

# INFORMATION REPORT

<b>TO:</b>	Chair and Members Emergency & Community Services Committee
<b>COMMITTEE DATE:</b>	September 25, 2017
<b>SUBJECT/REPORT NO:</b>	Ontario Early Years Child and Family Centre Initial Plan and Needs Assessment (CES16029(b))(City Wide) (Outstanding Business List Item)
<b>WARD(S) AFFECTED:</b>	City Wide
<b>PREPARED BY:</b>	Jessica Chase (905) 546-2424 ext. 3590
<b>SUBMITTED BY:</b>	Grace Mater Director, Children's & Home Management Services Division Community and Emergency Services Department
<b>SIGNATURE:</b>	

## Council Direction:

At the July 6, 2016, Emergency and Community Services Committee meeting, a motion regarding the Early Years Child and Family Centres was received with staff directed to:

“report back to the Emergency & Community Services Committee on the funding formula and any anticipated impacts on programs and services.”

## Information:

### Background

On February 22, 2016, the Ministry of Education announced the provincial plan for moving forward with the integration and transformation of child and family programs. Beginning in January 2018, the existing Ontario Early Years Centres (OEYCs), currently delivered by community agencies, and Parenting and Family Literacy Centres (PFLCs), presently delivered by the Boards of Education, will evolve into a new system of early years programs called the Ontario Early Years Child and Family Centres (OEYCFCs). The City of Hamilton, in its role as Consolidated Municipal Services Manager, will be responsible for the local planning, implementation, funding, and ongoing management of the new OEYCFCs. The OEYCFC programs will be guided by a provincial framework, a common identity, and a new funding approach.

On June 6, 2017, the Ministry of Education released *Ontario's Renewed Early Years and Child Care Policy Framework (2017)*, which highlighted the provincial vision that “all children and families have access to a range of child- and family-centred programs and services that are high-quality, inclusive and affordable and that contribute to children's

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learning, development and well-being". The creation of the OEYCFCs supports this vision. OEYCFCs are also identified as one of the seven priorities in Hamilton's Early Years Community Plan (2016-2020), which was released in the fall of 2016.

On June 16, 2017, the Ministry of Education announced the 2018 funding allocations for OEYCFCs. The total 2018 operating allocation for the City of Hamilton is \$5,941,018. In addition, the Ministry of Education has announced two capital funding opportunities through local boards of education to support the creation of OEYCFCs. These capital funding opportunities were submitted by the local school boards, in partnership with the municipality.

#### Planning Process and Stakeholder Engagement

Beginning in June 2016, the City brought together a planning group consisting of representatives from the OEYC agencies currently delivering early years programs, including Indigenous and Francophone operators, Ministry of Education, local school boards, professional resource centre, and City of Hamilton (Community & Emergency Services Department and Public Health Services). The planning group has developed a needs assessment and initial plan which is due to the Ministry of Education by September 29, 2017. The planning group has also consulted with families and children to better understand why families use the existing Ontario Early Years Centres (OEYCs) and Parenting and Family Literacy Centres (PFLCs) and any potential barriers to accessing these services.

The City has committed to building on the strengths and assets of both the OEYC and PFLC systems, as well as looking for new opportunities to distribute physical sites more equitably across the city, and realigning services to create a more cohesive system that better meets the needs of the families and children living in Hamilton. The City has also committed to continuing to engage and consult with families and community partners as we move forward with developing an implementation plan.

#### Needs Assessment

The Hamilton OEYCFC planning has been informed by an assessment of local community needs and assets as they relate to early years programs and services. This assessment included a review and analysis of available child and family population data, general community demographic data, and early years program and service availability and utilization data. Consultation with local children, parents, caregivers, early years service providers, and key community partners also informed the needs assessment by providing insight and understanding about how programs and services could be adjusted to respond to changing community needs.

The needs assessment highlighted the following strengths and accomplishments achieved to date:

- Strong foundation of child and family support programs, with a history of ongoing willingness to plan and work together for the benefit of children and families
- Improved communication, planning and working relationships between OEYCs and PFLCs
- Creation of new and innovative services and initiatives, such as the Beasley Child and Family Centre, Check It Out Clinics and the Hamilton Charter of Rights of Children and Youth
- Collaboration with other early years providers regarding inter-professional training and services
- Increased value placed on program evaluation and evidence-informed practice
- Families experience a “comfortable, welcoming and friendly” environment at the OEYCs and/or PFLCs

The needs assessment also identified the following considerations to help inform planning for the new system:

- Minimal funding increases have resulted in a limited ability for the system to expand hours or locations to meet the changing needs of Hamilton families (e.g. demand for weekend and evening hours, demand in areas of the city that have experienced rapid population growth, etc.)
- Some PFLCs and OEYCs are situated in relative close proximity to one another serving the same or adjacent neighbourhoods, leading to the perception of service duplication in some areas
- The need to stabilize the early years system and view it as a system, rather than a collection of programs
- Unclear access points/pathways for families who are not currently engaged but would benefit from services and supports (e.g. families accessing child welfare, mental health services, etc.)
- The need to work closely with providers that have expertise regarding the needs of diverse populations
- More support needed for programs serving children with high or complex needs
- A lack of consistent and efficient data collection and reporting mechanisms
- Need to identify how the OEYCFCs will align with the broader community hubs strategy.

