

17 March 2014



Councillor Anthony Perruzza  
Chair, Community Development and Recreation Committee  
10th floor, West Tower, City Hall  
100 Queen Street West  
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

Dear Councillor Perruzza,

I am writing with regard to the draft report prepared by the General Manager of Children's Services entitled "City of Toronto Response to Legislative and Regulatory Changes affecting Child Care in Ontario" (Agenda Item CD27.3, Appendix A). **Specifically, we are asking the Committee to amend Recommendation #1, and the accompanying rationale contained within the report, to remove any reference to having Data Analysis Coordinators (DACs) shifted from the long-standing service delivery model - currently a provincially-funded, community-based transfer payment service delivered by Mothercraft - to the municipality.**

Canadian Mothercraft Society ("Mothercraft") is a Toronto-based, not-for-profit charity that provides a wide range of programs and supports to families with children aged 0 to 6 years across the city. In addition to offering services to families such as infant mental health, special needs support, early intervention and family support, Mothercraft currently operates three licensed child care centres and is an accredited Private Career College delivering education, professional development and training to early learning professionals, including a Diploma in Early Childhood Education. The organization acts as the lead agency for the Data Analysis Coordinators (DACs) in Toronto Region as well as for the Child and Youth Services Information System (CYSIS). Mothercraft programs are delivered at various sites across the city located in Wards 19, 20, 21, 22 and 27.

Overall, Mothercraft supports and endorses the majority of recommendations contained within the City's draft response to the Province. We applaud Children's Services for organizing consultation sessions earlier this year in order to gather input from child care operators for the development of the City's response. At the session attended by Mothercraft, the consultation focussed on the provincial government's proposed changes to the current Day Nurseries Act through Regulation 262 only. As such, we did not provide input on the development of the City's position regarding Bill 143, the proposed legislation introduced to the Legislature in December to repeal the Day Nurseries Act and replace it with the Child Care and Early Years Act. We are taking the opportunity to provide this feedback now.



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Since 2003, Mothercraft has been the lead agency for the Data Analysis Coordinators (DACs) in Toronto Region. Funded annually by the Ministry of Children and Youth Services (MCYS), the mandate of the DACs is to design and conduct research, evaluation and data collection activities independently and to support these types of activities across the sector with other early years partners. The DACs are a unique community resource that allows local service providers to access vital information and support with data collection, analysis and interpretation, something most community-based agencies, particularly those in the early years and early learning sector, do not have within their organizations. The DACs also engage regularly with system planners and other key system stakeholders, such as, school boards, health sector partners, universities as well as local and provincial research partners. The DACs participate in various city-wide and provincial sector networks as well as by providing organizational supports to individual agencies across the city.

Mothercraft receives \$268,000 per year to fulfill this mandate and currently employs three full-time staff. Highlights of the work carried out by Mothercraft's DACs to support the early years and early learning sector in Toronto include:

- **Creation and ongoing development/support of EYSIS (Early Years Services Information System)** – Mothercraft developed this data management system for Toronto Region Ontario Early Years Centres (OEYCs) in 2003 to facilitate lead agencies' collection and reporting of data to MCYS. Today, EYSIS continues to be used by all of 24 of the city's OEYCs and is used by approximately 70% of the 108 OEYCs in the province as well as other early years service providers, such as, child welfare agencies, family resource programs, child care resource programs, family counseling centres, Indigenous family centres and schools.

The DACs are continually updating the EYSIS tool to ensure it meets the needs of user agencies and provides regular training for family support practitioners in the use of the tool. The DACs provide support to user agencies through the creation of customized data fields and reports in EYSIS that are tailored to their organizational needs so that they may gather and analyze data to inform program planning and program effectiveness. EYSIS data is used by MCYS to measure service deliverables and has been used by Toronto Network of OEYCs to provide high-level analysis of service use across the city.

- **Support for the implementation and analysis of the Early Development Instrument (EDI)** – The EDI was developed by the Offord Centre for Child Studies at McMaster University to measure child development at a population level and is used in Ontario to gather information regarding areas of strength and deficit for groups of children. The EDI is carried out every three years by senior kindergarten teachers in schools across the province to assess how groups of children are doing in five key areas: physical health and well-being, social knowledge and competencies, emotional health and maturity, language and cognitive development, communication skills and general knowledge. The data is shared with school boards and DACs in each region of the province to analyze and disseminate the results.

