EMERGENCY & COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE
REPORT 09-009

1:30 p.m.
Wednesday, June 3, 2009
Hamilton Convention Centre
1 Summers Lane
Room 207
Hamilton, Ontario

Present:
Councillors R. Pasuta (1st Vice Chair),
T. Jackson, M. McCarthy, B. McHattie, S. Merulla (2nd Vice Chair) and B.
Morelli

Absent with
Regrets:
Councillor S. Duvall (Chair) – FCM

Also Present:
J. Priel, General Manager, Community Services
D. Cunliffe, Acting General Manager/Chief, Hamilton Emergency Services
J. Soldera, Director, Social Development & Early Childhood Services
G. Mater, Program Manager
K. Lubrick, Special Supports Program Manager,
B. Bax, Program Manager, Child Care Systems Management
S. Paparella, Legislative Assistant, City Clerk’s Office

THE EMERGENCY & COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE PRESENTS REPORT 09-009 AND RESPECTFULLY RECOMMENDS:

1. Funding of the Canadian Mental Health Association, Evening Social Recreation and Rehabilitation Program (CS09041) (City Wide) (Item 5.1)

That Report CS09041 – Funding of the Canadian Mental Health Association, Evening Social Recreation and Rehabilitation Program, be received.

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2. **Continuation of Provincial Best Start Funding March 31, 2010 (CS09042) (City Wide) (Item 7.1)**

(a) That the Best Start Transition Plan (attached as Appendix A to Report 09-009), be approved.

(b) That staff be directed to develop a final Action Plan, respecting the termination of a portion of the Provincial Best Start Funding March 31, 2010, and report to the Emergency & Community Services Committee no later than October 28, 2009.

(c) That the Mayor correspond with the Prime Minister, the Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, the Premier of Ontario and the Minister of Children and Youth Services, to strongly request that the Governments of Canada and Ontario, work together to secure another funding source to mitigate the loss of $63.5 million annually to support the Best Start Initiative; formerly funded through a Federal-Provincial Bilateral Agreement, which was cancelled in 2006.

(d) That a copy of the approved resolution, respecting the Continuation of Provincial Best Start Funding March 31, 2010, be forwarded to all local Members of Parliament, local Members of Provincial Parliament, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities.

(e) That staff be directed to develop and implement a Transition Plan with respect to the ongoing provision of the Early Learning Program (Preschool Universal) no later than June 30, 2009, which includes the following:

   (i) The continuation of the Early Learning (Preschool Universal) program for the 2009/10 school year at a service level that is supported by the provision of 100% funding from the Province of Ontario.

   (ii) That staff be directed to investigate internal/external funding sources in an attempt to continue providing the Best Start Program, subsequent to March 2010, as promised by the Federal and Provincial governments. Thereby, allowing Hamilton City Council in a manner conducive to Hamilton City Council’s founding Term principle of being the “Best City to Raise a Child”, and report back to the Emergency & Community Services Committee as soon as possible.

(f) That the City of Hamilton place a moratorium on entering into any amended or new service agreements for expanding or newly opened child care
programs, until such time as additional information regarding Hamilton’s Best Start funding is received.

(g) That the Item respecting Correspondence from Minister Finley regarding Federal Investments in Child Care - Child Care Fee Subsidy Program Caseload Management, be considered complete and removed from the Emergency and Community Services Outstanding Business List.

(h) That copies of all written submissions, provided by delegations to the Emergency & Community Services Committee on June 3, 2009, respecting the Continuation of Best Start Funding March 31, 2010, be attached to the approved resolution and copies be forwarded to the aforementioned parties, as shown in recommendation (c) to Report CS09042.

(i) That, in the interest of Ontario families who are counting on the Best Start Program spaces, we strongly support the Honourable Deb Matthews’, Minister of Children and Youth Services, in calling on the Federal government to reinstate the $63.5 million investment.

3. Continuation of Provincial Best Start Funding March 31, 2010 (Report CS09042(a) (City Wide) (Item 7.1(a))

That Report CS09042(a) – Continuation of Provincial Best Start Funding March 31, 2009, be received.

