

For Information

DATE: October 19, 2009

REPORT TITLE: **BRAMPTON WEST NURSERY SCHOOL OPENING**

FROM: Janet Menard, Commissioner of Human Services

OBJECTIVE

To inform Council of the new services available to Peel residents as a result of the opening of the regionally operated, inclusive Brampton West Nursery School program.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

- The new Brampton West Nursery School program officially opened on September 8, 2009.
- The morning program provides a year-round, half-day (Monday to Friday 8:30 am to 11:30 am), licensed, inclusive, flexible learning environment for all children two and one half to five years of age.
- The innovative afternoon component of the program (which will inform future planning) offers a variety of specialized services for children and families and inclusion-based workshops for service providers and families.
- There are currently 25 families enrolled in the program utilizing a variety of part-time options and 19 families on the nursery school waiting list.

DISCUSSION**1. Background**

Utilizing a community focus group as a vehicle to inform planning, the lack of local, accessible, inclusive, part-time nursery programs was identified as a service gap. Council approved the introduction of the Brampton West Nursery School program to address this gap. The program opened on September 8th with 25 families enrolled and accessing a variety of part-time options. There are presently 19 families on the waiting list for part-time care.

The morning program provides a year-round, half-day (Monday to Friday, 8:30 am to 11:30 am), licensed, inclusive, enriched and flexible learning environment for all children two and a half to five years of age. Children with special needs are fully incorporated into the programming. The program provides all children with the opportunity to learn and develop their skills to ensure that they will be well prepared to transition to the school system.

The innovative afternoon component of the program offers specialized programming and inclusion-based workshops for service providers and families. In collaboration with several

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special needs agencies, space within the facility is available for a variety of integrated community service uses. This includes parental support groups for recently diagnosed children, down syndrome intervention groups that teach mothers how to support children under the age of six months, literacy programs for families with children with special needs, special needs therapeutic play groups, young moms parenting groups, Occupational Therapy and Physical Therapy, music and movement for children, small group play for medically fragile children, and parenting workshops for families of children with special needs. User fees are not charged during this portion of the day.

The afternoon program operates as a hub for families, providing information and access to various services and supports and acts as a model for other centres to offer similar accessible supports within the community.

2. Program Benefits

- a) Parents and children currently on extensive waiting lists for specialized services such as speech and language, now have the opportunity to attend workshops that provide them with the necessary skills to support their child's language development until they are able to obtain services.
- b) Increased services are now available for families seeking part-time child care options.
- c) The program offers newly developed inclusive child care services for children with special needs who may not otherwise have been able to participate in their community or access further learning opportunities.
- d) Many of the children presently enrolled in the nursery school reflect our diverse community and do not yet possess English language skills. The program provides the children with an opportunity to learn the language in an integrated setting and develop school readiness, social and problem solving skills.
- e) It is anticipated that joint programming will result in financial efficiencies as agencies collaborate using existing resources to provide services to children with special needs.
- f) The program is well aligned with the Peel Children's Charter of Rights that was endorsed by Council, and fully supports the objectives of the Human Services Plan.

3. Community Partners

This initiative is a collaborative strategy designed to address interrelated Human Services issues. The expanding community advisory committee which informs the afternoon programming includes Brampton Caledon Community Living, Community Living Mississauga, Ontario Foundation For Visually Impaired Children, Peel Children's Centre, Region of Peel, Children's Services Operations Division, Erinoak Kids, and community child care operators, all of which contribute jointly to the success of this distinctive model.

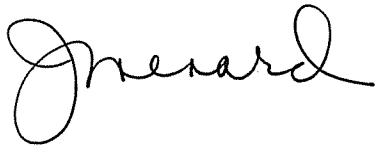
CONCLUSION

The new Brampton West Nursery program is well aligned with the Peel Children's Charter of Rights, and fully supports the objectives of the Human Services Plan. The program provides valuable services in an enriched and flexible learning environment. The affordable, integrated program welcomes parents, children and service providers into a supportive, inclusive environment that benefits children within the program and the community as a whole.

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Council support for this program has resulted in the provision of unique opportunities for families of children with special needs who may not otherwise have been able to participate in their community or access further learning opportunities.



Janet Menard
Commissioner of Human Services

Approved for Submission:



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