



ELCCTF-2012-4

THE REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF PEEL
EARLY LEARNING AND CHILD CARE IN PEEL
COUNCIL TASK FORCE

REPORT FROM THE CLERK

The Early Learning and Child Care in Peel Council Task Force met on Thursday, June 7, 2012 at 4:45 p.m., in the Council Chamber, Regional Administrative Headquarters, 10 Peel Centre Drive, Suite A, Brampton.

Members Present: B. Crombie*; E. Kolb; G. Miles; E. Moore; P. Palleschi,

Members Absent: S. Hames, due to a personal matter; R. Paterak; P. Saito, due to other municipal business; J. Sanderson, due to other municipal business; J. Sprovieri

Also Present: D. Szwarc, Chief Administrative Officer; N. Trim, Chief Financial Officer and Commissioner of Corporate Services; J. Menard, Commissioner of Human Services; S. Pace, Director, Children's Service Operations; S. Danos-Papaconstantinou, Director, Client Relationships; M. Cummins, Supervisor, Service Access; C. Reid, Director of Clerk's and Regional Clerk; C. Law, Committee Clerk

Chaired by Councillor Miles.

1. DECLARATIONS OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

In accordance with section III 4(d) of Region of Peel Procedural By-law 57-2006 as amended, no quorum was present 30 minutes after the time approved for the meeting at which time the Committee Clerk recorded the names of the members present as:

E. Kolb
G. Miles
E. Moore
P. Palleschi

* See text for arrivals

◆ See text for departures

In accordance with section III 4(g) of the Procedural By-law 57-2006, as amended, members present received information and no minutes were kept. The following are summary notes of the information received.

4. PRESENTATIONS

a) **Regional Role, Special Needs Programs**

- i) Presentation by Sonia Pace, Director, Children's Services Operations

Received

Sonia Pace, Director, Children's Service Operations, provided a summary of the Region of Peel's services for children with special needs. She emphasized the Region of Peel's policy of inclusion as being the basis for success and continued action in this area. She noted challenges in the underfunding of the system by other levels of government, as well as, a multitude of waiting lists that are independently maintained by each separate agency or organization.

Councillor Crombie arrived at 5:10 p.m.

Councillor Palleschi inquired why there is not one centralized waiting list. David Szwarc, Chief Administrative Officer, responded that while there is a centralized wait list for parents seeking fee subsidy, the waiting lists for special needs support are maintained separately by each organization. Councillor Palleschi commented that this is something that needs to be looked at in the future to accurately track parents rather than have parents putting their names on multiple waitlists for a better chance of success.

b) **Early Learning and Child Care Resource Supports and Services for Children with Special Needs**

- i) Presentation by Donna Lero and Tricia van Rhijn, University of Guelph

Received

Donna Lero and Tricia van Rhijn from the University of Guelph, provided a presentation regarding quality inclusion in early childhood programs. The presentation included information regarding the importance and value of inclusion of special needs children in all early learning and child care programs. They noted additional sustainable financial resources are needed to maintain positive momentum in this area to benefit children, parents, and society as a whole.

Councillor Palleschi inquired if there could be parental denial over identifying children with special needs. Donna Lero responded that this can occur and is often attributed to an attitude of being too proud to either enrol their child in an inclusive program, or have them evaluated for special needs. Councillor Palleschi added that he has seen positive momentum in this area interrupted by such attitudes; which can lead to the withdrawal of financial support. He stated that there should be no wait list for children with special needs.

Councillor Crombie inquired about the cost of delivering special needs education and services. Donna Lero responded that while there is both private and public delivery of this service, it will always be a shared cost among parents, organizations, and service managers. Councillor Crombie further inquired whether current Early Childhood Educators (ECEs) are qualified to service special needs children. Donna Lero responded that it is dependent on the timing of their education, given it was not always included as part of the core curriculum. She added additional, ongoing training will always be necessary for ECEs working with children with special needs.

Councillor Miles inquired what the Region of Peel can do to address the financial need of centres looking to provide care for special needs children but that are unable to do so given a lack of financial support. Donna Lero responded that the Region of Peel should do everything possible, including increasing Raising the Bar participation, providing resources for staff to access training, and perhaps offer special needs specific internships for new ECEs.

- ii) Presentation by Donna McIlroy, Manager, Peel Children's Centre and Co-Chair of the Peel Early Learning Special Needs Advisory Committee (PELSNAC)

Received

Donna McIlroy, Manager, Peel Children's Centre and Co-Chair of the Peel Early Learning Special Needs Advisory Committee (PELSNAC), presented several resource models for special needs education. She provided information regarding the Special Needs Access Point – Peel (SNAP-Peel) where referrals are made when a child is on a special needs waitlist. She noted challenges in this field include physical barriers in centres, not all centres embracing inclusion, and the fact that many ECEs do not feel qualified to support special needs children. She recommended the Task Force look at inclusion as well as support for a diversity of options for parents in the child care system.

- iii) Presentation by Deborah Samuels, Parent, City of Mississauga

Received

Deborah Samuels reported her experience with the fee subsidy waitlist, SNAP-Peel, Community Living Mississauga, and other cooperative daycare in attempting to find child care for her three children, two of which have autism. She reported a 12 month waitlist for diagnostic testing for autism, and a general lack of on-site, full time autism specialists at many sites, except at the Learn.Play.Care Centres.