4. Correspondence from the Honourable Minister of Children and Youth Services, Deb Matthews, respecting Funds in the 2010-2011 Fiscal Year to Stabilize the Child Care System (referred by Council at its meeting of May 27, 2009) (Item 7.1(b))

That the correspondence from the Honourable Minister of Children and Youth Services, Deb Matthews, respecting Funds in the 2010-2011 Fiscal Year to Stabilize the Child Care System, be received.

FOR THE INFORMATION OF COUNCIL:

(a) CHANGES TO THE AGENDA (Item 1)

The Committee Clerk advised of the following changes to the agenda:
(i) Copies of the Written Submissions for Items 6.1 to 6.5 and 6.7, 6.8 have been included in the Changes to the Agenda package. Copies of the written submissions for Items 6.6 and 6.9 will be provided by the delegates.

(ii) Item 6.9 – Tom Cooper will be speaking in place of Liz Weaver, on behalf of the Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction.

(iii) Item 6.10 – the Delegation by Dr. Jean Clinton, on behalf of McMaster University, Offord Centre for Child Studies, has been withdrawn due to illness.

(iv) Item 6.13 – Delegation by Domenic Russumanno, on behalf of Kindertown Child Care Centre, has been withdrawn.

(v) Item 6.16 – a written submission, to go with her verbal presentation, has been provided by Karyn Callaghan, on behalf of Mohawk College.

(vi) Added as Item 6.19, a written submission, from Moyra Hewlett, respecting Item 7.1 - Continuation of Provincial Best Start Funding March 31, 2010.

(vii) A copy of the PowerPoint presentation for Items 7.1 and 7.1(a) has been included.

(viii) Added as Item 7.1(a) – Report CS09042(a) – Continuation of Provincial Best Start Funding March 31, 2010.

(ix) Added as Item 7.1(b) – Correspondence from the Honourable Minister of Children and Youth Services, Deb Matthews, respecting Funds in the 2010-2011 Fiscal Year to Stabilize the Child Care System (referred by Council at its meeting of May 27, 2009).

(x) Added as Item 6.20 – A written submission from the Children’s Aid Society respecting Continuation of Provincial Best Start Funding March 31, 2010 (CS09042).

The June 3, 2009 agenda of the Emergency & Community Services Committee was approved, as amended.

(b) DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (Item 2)

There were none declared.
(c) APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (Item 3)

The Minutes of the May 20, 2009 meeting of the Emergency & Community Services Committee were approved, as presented.

(d) Minutes of Various Advisory Committees

The following Advisory Committee Minutes be received:

(i) Hamilton Historical Board Meeting Minutes, dated April 14, 2009 (Item 5.2)

(ii) Seniors Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes, dated April 3, 2009 (Item 5.3)

(e) DELEGATIONS (Item 6)

(i) Paul Johnson, on behalf of the Hamilton Best Start Network (Item 6.1)

Mr. Johnson’s comments included, but were not limited to, the following:

- Best Start is about ensuring all families with young children have access to service. In areas such as Ward 14, where geography makes local access difficult, Early Year Centres have developed mobile and outreach services that bring supports to parents, local churches and schools.

- Best Start is about increasing access to experts in early child development. These experts offer consultation, teaching and referrals and bring this expertise to local early learning programs on a monthly basis. For example, in the Waterdown Early Years Centre in Ward 15 these “Check it Out Clinics” occur.

- Best Start is about developing stronger linkages with Family Doctors. In Ward 1, doctors met for an education session in the Hamilton West Early Years Centre to better understand the community supports available to families under their care.

- Best Start is also about ensuring access to service for French speaking families. In Ward 3, for example, Best Start invested in the expansion of Ecole Notre Dame to provide an early years’ centre on-site.

- Best Start is about engaging Aboriginal families. In Ward 4, the development of an early learning and care hub has ensured the provision of Aboriginal child care; early years’ programs for Aboriginal families.

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families and their children; and, the addition of an Aboriginal Nurse Practitioner to address the primary health care needs of this population.

- Best Start is about encouraging partnerships. In Ward 7 an example of this is the development of a new early years’ centre in Lime Ridge Mall, which includes Public Health’s Breast Feeding Clinic, Settlement Services through SISO, access to Private Home Child Care and early learning and parenting programs.

