



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

MINUTES

The Early Learning and Child Care in Peel Council Task Force met on Thursday, April 12, 2012 at 8:34 a.m., at the Regional Administrative Building located at 7120 Hurontario Street, Mississauga, Ontario.

Members Present: B. Crombie; S. Hames*; E. Kolb; G. Miles; E. Moore; R. Paterak; J. Sanderson; J. Sprovieri*

Members Absent: P. Palleschi, due to other municipal business; P. Saito, due to illness

Other Regional
Councillors Present: P. Foley; C. Fonseca; K. Mahoney; R. Starr

Also Present: D. Szwarc, Chief Administrative Officer; N. Trim, Chief Financial Officer and Commissioner of Corporate Services; J. Smith, Commissioner of Health Services; J. Menard, Commissioner of Human Services; P. O'Connor, Regional Solicitor and Director, Legal and Risk Management; C. Reid, Regional Clerk; C. Law, Committee Clerk

C. Law, Committee Clerk, presided.

1. ELECTION OF CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR

RECOMMENDATION ELCCTF-1-2012:

That Councillor Miles be appointed Chair of the Early Learning and Child Care in Peel Council Task Force (ELCCTF) for a term ending upon the dissolution of the Task Force or the end of the current term of Council, which ever comes first.

RECOMMENDATION ELCCTF-2-2012:

That Councillor Moore be appointed Vice-Chair of the ELCCTF for a term ending upon the dissolution of the Task Force or the end of the current term of Council, which ever comes first.

* See text for arrivals

◆ See text for departures

Councillor Miles assumed the Chair.

2. DECLARATIONS OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST - Nil

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

RECOMMENDATION ELCCFT-3-2012

That the presentation by Vince Tedesco, Regional Director, Ministry of Children and Youth Services listed as Item 4b-i on the April 12, 2012 ELCCTF agenda be removed and replaced with a presentation by Jim Grieve, Assistant Deputy Minister of Early Learning, Ministry of Education;

And further, that the presentation by Rejean Sirois, Education Director, Conseil scolaire de district catholique Centre-Sud listed as Item number 4c-iii on the April 12, 2012 ELCCTF agenda, be withdrawn;

And further that the agenda for the April 12, 2012, ELCCTF meeting be approved, as amended.

Councillor Sprovieri arrived at 8:45 a.m.
Councillor Hames arrived at 8:46 a.m.

4. PRESENTATIONS

- a) **Early Learning and Child Care in Peel Council Task Force Meeting Logistics**
 - i. Presentation by Lisa Duarte, Director, Strategic Planning, Policy and Partnerships

Received

A copy of the presentation is available from the Office of the Regional Clerk.

Lisa Duarte, Director, Strategic Planning, Policy and Partnerships, provided an introduction and overview of the Task Force; its proposed meeting dates, proposed invited speakers and guests, meeting topics and objectives, the related website and email address, and she distributed Task Force binders to be used as a central information source for members. Lisa Duarte proposed that an evening meeting of the Task Force be scheduled for June 7 and asked whether the members would like staff to schedule tours of child care facilities at some point in the upcoming schedule. She noted that since the Regional Council meeting on January 26, 2012, contract staffing levels in the Region's Learn.Play.Care. Child Care Centres (LPC) has decreased due to many staff having applied for school board positions. Enrolment of children in the LPC's has increased, and Human Services staff have been holding several meetings with staff and parents in order to inform them of the Task Force's creation and mandate.

Several members expressed interest in touring both LPC's and other private or non-profit centres to better understand the concerns of constituents. Councillor Moore cautioned that the tours should be scheduled so as to minimize disruption to both the children and staff at the chosen centres.

Councillor Moore asked how the Task Force would be organizing and hearing delegations from the non-LPC centres to ensure all perspectives are heard. Lisa Duarte responded that staff intends for presentations to be heard from several community providers as well as parents not heard previously. Councillor Moore also suggested, given current provincial negotiations in the field of child care, that staff reserve space on future ELCCTF agendas for an environmental scan update. Councillor Crombie expressed her interest in hearing from those who offer specialty services in child care, such as before and after-day care.

- b) **Provincial Vision for Early Learning and Child Care**
 - i. Presentation by Jim Grieve, Assistant Deputy Minister of Early Learning, Ministry of Education

Received

A copy of the presentation is available from the Office of the Regional Clerk.

