



STAFF REPORT ACTION REQUIRED

Update on the *Let's Talk Child Care* Campaign

Date:	March 3, 2014
To:	Community Development and Recreation Committee
From:	General Manager, Children's Services
Wards:	All
Reference Number:	

SUMMARY

This report summarizes the feedback received from Toronto parents during the *Let's Talk Child Care* campaign.

The City of Toronto launched the *Let's Talk Child Care* campaign on November 4, 2013. The objective was to obtain parent feedback about child care in Toronto, which will be used to inform the development of the new Child Care Funding Model and the Children's Services 2015-2019 Service Plan. The *Let's Talk Child Care* campaign had two components: four in-person consultations with parents (the Toronto Parent Summits); and an online survey which was available from November 4 – December 16, 2013. Over 1600 parents of children ages 0-12 provided feedback to the City during this campaign.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The General Manager, Children's Services, recommends that City Council:

1. receive this report for information; and
2. forward Appendix A: *Let's Talk Child Care Campaign: Feedback from Toronto Parents* to Ontario's Education Minister and Canada's Minister of Employment and Social Development for their review and consideration.

Financial Impact

The adoption of recommendations in this report have no financial impact on the City of Toronto.

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

DECISION HISTORY

At the June 2013 meeting of the Community Development and Recreation Committee, Children's Services was directed to organize a summit for parents, using funds set aside for this purpose in the 2013 budget. The recommendation was adopted by Council on July 16, 2013.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewPublishedReport.do?function=getCouncilDecisionDocumentReport&meetingId=6811>

ISSUE BACKGROUND

Toronto Children's Services is the service system manager for the early years (ages 0-12) in Toronto, and is currently undertaking two important policy and planning initiatives: the development of the Children's Services 2015-2019 Service Plan, and the creation of a new Child Care Funding Model. The Service Plan is the central policy document that guides the work of Children's Services. It reflects the City's goals and principles with respect to programs and services for children and families and guides the planning and resource allocation of early learning services (ages 0-12).

The objective of the new Child Care Funding Model project is to create a "made in Toronto" funding model for child care programs and families, which addresses, among other things, ongoing accessibility challenges for many families requiring child care. As such, it was critical to engage Toronto's parents in a conversation about child care and services for children and families to inform the planning of these two key initiatives.

COMMENTS

The *Let's Talk Child Care* campaign consultations and survey asked parents about their current child care arrangements, issues and struggles obtaining child care, affordability of care, and other services used or needed by children and families. The feedback received indicates that parents value high-quality, regulated affordable child care. Parents described their difficulties in accessing licensed care in Toronto, the high cost of child care, the disparities between licensed and unlicensed child care, and the need for a system of universal access to child care.

Parents who participated in the *Let's Talk Child Care* campaign expressed support for a universal child care system; and for an affordable system that is supported by public investment and that meets the needs of families. Many parents reported that they cannot

afford the cost of care or cannot find child care for their children. The monthly cost of child care in Toronto is often more than monthly housing costs, and parents described the difficulty in making ends meet. Parents also described the challenges they face in obtaining child care, and the stress it has placed on their families. Parents stated that if they require child care, they should be able to find it. The struggles presented by parents in the campaign are persistent and onerous for families. Many noted that a universal child care system, which requires significant investment from all orders of government, would address many of the challenges that parents face: including access, affordability, quality, and women's participation in the paid labour force. Overall, parents stated that their preference is licensed child care, but that Toronto does not have enough licensed spaces to meet the demand.

The feedback from parents is described in detail in Appendix A - *Let's Talk Child Care Campaign: Feedback from Toronto Parents*.

Children's Services is establishing a *Let's Talk Child Care* Advisory Group, which will meet annually to advise the City and the Children's Services division on policy and programs. The Advisory Group will be open to all interested Toronto parents. Regular updates about the Advisory Group will be posted to toronto.ca/children and on the Facebook page *Toronto Family Connections*.

The Children's Services 2015-2019 Service Plan and the new Child Care Funding Model will be tabled at Community Development and Recreation Committee in 2015. Children's Services will use the feedback provided by parents to inform the directions in the two reports.

CONTACT

Elaine Baxter-Trahair
General Manager, Children's Services
ebaxter@toronto.ca
416-392-8128

SIGNATURE

Elaine Baxter-Trahair
General Manager, Children's Services

ATTACHMENT

Appendix A: *Let's Talk Child Care Campaign: Feedback from Toronto Parents*