- Best Start is about fostering stronger relationships between schools and early learning programs. In Ward 6 an example of this is the partnership between Templemead School and the Child Care Centre, which is operated by Umbrella Family and Child Centres. Teachers and Early Childhood Educators work in a “team” approach to coordinate the education of these young children.

- Early childhood development is a critical point of investment under the Poverty Reduction Strategy of the Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction.

- It is a critical consideration of the Innovation and Learning committee of the Jobs Prosperity Collaborative – because it is recognized that building a culture of innovation begins at the prenatal stage and continues throughout life long learning.

- And of course, it will be hard for Council to reach its vision of being the best place in Canada to raise a child, promote innovation, engage citizens and provide diverse economic opportunities without a commitment to supporting parents and their children.

- The Best Start Network wants to assure Council that it will not stop their communication efforts with their presentation to Committee. They will be engaging the education partners and representatives from the Provincial and Federal governments – all in an effort to build the strongest coalition for early years’ investment.

- The $18 million in Provincial funding that was recently announced is dedicated to supporting child care spaces and as we have just demonstrated, Best Start is much more than just child care.

- The Best Start Network is tired of a piecemeal and time limited approach to funding of the early years. While they acknowledge and thank both the Provincial and Federal governments for their investments in support of the early years it is no where near enough to be successful. Ensuring the continuation of the current Best Start funding is just the first step in advocating for a true system of early child development.
The Best Start Network had two requests of Committee and Council. They are as follows:

- Will someone (or all of you) from the Emergency & Community Services Committee stand up at the June 10, 2009 Council and publicly state the importance of early child development and in doing so encourage all Hamiltonians to make this a priority for our community.

- Will the Emergency & Community Services Committee members; work with their Council colleagues and the Mayor, to place early child development on the “top 5” investment needs for our community. The Network is aware of the current need for infrastructure investment and for new relationships regarding social service funding, but needs Council’s voice on this issue.

Several members of the Best Start Network were recently at a conference hosted by Fraser Mustard’s Council for Early Child Development. They heard former Prime Minister Paul Martin, economists from Canada and the U.S. and representatives from other countries all talk about how any economic stimulus package should include investment in early child development. Our economy is undergoing a paradigm shift where the engine of growth is going to be far more global than we have been used to. To be competitive we will need to be innovators – a culture that begins “right from the start”.

A written copy of Mr. Johnson’s submission was also provided and is on record in the Office of the City Clerk.

(ii) Janis Webster, on behalf of the Umbrella Family and Child Centres of Hamilton (Item 6.2)

Ms. Webster’s comments included, but were not limited to, the following:

- Implications to the Children – if Best Start Funding is not continued:
  - One component of the Best Start initiative is the Universal Preschool program, a free ½ day program aimed at preparing children for their Junior Kindergarten experience. While this program is only available in some centres located in the Best Start demonstration area (east end of Hamilton), families appreciate the opportunity to enrol their preschool child in a program that promotes early literacy and social skills, knowing that this skill development will better prepare them for their kindergarten experience the following year.
In addition, children who become accustomed to attending a program without their parent at an early age are less likely to suffer separation anxiety when they begin kindergarten.

The success of the Universal Preschool program over the past three years is evident by the number of calls we receive inquiring about the program, the number of children on the waiting list for service this September (2009), and the evaluations that have been conducted by the City of Hamilton.

Attendance in the Universal Preschool program allows qualified educators the opportunity to observe children’s skills and abilities, chart progress and make referrals to specialized services when necessary.

Additional Special Needs Resource staffing has been made possible through Best Start funding resulted in increased services for children and a more seamless transition from preschool program to kindergarten.

Implications to the Families – if Best Start Funding is not continued:

While the Universal Preschool program provides children with a high-quality child care experience, parents have an opportunity to spend time with younger siblings, often enrolling them in programs/services offered through the neighbourhood Ontario Early Years Centre (OEYC).

New licensed child care spaces in east Hamilton made it possible for more parents to access high-quality care for their children in an area that has been traditionally under-serviced.

