



December 7, 2023

Dear Councillor,

RE: EC 8.10 Growth and Expansion in Toronto's Licensed Child Care Sector: Update

For many years the City of Toronto has acknowledged that child care is essential for Toronto's children, families and communities.

It contributes to gender equality, social inclusion and economic opportunity. Building a better city - an inclusive city – means access to high-quality, publicly-funded, public and not-for profit child care for all who need and want it.

We've seen progress with the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC) plan, and the Canada-Ontario agreement. However, many serious challenges remain unaddressed because of the lack of action (either policy or funding) on the part of the provincial government. New investments are needed now, if our system is to survive and thrive as envisioned.

- Fee revenue has been frozen, with insufficient public funding to cover rising costs.
- Centres need to make significant wage and benefit improvements to attract and keep early childhood staff.
- Programs are cutting hours and closing rooms to stay financially viable.
- Equitable access to affordable child care isn't possible without capital funding to build and expand.
- Parents join long waitlists in hope of finding a space – hopes that are often dashed.

We expect the 2024 provincial funding allocations will be announced very soon. Without adequate, immediate funding and policy changes - that recognize the true cost of child care in Toronto - the promise of a high-quality, accessible, system of child care for all families will never become a reality.

Parents, staff, unions and advocates made submissions to the Economic and Community Development Committee on November 28, on report EC8.10. The Committee approved unanimously amended recommendations that acknowledge the critical situation facing parents, early childhood educators and operators of centres - and strengthens the city's advocacy. The community also recognized the ongoing support and leadership of the Chair and Children's Services staff.

We support the Committee recommendations and urge councillors to unanimously vote in favour of them at the upcoming Council Meeting on December 13th.

The recommendations are that:

1. City Council reaffirm the City of Toronto's support for building a system of early learning and child care services that are high-quality, public and not-for profit, affordable, inclusive and accessible for all families.
2. City Council request the Federal and Provincial Governments to consult with the City and provide capital and operating funding to reflect the regional and actual costs of developing and operating child care spaces in Toronto; provide capital expansion funding required to meet Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care targets in the not-for-profit and public sector for Toronto set out in the Province's Access and Inclusion Framework and the City's Growth Strategy; and provide operating funding that meets the sector's needs in Toronto.
3. City Council requests the Province of Ontario to develop a workforce strategy for the early years and child care sector that includes an investment to increase wages and benefits to levels that achieve parity with positions in the public sector in Toronto.
4. City Council express its support of Bill 49, the Early Years and Child Care Worker Advisory Commission Act, to Ontario's Minister of Education and all Toronto Members of Provincial Parliament.
5. City Council request the General Manager, Children's Services, in consultation with the Chair, Economic and Community Development Committee, to convene a roundtable meeting of City and School Board staff, families, educators, supervisors, unions, experts, and other community stakeholders for the purpose of enhancing information sharing and community advocacy in support of successful implementation of the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care program in Toronto.
6. City Council call on the Province of Ontario and the Government of Canada to include the City of Toronto and other large municipalities in discussions that are underway to renew the Canada-Ontario Action Plans.
7. City Council forward the item to the Ontario Municipal Social Services Association (OMSSA) and the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) with the request that the item be shared with child care Service System Managers.

In order for the City of Toronto to achieve its visionary Child Care Growth Plan and to address these important issues, it must ramp up its support for early learning and child care and challenge the provincial government to live up to the letter and intention of the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement.

Please cast your vote in favour of these recommendations to demonstrate vital support for Toronto families, early childhood educators and child care centre boards of directors. Together we can build a Toronto that includes child care for all.

Thank you,

Donna Spreitzer, Executive Director, Toronto Community for Better Child Care

