

# Save Peel Child Care Council Vote - September 13, 2012

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## What Makes Peel's Learn Play Care Centres so Important

### Some important facts:

- Learn Play Care Centres provide an astonishing 11% of all toddler and preschool spaces in Peel.
- Peel needs more child care – not less. Most parents have a hard time TODAY trying to find available, high-quality child care in Peel.
- Approximately 246 highly-trained staff will be let go. Peel administrators have committed to “speaking with” the school board to hire ECE’s. But many of Peel’s excellent staff do not want to work for the school board. There is no actual commitment to hiring these specialists.
- There is no reason that Peel can’t have a viable child care system that maintains regionally-run centres, which provide important benefits to children, families and the entire Peel community.
- Peel has been a leader in early learning and child care. If you vote to close 12 child care centres, you will no longer be leaders. Despite the financial crisis in child care, in Toronto, over the past year the City has increased the number of licensed spaces for every age group through careful planning. Why not in Peel?
- If fact, Toronto has just opened a new municipal child care centres. In fact, the City of Toronto just opened a new municipal child care centre in a low income, underserved neighbourhood. The program, O’Connor Child Care Centre, is a pilot by the City of a Child and Family Centre - the current initiative of the Ministry of Children and Youth Services. Many larger communities, like Peel, have larger systems of directly operated child care. Ottawa has 17 directly operated centres. Toronto continues to operate more than 50 municipal child care programs.
- The LPC centres have led the way in innovation and new programs to meet the needs of changing families. From the commitment to a Highscope curriculum, to evening care, to the integrated nursery school program for special needs children, the LPC centres have been a model for Peel Region and across the province.
- Why not provide additional after-school child care? After-school care is mandated where demand exists and can help to make child care for younger children more financially viable.
- The provincial Government has committed \$242 million dollars to stabilize existing child care programs since Peel last considered closure. Doesn’t this change the financial reality?

### **Three simple steps to make Peel regional child care centres viable:**

1. Full-fee parents pay the full operating costs for a child care space (this could be phased in over the next four years to accommodate current families. New families would be aware of the schedule for rising fees). Potential savings – \$4 million dollars. 363 full-fee paying families, additional \$43 per day, 262 days per year.
1. Not provide child care subsidies for children who have access to a full-day kindergarten program (frees up subsidies for younger children, will help lessen pressure of Peel’s child care subsidy wait-list). Addresses concern of the long waiting list for a child care subsidy by directing subsidies to families who need child care. Several CMSM’s and DSSAB’s have announced this policy or are considering this policy. Toronto has announced that child care subsidies will not be available to children who have access to a full-day kindergarten program. Toronto will continue to provide subsidies for before and after-school programs but not the core program already covered by the Ministry of Education.
2. Employ early childhood assistants to work in Learn. Play. Care. Centres. Peel’s current practice of employing all registered Early Childhood Educators is a best practice but the overwhelming majority of child care programs employ early childhood assistants as allowed under the Day Nurseries Act. Potential savings – according to Senior Peel staff the amount is well more than \$70,000 (staff estimated savings of \$4 per day, 65 current RECE, 262 days per year).

### **Vital information that has not been considered by the Task Force but is needed to make an informed decision by Regional Councillors:**

- 1) The Task Force never looked at each of the 12 Learn.Play.Care centre to see the role they played in their local neighbourhood and whether any other options exist for child care. Of 12 centres, not a single one plays a vital role and should be maintained?
- 2) The original consultation by KMPG listed ideas for improving LPC’s (expand programming to infants and after-school, extend hours of operation to late night and weekends, transform LPC’s into community hubs offering a range of services, evolve LPC’s into training centres for mentoring etc). These options were never considered.
- 3) What are the top ten neighbourhoods that are underserved by existing child care programs?
- 4) Which centres have applied to change to re-license a room to serve younger children?
- 5) Which centres have been or are likely to be approached to be third party providers for the extended day?
- 6) What other underserved neighbourhoods in Peel region might be candidates for expanded services?
- 7) Is there a service gap in Caledon?
- 8) The Provincial Government has just allocated \$242 million over the next three years to stabilize child care programs. What impact will that funding have in Peel?

## Myths and Facts

### **Myth: Child Care is in crisis – Peel has no choice but to close LPC's**

Fact: The Region claims it can create 975 new child care subsidies. But the closure would eliminate a licensed capacity of 850 child care spaces. That doesn't make sense.

Closing the LPC's will have a minimal impact on minimizing the subsidy waiting list – but will mean that Peel has less child care now and in the future.

### **Myth: Full day kindergarten means that there is less need for child care**

Fact: No. The closing of the LPC's would cost the Region of Peel 850 child care spaces. The loss of these spaces would intensify the current child care crisis in Peel. It is not unusual for child care centres to see significant turnover in September and children move on. However, there are thousands of younger children who need a child care space and replace those that move on.

### **Myth: That LPC's are "gold plated services" where 97% of Peel residents don't benefit?**

Good quality child care is expensive. The average cost per day of \$82 in LPC's is not out of line with comparable centres who specialize in care for younger children.

4 out of 5 children in Ontario don't have access to a licensed child care space. That's 80% of all children. You can't blame the LPC's for the lack of licensed child care in Peel. That rests at the feet of the Province of Ontario where early learning and child care programs remain underfunded.

### **Myth: Money can be better spent by re-directing funds from LPC's to help families on the waiting list.**

Most regions have a subsidy wait list. Those lists are growing. Like the amount of child care, the issue of affordable child care is a problem that can't be solved in Peel Region. Additional subsidies are a matter of provincial funding.

### **Myth: Being a Service Manager in Conflict with Direct Delivery**

The majority of CMSM's and DSSAB's directly run child care centres. These programs meet the needs of underserved communities. In order to provide opportunities for all residents of Peel, the Region should consider expansion of service in underserved communities in Caledon, which currently lacks a Learn Play Care Centre.

### **Myth: A directly-operated child care system can't be financially sound**

Unlike other service managers, all parents in Peel get a subsidy regardless of eligibility for a provincial child care subsidy. Where full-day kindergarten is available, the Region could restrict subsidies to cover before / after-school programs. That would free up money to be used by younger children on the waiting list.

### **NEW FUNDING**

The funding comes after significant pressure from the early learning child care sector that the government address the child care crisis in the 2012 budget.

The funding is *new* money and will be on top of the transitional funding announced two years ago that is “growing to \$63 million” by 2015.

- \$90 million in 2012-13
- \$68 million in 2013-14
- \$84 million in 2014-15

This new funding will go a *long* way towards stabilizing existing programs. Now is not the time to close child care centres.