Implications to the Staff – if Best Start Funding is not continued:

Just as Best Start funding resulted in increased employment opportunities for early childhood educators, the loss of this funding will result in unemployment for some, as the services we offer decrease.

Should funding for Special Needs Resource personnel also be reduced, waiting lists for children with special needs in preschool programs will increase, creating challenges for the early childhood educators working to meet these needs.
In addition to the above challenges, the hourly wage of remaining Umbrella employees may be reduced by 68 cents per hour (approximately 3.5% decrease), as the level of wage subsidy funding is reduced. This hourly reduction imposes very real challenges for employees and their families, who may be faced with the decision of leaving the field to find employment elsewhere.

A written copy of Ms. Webster’s submission was also provided and is on record in the Office of the City Clerk.

(iii) Jim Commerford, on behalf of the YMCA of Hamilton, Burlington & Brantford (Item 6.3)

Mr. Commerford’s comments included, but were not limited to, the following:

- Through providing opportunities for children to explore, discover and create in the early years, we can directly affect developmental outcomes in behaviour, learning and health.

- The YMCA believes that a licensed child care system that is accessible, affordable, of high quality and provides families with a mix of child care choices, best supports the health development of our children.

- As one of the largest providers of programs and services for children, youth and families in Canada, the YMCA combines three decades of experience in child care delivery and the latest knowledge on how the brain develops and how children learn.

- The YMCA of Hamilton/Burlington/Brantford is committed to:
  
  o Working with all who are interested in the well-being of children and families; including all three levels of government;
  
  o Finding ways to give every child access to the constellation of services and experiences that are key to optimal child development;
  
  o Providing high quality educational programs that impart values related to inclusion, diversity and respect for self, others and the environment; and,
  
  o Providing programs that offer choice, experience and discovery in developing the children in mind, body and spirit.

- The Best Start program supports families by offering a broad range of services for children 0-6 years old that will ensure their children receive the best possible opportunities early in their lives.
• Best Start empowers communities to offer comprehensive, flexible, integrated and seamless services for children and parents in a familiar neighbourhood setting.

• Should funding for the Best Start Program not be continued, it would have a huge negative impact on our families and children. Therefore, it is extremely important that investments be made to provide ongoing, sustainable funding for our child care system that meets community needs.

• The YMCA looks forward to working with all levels of government to find creative solutions to continue funding this important initiative.

A written copy of Mr. Commerford’s submission was also provided and is on record in the Office of the City Clerk.

(iv) Wanda St. Francois and Ruth Doherty, on behalf of the Affiliated Services for Children and Youth (ASCY) (Item 6.4)

Ms. St. Francios and Ms. Doherty’s comments included, but were not limited to, the following:

• ASCY provides resources, professional education, supports and program consultation to Early Years’ Practitioners in the City of Hamilton.

• ASCY has been represented on the Provincial Expert Panel on Quality and Human Resources and are currently working with the Ministry of Children and Youth Services to implement the Early Learning Framework across Ontario.

• Due to Best Start funding ASCY has been able to provide a number of very important expanded training opportunities to the Hamilton community. These include: early literacy training and inter-professional education coordination to name a few.

A written copy of Ms. St. Francios and Ms. Doherty’s submission was also provided and is on record in the Office of the City Clerk.

(v) Jack Maga, on behalf of Wesley Urban Ministries (Item 6.5)

Mr. Maga’s comments included, but were not limited to, the following:
• Wesley Urban Ministry’s goal is to provide people of all ages with a hand-up so that they can break the cycle of poverty and achieve a real measure of success.

• One in four children in Hamilton is currently living in poverty. Early literacy and numeracy skills are crucial to a child’s success. Best Start is about supporting families in providing those skills for their children.

• Too many children start school already lagging behind their peers. Our schools are working diligently to bridge this gap, but still many are not able to catch up.

The good news is that research has shown that if children can be reached early enough, they can catch up and even surpass other students.

• The Best Start initiative is deserving of continued funding because it provides the one-in-four children living in poverty with the best opportunity to be ready to learn by the time they reach Grade One.

A written copy of Mr. Maga’s submission was also provided and is on record in the Office of the City Clerk.