Jim Grieve, Assistant Deputy Minister of Early Learning, Ministry of Education, outlined the provincial vision and the reality of early learning and child care in Ontario. He provided a positive perspective on the need for early learning and its advantages and benefits to children and society in the long run. He detailed the fundamentals of full-day kindergarten (FDK); its ongoing implementation, challenges, schedule, and what the system will look like in its final form. He reported that currently, approximately 20 percent or 50,000 of the 250,000 total eligible students in Ontario have enrolled.

Councillor Mahoney inquired if there have been discussions at the provincial level with regards to mandatory kindergarten. Jim Grieve responded that he was not aware of any discussions on this topic due to the already high voluntary uptake of the program by parents.

Councillor Paterak inquired as to what Ontario could learn from countries such as Norway that have successfully implemented early learning systems for many years. Jim Grieve suggested many of the systems in countries like Sweden and Norway have informed the Ontario program, though they are not exactly the same as they have more benefits associated with things like parental leave.

Councillor Crombie inquired as to what the results are for children not enrolled in FDK but enrolled at a private full-day centre or are at home for the day with a stay-at-home parent. Jim Grieve expressed the intent of FDK is to support parents and their choices as they are the most valuable source of nurturing for children. He added that the uptake of the program suggests that FDK is providing a clear alternative to private centres for those who many not have access to them. Councillor Crombie also asked if there are any differences among uptake for the different school boards. He responded that the uptake has been significant and consistent across the different boards.

Councillor Moore inquired as to whether there have been problems identifying the specific needs of the 3.8 year olds entering FDK, given they are a full year younger and can sometimes be misdiagnosed as having special needs. Jim Grieve agreed this is a challenge that should be alleviated by a fully-integrated system where all children at all ages can be uniquely identified and assessed based on needs.

Councillor Miles inquired if, with the advent of FDK, the province will continue to provide fee subsidy to those parents who do not wish to enroll their child in FDK. Jim Grieve responded that, at this point, it is unclear whether the fee subsidy will continue in its current form once FDK is fully integrated. He added that the system of fee subsidies need modernization and updating; but a process to do so has not yet been completed.

- c) **Full-Day Kindergarten and Extended Day Program**
 - i. Presentation by Shirley Ann Teal, Superintendent of Education – Early Learning Program, Peel District School Board

Received

A copy of the presentation is available from the Office of the Regional Clerk.

Shirley Ann Teal, Superintendent of Education – Early Learning Program, Peel District School Board (PDSB), outlined the implementation to date of the PDSB's FDK and extended day program. FDK began in the fall of 2009 and has been implemented to date in 26 schools. Considerations for implementation of any new FDK program has been based upon factors such as: social risk index, percentage of low income families, geographic locations, impact on child care providers around the school, space availability, and capital needs among many others. There are currently 81 before-school programs and 103 after-school programs, while of the 26 FDK schools, 19 schools run an extended day program for 4 and 5 years olds. Funding for the FDK program is provided through two grants from the Ministry of Education; one general grant and the other specific for special programs. Funding is by student and not by class; there is an average of 26 students for every two staff members, but not all are this evenly distributed. At present 150 full-time Early Childhood Educators (ECE) and over 80 casual staff have been hired. It is expected an additional 177 permanent positions will be hired for September 2012.

- ii. Presentation by Sheila McWatters, Superintendent of Programs, Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board

Received

A copy of the presentation is available from the Office of the Regional Clerk.

Sheila McWatters, Superintendent of Programs, Dufferin-Peel Catholic School Board, was joined by her colleagues Silvana Reda, Principal, Georges Vanier Catholic School, Nancy Tallevi, Facility and Accountability Officer, and Dan Reidy, Program Coordinator. They presented the details of the implementation of FDK at the Dufferin-Peel Catholic schools. The emphasis has been on presenting a seamless transition among ages and a learning environment and curriculum based on play. They intend to fill all 124 schools and reach 100 percent of all 4 and 5 year olds in the Dufferin-Peel boundaries by 2014. Physical space and resources available are shared among all 4 and 5 year olds and are no longer separated among the former junior kindergarten (JK) and senior kindergarten (SK). Parents have been engaged in several surveys during registration regarding their needs for the extended program, getting their child ready for kindergarten, and learning about the diverse learning needs of students.

