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## Strategic Directions and Actions for the Next Five Years

This section sets the agenda for the next five years, leveraging the existing services and responding to the landscape and planning considerations we have just described. These new strategic directions and actions are intended to move the system towards our long-term vision of an accessible, inclusive, seamless, and resilient system.

# 1. access to high-quality child care

Access to child care means that it is available, affordable, and of high quality. Capacity is one of the biggest challenges facing Toronto: there simply aren't enough spaces available. Children's Services will work with our partners to leverage opportunities that increase the number of high-quality child care spaces. We will direct available funding to initiatives that will have the biggest impact on access.

## ACTIONS:

1. Engage federal and provincial governments in the development and implementation of a strategy to facilitate growth in the child care system, including increasing child care fee subsidies in order to incrementally address the waitlist for a subsidy.
2. Ensure all families have equitable access to child care fee subsidies by bringing each ward within 10 percent of its ward equity target, taking into account the needs and requirements of individual neighbourhoods within the ward.
3. Increase the number of public and non-profit child care spaces for infants and toddlers, with a target of 1,500 spaces, focused in wards where there are insufficient spaces for families receiving fee subsidies.
4. In partnership with school boards, expand the number of before- and after-school programs for kindergarten children (age 4-5) in schools.
5. Work with partners to increase the availability of middle childhood programs (age 6-12) by investing new resources across a range of developmentally-appropriate service options, including investing in licensed child care in schools, where appropriate.
6. With the ongoing modernization of child care and the impact of full-day kindergarten on unit costs for all age groups, review service levels to ensure that maximum benefits are generated from available resources.
7. Work with stakeholders to improve intake and waitlist processes in order to simplify access to child care for families, including consideration of a centralized waitlist for child care spaces to maximize efficiencies in the service system.

## 2. inclusive support for all families

Families are vulnerable when they face significant barriers to accessing services, or the services available do not meet their needs. Factors that contribute to vulnerability may include: poverty; structural inequalities; discrimination; limited social support; and geographic location. Children's Services will focus on making a broad range of supports and services easier for families to access and making the system as a whole more inclusive of the unique needs of Toronto's families. While there are policies in place that support inclusivity, efforts are needed to implement these policies consistently across the system so all children and families are represented.

### ACTIONS:

9. Establish child care and child care fee subsidy as key pillars of the Toronto Poverty Reduction Strategy, and leverage resources to alleviate child and family poverty in Toronto by:
  - Enabling families to take advantage of employment opportunities
  - Optimizing the uptake of child care fee subsidies reserved for Ontario Works recipients
  - Reducing intergenerational poverty
  - Improving workforce compensation in the child care sector, to the extent possible
10. Strengthen Every Child Belongs (the Special Needs service model) in alignment with provincial policies, to improve consistency, accountability, quality, and transitions between services for children with special needs and their families.
11. Work with the Aboriginal community to increase the number of culturally-specific spaces for Aboriginal children through a variety of approaches, including:
  - Supporting the viability of new and existing Aboriginal child care centres
  - Pursuing opportunities to develop Aboriginal home child care
  - Providing increased support for Aboriginal families in navigating services, including child care fee subsidy application
12. Expand Aboriginal cultural competency across the system by:
  - Partnering with Aboriginal agencies to develop cultural training and tools for non-Aboriginal service providers
  - Partnering with post-secondary institutions to include Aboriginal cultural competency within the core Early Childhood Education curriculum
  - Ensuring special needs programs are responsive to Aboriginal cultures and histories
13. In partnership with the French-language school boards and other community partners, pursue opportunities to increase high-quality infant and toddler child care for the French-speaking community.
14. In partnership with community organizations that work with LGBTQ families, enhance training, policies, and practices across the child and family service system to support all sexual and gender identities so that families are welcome and included in all programs.
15. Partner with organizations that work with newcomer families in order to improve their access to and inclusion in all child and family services.

# 3. engagement, partnership, and communication

The child and family system is founded on strong community partnerships. Engaging our partners in the planning process helps Children's Services to stay attuned and respond to the diverse needs of children, families, and service providers. Trusting relationships are built through strong, reciprocal communication, which includes how information is shared with and gathered from stakeholders.

