended day/year programming for children from 4 to 12 years old;
- modify child care fee subsidy eligibility to facilitate flexible enrolment options and remove parents' work requirement for eligibility so that more children can benefit, especially the most disadvantaged children;
- maintain the current 75 per cent target for French-language elementary schools to have French-language programs for 0- to 3-year-olds by 2011/12;
- transfer to municipal authorities funding for Best Start Child and Family Centres in a single envelope that includes all existing transfers for programs/resources that will be consolidated under Best Start Child and Family Centres, resources associated with regulation and oversight, plus all child care savings generated from implementation of the Early Learning Program;
- negotiate transitional funding, as necessary, to support program reorganization through Early Years Service Plans;
- secure continued support for Best Start child care spaces now funded by the federal government; and
- undertake immediate discussions with the federal government to ensure children of First Nations are not disadvantaged by the implementation of full-day learning.

- 20) Beginning in 2012, the Province should coordinate a process with key ministries to modernize legislation that would produce a new Education and Family Supports Act that would:
- enable the outcomes noted in this report;
 - reduce redundancies; and
 - eliminate outdated elements in various pieces of legislation and develop a single integrated piece of legislation.

Key Highlights of Dr. Pascal's Report:

The report recommends province-wide implementation of full day learning within three years with the first phase beginning in 2010. Costs to implement the full day learning plan are estimated at \$500 million for the first two years;

Families would have the option of enrolling their 4 and 5 year-olds for the full school day or half day. Extended-day options would also be provided by school board and, funded by parent fees with some subsidies available;

Schools will offer and operate before and after school and summer programs for school age children 6 to 12 years. To meet the needs of the older children (9 to 12 yrs) school boards may contract with municipal recreation programs or community agencies to provide the program.

A single program would be in place, with a single child-focused curriculum, planned and delivered by a qualified team of educators using common space and resources;

Certified teachers and qualified, registered early childhood educators (ECEs) working together would complement each other's skills and give every child a better early learning experience;

What happens to children before and after the bell rings is also important – by offering affordable, extended-day and summer programming for children 4 to 12 years old the education system will be strengthened even further;

Schools as hubs for child and family programming would provide better access and contribute to better outcomes and stronger communities;

Best Start Child and Family Centres would be formed by consolidating many existing early childhood services into one-stop access for families that include child care, parenting programs and resources, play groups, intervention supports for children with special challenges, and links to community agencies managed, planned and regulated by Municipalities;

Municipalities would provide local leadership for programs for children less than 4 years of age. School boards would provide local leadership for programs for children from 4 to 12 years old. Provincial leadership would be consolidated under the Ministry of Education;

Incremental costs to implement the full day learning plan are estimated at just under \$1 billion.

Appendix B

Principles for Full-Day Learning Programs

Human Resources

- 1) Full-Day Learning should be delivered by well qualified early childhood practitioners, which could include Ontario certified teachers, Early Childhood Educators, and educational assistants, with a recommended ratio of one appropriately qualified educator to ten children.
- 2) Working conditions for all practitioners should support quality, including; wages and benefits commensurate to education, time for program planning, paid professional education and development time, and equitable working hours.
- 3) All early childhood practitioners working in the Full-Day Learning for Four-and-Five-Year-Olds should be responsible for both their care and education.

Governance

- 4) Full-Day Learning should be guided by shared principles that allow for innovation and flexibility, based on good-practice research and local practices.
- 5) Appropriate infrastructure and budget should be provided to enable oversight at both the system and local level.
- 6) School Boards and Municipalities should work together to implement Full-Day Learning, in collaboration with Best Start Networks. Meaningful parental involvement and clear lines of accountability to the elected bodies should be established.
- 7) Local planning and implementation will ensure that the plan for Full-Day Learning provides local flexibility, yet agreed upon consistency and standards.

Facilities

- 8) Where space permits, full day learning should be offered in elementary school settings. Where this is not possible, existing child care centres and other child-friendly facilities should be considered based on community needs.
- 9) Physical environments for Full-Day Learning should be well designed; in terms of access, layouts that enable the integration of early childhood programs, appropriate lighting, air flow, easy access to outdoor space and washrooms.

- 10) Funding should be provided to ensure facilities meet the standards laid out in the Day Nurseries Act (DNA) and the Toronto Operating Criteria.
- 11) No existing programs (including tenanted) should lose their space due to this new initiative.

Funding and Sustainability

- 12) Full-Day Learning should build on the successes and lessons learned from existing models including Toronto First Duty, full-day kindergarten, kindergarten in child care, family support programs, and should build-on and enhance the existing system of services for young children.
- 13) While Full-Day Learning is a welcome additional service to support families and young children, implementation should be phased in strategically to ensure it does not destabilize other early childhood services.
- 14) Toronto will continue moving forward with its Best Start Plan: Toronto Vision for Children, working collaboratively with all early childhood service sectors.
- 15) Full-Day Learning in Ontario should guarantee the option of publicly funded, high quality full-day learning programs, offering universal access to all four-and-five-year-olds, providing a range of choices to support children and family's unique needs.
- 16) Full-Day Learning should be closely aligned with existing programs for four-and-five-year-old children, to ensure seamless delivery of services.
- 17) Full-Day Learning should be linked with a continuum of services for children 0-12 years.

Pedagogy, Curriculum and Quality

- 18) Full-Day Learning should meet the unique needs of every child, providing learning opportunities in all developmental domains.
- 19) *The Kindergarten Program (MOE, 2006)*, in combination with *Early Learning for Every Child Today (ELECT)* should be the curriculum framework for full day learning programs.
- 20) Quality assurance mechanisms should be in place to monitor and ensure ongoing program quality, and an assessment tool should be utilized to measure success.
- 21) Appropriate training is needed for early childhood practitioners including Early Childhood Educators and for Ontario certified teachers.

- 22) The Early Learning and Child Care Program must have adequate, long-term sustainable funding and capital funding to support the creation of appropriate space for full-day learning and child care.

Appendix C

Draft Principles for the 2010-2014 Child Care Service Plan

City Council on December 1, 2 and 3, adopted the draft principles for the 2010-2014 Child Care Service Plan as follows:

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