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Toronto City Council and Committees

Community Development and Recreation Committee

For Consideration September 11, 2017

Item # 2

Assessments of Licensed Child Care Conducted by the City of Toronto and the Ministry of Education

Good morning:

As an introduction, this letter was prepared by Catherine Di Domenico and Charlotte Orser. We each have at least twenty years experience in the field of Childcare and we have the pleasure of overseeing the day-to-day operation of Churchill Chums Childcare Centre.

Churchill Chums Childcare Centre is located in the north-west area of the City.

We are licensed for 224 children from infant to age 12 years. Our Centre is attached to Churchill Public School. In the last 5 years, we have grown from an enrolment of 45 children to our current capacity of 224. Our growth was a result of an amalgamation of two centres; one a Preschool Centre and one a School-Age Centre. The School-Age Centre was familiar with the City of Toronto Assessment tool. The Preschool component did not have the City of Toronto Purchase of Service Agreement and therefore the staff had not engaged in any Assessments. The knowledge and support from our City of Toronto Consultants at that time, was truly invaluable and one of the keys to the Centre being successful. That support continues today. The amalgamation and the growth happened because the Province, the City of Toronto, the Board of Directors and our Staff Team all worked together to establish a viable Childcare Centre. Our journey over the past five years maybe unique, but not unlike other childcare centres that have expanded.

We utilize 11 classrooms; 5 exclusive-space classrooms and 6 shared-space kindergarten classrooms. Our space also includes a Staff Room, a Servery (Kitchen facilities) storage areas and a lovely south-facing playground.

With 11 classrooms, the process of the City of Toronto Assessment is a tool that we are very familiar with.

Regulations and licenses ensure safety and a level of functioning but regulations are not the only tool needed to achieve high quality childcare.

There are other components of childcare that are not always covered by regulations.

This is where the City of Toronto, Early Learning and Care Assessment for Quality Improvement, the “AQI” measures additional components of a childcare program such as the environment, interactions and supports quality.

As an example, the Assessment Guideline for Preschool, Art Domain, “Three or more art materials include diverse skin tones”. We have experienced that when a child chooses a shade of paper that matches their skin tone, they feel that they belong and they experience being valued. This aligns with “How Does Learning Happen Ontario Pedagogy for the Early Years”.

This example and many other expectations in the Assessment Tool provide and promote quality environments, facilitate unique experiences and extend learning opportunities.

Monitoring and improving quality in our Childcare is also a goal that is shared by the Team at Churchill Chums. The Assessment tool helps us to strive for quality. The value of the Assessment cannot be dismissed. There may be overlapping in some aspects with the Province, but the Assessment is a living document and that as Childcare is changing, this document will change.

A Childcare Centre can be measured by the quantitative evaluation that the Assessment Tool provides.

Quality and monitoring of the framework raises awareness of the importance for all components of quality Childcare.

Goals to be achieved within a specific time frame, as well as indicators for measuring progress towards assigned goals, improve the journey of quality Childcare.

AQI Assessors have the knowledge, the expertise and the experience specific to the Assessment and to Childcare environments. At Chums, we have always felt supported, we have utilized their knowledge, and this has been an ongoing journey for our community. The support is not just available the day of an Assessment, we have been fortunate to experience on-going support from the City of Toronto Assessment Team, as well as the Province. We see everyone as part of the Team.

We are aware that some areas of overlapping have been identified and the goal of enabling parents to have a more informed understanding of the scores and the context in which assessments are conducted is valid.

If the process were to be streamlined, we could direct our energies away from overlapping components. The support of the Consultants and the AQI Assessors have improved our journey towards quality Childcare at Churchill Chums. It is always best practice to examine. Best practice is a commitment to using all the knowledge at one's disposal to ensure success.

Thank you for the opportunity,

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