

REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF OTTAWA-CARLETON
MUNICIPALITÉ RÉGIONALE D'OTTAWA-CARLETON

REPORT
RAPPORT

Our File/N/Réf.
Your File/V/Réf.

DATE	1 June 1998
TO/DEST.	Coordinator Community Services Committee
FROM/EXP.	Social Services Commissioner
SUBJECT/OBJET	STRATEGIC PLAN FOR CHILD CARE SYSTEM

DEPARTMENTAL RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Community Services Committee recommend Council approve:

- 1. The outlined process for a strategic planning exercise with the child care community, and;**
- 2. An expenditure of up to \$20,000 for the strategic planning exercise including up to \$15,000 for external consultants to assist with the process.**

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to outline the proposed process for a strategic planning exercise that the Social Services Department will embark upon with the child care community. The report also outlines costs of this process.

BACKGROUND

A number of factors have contributed to the need to do a strategic planning exercise for the child care system in Ottawa-Carleton at this time. They include:

1. transfer of responsibilities from the Province to the Region for the management of the child care system;
2. the desire on the part of the Child Care Council to undertake a planning exercise on service priorities;
3. the completion of a planning document by the Regroupement des services de garde de langue française;

4. increased focus of the Ministry of Community and Social Services on early intervention and prevention programs;
5. the growing body of knowledge highlighting the importance of early childhood development as a basis for success in later life.

The child care system in Ottawa-Carleton is about to undergo a number of changes. Effective January 1998, the transfer of responsibility from the Province to municipalities as delivery agents for the system has begun. By the end of 1999, municipalities, including the Region will be responsible for administering child care subsidies, wage subsidies, the funding of resource centres and services for integrating children with disabilities. In Ottawa-Carleton, due to recent policy changes approved by Regional Council, capital funding of child care programs will also be a responsibility of the Department. Part of the transfer process from the Province to the Region involves the development of a child care service plan by all municipalities that are becoming the municipal delivery agents.

The Child Care Council, a network of service providers representing all components of the English child care system has been interested in developing a comprehensive plan for setting priorities for the child care system for a number of years. Because of the diversity and numbers involved with this network, the Council has wanted to get some assistance from a consultant to help facilitate this process. The Department has a representative on the strategic planning committee of the Child Care Council and has offered to conduct much of the background research to aid in the process of identifying the characteristics of the current system.

Le Regroupement des services de garde de langue française is a network of francophone and bilingual service providers offering child care services in Ottawa-Carleton. This group undertook a planning exercise a number of years ago that set out priorities for child care services for francophone children. They have recently received a small amount of funding from the Department to update their plan. Although the final report has not yet been received, the Department would like to include their findings in the overall plan for the Ottawa-Carleton Region.

The provincial government has launched several initiatives in the past two years that have a prevention and early intervention focus. They include the Healthy Babies, Healthy Children initiative managed by the Region's Health Department and the speech and language initiative, First Words. Both of these initiatives are targeting early identification and intervention for children and their parents. In addition, the provincial government has several planning initiatives that involve reinvestment of funding in services deemed to serve families most in need. The Social Services and Health Departments are involved in many of these projects, but it is important that any planning that is undertaken at the regional level keep up to date with these directions.

Finally, some research projects have recently been released including: Cleveland and Krashinsky report entitled "The Benefits and Costs of Good Child Care"; and the recently released report entitled "Our Child Care Workforce from Recognition to Remuneration" by the Child Care Human Resources Steering Committee. Both studies highlight the importance of child care services in the healthy development of children. Although quite different in scope, both reports

also stress the importance of quality child care that has well trained staff in adequately funded programs.

PLANNING PROCESS

The Department is proposing the following process for the development of a local plan:

1. a survey for parents to identify needs and satisfaction with the current system;
2. a comparison of demographics and a service inventory to provide a picture of the existing system (particularly for subsidized spaces);
3. a consultation process to involve service providers and parents in the setting of priorities.

Parent Survey

The Department has drafted a survey that will be sent to a sample of parents in Ottawa Carleton. The survey will request information on current child care arrangements and also gather information on people's knowledge of the broader system. The results from this survey will indicate the demand for child care, differences across communities and also the barriers that may exist for accessing this system. This survey is a modification of one administered by Metro Toronto in 1994. The questionnaire will be sent to a representative sample of the population in both official languages early in September, 1998.

Comparison of Need and Availability of Subsidized Licensed Spaces

The Department plans to update an internal report it did in 1995 that identified the need for subsidies as compared to where the spaces are located geographically. This report compares census track data on the numbers of children, low income families and labour force participation of mothers with children and the distribution of subsidized spaces in Ottawa Carleton. The report also outlines where other child care services are located across the region including centres that operate with only fee payers, nursery schools and resource centres. This report will be completed during the summer months.

Consultation Process with Service Providers and Parents

Le Regroupement has already undertaken a process where service providers have met to identify service needs. The Child Care Council plans to undertake a similar process, where representatives from both the licensed and informal sectors will have an opportunity to identify priorities. It is hoped that this process will also involve parents who are currently using the licensed and unlicensed sectors that will complement the information gathered in the survey referred to above. In order to allow those working in the system an opportunity to participate fully, it is recommended that consultants be hired to help design the process and analyze the findings. Departmental staff will be available to assist in any way throughout this exercise, but there are some parts of the process where the use of external consultants will be beneficial. The Department believes that it will cost approximately \$15,000 to engage a consulting company or individual to work out this part of the planning exercise.

Costs of Resources Required for the Process

It is estimated that the total cost of the process will be approximately \$20,000.

CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

The Department in collaboration with the child care community have long wanted to embark on a planning process for the child care service sector. The resulting document will attempt to identify service needs and priorities for the next several years. The resulting document will need to be monitored and updated as funding and provincial priorities change. Once the results of all of these initiatives have been analyzed, the Department would report back to Committee and Council with a report in early 1999.

Approved by Dick Stewart

GP/maw

FINANCE DEPARTMENT COMMENTS

Funds are available in 1998 Child Care Operating Budget.

*Approved by T. Fedec
on behalf of the Finance Commissioner*