



STAFF REPORT FOR INFORMATION

Toronto's Child Care System – Moving Forward

Date:	December 22, 2011
To:	Community Development and Recreation Committee
From:	General Manager, Children's Services
Wards:	All
Reference Number:	

SUMMARY

A staff report was requested at City Council on November 29, 30 and December 1, as follow up to CD8.1, Transitional Issues Impacting Toronto's Child Care System and Recommended Actions for Mitigation. This information report outlines the Children's Services Division's strategy for addressing Council's various recommendations.

Financial Impact

This report is for information purposes and has no financial impact beyond that which can be addressed within the division's operating budget. 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 29, 30 and December 1, 2011, adopted with amendments a report on transitional issues impacting Toronto's child care system and recommended actions for mitigation.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2011.CD8.1>

<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2011/cd/bgrd/backgroundfile-42007.pdf>

This report summarized the impact of the Province's Full-Day Kindergarten program on Toronto's child care system and outlined the resources required to mitigate these impacts. In considering the report, Council instructed staff to, among other things, arrange a number of community and intergovernmental meetings to discuss child care issues and requirements and to develop a communications strategy that would raise awareness for

these requirements prior to the Provincial announcement of its 2012/2013 operating budget in March 2012.

ISSUE BACKGROUND

As we approach 2012, Toronto's child care system is in a precarious position with insufficient tools and resources to address the impact of the Province's Full-Day Kindergarten (FDK) program on the child care system. Provincial investment, along with legislative and regulatory amendments to the Day Nurseries Act, are required to address historical funding pressures and to support the transition to FDK

COMMENTS

The timeframe between the City Council meeting on November 29, 30 and December 1, 2011 and the agenda distribution on January 4, 2012 for the Community Development and Recreation Committee (CDRC) meeting on January 11, 2012 left little time for staff to address the various recommendations put forth by Council. Accordingly, this report summarizes staff's strategy for addressing those recommendations that required a report to the January 11, 2012 meeting of the CDRC, along with some further actions underway.

Recommendation 8 requires that the General Manager, Children's Services report to the January 11, 2012 meeting of the CDRC, and regularly thereafter, on "plans of the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) and the Toronto Catholic District School Board (TCDSB) for a smooth transition from 2012-2014 for the extended day, and all breaks and holidays for schools that currently have school age child care".

City staff meets regularly with both the TDSB and TCDSB. Both boards share the same goal of successful implementation of FDK and the preservation of child care space in schools. They have determined that where before and after school care is required for FDK, the first right of refusal to operate these programs will go to existing child care operators in schools. This arrangement successfully addresses the care requirements for holidays and summer as the child care will continue to run full time during these times. This also provides continuity for children and improves the financial viability of child care programs.

In an effort to encourage parents to complete the before and after school survey in which they are required to identify their need for before and/or after school and holiday care, a parent fact sheet has been jointly developed by the boards and the City. The fact sheet, will be distributed with the survey and made available at child care centres.

The school boards have not determined their policy with regards to schools that do not currently have a child care operator on sight. It is expected that after the parent survey results are compiled, a decision on who will be the provider will be determined. School boards can operate the program directly or seek a third party operator to come on site and operate it on the Board's behalf.

Recommendations 10 and 13 ask that a variety of community and intergovernmental meetings be scheduled to raise awareness for the issues impacting child care and the resources and actions required to address these issues. As a result, additional community meetings are being scheduled for February 2012. Children's Services has requested that representatives of the various Boards of Education and the Ministry of Education attend these meetings, where possible. A briefing for MPPs, Trustees and Councillors will be planned in partnership with the Chair of CDRC for the New Year.

Recommendation 14 requests a report to the January 11, 2012 meeting of the CDRC on plans for a joint meeting of members the Committee with school board officials responsible for policy and planning related to the FDK program, and Children's Services staff. Staff is exploring this opportunity with representatives of the TDSB and the TCDSB.

Recommendations 17 requires the General Manager, Children's Services to develop a pamphlet and web page with easy-to-understand information on the funding needs and transitional challenges facing the child care system as a result of the implementation of full-day kindergarten in Toronto.

Recommendation 18 requires the General Manager, Children's Services, in conjunction with Strategic Communications, to develop a strategy to increase media coverage and highlight the issues identified in the staff report on transitional issues impacting Toronto's child care system.

Children's Services is working with Strategic Communications on opportunities to increase media coverage and highlight child care issues, and is developing a tool kit for use by Councillors which will contain all pertinent information.

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SIGNATURE

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