



## Jackman Community Daycare

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### **For Submission at the CDRC Committee Meeting – June 26, 2013 CD22.3 – Full-Day Kindergarten Implementation Status Update**

**Submitted by Donna Spreitzer, Director, Jackman Community Daycare**

Childcare in the City of Toronto is under-funded and in chaos. And with the provincial rollout of Full Day Kindergarten (FDK) in full swing, things are getting messier by the month. For the past 5 years, Jackman Community Daycare has been drafting a strategic plan to ensure our daycare's viability and during this entire time the goal posts have continually changed.

Members of my Board of Directors and I would like to work with the city to ensure a smoother, more balanced approach to the City of Toronto's role in FDK. We realize that many of our concerns are provincial issues and we have therefore approached Deputy Ministry of Education, Jim Grieves as well as Jill Worthy, now with the Ministry. FDK mandates that school boards must provide Before & After care or arrange for a third party operator to provide this care. Unlike school boards that have been allowed to opt out of their obligations, childcare centres located in schools do not have any option other than to scramble to provide childcare in kindergarten classrooms that do not easily conform to the onerous requirements of the City of Toronto's Operating Criteria. City of Toronto Children's Services treats shared classrooms (rooms used during the day by the school board and then before & after school by childcare) the same as rooms used exclusively by childcare. This puts undue strain on childcare centres that are working very hard to comply with the City's rules – rules that have not kept up with the dramatic changes that FDK has created across the City.

Registered Early Childhood Educators know the importance of quality childcare and know that the City's Operating Criteria for childcare centres ensures quality standards for all children. One suggestion is for the City to support childcare centres by creating new Operating Criteria for the Before & After components of FDK. In May I shared my concerns and suggestions with Anne Hepditch in the Children's Services office and her reply to me was, "I appreciate your feedback, however, at this time Children's Services will continue to follow the same process as last year." This is unacceptable. Children's Services must evolve to support existing childcare institutions and they can do this by modifying the Operating Criteria for shared space.

In addition, Children's Services made the controversial decision to take away critical Wage Grants. This decision lacked foresight and has had the deleterious effect of increasing parent fees throughout the city. Parents in Toronto already pay too much for childcare. When grants are taken away, centres have no choice but to raise fees for parents. There is no wiggle room since daycares are already operating on shoestring budgets. Taking away Wage Grants was a bad decision and an unfortunate example of how the City of Toronto has continually not prioritized childcare. Instead of supporting childcare centres as we transition into FDK, Children's Services has made it much harder for community childcare centres to survive.

As a daycare located in a TDSB school, we have recently had to apply for permits and pay the TDSB for space that previously had been unpermitted and free. I strongly encourage the City to work out a plan with the TDSB and other school boards so that childcare programs in schools do not have to pay to use shared space such as classrooms, gyms and playgrounds during the school year, on school breaks and after hours. Any money childcare operators have to pay the TDSB is money taken directly away from children. The City's transition to FDK should not be on the backs of non-profit childcare centres which are already struggling to adjust to licensing new space and accommodating new age groups.

For decades, community childcare centres have provided quality care to thousands of families. Most centres have purchase of service agreements with the City and we would like to be full partners in implementing the City's childcare strategy. Over the coming years as Full Day Kindergarten is rolled out, I implore the City of Toronto to more fully support childcare, not just by putting more money into the system but also by modifying policies such as reinstating wage grants, revising Operating Criteria and bargaining with School Boards in order that childcare operators in the city are supported and not thwarted in their efforts to provide quality childcare to the children in Toronto.

Sincerely,



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