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EARLY LEARNING AND CHILD CARE 100% PROVINCIAL FUNDING FOR HEALTH AND SAFETY AND EXPANSION

The Community Services and Housing Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendations contained in the following report, September 30, 2004, from the Commissioner of Community Services and Housing:

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. The Commissioner of Community Services and Housing be authorized to receive and allocate one-time Provincial 100% child care funds of \$1.362 million according to the provincially set guidelines.
2. The 2004 approved budget be adjusted to reflect increased gross expenditures of \$1.362 million, offset by 100% provincial subsidy revenue, resulting in no tax levy impact.
3. The Region enter into Agreements with licensed, non-profit child care operators to implement health and safety improvements, purchase new equipment, and/or create additional child care spaces (expansion), serving children 0 to 5 years of age, and that the Commissioner of Community Services and Housing be authorized to sign the Agreements on the Region's behalf, subject to prior review by the Regional Solicitor.
4. Staff be authorized to take all steps to give effect hereto.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to seek Council approval to allocate one-time Provincial 100% child care funds to address health and safety improvements, purchase new equipment, and/or create additional licensed child care spaces by licensed non-profit child care operators serving children 0 to 5 years of age. This funding is 100% Provincial.

3. BACKGROUND

On July 15, 2004, the Ontario Minister of Children's Services announced that the Ontario government will strengthen child care and early learning by making \$58.2 million in Federal funds available in their fiscal year 2004/2005, to child care operators through their municipal service managers to stabilize and expand the child care system. The Province has allocated a portion of this funding as one-time funding in 2004 to address health and safety concerns, purchase new equipment and to create additional licensed child care spaces. This is the second implementation phase of the Multilateral

Framework five-year initiative. As part of the first phase, York Region received \$0.753 million in child care funds in spring 2004 to implement health and safety improvements.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

4.1 Licensed Capacity

There are 7,269 licensed non-profit child care spaces in York Region for children 0 to 5 years of age. Of these, 6,728 are centre-based while 541 are home-based.

York Region's portion of the Early Learning and Child Care, One-time Health and Safety and Expansion Funding is \$1.362 million. Licensed child care operators are required, under Provincial guidelines, to use these funds to make health and safety improvements, purchase new equipment and/or create additional licensed child care spaces.

4.2 Distribution of Surveys

Staff of the Family and Children's Services Division will distribute one-time funding surveys to licensed non-profit child care operators in York Region.

Non-profit operators will be required to provide a detailed funding request within their funding allocation. They will be advised that concerns documented by the Ministry Program Advisor should be addressed as the first priority for this one-time funding.

The results of the survey will determine the level of need for this one-time funding in York Region. It is expected that the available funding will be fully utilized.

4.3 Funding Allocation/Distribution

Available dollars for the health and safety improvements or the purchase of new equipment will be allocated to a maximum of \$100 per licensed space.

Funding to expand the child care system by creating additional licensed child care spaces will be allocated on a case-by-case basis, as supported by a Ministry Licensing Program Advisor, to a maximum of \$50,000 per agency.

4.3 Relationship to Vision 2026

The distribution of this one-time funding supports the following action areas of Vision 2026:

- Responding to children in need.
- Enabling access to services that aid in early child development.
- Partnering with community agencies to provide more and better services.
- Working with Federal and Provincial government partners.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no tax levy implications associated with this report. Funds of \$1.362 million to be distributed are 100% Provincial. It is anticipated the 2004 approved budget will reflect this amount.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

Non-profit child care operators, in each municipality, who are licensed under the *Day Nurseries Act* and serving children 0 to 5 years of age, will be able to address health and safety improvements, purchase new equipment, and/or create additional licensed child care spaces using these one-time funds.

7. CONCLUSION

Child care environments that are well designed and well maintained support safety and injury prevention and are essential to the healthy development of children. One-time funding to non-profit child care operators will support them in providing a safe and healthy environment, which supports the optimum development of the children they serve.

One-time funding to expand the child care system will increase access to licensed child care for the 38,557 children, age 0 to 5 years of age, of working parents in York Region and support continued attachment to the workforce.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.