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ADDITIONAL FUNDING TO SUPPORT FEE SUBSIDIES FOR FULL DAY KINDERGARTEN EXTENDED DAY AND TRANSITIONAL OPERATING

The Community and Health Services Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendations contained in the following report dated August 17, 2011, from the Commissioner of Community and Health Services.

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. Regional Council approve an increase in gross expenditures in 2011 of \$507,382 in the Full Day Kindergarten Extended Day Initiative and Transitional Operating Initiative, offset by 100% funding from the Ministry of Education.
2. The Commissioner of Community and Health Services or designate be authorized to execute the necessary agreements on behalf of the Region with the Ministry of Education.

2. PURPOSE

This report requests that Regional Council endorse an annual \$507,382 increase in funding for Extended Day Fee Subsidies and Transition Operating Fee Subsidies. This is the result of the implementation of the Full Day Kindergarten initiative and will be offset by 100% funding as part of the Province's transition of child care to the Ministry of Education.

3. BACKGROUND

Province of Ontario announced changes to the Early Learning System in response to the Pascal Report recommendations

In June 2009, Dr. Charles Pascal released the report "With Our Best Future in Mind". The Report contained a number of recommendations for broad changes to the Early Learning and Child Care System in Ontario, and in October 2009, the Province announced the implementation of full day early learning for four and five year olds. This component of the revised system was to be phased in between September 2010 and September 2014. The move essentially meant the child care system would now be integrated into the educational system. In April 2010, to support the transition and impact on the child care system, the Province announced the provision of new minor capital

funding to support renovations and retrofits for child care programs impacted by the implementation of full day kindergarten and new operating funding to support additional fee subsidies for families. In May 2010, as recommended by Dr. Pascal, the Ministry of Education began assuming program responsibility from the Ministry of Children and Youth Services for all provincial childcare service management responsibilities.

Full day kindergarten and extended day programs implemented in schools in York Region

In York Region, implementation of the Full Day Kindergarten Program began in September 2010 with 2,816 children in 39 schools. In September 2011, an additional 19 schools will offer the program, with 63 more schools coming on board in September 2012. By September 2012 it is expected that 121 schools (approximately 46% of all schools) will be offering the program.

In addition to Full Day Kindergarten, Boards of Education across Ontario have the option of providing fee based extended day programs, either through direct operation of these programs or through the use of a 3rd party licensed child care operator in the school. The extended day program is designed to be offered before and after school (e.g. 7 a.m. to 9 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. to 6 p.m.). In York Region, Boards of Education decided to provide fee based extended day programs through the use of 3rd party licensed child care operators. In September 2010, 33 of 39 schools provided an extended day program operated by 3rd party providers. In September 2011, it is anticipated that there will be an additional 15 schools providing the extended day program in this manner.

New funding received to support fee subsidies for families

On January 1, 2011, the Ministry of Education assumed the final portion of management responsibility from the Ministry of Children and Youth Services which includes fee subsidies for children attending an extended day program and fee subsidies under Transition Operating Funding.

In late May 2011, York Region was advised of an increase of \$507,382, 100% provincial fee subsidy, effective January 1, 2011. Due to the timing of the announcement and a need to confirm details, a report to the Community and Health Services Committee could not meet the timelines for the June cycle of reports.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

Additional fee subsidy funding supports increased access to licensed child care for eligible families on the waitlist and increases York Region's flexibility

This new funding will support access to child care fee subsidies for an additional 67 spaces annually.

Revised business practice guidelines by the Ministry of Education provides municipalities, including York Region, with the financial flexibility to direct funding to support the needs of local communities and manage the waitlist using current Regional policy. It is not clear if this flexibility will be maintained but at this point, these guidelines support the role of the Service System Manager to respond effectively to community needs.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Unexpected 100% Provincial subsidy means no tax levy impact and an opportunity to leverage 2011 Multi-Year Plan dollars

Retroactive to January 1, 2011, York Region has received an additional \$507,382 in extended day fee subsidy and transition operating funding. This is 100% provincially funded, with no impact on tax levy. This unanticipated but welcome increase in provincial funding further leverages the \$600,000 for child care fee subsidy that Council approved for 2011 as part of Community and Health Services Multi-Year Plan. There are currently 5,091 families waiting for child care fee assistance. The increase in funding will be used to increase the availability of child care subsidies to eligible families on the waitlist.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

The implementation of the Full Day Kindergarten Program and other changes in the early learning sector will positively impact children and families in all local municipalities.

Child care fee assistance allows parents to place their child in child care so they can pursue employment and/or educational opportunities. This, in turn, supports local industry, promotes economic development, and strengthens local communities. The new Full Day Kindergarten Program initiative plays a critical role in promoting healthy childhood development so children throughout the Region arrive at school ready to achieve their greatest potential and, in time, contribute to our economy and community.

7. CONCLUSION

The child population and number of low income families continues to grow in York Region. It is critical that funding for services that support families exists to serve the needs in the community. The additional extended day fee subsidy funding, transition operating funding and municipal flexibility to manage this funding will increase access to licensed child care and allow families to better afford child care in York Region. This in turn will allow parents to work and/or get training to continue to contribute to Regional communities and economy.

For more information on this report, please contact Cordelia Abankwa-Harris, Acting General Manager, Social Services at Ext. 2150.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.