



COMMUNICATION UPDATE

TO:	Mayor and Members City Council
DATE:	November 28, 2024
SUBJECT:	Update on Before and After School Affordability and Early Childhood Educator Workforce Grants (City Wide)
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	City Wide
SUBMITTED BY:	Brenda Bax Acting Director, Children's and Community Services Healthy and Safe Communities Department
SIGNATURE:	<i>B Bax</i>

The purpose of this Communication Update is to inform Council about the final extension of two grant programs launched by the Children's and Community Services division to improve child care affordability, accessibility and workforce stability in Hamilton: The Early Childhood Educator Workforce Grant and the Before and After School Affordability Grant. These decisions are a result of Ministry of Education changes in the funding formula and guidelines which take effect in 2025.

Early Childhood Educator Workforce Grant Update

To address workforce challenges and support the recruitment and retention of Early Childhood Educators (ECEs) and program staff, a workforce grant program was implemented in August 2023. The grant covers the full child care costs for eligible participant's children, aged 0-12 years.

The grant has been extended from January 1, 2025, to March 31, 2025. This will be the final extension, with the program set to end on April 1, 2025. Staff will be communicating this change to participants and include information on the eligibility for financial assistance through the Fee Subsidy program. Participants may choose to explore this option.

Before and After School Affordability Grant Update

To promote equitable access across the childcare system and school boards, an affordability grant program was launched in September 2023 to establish a standardized rate of \$15/day for school-age children in before- and after-school care.

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OUR Mission: To provide high quality cost conscious public services that contribute to a healthy, safe and prosperous community, in a sustainable manner.

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The grant was initially set to end on December 31, 2024. To avoid disruption in the middle of the school year, the grant has been extended to **June 30, 2025**. This will be the final extension, with the program concluding on July 1, 2025. The grant included funding licensed child care operators to offset operating costs and lost revenue due to fees being reduced to \$15.00. Staff will be communicating this extension to licensed child care operators and the families participating.

In 2025, Children's and Community Services staff will collaborate with school boards and school-based child care operators to explore strategies that improve access and affordability in the before and after school child care programs.

Families with children enrolled in kindergarten before and after-school care will continue to benefit from reduced fees provided under the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care agreement. Fees for child care for children aged 0-5 years will be capped at \$22.00 per day effective January 1, 2025.

If you have any questions or require additional information, please contact Brenda Bax, Acting Director, Children's & Community Services at Brenda.Bax@hamilton.ca or Dawn Meitz, Manager, Business Supports Dawn.Meitz@hamilton.ca

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