A detailed review of the needs assessment can be found in the Hamilton OEYCFC Needs Assessment, attached as Appendix A to Report CES16029(b).

#### Initial Plan: Conceptual Model

The City of Hamilton, in partnership with the OEYCFC planning group, has developed a conceptual model for the new system. The conceptual model is based on the foundational principles identified in the Hamilton Early Years Community Plan, 2016-2020, as well as the Ministry of Education's planning guidelines. Based on the needs assessment and provincial expectations, Hamilton will be moving towards offering more full service sites in permanent locations. This will include a combination of full-time and part-time hours of operation. All sites will provide the following mandatory core services:

- Engaging parents and caregivers through discussions, information sharing, pre- and post-natal supports, and targeted outreach activities
- Making connections for families by responding to parent concerns about their child's development, information sharing and connecting with specialized community services, and information sharing about programs and services for the whole family beyond the early years
- Supporting early learning and development through drop-in or other programs that build responsive adult-child relationships and encourage children's exploration.

A key component of Hamilton's OEYCFC plan is the commitment to city-wide programs, processes and protocols that will ensure system-wide expectation for equitable access and high quality programming are met. Examples of this include:

- Hamilton's commitment to quality through the Hamilton Early Years Quality Program
- Supporting professional learning and development
- Maintaining system-wide data and monitoring protocols, supports and resources
- Developing strategies to engage key stakeholders, including key community partners, OEYCFC staff, families and caregivers, and neighbourhood partners
- Creating mechanisms for the coordination of programs and system-wide processes, programs and supports.

The Hamilton OEYCFC Initial Plan is attached as Appendix B to Report CES16029(b).

#### Initial Plan: Number of Locations and Site/Operator Selection Considerations

As evidenced by the needs assessment, the current OEYC and PFLC sites are not equitably distributed across the city. Therefore, one of the key objectives of the new OEYCFC system is to move towards a more equitable distribution of physical sites across the city. To address this challenge, the planning group established a neighbourhood-based approach to determine the geographic locations for centres, while also building upon existing assets and resources within our community. This mapping approach identified that Hamilton needs approximately 15 to 20 OEYCFC sites, which

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will include a combination of new and existing locations. The current funding allocation of \$5,941,018 indicates that some of these sites will be full-time and others will be part-time.

Building on existing assets, it has been determined that Hamilton's OEYCFC system will build on the existing eight main OEYCs, including the Francophone and Indigenous OEYCs. The City will begin a process to review each of these existing physical assets to ensure they meet the new service delivery expectations and will identify transition plans to address any shortcomings.

For each new OEYCFC site, selection to determine the best location will be based on the following criteria:

- Ability to meet the needs of Hamilton's diverse population of children and families
- Representative of a range of settings across the city
- Supports easy family access and early childhood learning
- Supports neighbourhoods
- Supports community and service provider connections
- Meets physical requirements
- Meets operational requirements.

The existing OEYC operators will form the basis of the OEYCFC's system expertise and the Boards of Education will continue to play an important partner role in the OEYCFC planning process. The OEYC operators will continue to deliver at least one full service OEYCFC, however there may be some changes in the geographic service delivery areas or the specific physical site. The creation of new OEYCFCs also provides an opportunity to potentially engage new operators and partners in the delivery of OEYCFCs. Each operator, new or existing, must meet the following criteria:

- Be a not-for-profit organization
- Demonstrate financial and organizational viability and sustainability
- Have the capacity to deliver high quality early years programs that align with the pedagogical approach described in *How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years*
- Have the capacity, knowledge, and expertise to address the diverse needs for all children, parents, and caregivers
- Have the ability and demonstrated commitment to work in partnership with other early years and community partners
- Agree to participate in the Hamilton Early Years Quality Program
- Ensure that all program staff are paid a living wage

It is important to note that the selection and implementation of OEYCFC sites and operators will be phased in beginning in 2018 based on site and operator resource

availability. In some cases, temporary locations will be selected until a more permanent location is available.

#### Next Steps

The needs assessment and initial plan will be submitted to the Ministry of Education by September 29, 2017.

Over the coming months, City staff will develop a transition plan for the new OEYCFC system. The key tasks included in the transition plan will include confirming and/or selecting the OEYCFC physical sites and operators, and developing and implementing a coordinating structure that will support the integration and connectivity of OEYCFCs.

Staff are committed to continuing to consult with families, early years staff, and community partners as we move forward with the transition plan for the new OEYCFC system. As we transition to the new system beginning in 2018, every effort will be made to minimize disruptions to families and staff. A communications plan is being developed to continue to keep all key stakeholders, including families, updated on the planning process and implementation of the new OEYCFC system.

#### **APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED**

Appendix A to Report CES16029(b): Hamilton OEYCFC Needs Assessment

Appendix B to Report CES16029(b): Hamilton OEYCFC Initial Plan