



*City Councillor – Ward 17 • Davenport*

**URGENT**

January 18, 2017

Gary Crawford, Toronto City Councillor  
Chair of the Budget Committee  
City Hall, 100 Queen Street West  
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

Dear Budget Chief,

The purpose of this missive is to appeal to your good judgement and ask you to give every consideration to my humble request, that is, to maintain the current \$1.13 million Child Occupancy Grant for the current year, I remain hopeful that the province will eventually assume responsibility for this much needed subsidy in the upcoming months.

The City staff's proposal to end the 20 year "**Child Occupancy Grant**" payable to Public, Catholic and French School Boards, will affect most daycares in my Ward.

At the local level, Ward 17 has gentrified tremendously with thousands of new young families. As a result, the demand for daycare services has increased. Taking this into consideration, I have been working closely with city staff from Children Services, MPP Cristina Martins and the local Trustee to create additional affordable child care spaces at the Carleton Village Early Learning Centre, Fairbank Memorial Daycare Centre, General Mercer Early Learning Centre and the Ascot Community Daycare at the Oakwood Collegiate.

In Ward 17 the majority of day care centres rely on this important grant to conduct their day-to-day operations. The following 7 Child Care Centres in Ward 17 have Occupancy Agreements, furthermore, some of these daycares are located in the Weston-Pelham community – a **Neighbourhood Improvement Area (NIA)**:

- Carleton Village Early Learning Centre
- Fairbank Memorial Day Care Centre
- General Mercer Early Learning Centre
- Harmony Child Care Centre
- Rawlinson B & A School Program
- Rawlinson Early Learning and Child Care
- Ascot Avenue Community Day Care

There is no question that the city's proposal to not increase subsidies would affect low-income and middle-income families alike –who are struggling to make ends meet. It is crucial to maintain the Child Occupancy Grant for the current year until the province tables a more equitable funding formula, in my opinion, the occupancy grant is helping offset costs pertaining to lighting, heating, maintenance and rent for 350 child care centres in Toronto. These are costs that providers will no doubt pass onto low income families.

The reality is that families on average are spending a disproportionate amount of their net income on child care. The costs for obtaining affordable, accessible and quality child care has become totally unaffordable, it is unconscionable to think that in many cases –child care costs exceed mortgage payments, or university tuition. It is sad, when hard working families with small children face the dilemma of quitting their jobs because they can no longer afford the cost of child care.

**Please turn over...**

Fighting for affordable child care is every body's business, I hope all levels of government step-up to the challenge, after all –there is only one taxpayer; meaning budget cuts to the most vulnerable, or middle class –don't save money –it just transfers the costs to social services as more people will become reliant on social services, or unemployed.

As you know, a review of the Province's current Board of Education occupancy funding model is expected to be released by the Province as part of Phase 3 of the Children Care and Early Year Act in 2017. The City of Toronto has requested that the Minister of Education improve the funding formula to include the occupancy cost of early learning and child care space in schools.

On July 12, 2016 City Council adopted the following recommendations supporting this direction:

**City Council request the Minister of Education to support a continuum of learning and the stabilization of early years and child care programs located in school buildings by undertaking the following five actions which have been developed collaboratively by the City of Toronto and the Toronto District School Board, the Toronto Catholic District School Board, Conseil scolaire Viamonde, and Conseil scolaire de district catholique Centre-Sud:**

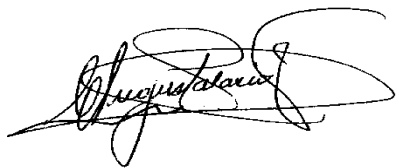
- a) Improve the funding formula in order to fully fund the occupancy cost of early learning and child care space in schools directly to the school boards;
- b) Ensure the funding formula takes into account the higher cost of building, operating and maintaining spaces for young children;
- c) Ensure the funding formula for early learning space is not a per person rate, but a per room rate;
- d) Ensure the funding formula accounts for the incrementally higher cost of operating before- and after-school programs in shared spaces; and
- e) Ensure that the school utilization formula reflects the improved funding formula and fully accounts for early learning space in schools.

Gary, given the above, I am appealing to your good judgement, I strongly believe that we can find funding within our current operating budget, perhaps, from the MLTT surplus year-end projection, or a Reserve Account within Cluster A. What I'm asking for is to reinstate the 2017 Child Care Occupancy Grant in the amount of \$1.13M until the Province comes up with an improved Child Care funding formula later this year.

Gary, I commend and thank you for doing an admirable (thankless) job, and there is no doubt in my mind that through your vision and leadership you will find a satisfactory solution, a solution that will bring confidence to those that we are accountable to –our residents, our taxpayers.

The people of Toronto have been very clear about what they want. They want us to find efficiencies, while protecting social programs that enhance the livelihood of our communities. These are difficult, yet critical decisions that we have to make. We owe it to families to continue advocating for affordable quality child care. As we move forward, we must continue working towards a funding model that will help Toronto address the challenges child care service providers face now and in the future. Affordable daycare, I believe is one of the best investments our Governments can make for our children.

Thank you for your consideration.



Cesar Palacio  
Toronto City Councillor  
Ward 17-Davenport