Councillor Mahoney asked if more efforts and resources are being put into special needs students as a result of FDK implementation. Silvana Reda responded that the model of FDK allows for more flexibility for educators to deal with special needs students, but there have also been extra resources specifically provided for identifying and helping special needs students develop alongside other students. Sheila McWatters noted that a key priority for the Board and educators is ensuring the transitions from home or other daycare providers to FDK is as smooth as possible. Councillor Mahoney further inquired if these supports are made available during the summer months or during school holidays. Silvana Reda responded that currently, there are literacy camps available to all students from kindergarten to grade 8 during the offseason months.

Councillor Crombie inquired as to what the differences, approaches, and outcomes between the two School Boards might be with FDK coming in. Ms. McWatters responded that while the two Boards have subtle differences in the implementation of FDK, both are following a holistic approach. Councillor Crombie further inquired as to why integration of JK and SK was deemed necessary and if there are advantages to a learning-based approach rather than play-based and separating by age. Mr. Reidy responded that the ages of 4 and 5 are very fluid and in keeping them together, a more homogenous play-based program that is more inclusive is used to the benefit of students. Councillor Crombie also asked whether there was any concern over disadvantaging 5 year olds by combining them with a younger cohort. Ms. Reda responded that while the old model is no longer used specifically, the strengths of each are still incorporated into the new model, just in a more combined setting to increase flexibility.

Councillor Fonseca inquired as to whether there has been any formal outreach to parents to encourage their perspectives on challenges for children with special needs. Sheila McWatters responded that there is ongoing outreach to parents and early meetings with families for planning purposes well before the school year begins. Councillor Fonseca also asked if the current separation of 4 and 5 year olds from the 6 to 12 year olds is occurring in all schools. Nancy Tallevi responded that it occurs only where possible, given large enough numbers of students.

- iii. Presentation by Rejean Sirois, Education Director, Conseil scolaire de district catholique Centre-Sud

Withdrawn

- d) **Peel's Full-Day Kindergarten Research Projects Results**
- i. Presentation by Carl Corter, PhD, Professor, Dr. Eric Jackman Institute of Child Study, OISE, University of Toronto

Received

A copy of the presentation is available from the Office of the Regional Clerk.

Carl Corter, Professor, the Dr. Eric Jackman Institute of Child Study, OISE, University of Toronto, outlined the results of a recent study into the benefits to children in FDK in comparison to those students who are not. The results showed both quantitative and qualitative data comparing students in more traditional half-day kindergarten programs as control sites versus those children in Best Start sites and expanded to those enrolled in implemented FDK sites. Both groups were followed longitudinally until they reached grade 3. The results showed children enrolled in Best Start and FDK showed significantly higher ability in several subjects including drawing. The results and measured child outcomes are directly attributable to the seamless day and play-based learning at these full-day learning sites.

Councillor Crombie asked if Dr. Corter believed there would be similar results from children enrolled in full-day Montessori or other private and non-profit programs. Dr. Corter responded that the data shows that quality full-day produces better outcomes than half-day and that would be attributable across the system. Councillor Crombie further inquired, that given the apparent benefits of full-day learning, what has taken Ontario so long in adopting the program. Dr. Corter replied that, in his estimation, it has taken the overwhelming evidence of the benefits from a number of academic disciplines to make the whole case for action and investment in this area.

Councillor Miles inquired as to Dr. Corter's opinion regarding benefits for 2 and 3 year olds and whether they would see similar benefit if full-day learning were applied. Dr. Corter responded that generous parental leave has helped in this area however, he believes there should be other options for early learning available for these age groups as well. He emphasized quality child care as being the most important aspect.

Councillor Moore inquired as to how Task Force members could help parents identify quality child care options. Dr. Corter responded that the model of FDK and play-based learning is a good model for which all child care providers should strive for. He expanded to say that it is not a gold plated option, but rather, the standard that ensures quality child care and provides the most benefit.

5. COMMUNICATIONS - Nil

6. OTHER BUSINESS

Regional Chair Kolb requested that staff prepare a message to the public regarding the purpose and goals of the Task Force for the next meeting.

7. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Early Learning and Child Care in Peel Council Task Force is scheduled for Thursday, April 26, 2012 at 8:30 a.m., Regional Administrative Headquarters, Council Chamber, 5th floor, 10 Peel Centre Drive, Suite A, Brampton, Ontario.

Please forward regrets to Curtiss Law, Committee Clerk, (905) 791-7800, ext. 4330 or at curtiss.law@peelregion.ca

8. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 10:59 a.m.