
2004 BUDGET BRIEFING NOTE – Budget Implication of Recommendations of the 2004 Action Plan for Children

Issue/Background:

At its February 22, 2004 meeting, the Policy and Finance Committee requested a report outlining the budget implications of the recommendations of the 2004 Action Plan for Children, developed by the Children and Youth Advocate as a follow-up to the 2004 Toronto Report Card on Children.

Key Point(s):

Consideration of the recommendations in the 2004 Action Plan for Children as submitted to the February 22 meeting of Policy and Finance Committee (attached) must include the following points in addition to the information provided in the original recommendations:

- **Children's Services:**

- *Expansion of subsidized spaces:* due to annualization and gapping, any restoration or expansion of subsidized spaces (\$12.3 million to fund Toronto's share of the cost of 2000 new spaces is currently in the 2004 base budget) would not be felt until 2005. However, it should be noted that the recommendations contain a total of 3800 spaces not currently in the system (1800 replacement of lost spaces; 2000 expansion) and the divisional budget request contains sufficient net funding for only 2000 spaces. (non-budget #6; budget #9)
- *Expansion of non-subsidized child care spaces:* the capital budget contains a number of projects either underway or proposed. All of them will improve access to licensed child care spaces in predominantly under-served areas of the City. (budget #10)
- *Wage subsidy:* the restoration of the net cut of \$356.3 thousand resulting from the transfer of a portion of provincial funding for wage subsidies to the space subsidy program line will impact the 2004 budget by causing a loss of 180 subsidized spaces. (budget #11)

- **Housing:**

- *Adapt shelter by-law to allow shelter development beyond major arterial roads:* this is a major policy change, but has no budget impact beyond fluctuations in real estate values. (non-budget #15)
- *Provision of funding from property tax to "Let's Build":* 2005 budget impact of \$750,000. (non-budget #17)

- *Sale of surplus residential properties into Capital Revolving Fund*: new sources of funding are needed. The calculation of this source of revenue is undetermined and would need involvement of Corporate Real Estate to conduct an impact evaluation analysis. (budget #14)
- *Continue to provide five year capital funding to the "Let's Build Capital Revolving Fund"*. Estimated contribution from the City for 2005 to 2009: \$31.5M. (budget #15)
- **Toronto Public Health:**
 - *Increase funding for Student Nutrition program*: Restoring the City contribution to 24% of costs, providing a subsidy of up to 60% of program costs for highest needs communities and subsidizing youth nutrition programs: 2004 budget impact: \$2.34M. This represents an expansion over current program provision. Endorsed by the Toronto Board of Health on February 23. (budget #1)
 - *Expand Peer Nutrition/Nobody's Perfect*: 2004 budget impact: net \$262,800. Endorsed by the Toronto Board of Health on February 23. (budget #3)
 - *Fully fund Food Security Grants*: no work has been done to identify the need and/or to cost this recommendation. TPH proposes to move it to the non-budget list and work during 2004 to identify the need and the 2005 budget implications. (budget #2)

Departments and agencies have reported that all other recommendations may be considered as outlined in the Action Plan.

Date: February 25, 2004.

Non-Budgetary Recommendations

1. Explore feasibility of a joint pilot project between Toronto Shelter Services and Public Health to do deep dental cleaning for high-risk pregnant women living in shelters. This may reduce the number of low weight birth babies in Toronto.
2. Request the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care to cover the cost of dental cleaning for uninsured, low income pregnant women as a means of reducing the incidence of pre-term births.
3. Advocate the province to fully fund the Healthy Babies Healthy Children Program.
4. Advocate the province to sustain the Early Childhood Development Initiative funded projects beyond the current 5 year plan.
5. Continue to advocate the provincial government to contribute its fair share of the Early Childhood Development Initiative so more licensed childcare spaces can be created.
6. Advocate the provincial government to restore its contributions to subsidized childcare and fund the 1800 spaces that were cut.
7. Adjust the requirements for subsidized childcare to realistically meet families' circumstances.
8. The City must equalize the distribution of Early Years Centres' funding across the ridings. This will ensure each child has access to an equal amount of resources as every other child.
9. Continue to support the Toronto First Duty Project to ensure that the children and families served now can continue to benefit from this program.
10. Explore the provision of licensed childcare during non-traditional childcare hours, as well as flexible hours of care, to support the needs of families who have to work nights, weekends, shifts and/or multiple jobs.
11. Continue to advocate the federal government to help create a municipal-federal partnership to build on the national childcare strategy.
12. Advocate the provincial government to adapt the school funding formula so schools have more funding for needed resources and programs.
13. Advocate the provincial government to increase social assistance rates to reflect families' cost of living and to increase the minimum wage more swiftly than the current three year plan.

