

Early Years System Review-Quality and Inclusion Services

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Report Summary

This report provides information regarding the implementation of an Early Years System Review in the areas of quality and inclusion services. An external consultant has been engaged to conduct a sectoral service review and implementation plan as part of the Ministry of Education’s Directed Growth and Expansion plan for the City of Greater Sudbury.

Relationship to the Strategic Plan, Health Impact Assessment and Community Energy & Emissions Plan (CEEP)

This provision of high-quality and accessible early learning and childcare services supports Council’s Strategic Plan of Economic Capacity and Investment Readiness and Create a Healthier and More Vibrant Community.

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications to this report.

Background

The Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care System (CWELCC) aims to provide greater access to affordable and high-quality childcare. Participating CWELCC licensed childcare programs have had their fees reduced by 52.75 percent. The City of Greater Sudbury has a high provincial enrollment rate for CWELCC with approximately 97 percent of eligible childcare spaces enrolling in the program in 2022.

CWELCC also seeks to increase the number of childcare spaces available for families. The province has committed to the creation of approximately 86,000 new licensed childcare spaces in Ontario, of which, approximately 53,000 spaces remain to be created by 2026. In December 2022, the province released a draft Access and Inclusion Framework which sets a foundation for targeted CWELCC childcare expansion. The intention of the Framework is to focus on creating spaces in priority communities that will support access to licensed childcare for: low-income families; vulnerable communities; diverse communities; children with special needs; Francophone families; Indigenous families; and families needing flexible models of care.

CWELCC Targeted Child Care Expansion

The City of Greater Sudbury was provided a nominal allocation of 257 (91 school-based and 166 community-based) new childcare spaces for CWELCC childcare expansion to be developed by 2026. Planning is underway in targeted neighborhoods for the space expansion to be finalized ahead of schedule by the end of 2024.

As required by the Ministry of Education, the City of Greater Sudbury Children Services will develop a Directed Growth and Expansion Plan that will identify priority neighborhoods for expansion. In addition to the socioeconomic factors identified by the province, an online mapping tool will be used to layer childcare demand and demographic factors to identify priority communities, including:

- Current high childcare demand for families waiting for care;
- Incorporate the community plan and population growth areas;
- Vulnerable communities such as low-income housing, high public transit area, diverse communities.

Based on these above factors, CWELCC childcare expansion for the City of Greater Sudbury will target the neighborhoods of New Sudbury, West End and South End. Any Capital investment required for renovation costs in targeted expansion sites would be funded by General Operating Grant, which is an 80-20% cost share between the Province and the City.

The identification of priority communities was based on available data sources and reflects current childcare demand. Families will continue to access affordable childcare at existing CWELCC-enrolled sites in communities that were not identified as priorities.

Further, childcare expansion in communities not defined as priorities will continue through licensed home childcare. There is room for expansion within the licensed capacity of licensed home childcare as many childcare centers are operating below the current licensed capacity and therefore licensed home childcare is permitted to expand up to their licensed capacity. As Children Services collaborates with childcare operators to determine the feasibility of growth in priority communities, monitors supply and demand, and receives updated local data, more childcare operators may be considered for expansion.

Early Years System Review – Key Priorities

The provision of quality licensed childcare services supports early childhood learning which is vital to a child's development and offers an opportunity for the best start in life for young children and the future workforce. As well, licensed childcare services are recognized as essential to the economic well-being of a community by enabling parents to work or attend school. The global pandemic has demonstrated how crucial access to affordable licensed childcare is to the economic recovery in Canada, in part leading to the federal government moving forward with a national childcare plan.

This system review will provide Children Services with key recommendations for service integration aligning with the priorities of the Access and Inclusion Framework. It will focus on the provision of services for children and families with special needs and vulnerabilities in early childhood development as well as quality consultation services.

In addition, the review will include consultation with members of local stakeholder groups across the sector such as School Boards, specialized services with HSN, mental health leads, and licensed childcare service providers to inform them of the recommendations for the final report and work plan. Focus groups will also be scheduled with front-line staff across the early learning and childcare sector as well as with parents and caregivers. The external consultant will conduct the targeted consultations to promote full transparency and confidentiality while ensuring that the recommendations in the final report are representative of key priorities. The expenses related to the Consultation and Final Report, Professional Learning Plan for 2024-2025 for the sector, and

Program Evaluation Framework will be funded by General Operating and Professional Learning Grants, which are an 80-20% cost share between the Province and the City.

Next Steps

Children Services will release the Directed Growth and Expansion Plan for the City of Greater Sudbury by March 2024 including our priority communities, the expansion application process, and the recommendations from our Early Years System Review for public knowledge. The information will be posted on the City's website.

Resources Cited

[Ministry of Education Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Guidelines](#)