## ACTIONS:

16. Develop and implement a comprehensive communications, public education, and engagement strategy for service providers, families, and the broader public, including:
  - Reviewing, adapting, and enhancing existing communications channels for service providers
  - Pursuing ongoing initiatives to receive input from families and raise public awareness of the child and family system
  - Implementing targeted approaches for new families, families and children with special needs, newcomer communities, and LGBTQ families and families of trans or gender independent children
17. Improve professional learning for the French-language service sector by:
  - Building networks with French-language school boards, relevant community agencies, and other municipalities, and developing joint training opportunities
  - Delivering training on the Assessment for Quality Improvement in French
18. Strengthen partnerships with the Aboriginal community by providing ongoing support to the Aboriginal Advisory and Planning Committee and regular, targeted engagement initiatives.
19. Support and strengthen the leadership role of the Toronto Child and Family Network in planning and coordinating the system of services for children and families, and in advancing Service Plan strategic directions and actions.
21. Improve customer service to families by increasing automation and diversifying the channels through which services can be accessed.

# 4. systems change

The child and family system is undergoing significant change. Recognizing that change can be challenging, Children's Services will advance the modernization of the child and family system by implementing Provincial legislation and Council direction in a way that works best for Toronto's service providers, and that responds to the needs of children and families.

## ACTIONS:

22. Transition to a new child care funding model with approval from City Council.
23. Review the model used to provide support to child care programs and target supports based on need, in order to ensure that all families receive the same level and quality of service.
24. Streamline and continue automating Children's Services' administrative and reporting requirements of service providers to address efficiencies in the system while maintaining accountability.
25. Strengthen licensed home child care by:
  - Implementing recommendations from the 2015 licensed home child care review
  - Evaluating the current state of quality in home child care
  - Building capacity within home child care agencies to support Aboriginal children, French-speaking children, and children with special needs
26. Consolidate and coordinate the quality, planning, and management of middle childhood programs (age 6-12) within the City to improve families' access to high-quality programs by reducing silos and by strategically aligning City resources.
27. Work with partners to develop and implement an integrated service delivery model for Child and Family Centres in Toronto that is community-based, inclusive, and responsive to families.
28. In order to fulfill our mandate as the service system manager, request that the Ministry of Education transfer the planning and governance of all early years programs identified in the Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014 and the Ontario Early Years Framework to Children's Services.
29. Review the delivery of all family support programs that are funded by Children's Services, within the context of the broader child and family system, to ensure stable and dependable services are available to families.

# 5. leadership

Children's Services will champion the needs of children and families in Toronto. Recognizing that these efforts fit within a broader policy context, we will work with all orders of government and municipal and community partners to enhance the well-being of children and families. Drawing on research and data analysis, we will continue to be leaders in developing policy and in planning services that improve child and family outcomes.

## ACTIONS:

30. Call for predictable, sustainable funding that supports high-quality child care that is accessible and affordable for all families requiring care.
  - Streamlining and updating eligibility criteria for clients in income-tested programs (i.e. child care fee subsidy, Ontario Works, etc.)
31. Work with the Province to align policies governing schools and child care to:
  - Recognize that the full day experience includes both child care and school programming
  - Commit to funding licensed child care in new schools and replaced schools
  - Commit to the security and tenure of child care in schools
  - Fund occupancy costs for licensed child care in schools
  - Amend the formula for utilization rates
  - Recognize the full community value and use of schools
32. Continue to work with other City divisions to integrate and improve the delivery of City-run human services to children and families, by:
  - Providing families with all the information they want and need about multiple human services at the first point of contact
  - Sharing client information among multiple human services at the City, so that families only have to tell their story once
  - Developing self-service options, including enhanced online services
33. Promote the adoption of the validated Assessment for Quality Improvement tool by other jurisdictions in order to promote a consistent approach to assessing child care quality across Ontario and Canada.
34. Initiate and conduct research in partnership with academic institutions, TELCCS, and community organizations to support better service system planning, policy development, and quality. Facilitate data sharing practices among partners, service providers, and other orders of government to support this research.
35. In order to monitor shared child and family population outcomes, report on identified indicators and engage community partners in a collaborative planning process to improve the well-being of children and families.
36. Support a stable child and family workforce by enhancing job quality, by developing recruitment and retention strategies, and by exploring alternative employment models.
37. Continue to invest in the growth of the public and non-profit child care sectors.

# appendix a: child and family network

The Toronto Child and Family Network plans, coordinates and promotes the broad range of services for children from birth to 12 years of age and their families. The Toronto Child and Family Network is a partnership between a cross-section of agencies and organizations who share the same goal of promoting positive outcomes for new and expectant parents, children and families in Toronto.

