

Implementing early learning: Status report ^[1]

Staff Report

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AVAILABILITY

Report in pdf ^[2]

Summary:

This report summarizes the implementation status of the Province's Early Learning Program (ELP) for 4- and 5-year-olds, outlines the impact of this program on Toronto Children's Services and the child care sector and clarifies those actions and resources needed to mitigate these impacts. The report updates Council on the ongoing funding pressures impacting Children's Services in Toronto and seeks Council approval of changes to the Children's Services 2010 Operating Budget to reflect new funds received from the Province of Ontario.

Recommendations:

The General Manager, Children's Services recommends that:

1) Council request that at the newly established Toronto/Ontario table, discussions include the following objectives:

- negotiating a transition agreement that ensures creation of a sustainable and integrated Early Learning Program in Toronto that reflects the size and complexity of the city's child care system;
- exploring more flexible funding models, including base funding, to address the affordability of child care to all families;
- developing new monitoring and reporting mechanisms that satisfy accountability and governance requirements, provide meaningful data to inform policy, and respect the City's role as consolidated municipal systems manager for children from pre-natal to 12 years of age; and
- identifying strategies to address base funding pressures that increase by \$8 million per annum and will total \$35 million by 2012, resulting in service cuts of 3,500 subsidized spaces if not addressed.

2) Council request that the Province provide an additional \$27 million in base funding to address the affordability of child care for all families and \$13.5 million in capital funding to mitigate renovation costs in child care centres located outside of schools, with the timing of the provision of these funds to be addressed in the transition agreement identified in recommendation 1.

3) When a provincial framework is available for the development of Child and Family Centres (CFC), Children's Services revise transitional and capital requirements, if needed, to ensure that CFC's in the community and in schools and their corresponding child care are sustainable, accessible and of high quality.

4) Council request that the Province take the necessary steps to ensure continuity of services for all children by ensuring that for each new subsidy dedicated to ELP the Province provide a corresponding new subsidy for school age.

5) Council approve an adjustment to the 2010 Approved Operating Budget for Children's Services to include an additional \$7.954 million in Provincial revenues for child care to replace the reduction in Best Start funding, and these revenues be offset by an equivalent reduction in the 2010 budgeted withdrawal from the Child Care Expansion Reserve Fund (CCERF).

6) Council approve an adjustment to the 2010 Operating Budget for Children's Services, the Child Care Expansion Reserve Fund, and the Child Care Capital Reserve Fund to reflect the receipt of an additional \$0.971 million in provincial revenue to expedite the transition to early learning phase 1, as follows:

- increase the provincial budgeted revenues by \$0.787 million with a corresponding decrease in the 2010 budgeted draw from the Child Care Expansion Reserve Fund; and
- contribute the \$0.184 million received from the province in 2010 as a contribution to the Child Care Capital Reserve Fund to be used to assist child care operators to reconfigure their infrastructure in order to accommodate younger children, once sufficient resources are available.

7) Council provide authority to increase the 2010 Operating Budget for Children's Services by \$0.050 million gross \$0 net with funding from the Province to expedite the necessary information technology changes related to ELP.

8) Council provide authority to Toronto Children's Services to apply both the Council approved budget guidelines and where necessary, the guidelines from the regulations under the Education Act, to establish per diems for the extended day program with school boards.

9) The General Manager, Toronto Children's Services report to Council by July 2011 on actions outlined in the Recommendations in this

report and on the strategies that will be implemented to reduce service levels should base funding requirements not be addressed by the Province.

10) The City forward this report to the Premier of Ontario and the Ministers of Children and Youth Services and Education to ensure that they are informed about the transitional and fiscal requirements of the City of Toronto with respect to ELP.

Region: Ontario ^[3]

Tags: full-day early learning ^[4]

public management ^[5]

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