14. Advocate the federal and provincial governments to create initiatives that allow parents to achieve a better work-family balance, which will help them meet the multiple demands placed on them.
15. Adapt the shelter by-law to allow shelter development in all parts of the city, not just major arterial roads.
16. The Shelter, Housing and Support Division, through the “Let’s Build Program”, must continue to support non-profit and private organizations’ efforts to build and sustain new permanent affordable housing.
17. Continue to be at the forefront in the development of affordable housing, through the “Let’s Build Program”, by providing property-tax money to this program.
18. Continue to implement the Housing First policy for surplus city lands by developing/retrofitting unused space into affordable housing.
19. Remove the cap placed on Housing First land value.
20. Continue to advocate the federal and provincial governments to contribute their fair share of investment into affordable housing development.
21. Continue the efforts made to coordinate all planning and services that effect children. New efforts should also be made to assess whether such coordination and service linking have effectively been meeting children’s and families’ needs.
22. Initiate the process of establishing service benchmarks and measuring outcomes.
23. The City should continue to find “Made In Toronto” solutions that help serve children and families, while respecting local priorities and needs.

Budgetary Recommendations

1. Increase funding for the Student Nutrition Program by \$2.338 million, which will restore the municipal funding contribution in existing programs, subsidize food programs in highest needs areas of the city and fund nutrition programs for youth.
2. Fully fund the Food Security Grants. They will enable low-income areas to access healthy meals and foster neighbourhood solidarity.
3. Expand the number of Peer Nutrition programs and add a Nobody’s Perfect education component in order to meet the nutrition and parenting education needs of an additional 900 families and 1400 children (\$262,800 net, \$525,500 gross).

4. Expand the Children's Before and After School Recreation Program across 24 sites. This will enable more children to have fun in a safe, supervised place that is affordable for parents. Total request for additional Before and After School Recreation Programs is \$255,192.26.
5. Expand the Preschool Recreation Program across 99 additional sites in all 4 districts. This will provide 27,535 children and parents with registered and drop-in preschool program opportunities, 10,200 outreach referrals, 13,280 preschool drop-in opportunities, and 4900 opportunities to participate in special events. In total, the Preschool Recreation Program will serve 42,635 children and families. Total request for additional Preschool programs is \$701,107.60.
6. Expand the Children's Recreational Program across an additional 65 sites. This will provide children with 38,194 recreational opportunities. Total request for Children's Recreation Programs is \$438,014.40.
7. Expand the Children's Recreational Camp Program to reach 11,158 children. This will help children make new friends and learn new skills, as well as provide a form of quality childcare for working parents. Total program cost is \$503,385.32 for 44 additional programs.
8. Create Girls' Recreation Programs across 28 sites to provide 10,166 girls with registration and drop-in opportunities. The estimated cost is \$237,337.81.
9. Expand the childcare program to include another 2000 subsidized spaces in order to reduce the wait list of eligible children, on the condition that they are cost-shared 80/20 by the provincial government.
10. Increase the number of childcare spaces so more children have access to quality care.
11. Ensure the quality of care provided and the affordability of childcare service in Toronto by maintaining all lines of funding, including wage subsidy.
12. Commit the next annual increment to the phased-in return of actual costs in order to achieve full payment of actual costs by 2006.
13. Maintain the 98 Toronto Public Libraries' current service levels by reneging the proposed \$1,253,000 funding cut in the 2004 municipal budget.
14. Place the sale of surplus residential properties into the Capital Revolving Fund in order to create new affordable housing.
15. Continue to provide five year capital funding to the "Let's Build Capital Revolving Fund".