

October 13, 2020

To Economic and Community Development Committee Chair and Members,

Re: Understanding the Impact of Proposed Provincial Changes to Childcare on Toronto Families

On October 2, the Ontario Government released proposed changes to child-care regulations that would allow operators to group infants and toddlers together, reduce staff-to-child ratios for some age groups, and lower qualification requirements for staff. Further, the province is hold consultations on creating a registry for unlicensed childcare providers, which is a risky proposal given the need for our children to be in safe, licensed spaces.

These changes were announced quietly, on the government's website in the middle of a pandemic. It's critical that, as the largest city in the province, we are able to consult with childcare providers, parents, and other stakeholders about the potential impacts of the changes and to have staff report back to Council in time for the City to take a position on the regulations.

We know that high quality, safe, accessible child care is essential for parents to participate in the workplace; generates positive child outcomes; and is a key tenet of poverty reduction. It is important to examine the changes through these measures to understand the potential impacts on children and families in Toronto.

These proposed amendments to the Child Care and Early Years Act are being brought forward as a result of a scheduled five-year review of the Act. Stakeholders, including the City of Toronto, have until November 20, 2020 to submit feedback. If changes are approved they would come into effect in 2021.

The previous government proposed similar changes in 2016 but withdrew them in response to widespread opposition from parents, advocates and academics.

As part of the process in 2016, City staff submitted a draft response to the Province by their deadline and then went to Committee and Council with their final recommendations based on consultation with parents and childcare providers and on analysis of the impact of the changes.

In the end, City Council supported the staff recommended response that current ratios and group sizes be maintained; and that future proposals be further developed through engagement with the childcare sector and recreation sector, including after school care providers (<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2016.CD11.4>).

We suggest that a similar thorough process is undertaken in this case.

We therefore recommend:

1. The Economic and Community Development Committee request the General Manager, Children's Services, and the General Manager, Parks, Forestry, and Recreation, to report to the Economic and Community Development Committee in November or December 2020 with a draft response for the City of Toronto to the Government of Ontario on the proposed regulatory amendments to the Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014, which were released by the Ministry of Education in a consultation document on October 2, 2020, including proposed changes, impacts, and consultation with child care providers, parents, and other stakeholders.

Thank you,

Councillor Joe Cressy

Ward 10, Spadina-Fort York

Councillor Mike Layton

Ward 11, University-Rosedale