

## **Supplementary Report on Request for Authority to Open Emergency Child Care for Children of Essential Workers**

**Date:** April 7, 2021

**To:** City Council

**From:** General Manager, Children Services

**Wards:** All

### **SUMMARY**

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On April 6, 2021, Toronto Public Health (TPH) issued a Section 22 order under the Health Protection and Promotion Act that moved all Toronto schools to online and/or remote learning effective April 7, 2021 at 12:01 a.m. The order will be in place from April 7 - 18, 2021, which will bring students to the end of the April break. An extension of this order may be considered based on COVID-19 epidemiological data for Toronto.

As part of this order, licensed child care programs will not be permitted to offer care to children whose schools are required to be closed under the order, with the exception of emergency child care for those who qualify.

This report seeks authority to open emergency child care to provide care to children of essential workers.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

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The General Manager, Children Services recommends that:

1. City Council direct Toronto Children's Services, under its authority as the legislated service system manager for early years and child care in Toronto, to coordinate the planning and delivery of Emergency Child Care (ECC), for the duration of the Section 22 order in cooperation with eligible child care operators with a purchase of service agreement and using eligibility and application criteria for families consistent with previous implementations of ECC in Toronto, and at no cost to eligible families.

2. City Council grant authority for Children's Services to fund the proportionate cost of operating emergency child care for the duration of the Section 22 order, using available funding within its 2021 Approved Operating Budget.

## **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

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Based on previous implementations of emergency child care, it is estimated that the cost of coordinating and delivering programming across the sector will be approximately \$41,000 per day, or \$205,000 for the duration of the existing Section 22 order. This represents the estimated proportionate cost of delivering the service and is subject to change based on actual demand from eligible families, the overall duration of the order, and the number of child care operators with a purchase of service agreement providing emergency child care.

The 2021 Approved Operating Budget for Children's Services includes funding for early years and child care services, including some provincial and federal funding flexibilities that allow for already committed funding to be repurposed to support eligible child care costs. It is anticipated that the proportionate costs of operating emergency child care for the duration of the Section 22 order can be funded within the existing 2021 Approved Operating Budget.

The Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer has reviewed this report and agrees with the financial impact information.

## **DECISION HISTORY**

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On March 22, 2021, the Medical Officer of Health delivered a report and presentation to the Board of Health on COVID-19: March 2021 Update.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2021.HL26.1>

## **COMMENTS**

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The spread of COVID-19 has never been greater in Toronto, with variants of concern increasing both the risk of transmission and the risk of serious illness or death. Stronger public health measures are required to reverse the surge of infection that the province currently faces.

On April 6, 2021, Toronto Public Health issued a Section 22 order under the Health Protection and Promotion Act that moved all Toronto schools to online and/or remote learning effective April 7, 2021 at 12:01 a.m. The order will be in place from April 7 to 18, 2021, which will bring students to the end of the April break. An extension of this order may be considered based on COVID-19 epidemiological data for Toronto.

As part of the order, licensed child care programs will not be permitted to offer care to children who attend schools that are required to be closed, with the exception of emergency child care for those who qualify.

This includes before and after school programs and any planned non-instructional April Break programs and/or camps. Licensed child care programs will be permitted to offer care to children (infant, toddler, preschool) who do not attend school, including those child care programs that are co-located in a school.

Children's Services has previously operated and administered emergency child care during the first and second lockdown and school closures. However, both times were under the authorization of the Ontario Ministry of Education. Under the Section 22 order, there is no authorization to allow for school aged children (4-12 years) to attend any child care or recreational activity in Toronto.

Children's Services, as the Consolidated Service System Manager for child care and early years in the City of Toronto, has the designated authority to plan and deliver services that meet the local needs for child care within their jurisdiction, including the authorization of emergency child care. Children's Services will work closely with the sector and local school boards to identify interest and prepare for a transition to opening emergency child care for school aged children for the week of April 12, 2021, using a model similar to the one provided during the December to February school closure.

Emergency child care services would be made available, at no cost to families, for designated essential service providers who are not able to accommodate their school-aged child's learning or care at home, as the safest option for families is to have children remain at home if possible.

## **CONTACT**

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## **SIGNATURE**

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