(vi) Susan Honeyman, on behalf of Early Words 1ers mots (Item 6.6)

Ms. Honeyman’s comments included, but were not limited to, the following:

• Through Best Start, Early Words 1ers mots has been able to provide speech and language assessments for young children in their own neighbourhoods, and has also been able to reach children at higher risk who would have not previously been referred.

• Through strong partnerships with Best Start, Early Words has been able to reach thousands of children at:
  
  o Three major child care centres; serving vulnerable families.
  o Provide twice-monthly “Check It Outs” at CAS and CCAS.

• Did you know that: the single best predictor of school success is communication skills; a key predictor of reading ability is oral language; and, a child’s academic ranking as they enter Kindergarten predicts their ranking when they graduate from high school.

• 10% of young children have speech and language problems and 80% of these children are at risk of reading problems in school. Speech and
language problems are associated with negative academic, social and emotional outcomes.

A written copy of Ms. Honeyman’s submission was also provided and is on record in the Office of the City Clerk.

(vii) Michael MacPherson, on behalf of the Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic Child Care Centres (Item 6.7)

Mr. MacPherson’s comments included, but were not limited to, the following:

- The Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic Child Care Centres’ child care programs provide care for families where parents work or go to school. Some parents also use these programs as support for their children with special needs or to help develop the skills for transition to school programs.

- HWCCCC also offers Ontario Early Years Centre programs for the Stoney Creek area with parent-child drop-ins plus parenting programs for children from birth to age six.

- When The Best Start initiative was introduced, HWCCCC became an active participant. All of the HWCCCC’s programs have been enhanced through the Best Start program.

- As part of the East Hamilton demonstration site, HWCCCC opened six new child care programs with 325 licensed spaces in a section of the city that was definitely under-served. In these programs, HWCCCC currently provides care for 288 children; creating jobs for 30 staff. The number of families using these programs grows as the community becomes aware of their options and develops trust in the programs.

- A unique component of the Best Start Demo area is the pre-school universal program – the free half day program for three year olds. This program serves many children who otherwise may not have been connected to any community programs.

- Over the past two years the HWCCCC programs have connected 44 children with community referrals. Many if these children would not have been identified nor found support until after they entered school programs. All the research on child development stresses that the earlier an intervention the more effective it will be. Each location already has families looking to register in this program in September 2009.
The Best Start has had a profound effect on the East End Demonstration area but Best Start is broader than the Demo Area.

- The HWCCCC’s families, staff and Board of Directors urge you to advocate with the provincial and federal levels of government so that we can not only maintain what we have achieved, but more importantly move ahead as we find new and better ways to ensure that Hamilton is the best place to raise a child.

A written copy of Mr. MacPherson’s submission was also provided and is on record in the Office of the City Clerk.

(viii) Marni Flaherty, C.E.O. Today’s Family – Early Learning and Child Care (Item 6.8)

Ms. Flaherty’s comments included, but were not limited to, the following:

- The fabric of Best Start is woven into Hamilton’s vision for our city. To remove the thread of Best Start will fragment the collaborations coming together to assist our community in reaching this vision.

- Hamilton is a community known for its collaboration. When creativity, skills, self efficacy and motivation accompany collaboration, possibilities are extended, capacity expanded and success realized.

The discontinuation of the Best Start funding will effectively and indefinitely terminate an incredible need for Best Start applications in the City of Hamilton.

- The sheer capacity of the City of Hamilton to carry on providing the discernable needs of children, families and caregivers will be severely dislocated if Best Start funding is not continued.

- The ramifications of the discontinuation of Best Start funding will undoubtedly put increased economic strain on the City of Hamilton. In an environment where some resources are decreasing while demands are increasing, collaboration has become even more essential.

- The unrealized potential of child care in Hamilton will be lost or crippled if the City of Hamilton and the Province loses Best Start funding.

- Today’s Family needs Hamilton City Council to lobby the Province of Ontario to change direction and to maintain the Best Start funding, and to urge the Federal Government of Canada to contribute.
A written copy of Ms. Flaherty’s submission was also provided and is on record in the Office of the City Clerk.

