

City Council**Notice of Motion**

MM23.18	ACTION			Ward: All
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Calling on the Federal and Provincial Governments to implement an emergency action plan to ensure a safe return to school - by Councillor Mike Layton, seconded by Councillor Paula Fletcher

** Notice of this Motion has been given.*

** This Motion is subject to referral to the Executive Committee. A two-thirds vote is required to waive referral.*

Recommendations

Councillor Mike Layton, seconded by Councillor Paula Fletcher, recommends that:

1. City Council request the Government of Ontario and the Government of Canada to implement an emergency action plan to ensure a safe return to school in September for all children, families and education workers.
2. City Council request that the emergency action plan include, at a minimum:
 - a. immediate funding to stabilize the childcare sector;
 - b. access for parents to job-protected leave and benefits until school and childcare fully resume;
 - c. measures to address the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on Black, Indigenous and racialized communities and the potential ramifications on students and their families, and ensure we can flow funding to areas hardest hit to ensure equity of access to programming in education and child care;
 - d. a COVID-19 recovery school advisory group that includes teacher and education worker unions, parents, students and school boards;
 - e. funding for school boards to cover all COVID-19 related exceptional costs they will need to incur to ensure a safe return for both students and education workers;
 - f. consultation with all levels of government to find ways to use available public infrastructure to allow school and child care centres to resume in-person for as many children as possible in a safe and healthy way;
 - g. guarantees that no essential workers currently receiving emergency child care will lose

child care provision when the emergency child care program ends; and

h. prioritization of active transportation models to support the safe transport of children to schools, while expanding bus service.

3. City Council notify the Government of Ontario and the Government of Canada of the City of Toronto's willingness to participate in the implementation of the emergency action plan at the regional level.

Summary

September is quickly approaching and many parents across the City of Toronto do not know if they will have childcare or a full-time return to school in September. The current situation leaves parents in the dark and likely without options that allow them to work consistently, assured that their children are safe, social and learning at the same time.

If we are to take our economic recovery and reopening seriously, the Government of Ontario needs to prioritize access to childcare and a safe return to school above all else. We have seen the disproportionate impact that the pandemic has had on families, Black, Indigenous and racialized communities and women. If we are to try and address these inequalities which have become more apparent through the progression of the pandemic, it starts with creating programming and services that meet their needs.

MPP Marit Stiles has brought forth Motion 101 to be debated by the legislature calling on the Government of Ontario to implement an emergency action plan to ensure a safe return to school in September for all students, education workers and families.

At the forefront of this Motion is the need to assist those deeply impacted by COVID-19 and support their efforts toward a personal recovery by guaranteeing funding to childcare programming and access to those supports until childcare and school can fully resume.

At the Toronto District School Board and the Toronto Catholic District School Board, motions were passed calling on the Province to address the fact that as an urban school board with space constraints, action must be taken to support growing the physical space in which we educate our children and calling on the City to support them in these efforts.

The Toronto District School Board raises serious concerns about the impacts of the current model proposed for a return to school which places a tremendous burden on parents and caregivers -- and, in particular, women, families with young children and low-income families, and stands to further jeopardize the economic recovery.

There is also a call from these school boards to promote active transportation as a means to support the safe transport of children to schools, which the City of Toronto can continue to assist with through its ActiveTO improvements.

We also know that our smaller, French language boards Viamonde and MonAvenir have noted that the funding they have received will not likely be able to cover the costs to reopen in a safe manner.

The City of Toronto should support this call for an emergency action plan, and work to assist in its implementation to support the millions of families in our City.

Background Information (City Council)

Member Motion MM23.18