EDI outcomes do not measure individual children's development but are used as a tool for curriculum development, program planning, community investment and social policy interventions. Each cycle of the EDI provides important comparative data at the school, neighbourhood and regional level that is used by a multiplicity of community stakeholders. Supporting EDI activities is a key part of the DAC mandate. In addition to producing a city-wide report of the EDI results, Mothercraft's DACs also produce individual riding profiles that combine Census data with EDI outcomes. These reports are made available to local community stakeholders and are presented at facilitated local planning sessions organized and led by the DACs to help with local service planning. Typically, these sessions include a wide variety of professionals and practitioners, including: early years and family support programs, licensed child care operators, public health staff, speech and language pathologists, teachers and principals, children's mental health programs, special needs providers, pediatric specialists and local municipal councillors.

At the system planning level, the DACs have presented the city-wide EDI results to various stakeholder groups, including Toronto Public Health and members of the Francophone community. With each cycle of the EDI (Ontario is about to embark on its 4th cycle in the 2014/15 school year), we learn more about how to interpret EDI results and how to help communities use the information as effectively as possible to improve school readiness outcomes for children. The EDI is used across Canada and internationally and is increasingly seen as a vital tool in the development of policies and programs that can enhance early child development, as evidenced at the recent Canadian Institute for Advanced Research (CIFAR) symposium *"From Cell to Society, Creating a world where all children can succeed"*.

The most recent Toronto EDI report and riding profiles are available at <http://www.mothercraft.ca/index.php?q=toronto-edi-results>.

- **Local community data analysis, evaluation and research support** – As was previously noted, many community-based service providers in the early years sector do not have internal resources available for research and evaluation. The DACs provide advice and assistance to any organization serving children and families in Toronto including activities like: Census data interpretation, development of client satisfaction and/or outcome evaluation, geographic mapping of data, custom data tracking, reporting and analysis and computer training. These types of supports have historically been offered at the individual organization level as well as at the city-wide level, most recently as contributors to the Toronto Network of Ontario Early Years Centres evaluation report, *"How are we doing? Ontario Early Years Centres in Toronto"* (<http://www.mothercraft.ca/index.php?q=oeyc-evaluation>).
- **Support for system planning and enhancing sector capacity** – In the last two years, DACs have worked closely with the City supporting the development of the Well-Being Toronto responsive website. We are proud champions of this important City resource and offer our support to the initiative by informing our networks about how to use the site and offering training sessions to practitioners from the early

years and early learning sectors. By the end of this month, three training sessions will have been delivered by Mothercraft's DACs with 40 participants from community service providers on Well-Being Toronto since the launch of the site.

The DACs recently contributed to the development of the Toronto Child and Family Network's 2013 report "*Raising a Village: Measuring the Well-being of Children and Families in Toronto*" as active participants in the Outcomes Workgroup. This work is continuing through DAC involvement in the Indicators Workgroup.

Another key mandate of the DACs is to build capacity within the community to understand and apply information arising from early years research. We do this through various training and education initiatives, such as, data dictionary interpretation and publication of research papers. Last year, DACs provided 48 training, workshop or conference sessions to 924 early years professionals.

These are just some of the services and supports Mothercraft is able to provide to its sector partners through the DACs. For over 10 years, Mothercraft has provided consolidated data collection functions and support to the sector that not only meets the needs of our local communities but also draws upon the 83-year history of the organization as a service provider whose entire focus is providing support to families with young children and the professionals who serve them. Our staff team is small in number but large on output and leverages its resources as much as possible to achieve its provincial mandate.

Mothercraft values the many partnerships it enjoys with the City of Toronto, in particular those the DACs share with the Children's Service Division, Toronto Public Health and Social Development and Finance Administration (as members of the Community Data Program). **We respectfully submit that Recommendation #1, as relates to shifting the DACs from the community to the municipality, should be amended to remove any reference to the DACs.** Mothercraft is more than willing to explore new ways for the DACs to offer system support to our municipal partners but feel it would be a tremendous loss to the community to have this unique and vital service model changed as proposed.

Thank you for the opportunity to present our perspective and thank you for all the work you and your Council colleagues do as members of the Community Development and Recreation Committee on behalf of children and families in our great city.

With warm regards,



Michele Lupa  
Executive Director, Mothercraft