(ix) Tom Cooper, on behalf of the Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction (Item 6.9)

Tom Cooper’s comments included, but were not limited to, the following:

- Investments in the Early Years will reduce poverty - as strategic focus on poverty can shift the impact on poverty in a community.

- The Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction with their Starting Point Partners believes that all families should have access to healthy, early learning and parenting neighbourhood hubs and support.

- The City of Hamilton’s integrated early learning system has already yielded successes.

- The Roundtable has asked the Provincial government to:
  
  o Continue support and increased investment in the Provincial Best Start initiative and the Ontario Early Years Centres.

  o Commit to implement the recommendations as outlined in the three expert panel reports commissioned under the Best Start initiative.

  o Commitment to work with the Best Start Networks to understand and plan for the transition to full-day Junior and Senior Kindergarten, which will have a huge impact on the current child care system.

  o Expand and enhance the integration of programs directed to children and families in the early years with particular focus on low-income and marginalized families; including increased investment in child care.

- The Roundtable is also strongly urging the Federal government to adopt several prosperity priorities – among those: a National Child Care Strategy.

A written copy of Mr. Cooper’s submission was also provided and is on record in the Office of the City Clerk.
Dr. Jean Clinton, on behalf of McMaster University, Offord Centre for Child Studies (Item 6.10)

Dr. Clinton had withdrawn her delegation status, as she was ill.

Nicole Olyschlager, Resident (Item 6.11)

Ms. Olyschlager, a mother of two, provided a video presentation showing children in the Best Start Program, and shared her own personal experiences with the Best Start Program, and how it has greatly helped her own children and their family.

The best start program has helped her previously shy and withdrawn little girl become confident and comfortable interacting and playing with other children.

Tanya Brown, Resident (Item 6.12)

Ms. Brown’s, a mother of four, provided a PowerPoint presentation to Committee respecting her own personal experiences with the Best Start Program; explaining she has learned from the Best Start program and helped her four children.

Domenic Russumanno, on behalf of Kindertown Child Care Centre (Item 6.13)

Mr. Russumanno withdrew his delegation status.

Judith Bishop, Trustee and Past Chair of the Board and Krys Croxall, Superintendent of Program and Assessment, Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board (Item 6.14)

Ms. Bishop and Ms. Croxall’s comments included, but were not limited to, the following:

- The Best Start initiative currently has programs serving families operating in six Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board schools in the Best Start urban demonstration area, and a large number of schools elsewhere in the district. Offering early learning and care, free half day programs for three year olds and resource centres for parents, these programs are all well used and attended.
• There are also specialized support programs for parents, including speech and language, hearing and developmental support for families through monthly Check It Out drop-ins (Child Development Clinic).

• These programs offer more convenient support within neighbourhoods for parents and easy access to a range of specialities, which can help reduce the time before children with developmental or other difficulties are provided with the assistance they need.

• Since research has shown the critical importance of development between birth and the age of six, it would be tragic if reduced funding once again increased the timelines for the identification of vulnerable children.

• Research also indicates, and the HWDSB endorses, the importance of assistance to parents and their engagement in the education of their child as key components of student success in school.

• Best Start initiatives are based on solid research that consistently rates early learning and child care programs as important in improving a child’s healthy development, well being and cognitive development.

• Hamilton’s scores for children’s development (EDI scores) are below the provincial average and in this community 26% of children are vulnerable in the areas of speech, language and general knowledge upon school entry.

• Early learning and child care can help level the playing field for children in disadvantaged circumstances. Education is the main route out of poverty for disadvantaged students, as it leads to a better change for employment and higher earnings.

• The Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board petitions the Hamilton City Council to urge the Province and Federal Government to continue the Best Start Initiatives beyond March 2010.

A written copy of Ms. Bishop and Ms. Croxall’s submission was also provided and is on record in the Office of the City Clerk.

(xv) **Merle Parker, on behalf of the Stoney Creek Parents and Caregivers (Item 6.15)**

Mr. Parker’s passionately spoke about the Early Years (Universal Program) and outlined the programs such as Baby Picasso, Early Literacy, the gym, Gathering time; all of which actively engage young children.