- iv) Presentation by Pat Bizzarro, Parent, Town of Caledon

Received

Pat Bizzarro provided his experience raising his youngest son with special needs. He reported a two to three year wait until he was welcomed to Pumpkin Patch Daycare who have helped immensely. He added that his son has shown great improvement since obtaining child care but still requires significant support.

- v) Presentation by Betty Jong, Parent, City of Mississauga

Received

Betty Jong provided her experience raising a child with special needs who is now 15 years old. She noted that he is non-verbal and still requires significant support. Betty Jong recommended an after-school program for all ages of children with special needs, as well as a day-centre for older kids after high school; all using one room and one location. She noted that continuous learning, constant physical and emotional development is necessary for children with special needs.

c) Child Care Subsidy Wait List

- i) Presentation by Stella Danos-Papaconstantinou, Director, Client Relationships and Mary Jane Cummins, Supervisor, Service Access

Received

Stella Danos-Papaconstantinou, Director, Client Relationships provided a presentation regarding the Region of Peel's Child Care Fee Subsidy Program and corresponding wait list. The presentation contained information regarding how the fee subsidy for child care is calculated for parents and the eligibility criteria. She noted that there are 220 new applications received monthly, and there are currently 4,816 children on the wait list; 156 of those are children with special needs.

d) Child Care Subsidy Wait List and Child Care Programs

- i) Presentation by Dina and Mohammed Hamad, Parents, City of Brampton

Received

Dina and Mohammed Hammad made a presentation regarding their experience with the child care waiting list. Mr. Hammad recounted their experience as parents and recent immigrants. They waited thirty-five months for subsidy until May 2012. They recommended better clarity of the information regarding subsidy and eligibility on the Region of Peel's website as they found it very confusing and lacking detail.

- ii) Presentation by Lynette Kamara, Parent, City of Brampton

Received

Lynette Kamara recounted her experience since obtaining residency in 2008. She stated that the system in place is not responsive, as she has provided extensive information but is still on the list and her current salary is not enough to cover one child's daycare costs.

- iii) Presentation by Atisha Sanderson, Parent, City of Brampton

Withdrawn

- iv) Presentation by Mariam Mesbah and Wesley Mack, Learn.Play.Care. Parent Advisory Council Representatives

Received

Mariam Mesbah and Wesley Mack, representatives of the Learn.Play.Care (LPC) Centres Parent Advisory Council identified concerns of parents of children should the Centres be closed down. Mariam Mesbah noted that quality of child care is of utmost importance to all parents and the LPC Centres have set a standard in the Region of Peel that should serve as an example for other centres. She also noted that timelines for implementation of Full Day Kindergarten (FDK) in different schools is as late as 2014, which would leave parents without child care options. Wesley Mack stated that quality assurance programs should become mandatory for all centres.

Councillor Crombie inquired if the LPC Representatives had answers for the waitlist problem discussed during the meeting. Ms. Mesbah responded that closing the LPC Centres cannot be the only answer, because even without the LPCs, there would still be a waitlist in the Region of Peel.

Councillor Palleschi suggested all parents contact their Member of Provincial Parliament (MPP) to advocate on this issue as the province is the primary funder of child care. Councillor Moore added that the federal government should have a role as well. Councillor Moore further noted that any kind of reduction in waitlist numbers would be a positive change they could take to the province for greater funding. She also noted that there is great quality in for profit and non-profit centres around the Region of Peel; and the LPCs are losing staff and students to the school boards as FDK continues to move forward.

- v) Presentation by Andrea Calver, Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care

Received

Andrea Calver, Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care, presented her views on data not being reviewed by the Task Force during the process. She reported the Region of Peel's Learn.Play.Centres are serving large numbers of low-income families and are specializing in younger cohorts due to the advent of Full Day Kindergarten. She cautioned against using Raising the Bar as a quality assurance program and instead to look at the provided inspection results on the Operating Criteria and demographics before considering closing the Learn.Play.Centres. Andrea Calver noted that the \$82 a day per child cost in the Learn.Play.Centre is not uncommon, nor is the size of the subsidy waitlist. Her recommended solution is to increase advocacy for provincial child care funding and suggested the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO).

5. COMMUNICATIONS

1. **Hannah Atom**, Email dated May 23, 2012, Expressing Concerns Regarding the Potential Closure of the Region of Peel Child Care Centres

Received

2. **J. Williams**, Email dated May 23, 2012, Regarding the Types of Recommendations Considered by the Early Learning and Child Care in Peel Council Task Force (ELCCTF)

Received

3. **Shevonne Mckoy**, Email dated May 24, 2012, Expressing Concerns Regarding the Potential Closure of the Region of Peel Child Care Centres

Received

4. **Hiral Patel**, Email dated May 29, 2012, Expressing Concerns Regarding the Potential Closure of the Region of Peel Child Care Centres

Received

5. **Domenica Johnson**, Email dated May 23, 2012, Expressing Concerns Regarding the Potential Closure of the Region of Peel Child Care Centres

Received

6. OTHER BUSINESS

7. NEXT MEETING

Thursday, June 28, 2012
8:30 a.m. – 10:45 a.m.
Council Chamber, 5th floor
Regional Administrative Headquarters
10 Peel Centre Drive, Suite A
Brampton, Ontario

8. ADJOURNMENT

Having regard that a quorum of voting members was not achieved, in accordance with section III 4(f) of Procedural By-law 57-2006, as amended, items not dealt with during this meeting will be placed on the agenda of the next meeting of the Early Learning and Child Care in Peel Council Task Force, scheduled for June 28, 2012.