Building on the success of the Best Start Network, the Toronto Child and Family Network will contribute to services by:

- Enhancing community engagement at the local and system level
- Organizing and integrating services with the goal of improved outcomes for children
- Aligning provincial, municipal and community planning, policies, processes and programs



For more information, visit: [toronto.ca/childandfamilynetwork](http://toronto.ca/childandfamilynetwork)

## THE NETWORK VISION

Every child has the right to high quality, meaningful childhood experiences that respect diversity, are rooted in communities, and support engagement in life-long learning and healthy development. An inclusive, integrated and accessible community service system places children at the centre, appreciates their unique potential, is responsive to families and promotes positive outcomes.

# appendix b: list of neighbourhoods

1	West Humber-Clairville	35	Westminster-Branson	71	Cabbagetown-South St.Jamestown	105	Lawrence Park North
2	Mount Olive-Silverstone-Jamestown	36	Newtonbrook West	72	Regent Park	106	Humewood-Cedarvale
3	Thistletown-Beaumont Heights	37	Willowdale West	73	Moss Park	107	Oakwood-Vaughan
4	Rexdale-Kipling	38	Lansing-Westgate	74	North St.Jamestown	108	Briar Hill - Belgravia
5	Elms-Old Rexdale	39	Bedford Park-Nortown	75	Church-Yonge Corridor	109	Caledonia - Fairbanks
6	Kingsview Village-The Westway	40	St.Andrew-Windfields	76	Bay Street Corridor	110	Keelesdale-Eglinton West
7	Willowridge-Martingrove-Richview	41	Bridle Path-Sunnybrooke-York Mills	77	Waterfront Communities-The Island	111	Rockliffe-Smythe
8	Humber Heights-Westmount	42	Banbury-Don Mills	78	Kensington-Chinatown	112	Beechborough-Greenbrook
9	Edenbridge-Humber Valley	43	Victoria Village	79	University	113	Weston
10	Princess-Rosethorn	44	Flemingdon Park	80	Palmerston-Little Italy	114	Lambton-Baby Point
11	Eringate-Centennial-West Deane	45	Parkwoods-Donalda	81	Trinity-Bellwoods	115	Mount Dennis
12	Markland Woods	46	Pleasant View	82	Niagara	116	Steeles
13	Etobicoke West Mall	47	Don Valley Village	83	Dufferin Grove	117	L'Amoureux
14	Islington-City Centre West	48	Hillcrest Village	84	Little Portugal	118	Tam O'Shanter-Sullivan
15	Kingsway South	49	Bayview Woods-Steeles	85	South Parkdale	119	Wexford/Maryville
16	Stonegate-Queensway	50	Newtonbrook East	86	Roncesvalles	120	Clairlea-Birchmount
17	Mimco	51	Willowdale East	87	High Park-Swansea	121	Oakridge
18	New Toronto	52	Bayview Village	88	High Park North	122	Brichcliffe-Cliffside
19	Long Branch	53	Henry Farm	89	Runnymede-Bloor West Village	123	Cliffcrest
20	Alderwood	54	O'Conner-Parkview	90	Junction	124	Kennedy Park
21	Humber Summit	55	Thornccliffe Park	91	Weston-Pellam Park	125	Ionview
22	Humbermede	56	Leaside-Bennington	92	Corsa Italia-Davenport	126	Dorset Park
23	Pelmo Park-Humberlea	57	Broadview North	93	Dovercourt-Wallace Emerson-Junction	127	Bendale
24	Black Creek	58	Old East York	94	Wychwood	128	Agincourt South-Malvern West
25	Glenfield-Jane Heights	59	Danforth Village East York	95	Annex	129	Agincourt North
26	Dowsnview-Roding-CFB	60	Woodbine-Lumsden	96	Casa Loma	130	Milliken
27	York University Heights	61	Crescent Town	97	Yonge-St.Clair	131	Rouge
28	Rustic	62	East End Danforth	98	Rosedale-Moore Park	132	Malvern
29	Maple Leaf	63	The Beaches	99	Mount Pleasant East	133	Centennial Scarborough
30	Brookhaven-Amesbury	64	Woodbine Corridor	100	Yonge-Eglinton	134	Highland Creek
31	Yorkdale-Glen Park	65	Greenwood-Coxwell	101	Forest Hill South	135	Morningside
32	Englemount-Lawrence	66	Danforth Village Toronto	102	Forest Hill North	136	West Hill
33	Clanton Park	67	Playter Estates-Danforth	103	Lawrence Park South	137	Woburn
34	Bathurst Manor	68	North Riverdale	104	Mount Pleasant West	138	Eglinton East
		69	Blake-Jones			139	Scarborough Village
		70	South Riverdale			140	Guildwood



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- <sup>iii</sup> Ibid.
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Call **3-1-1**

[toronto.ca/children](https://toronto.ca/children)  
[childcare@toronto.ca](mailto:childcare@toronto.ca)