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Ms. Parker urged Committee to advocate to the Provincial and Federal levels of government for the continuation of Best Start funding beyond 2010.

(xvi) Karyn Callaghan, Professor of Early Childhood Education at Mohawk College, respecting the Continuation of Provincial Best Start Funding as of March 2010 (Item 6.16)

Ms. Callaghan’s comments included, but were not limited to, the following:

- Best Start is about children and families: Children have the right to be recognized as subjects of individual, legal, civil and social rights, with an extraordinary wealth of inborn abilities and potential, strength and creativity.

- Parent participation enables a communication network that leads to fuller and more reciprocal knowledge, as well as a more effective shared search for the best educational methods, content and values.

- Best Start has provided the context and support for educators in collaboration with parents and other professionals to learn at a deeper level about children’s thinking and construction of knowledge.

- The vision of this City Council will build a valuable legacy for our citizens.

A written copy of Ms. Callaghan’s submission was also provided and is on record in the Office of the City Clerk.

(xvii) Darrel Skidmore, CEO the United Way of Burlington and Greater Hamilton (Item 6.17)

Mr. Skidmore’s comments included, but were not limited to, the following:

- Federal and Provincial levels of government invest in: Intervention (immediate supports when citizens run into difficult times); Crisis Intervention (for those who are in peril); however, it is also very important to invest in Preventative Measures - If society invests in families early – it is an investment in collective benefits later. More importantly, its human investment.

- Investment in infrastructure and in neighbourhoods is important, but an investment in the Best Start program is an investment in our children, our families and in our community.
• We have a responsibility to advocate for the Ontario children who will be left behind – it would be morally wrong. It is a social responsibility to for senior levels of government to invest in Best Start and other similar programs. A community is not truly great, until it is great for everyone.

**Written Submissions:**

(xviii) **Patricia Amos, on behalf of the Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board (Item 6.18)**

Patricia Amos, provided a written submission, on behalf of the Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board, respecting the Continuation of the Provincial Best Start Funding.

(xix) **Moyra Hewlett, respecting Item 7.1 - Continuation of Provincial Best Start Funding March 31, 2010**

Moyra Hewlett, resident, provided a written submission respecting the Continuation of the Provincial Best Start Funding.

Items 6.1 through 6.20, respecting the Continuation of the Provincial Best Start Funding, were received.

(f) **Continuation of Provincial Best Start Funding March 31, 2010 (CS09042) and (CS09042(a) (City Wide) (Items 7.1, 7.1(a) and 7.1(b))**

Joe-Anne Priel, General Manager of the Community Services Department, and Jane Soldera, Director, Social Development and Early Childhood Services, provided an overview of Report CS09042 and CS09042(a) to Committee.

(g) **Outstanding Business List Items requiring Approval for Proposed New Due Dates (Item 11.1)**

The proposed new due date for the following item, were approved:

(i) **Item “M” – Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Needs Assessment**

Current Due Date: June 3, 2009
Proposed New Due Date: September 9, 2009
(h) ADJOURNMENT (Item 13)

There being no further business, the Emergency & Community Services Committee meeting be adjourned at 4:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Councillor R. Pasuta, 1st Vice Chair
Emergency & Community Services Committee

Stephanie Paparella
Legislative Assistant
June 3, 2009
BEST START TRANSITION PLAN

**Principles to Guide Planning in Hamilton for the End of the $63.5 Million Best Start Province Wide Funding**

1. Historical under-funding, by the Ministry of Children & Youth Services (MCYS), of the City of Hamilton’s child care administrative functions and child care allocated cost of administration expenses pre-dates Best Start Network Funding. While this funding pressure has been alleviated with Best Start funding, the pressure will re-emerge if the funding at risk ends by March 31, 2010.

2. The need to plan, co-ordinate, and integrate Early Years programs and services (system) in our community, will continue beyond March 31, 2010.

3. The Best Start Network will continue to provide strategic advice, direction and leadership in planning for Early Years in Hamilton.

4. The City will partner with the Best Start Network to develop a new Best Start Community Plan that reflects the amended Best Start funding levels.

5. Programs and service levels, currently provided as part of the Best Start Community Plan, will be adjusted to reflect funding levels confirmed by the MCYS.

