

## Advisory Committee for Extended Day and Child Care Programs Report

**Wednesday, January 27, 2021, 7:00 pm  
Zoom Meeting**

Members: Lucas Malinowski (Parent Member), Chris Ellis, Melanie Aqiqi (Parent Member), Tanya Burger, Orllie Gogolin (RESKAP), Tammy Piche (OSSTF), Prince Duah (Superintendent of Instruction), Julie Cyr (Manager of Early Learning)

Staff and Guests: Geraldine Taggart (Staff), Julie Cyr (Manager of Early Learning), Myriam Pepin (Children's Village, Non-voting member), Blake Doucett (Voting Member, OCASC), Melanie Goode (Non-voting member, REKSAP Centres for Early Learning), Nasrin Javanfar (Voting Member, Advisory Committee on Equity)

1. Call to Order

Chair Malinowski called the meeting to order at 7:07 p.m.

2. Welcome

Chair Malinowski welcomed everyone to the meeting and expressed his appreciation to all parents who are supporting their children while learning at home during the lockdown.

3. Approval of the Agenda

**Moved by Blake Doucett, seconded by Tanya Burger,**

**THAT the agenda be approved.**

**Carried**

4. Review of Committee Report

4.1 Report, 3 December 2020

**Moved by Blake Doucett, seconded by Tanya Burger,**

**THAT the report of the Advisory Committee for Extended Day and Child Care Programs dated 3 December 2020 meeting be approved.**

**Carried**

5. Update from Prince Duah, Superintendent of Instruction

Superintendent Duah welcomed everyone to the meeting and advised that the District would be ready to resume in-school learning the day after the Province makes an announcement that it is safe to do so.

With respect to the appointment of a chair for the Committee, Superintendent Duah advised that the Board policy P.111.GOV Advisory Committee for Extended Day and Child Care programs provides for the annual appointment or reappointment of a chair. As the Committee had only one meeting last year, he suggested that Lucas Malinowski continue as Chair for consistency. The Committee noted that Mr. Malinowski is doing a great job and they would be pleased to have him stay on as Chair.

6. Update from Julie Cyr, Manager, Early Learning Department,

Manager Cyr advised that a modest increase in registration took place prior to the closure of in-class learning in January. She added that registration for September 2021 will commence soon and it is hoped that enrollment will continue to grow.

6.1 Closure

Manager Cyr advised that all Infant, Toddler and Preschool programs remained open during the January school closure, noting that Covid-19 transmission has been less than 2 percent in childcare centres in Ottawa. She expressed appreciation to all early years educators for their efforts to avoid transmission.

Manager Cyr acknowledged the difficulty for children and families to support working and learning from home. During the shut-down, the District has provided training to Early Learning Assistants (ELAs) who support Early Childhood Educators (ECEs) in their virtual classrooms. Parents are welcome to reach out to Early Learning Department staff and supervisors for additional support.

Being mindful of not inundating families with emails, Manager Cyr reported that the District communicates with families to provide the latest information on subsidies or the resumption of in-school learning.

In light of the ongoing closure, the District will credit or refund fees paid for January 2021 and let families know prior to withdrawing fees for February and March 2021.

Chair Malinowski requested that these fees be withdrawn each month rather than facing a double payment in March. It was suggested that parents be surveyed to determine their preference. Manager Cyr noted that the District has the ability to support individual families who experience difficulty with fee payments by offering extended payment plans.

## 6.2 Third Party Partner Emergency Child Care

In light of the provincial announcement with respect to online learning, Manager Cyr advised that the District and some of its third party providers have implemented free emergency child care for essential workers at a number of sites across the District. The province provides the funding to the City and the City Manager determines how it is distributed to child care providers who have requested that they be approved to provide this service. It is not yet known how much each provider will receive for staffing as the funding formula has not yet been announced. At the present time, none of the emergency sites are at capacity and spaces are available provided that there is staff available. Manager Cyr added that both the District and third party providers are still waiting for the funding promised for the first school closure last spring.

Many providers are continuing to pay salaries to their employees while not knowing what the financial impact will be. Ms. Pepin noted that three of their six sites are closed at the present time. As many of their workers with school-age children are staying home, it is necessary to staff the centres that remain open by pulling available staff from centres that are closed. If any of these workers contract COVID-19 when the centres re-open and staff return to their home locations, it may be necessary to close all six centres.

Ms Javanfar noted the difficulty many newcomer families have in learning about child care options and subsidies due to language difficulties. Manager Cyr advised that schools provide information about child care options to parents when they register their children for school. Multicultural Liaison Officers (MLOs) can also provide information. Information is also available on the District's website and families may call the Early Learning Department if they have questions.

Trustee Ellis advised that the Province sets the criteria for the provision of subsidies. It does not allow school boards to provide subsidies. He suggested that child care providers write to the Province, Members of Provincial Parliament (MPPs), and others to advocate for more subsidized child care spaces.

Manager Cyr noted that subsidies are managed through the City of Ottawa and they maintain a centralized waitlist with controls in place to ensure equity. The wait time for subsidies has decreased substantially in recent years.

