



City of
Peterborough

TO: Members of the Joint Services Steering Committee

FROM: Ken Doherty, Director of Community Services

MEETING DATE: September 10, 2009

SUBJECT: Report CSSSJSSC09-014
Best Start Update Report

PURPOSE

A report to inform the Joint Services Steering Committee of the status of Best Start funding and the release of Dr. Pascal's 'With Our Best Future in Mind' Report.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council approve the recommendation outlined in Report CSSSJSSC09-014 dated September 10, 2009, of the Director of Community Services as follows:

That the Best Start Update Report be received for information.

BUDGET AND FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no municipal budget or financial implications arising from this report.

BACKGROUND

The Province of Ontario's vision for Best Start is to create a comprehensive integrated system of services covering the spectrum of health, education, social and family supports and children's services from the pre-natal stage through transition to school.

Full Day Learning

A component of Best Start is the implementation of full day learning for 4 and 5 year olds. During November of 2007, Premier Dalton McGuinty appointed Dr. Charles Pascal as the Special Advisor on Early Learning. He was asked to recommend how best to implement full day learning, how to reinvest and redirect resources for this initiative, and how to build onto Ontario's Best Start strategy of a comprehensive, continuous and integrated system for children and their families. Dr. Pascal's report "With Our Best Future in Mind – Implementing Early Learning in Ontario" was released in June 2009.

The report recommends that provincially, the Ministry of Education will have the leadership role and that an Early Years Division be developed. This Division would be responsible for developing and implementing an Early Years Policy framework. Beginning in September 2010, implementation of full day learning would begin and be completed by 2013. The Ministry of Education would be responsible for children birth to 12 years but specifically for children 4 - 12 years of age.

Dr. Pascal also recommends that local municipal authorities, Consolidated Municipal Service Managers (CMSM's), continue to play a key role, as they are best positioned to lead the transformation of service delivery for children from birth to 4 years of age. CMSM's working with local School Boards and Best Start Partners will develop local Early Years Service Plans that would include outcomes, benchmarks, timelines and accountability mechanisms. CMSM's would continue to be responsible for Early Years Service contracts and the broader system management of a network of Best Start Child and Family Centres for children from birth to 4 years of age at the local level.

With appropriate resources, CMSM's would be responsible for the local creation and system management of a community network of Best Start Child and Family Centres. The centres would be developed and expanded by consolidating resources, governance and mandates of existing childcare, family resource, and early intervention services. This is to include regulated centre-based and home childcare, family resource programs, Ontario Early Years Centres, Parenting and Family Literacy Centres, Healthy Babies Healthy Children, Preschool Speech and Language, Child Care Special Needs Resourcing and Family Literacy Co-ordinators. This is consistent with the Provincial-Municipal Fiscal and Service Delivery review. All service expansion would take place through the Best Start Child and Family Centres and School Boards. Municipal funding contributions would remain.

On August 14, 2009, Central East Region provincial staff from the Ministry of Children and Youth Services hosted a Pascal Report discussion opportunity for invitees from the City of Kawartha Lakes, the City of Peterborough, Haliburton County, Northumberland County and Simcoe County. In attendance were representatives of the Ministry of Education, the Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board, Ontario Early Years Centres, commercial and non-profit childcare service providers and the CMSM's. Proceedings of the Peterborough meeting and others held across the province will be made available in the fall.

Provincially, Dr. Pascal's Report is being reviewed by various Ministries. Once Parliament returns from the summer break, further direction and clarification is expected on implementation of full day learning and restructuring of children's services. Locally, it is anticipated that, in the fall, the three School Boards (public, separate and French) and the CMSM will begin discussions on engaging community partners to begin preparations for what is considered major change within the school boards and the child care community. The full report is available at www.ontario.ca/earlylearning

Best Start Fee Subsidy

Best Start operating funding of \$489,775 for the CMSM has been confirmed for January to March 2010. In order to support municipal budget planning for 2010, subject to legislative approval, MCYS has indicated that our Best Start operating allocation for April to June 2010 is \$151,227. The Division is reviewing fee subsidy spending monthly and moving children accessing unstable Best Start fee subsidy to stable Day Nurseries Act Fee Subsidy. Many families will still be accessing Best Start funding in 2010 and the unconditional grant will need to be used to financially support the cost for care. This is outlined in the 2010 municipal budget documents. As of August 19th, 2009, families with a combined total of 181 children are on the wait list for financial assistance for childcare.

Submitted by,

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