6. The City will work closely with Child Care Operators to inform them of its approach to managing the potential reduction of Best Start funded child care fee subsidies (including Early Learning Program), wage subsidies and special needs resourcing funding.

7. Utilization of the Best Start Reserve will continue to occur in accordance with the guidelines set out in Report ECS07055.

**Immediate Action Required to Mitigate Potential Loss of Best Start Funding**

In advance of the development and approval of the final Action Plan, staff are recommending implementation of the two following steps to mitigate risk to the City and the local Early Years System as a whole:

1. **Phase-Out of the Early Learning Program (Preschool Universal)**

   The Early Learning Program (also referred to as Preschool Universal) is a Best Start component unique to the three demonstration sites across the province. For the past three years, the program has been offered in Hamilton by three child care operators specific to the demonstration area only. This program, which was part of the Best Start child care expansion in 2006, created 124 spaces for children to
attend (free of charge—regardless of family financial need) half-days, prior to entering junior kindergarten. The program operates September to June of each year for a ‘new’ group of children and compliments the full-day and/or the before and after school child care operating in some child care sites. Since the MCYS has indicated that funding for this Best Start component is ‘potentially at risk’ by March 2010, staff are recommending that the program not resume in September 2009 and that the ‘universal fee subsidies’ currently assigned to the program be redirected to partially offset the existing child care fee subsidy wait list pressures, which affect all child care operators who have a Service Agreement for fee subsidies with the City of Hamilton.

The following rationale supports this recommendation:

- Provincial policy direction has shifted to focus on a universal program of full-day of learning for four and five-year olds rather than a half-day universal early learning program for three-year olds.

- Funding for this program, through a universal subsidy to child care operators is now considered by the MCYS as a sub-set of the Best Start Fee Subsidy funding envelope; the fee subsidy program currently has a waitlist of over 1,100 children requiring subsidized child care.

- Currently, there is an increase in demand for full-time pre-school care in some areas where the program is offered.

- Enrolment in the program has never reached its full capacity.

- Staff have been advised of potential school closures in September 2009 that may necessitate the closure of some of the programs.

- There is a decline of kindergarten enrolment in some areas where the program is offered.

2. **Temporary Moratorium on New Service Agreements with Child Care Operators**

Currently, Provincial legislation does not preclude child care operators from undertaking the expansion of existing programs or opening new programs regardless of whether Provincial funding is available to support capital or operating expenses.

No Provincial capital funding has been available for child care expansion since 2006. The MCYS has recently confirmed that child care fee subsidies, wage subsidies and wage improvement funding (operating expenses) will be negatively impacted if the Province cannot secure another funding source for the $63.5 million (province-wide). Any further expansion of the child care system in the community, at this time, will
only result in additional pressure or competition for shrinking child care operating subsidies.

Therefore, staff believes that it would be prudent for the City to place a moratorium on entering into amended or new service agreements for expanded or newly opened child care programs at this time. When further information regarding Hamilton specific Best Start funding reductions is received, an action plan to deal with the reductions will be developed and presented to the Emergency & Community Services Committee by October 28, 2009. The Plan will provide further recommendations related to the imposition of the moratorium beyond that date.

**Next Steps:**

1. Staff will continue to monitor relevant Provincial policy changes and Best Start funding levels in order to seek more information about the actual impact of the proposed funding loss on Hamilton’s Best Start Budget, as of March 31, 2010.

2. Staff will undertake work with the Best Start Network to develop a new community plan that reflects the amended Best Start funding levels.

3. Staff will continue to work with other municipal colleagues through the Ontario Municipal Social Services Association (OMSSA) to continue advocacy efforts aimed at having the $63.5 million Best Start funding re-instated.

4. Staff will continue to keep Council apprised as ‘new information’ becomes available and will prepare an action plan in response to potential funding reductions. A report will be presented to Council no later than October 28, 2009.

5. Staff will provide notification to the existing and potential new child care operators, and the MCYS regarding the temporary moratorium for service agreements (for fee and wage subsidies).

6. A communication plan will be developed and implemented in order to ensure accurate and timely communication with all stakeholders who may be affected by these changes.