

For Information

DATE: March 8, 2013

REPORT TITLE: **UPDATE ON THE WITHDRAWAL OF SERVICE AT THE LEARN.PLAY.CARE. CHILD CARE CENTRES**

FROM: Janet Menard, Commissioner of Human Services

OBJECTIVE

To provide a status update on the withdrawal of direct service delivery at the Learn.Play.Care. Child Care Centres.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

- Regional child care service delivery in the Learn.Play.Care. Centres will cease by September 2014.
- Current enrolment at the Learn.Play.Care. Centres is stable. It is expected to decline in the fall of 2013.
- There have been 96 staff resignations at the Learn.Play.Care. Centres since January 2012 when the Task Force was established. However, the recruitment of Registered Early Childhood Educators (RECE) is ongoing and operational needs are being met.
- A significant number of staff resignations are also expected this fall as many pursue employment with the school boards or other employers.
- A Request for Expression of Interest (REOI) was made public on March 1, 2013 to identify qualified child care providers interested in offering child care at one or more of the centres' locations and providing evening care.

DISCUSSION

1. Background

In September 2012, Regional Council approved a recommendation that included 21 enhancements to the child care system in Peel, as well as the withdrawal of direct service delivery through 12 Regionally operated Learn.Play.Care. Child Care Centres.

A phased withdrawal was adopted by Regional Council to mitigate the impact on children, families and staff. Child care operations will cease at all Learn.Play.Care. Centres by September 2014. This approach was selected to allow for children currently enrolled at the Learn.Play.Care. Centres to transition to the school system through full-day kindergarten. It also gives Learn.Play.Care. Centre staff an opportunity to obtain other employment and it will allow time for the Region to identify community interest in providing services from the Learn.Play.Care. Centres locations.

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Given these unique circumstances it is important to monitor the factors affecting Learn.Play.Care. Centre operations. Enrolment is expected to decline in the fall of 2013. It is also anticipated that many more of the Learn.Play.Care. Centre staff will leave their employment with the Region of Peel to pursue opportunities with the school boards or other employers. In addition, centre operations may be transferred to an external child care provider prior to September 2014.

2. Status of Withdrawal Process

a) Enrolment

As per Council direction, several enrolment policies have been implemented at the Learn.Play.Care. Centres:

- Effective October 2012, enrolment was limited to children born on or before December 31, 2010 to ensure that all children in the Learn.Play.Care. Centres (including the Brampton West Nursery School) would have full-day kindergarten opportunities or transition to grade one by September 2014;
- Effective January 1, 2013, new full-fee families enrolling at the Learn.Play.Care. Centres are required to pay an increased fee that aligns with full-fee cost recovery (full-fee families enrolled prior to this date continue to pay current rates);
- Effective September 1, 2013, enrolment will cease in all Learn.Play.Care. Centres.

As of February 22, 2013, there were 787 children enrolled in the Learn.Play.Care. Centre child care programs that equates to 94 per cent occupancy of available spaces. Although enrolment has remained stable, the above mentioned policies are starting to take effect:

- few toddlers (18 months to 30 months) have enrolled since October 2012 resulting in lower enrolment in toddler rooms (most toddler rooms will be non-operational by the fall of 2013);
- there has been no enrolment of new full-fee families since the fee increase was implemented on January 1, 2013.

Traditionally, enrolment drops in the fall as children withdraw to attend school. This year will be unique as 80 per cent (313 children) of four and five year olds enrolled in the Learn.Play.Care. Centres will have access to a full-day kindergarten program. Furthermore, parents with a child (or children) eligible for full-day kindergarten are being encouraged to register for school. Learn.Play.Care. Centre supervisors have been provided with a tool kit to assist parents in identifying school options available to them.

However, parents are not obligated to have their children attend full-day kindergarten and, within our existing policy, have the option to keep their children enrolled in child care. It should also be noted that 20 per cent (78 children) of four and five year olds in the Learn.Play.Care. Centres will not have access to full-day kindergarten in September 2013. Therefore, enrolment levels in September 2013 will depend primarily on how many children leave child care to attend full-day kindergarten. In September 2013, all children born in 2007 (turning six years of age in 2013) will be transitioning to grade one, as anticipated.

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b) Staffing

Staffing is becoming an increasingly challenging issue. Since January 2012, a total of 96 (26 permanent, 12 contract, and 58 casual staff) have resigned. Twenty-three are subsequent to the September 2012 Task Force recommendations. This has resulted in an increased number of newly hired Registered Early Childhood Educators (RECE) in the Learn.Play.Care. Centres. The current total staff complement is 280.

This fall an even larger number of staff are expected to resign as many will obtain employment with the school boards or other employers. Currently, management is aware of 61 staff (including 21 permanent, 27 contract, and 13 casual) who have applied to the school boards. However, the recruitment of qualified RECEs is ongoing in order to meet operational needs.

c) Request for Expression of Interest

A Request for Expression of Interest (REOI) was released on March 1, 2013 to identify qualified child care providers interested in providing early learning and child care services at one or more of 11 Learn.Play.Care. Centre locations. Although the REOI process is open to all licensed child care providers, preference is given to not-for-profit, inclusive programs for children 0 to 3.8 years of age, evening care for children up to age 12, and innovative specialized programs that reflect community need.

The Chinguacousy Learn.Play.Care. Centre was not included in the REOI primarily due to the future capital investment required to ensure long term sustainability. As well, the location and transit accessibility of the Chinguacousy site offers numerous opportunities to meet other community needs. Options will be explored under a separate process to determine the best future use of the space for the community.

The REOI was available through the Region of Peel website (www.peelregion.ca) and was advertised in the local newspapers. Submissions were accepted until March 26, 2013 and evaluated by a committee involving representatives from the Region of Peel, as well as partners in the City of Brampton, City of Mississauga, Peel District School Board, Sheridan College, and Peel Housing Corporation. These organizations own the properties where the Learn.Play.Care. Centres are located and were therefore invited to participate in the evaluation process.

Evaluation criteria includes:

- financial viability;
- business overview (business status - non-profit vs. commercial, years of experience, historical enrolment trends, etc.);
- core programs and services offered;
- value added programs and services offered; and
- demonstrated transition plan to support operations.

3. Next Steps

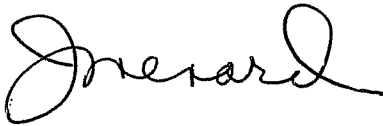
Staff will continue to monitor enrolment and staffing levels at the Learn.Play.Care. Centres and ensure that operational quality is maintained. Staff will also report back on the results of the REOI process at the next Early Learning and Child Care Task Force meeting (June 20, 2013).

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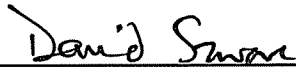
CONCLUSION

The child care system in Peel is undergoing a major and positive transformation. This degree of change requires that the system be supported so that it remains stable and able to re-purpose. The province of Ontario and Regional Council are making important investments to ensure that the end result of this transition will be a strengthened child care system that more effectively satisfies the needs of children and families in Peel.



Janet Menard
Commissioner of Human Services

Approved for Submission:



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