



STAFF REPORT ACTION REQUIRED

George Webster Elementary School Capital Project and Update on Parkside Early Learning and Child Care Centre

Date:	June 9, 2016
To:	Community Development & Recreation Committee
From:	General Manager, Children's Services
Wards:	All
Reference Number:	

SUMMARY

This report provides an update on two child care sites in Ward 31, Beaches-East York. First, it requests the approval to add a new capital project for the expansion of a child care centre at the new George Webster Elementary School, based on the results of a feasibility study.

The report also responds to a City Council request for a report on the feasibility and financial implications of offering an infant/toddler/preschool program at Parkside Early Learning and Child Care Centre to create a more viable operating model at the site.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The General Manager, Children's Services recommends that:

1. City Council amend the 2016 - 2025 Approved Capital Budget and Plan for Children's Services by adding a new capital project, with a total project cost of \$2.4 million, funded entirely from the Child Care Capital Reserve Fund, with a cash flow budget of \$0.715 million in 2016 and \$1.685 million in 2017;
2. City Council authorize the General Manager, Children's Services to enter into a funding and development agreement with the Toronto District School Board (TDSB), in a form satisfactory to the City Solicitor, to fund the construction of 25

new infant and toddler child care spaces at the new George Webster Elementary School; and

3. City Council authorize the General Manager, Children's Services to amend the programming at the Parkside Early Learning and Child Care Centre by continuing to offer kindergarten and school age programming at Parkside Early Learning and Child Care Centre but not to proceed with the re-opening of the preschool program or the addition of an infant/toddler program at this location, with the funding approved to operate the expanded preschool program for four months, from September to December 2016, to be returned to the Service System Management function of the Children's Services Operating Budget.

Financial Impact

George Webster Public School

The adoption of the recommendations in this report will result in an amendment to the 2016-2025 Approved Capital Budget and Plan for Children's Services that will add a new capital project that will support the replacement of the child care centre located in the original George Webster Public School and expand the replacement centre in the new George Webster Elementary School. The new capital project will provide funding of \$2.4 million, with a cash flow of \$0.715 million in 2016 and \$1.685 million in 2017. The increase in capital expenditures will be fully funded from the Child Care Capital Reserve Fund. The uncommitted balance in the Child Care Capital Reserve Fund is sufficient to provide funding for this project.

Through the *Capital Funding Policy to Replace Child Care Spaces in Replacement Schools*, the Province is providing \$0.494 million to construct a preschool room for 24 children in the new school site. This funding, combined with the additional \$2.4 million in City funding that adds 25 additional spaces, provides the means to increase the total spaces at the new centre to 49 from the original 21 spaces in the old school site.

The revised 2016-2025 Capital Plan of \$72.207 million will provide funding of \$56.877 million to deliver 19 child care centers over the 10-year term, which will add a total of 946 new child care spaces, once construction has been completed.

Parkside Early Learning and Child Care Centre (ELCCC)

The 2016 Operating Budget for Children's Services included staff recommendations to close the under-enrolled preschool room at Parkside ELCCC, which would have resulted in a savings of \$0.173 million in 2016. During the budget process, City Council directed that the 2016 expenditure savings be reduced from \$0.173 million to \$0.115 million to reflect a temporary closure of eight months instead of the recommended permanent closure. The \$0.058 difference, required to operate the preschool room for the final four months of the year, was offset by a reduction in the Division's Service System Management budget.

A site review and feasibility study undertaken in March 2016, in collaboration with the TDSB, affirmed that expanding the program to include infants and toddlers or reopening the preschool room is not feasible or cost effective, as there is inadequate interior and exterior space required to meet current licensing requirements; as well, based on previous experience and parent demand, there is insufficient enrolment to support the ongoing service in the preschool room.

Upon the adoption of Recommendation 3 of this report, the \$0.058 million will no longer be required to operate the preschool program for four months. As a result, funds will be returned to the Service System Management function of the Children's Services Operating Budget.

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

DECISION HISTORY

The 2016 Operating Budget recommended permanent closure of the under-enrolled preschool room at Parkside ELCCC. On January 26, 2016 Budget Committee recommended that the permanent closure be amended to be a temporary closure of eight months. The \$0.058 million required to operate the preschool room for the final four months of the year was to be offset from a reduction in the Service System Management function in the Children's Services Operating Budget.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2016.BU18.1>

Council also requested the General Manager, Children's Services to report to the June meeting of Community Development and Recreation Committee on the feasibility and funding impacts of establishing an infant/toddler/preschool program at Parkside ELCCC to create a more viable operating model that meets the needs of the community, and is consistent with the directions of the Ministry of Education.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2016.EX12.2>

At its meeting of May 3, 4 and 5, 2016, City Council considered a report titled "Child Care Capital Expansion Update", which supported the creation of 464 new child care spaces in 10 locations. The report indicated that one additional project, at George Webster School, was planned pending the results of a feasibility study and committed to reporting to City Council when the results of the feasibility study were known.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2016.CD11.3>

ISSUE BACKGROUND

This report provides updates on two child care centres in Ward 31, Beaches-East York. George Webster Jr. YMCA operates out of George Webster Elementary School located at 2 Cedarcrest Boulevard. Parkside ELCCC is a City-operated Early Learning & Child Care Centre located in Parkside Elementary School at 401 Cedarvale Avenue. Both centres have recently been reviewed for expansion opportunities.

