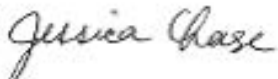




COMMUNICATION UPDATE

TO:	Mayor and Members City Council
DATE:	February 21, 2024
SUBJECT:	Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care - Directed Growth Application to Create New Child Care Spaces (City Wide)
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	City Wide
SUBMITTED BY:	Jessica Chase, Director, Children's and Community Services Division Healthy and Safe Communities Department
SIGNATURE:	

The province and the City of Hamilton are in the third year of implementing the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC) plan. The initiative aims to ensure more families across Ontario have access to safe, affordable and high-quality child care. CWELCC will be phased in by March 2026, with the average cost of child care for eligible children 0 to 6 years old, reduced to approximately \$12 per day. The Ministry of Education has also set a target access rate (the ratio of available child care spaces to children) of 37% by 2026 for this age group. This is equivalent to one affordable child care space available for every 2.7 children. Hamilton's access rate is currently at 32%.

Ontario's Ministry of Education also released an Access and Inclusion Framework to support the creation of new child care spaces, focusing on increased access to child care for children of low-income families, vulnerable children, children from diverse communities, children with special needs and Francophone and Indigenous children.

2023

In 2023, staff partnered with ten community agencies that have relationships with these populations. They engaged with more than 330 families regarding their child care needs. Their input helped inform the Directed Growth Application and evaluation criteria. Staff are currently reporting back to these agencies and families, providing resources based on their input.

In 2023, staff prioritized growth in wards 6,7,3 and 4 and completed a Directed Growth Application process inviting existing and new child care licensees to apply for funding to

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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.

OUR Culture: Collective Ownership, Steadfast Integrity, Courageous Change, Sensational Service, Engaged Empowered Employees.

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support opening or expanding new child care spaces. The demand for new child care spaces outpaced the available 381 spaces the Ministry of Education allocated. Approximately 60% of these spaces were operational in November, and the remaining 40% are in the licensing process. Staff anticipate these remaining child care spaces will be operational in wards 7, 4 and 3 this year.

2024

On February 28, staff will open the 2024 city-wide Directed Growth Applications, prioritizing growth in wards 6, 11, 5 and 2. Ward 6 is carried forward from 2023 because there were no applications submitted. Wards 11, 5 and 2 are being prioritized this year as these wards have lower access rates compared to other wards across the city. The Ministry of Education has allocated 265 community-based spaces for 2024. Following high demand in 2023, staff have requested an additional 98 spaces for 2024, pending Ministry of Education approval.

All child care growth in CWELCC is facilitated through the Directed Growth Application process, guided by the City of Hamilton's Access and Inclusion Framework as an evaluation tool. This process will also consider the Ministry of Education's auspice ratio, with 80% of spaces operated by not-for-profit and 20% by for-profit childcare licensees, which the City of Hamilton is required to maintain.

Over the next three years, all wards will benefit from new child care spaces. Staff will complete further analysis to ensure the child care needs of all neighbourhoods are considered.

Should you require further information on the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care, please contact Jessica Chase, Director Children's Services and Community Services Division at ext. 3590 or via email at Jessica.Chase@hamilton.ca.