Trustee Ellis noted that the OCDSB policy requires the District to provide child care at a school where there is a need for three or more children. Programs for less than 13 children are not cost-recovery. Ms. Pepin advised that the Children's Village usually has one or two spaces available for new registrations, but it is not viable for them to open a new

room and offer care for only three children. Ms. Gogolin and Ms. Good noted that REKSAP child care centres can expand if classroom space is available in schools and/or if it will be cost recovery.

In response to a query about enrolment projections when in-class learning resumes and/or for next year, Manager Cyr advised that the District currently has room for growth this year as the EDP program is overstaffed due to virtual learning and not all ELAs are back to work. Superintendent Duah added that the District anticipated an enrolment of 6,000 children in September 2020; however, actual enrolment is approximately 1,400 at the present time.

Trustee Ellis suggested that the Committee further discuss the financial aspects of providing child care at a future meeting.

Superintendent Duah and Manager Cyr expressed appreciation to third party operators and staff at the OCDSB who help support child care programs.

Committee members expressed their appreciation to the District and third party providers for providing care and support as well as a range of options for child care.

#### 7. Extended Day Program and Infant, Toddler, Preschool Program Fees

Manager Cyr advised that the *Education Act* requires school boards to charge and collect fees for child care on a cost recovery basis. Over a number of years, the District acquired a surplus and there has been no increase to fees since 2017. The current fee for the EDP program is \$22.50 per day for morning and afternoon care. The fee for full-day care is \$35.00.

Current collective agreements call for salary increases this year. The District is overstaffed due to COVID-19 restrictions and material supply costs, including personal protective equipment, have increased substantially. At the same time, revenues have decreased due to the closure of sites due to the lockdown. The surplus has been depleted and there are now budget shortfalls which necessitate an increase in fees.

The District is seeking approval from the Board to increase EDP fees to \$23.00 for mornings and afternoons, and \$37.00 for full-day care. The proposed increase for the Infant, Toddler and Pre-school (ITP) program is 1.5 percent.

During discussion, the following points were noted:

- These proposed increases were discussed with the City of Ottawa so as not to compromise families who receive subsidies;
- The Ottawa Catholic School Board (OCSB) and OCSB have similar fee structures and both are proposing similar fee increases and will not be in competition with each other;

- Some school boards have reduced the number of their child care programs;
- The OCDSB has kept all programs opened and increased hours worked for Early Learning Assistants in order to maintain service to families and to support the rooms being ready to great children during the transition between school and EDP;
- Fee increases will commence in September 2021;
- Parents will be advised by email of the reasons for, and amount of fee increases before registration commences for September 2021;
- Information about fee increases will be posted on the District's website;
- The fee increases will be presented to the Committee of the Whole for approval on 9 February 2021. If approved, the recommendation will go forward to the Board for final approval on 23 February 2021;
- School boards are required to post child care fees on their website no later than May of each year;
- The District has agreements with the City of Ottawa and it is up to the City to amend their budgets to fully fund subsidies;
- Third party partners are in similar circumstances and will be increasing their fees to cover costs. Some operators may increase their fees in January and others may wait until June 2021;
- The federal government is funding 75 percent of the loss of revenue however school board run programs cannot access these funds. The provincial funding flows to the City who then distributes it to the child care providers. It is unknown if additional funding will be provided in March; and
- Manager Cyr noted that she sits on local committees at the City of Ottawa and College of Early Childhood Educators which provides opportunities to advocate for an overhaul of child care systems and higher funding from provincial and federal governments.

Trustee Ellis asked whether the Committee wished to take a position on the proposed fee increase before it is discussed at the Committee of the Whole on 9 February 2021.

The members agreed that the proposed increase in fees is justified for the following reasons:

- Current fees do not meet the demands of the programs;
- Programs are no longer operating on a cost-recovery basis;
- The accumulated surplus to absorb increased costs related to COVID-19 has been depleted;

- COVID-19 protocols are expected to continue for another year;
- The District recognizes the impact fee increases would have on families and there is a need to increase provincial and federal funding of child care programs;
- A survey of parents that was completed over two years ago revealed that a majority of parents felt that the fees were acceptable, which small percentages of parents felt they were either too low or too high;
- Asking the Board to delay their decision on fee increases would cause delays in getting the information out to parents. Registration for next year and projecting staffing requirements would also be postponed; and
- If fees are not increased, it may be necessary to eliminate some programs.

Trustee Ellis thanked the Committee for their input. He advised that the minutes of this meeting will be presented to the Committee of the Whole on 9 February 2021 to provide trustees with a summary of the discussion and the Committee's support for fee increases at this time.

8. New Business

There was no new business.

9. Adjournment

**Moved by Melanie Aqiqi, seconded by Blake Doucett,**

**THAT the meeting adjourn at 9:09 p.m.**

**Carried**

The next meeting will take place in March 2021.

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Lucas Malinowski, Chair,  
Advisory Committee for Extended  
Day and Child Care Programs