COMMENTS

George Webster

The YMCA currently operates a preschool program with a licensed capacity of 21 at George Webster Elementary School. The Toronto District School Board is replacing the existing school with a new school projected to open in September 2017. The TDSB, with the support of Children's Services, requested Ministry of Education funding that would have replaced and expanded the existing child care centre in the new school. The Ministry of Education agreed to fund the replacement of the existing preschool space under the *Capital Funding Policy to Replace Child Care Spaces in Replacement Schools*, which replaces child care spaces for children age 0 to 3.8 in rebuilt schools. Ministry funds will create 24 pre school spaces, which is the maximum group size for this age group under the *Child Care and Early Years Act*. The Ministry approved \$0.494 million for this purpose and, as a result, the new school plans include a child care room for preschool children.

Following the Ministry decision, the TDSB and Children's Services looked for an opportunity to leverage provincial funding and expand the child care centre so that it could also serve infants and toddlers. As previously reported to Community Development and Recreation Committee (CD11.3), a feasibility study for this project was conducted in April 2016 to see if the centre could be expanded to provide infant and toddler space, necessary support areas, and an expanded outdoor play area. This feasibility study, conducted by MC Architects Inc., has now been completed and has identified an opportunity to expand the planned preschool program to also accommodate rooms for infants and toddlers. This expansion requires adding 3,675 square feet of floor space and 1,100 square feet for a new shared infant and toddler playground. The feasibility study and new plans call for a capacity for 10 infants, 15 toddlers, and 24 preschoolers.

The expanded child care centre could be built into the replacement school during construction with a substantial completion of August 2017 and target opening date of September 2017. The estimated project cost to Children's Services is \$2.4 million, to be funded from the Child Care Capital Reserve Fund. The funds are for the new infant and toddler spaces, and for changes to the existing design occurring as a result of the program expansion. The YMCA would continue to be the operator for the Centre.

Children's Services actively pursues partnerships with school boards and others to secure space and to reduce the cost of development. Adding infant and toddler capacity to better serve children and families is a priority for Children's Services. Based on the results of the feasibility study, Children's Services recommends taking advantage of the opportunity to add licensed infant and toddler spaces at George Webster Elementary School.

Parkside Early Learning and Child Care Centre (ELCCC)

Parkside ELCCC offers kindergarten and schoolage programming and, until the fall of 2015, preschool programming for up to eight children. In the fall of 2015, a flood caused the program to relocate. The four children enrolled in the preschool program at the time

of the flood received care at Woodbine ELCCC, which is approximately five blocks from Parkside.

Over the last number of years, the preschool program at Parkside has experienced chronic under-enrolment. Children's Services staff have worked with the school and others in the community to promote the program and increase enrolment; however, these efforts have not been successful. The program was fully enrolled at eight children for only two months over a two year period. Over this time, the program's enrolment generally fluctuated between three and seven children.

Due to legislated staffing ratios, health and safety requirements and employment standards, the preschool program at Parkside requires two full-time Registered Early Childhood Educators (RECEs) and additional part time staffing hours. This results in a program which is expensive for the small number of children enrolled, with per child costs exceeding the current TELCCS preschool fee of \$72.18 per day.

As the program was financially inefficient and not able to maintain full enrolment, staff recommended that the preschool program be closed permanently during the 2016 Operating Budget process. No changes were recommended to the kindergarten and school age programs at the site. During the approval of the City's 2016 budget, Toronto City Council approved funding to allow the preschool program at Parkside ELCCC to be operated for the last four months of the year, to be funded from within Children's Services existing budget. Council also requested a report on the feasibility of adding an infant and toddler program at Parkside ELCCC to create a more viable operating model that meets the needs of the community.

In March 2016, in response this direction, Toronto Children's Services and the TDSB met regarding the operation of Parkside ELCCS to discuss the possibility of infant, toddler and preschool programming at the site. Children's Services committed to reviewing the available space to determine whether there was a sufficient area to operate a program under current legislative and operating standards.

A site review was conducted to assess the feasibility of using the current child care space to increase the centre's capacity to 10 infant, 15 toddler, and 24 preschool spaces. This is a standard child care centre model which ensures space for children to move into as they age through the centre. The review concluded that there is insufficient space to meet licensing requirements for an infant, toddler, and preschool program. The available child care space in the school is 2,734 square feet. Based on the requirements of the *Child Care and Early Years Act*, and municipal and provincial standards (for example, Toronto Public Health, Toronto Building, Toronto Fire and Ministry of Education requirements), a total square footage of approximately 5,000 would be needed for licensed playrooms and amenities. This leaves a shortfall of approximately 2,300 square feet.

In addition, there would be significant costs involved in upgrading the exterior space to meet current legislative requirements. A major retrofit of the existing playground would be required to meet provincial licensing requirements which include a variety of surfaces, a shade area, a water source, and a storage shed.

Based on previous experience with enrolment and parent demand, and the lack of adequate interior and exterior space at Parkside, Children's Services does not recommend expanding the program to include infants and toddlers or reopening the preschool room.

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