



## INFORMATION REPORT

<b>TO:</b>	Chair and Members Emergency and Community Services Committee
<b>COMMITTEE DATE:</b>	August 17, 2020
<b>SUBJECT/REPORT NO:</b>	Reopening the Child Care and Early Years Systems (HSC20027(a)) (City Wide)
<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 Services and Neighbourhood Development Division Healthy and Safe Communities Department
<b>SIGNATURE:</b>	

### COUNCIL DIRECTION

Not Applicable

### INFORMATION

In Hamilton, the licensed child care system began to reopen on June 22, 2020 based on provincial direction. Licensed child care centres were able to reopen with enhanced health and safety measures in place, including reduced capacity as detailed in Report HSC20027. As of July 31, 2020, 78% of child care programs that typically operate during the summer months had reopened. Most programs were operating at approximately 30% of their typical licensed capacity.

On July 30, 2020, the Ministry of Education announced that effective September 1, 2020, all licensed child care centres, including before and after school programs, may reopen at their full licensed capacity. Additional health and safety measures such as enhanced cleaning, screening of children and staff, and exclusion policies for those showing potential COVID-19 symptoms remain in place. Locally, the requirement to pass an in-person Public Health inspection also remains in place. Effective September 1, 2020, the ministry will also be mandating the use of medical masks and face shields for all staff and cloth masks/face coverings for children in grades 4 and above.

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OUR Vision: To be the best place to raise a child and age successfully.

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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On July 30, 2020, the Ministry of Education also announced that effective September 1, 2020, all EarlyON Child and Family Centres may also reopen. All EarlyON Child and Family Centres have remained closed for in-person programming since March 14, 2020. During this closure period, EarlyON centres have continued to provide virtual programming to families including online story and gathering times and activities for families to do at home with their children aged 0-6 years. EarlyON centres will also be required to implement enhanced health and safety measures, including a reservation system so that families can book a time to attend. In Hamilton, City staff are working closely with EarlyON operators to offer a blended model in September which will include a combination of in-person EarlyON programs, outdoor programming and virtual programming. EarlyON centres will be phased in based on staffing capacity and physical space requirements.

While both the licensed child care and EarlyON systems are reopening, many operators are facing staffing pressures which may limit their ability to fully reopen immediately. The child care and early years system was facing a shortage of Registered Early Childhood Educators prior to the pandemic. As a result of the pandemic, several operators have indicated that they are experiencing further staffing shortages at the same time that the need for additional staff for screening and enhanced cleaning has increased.

The Ministry of Education has also announced that beginning September 1, 2020, the requirement to hold a child's space has been lifted. Operators are required to provide 14 days notice to the family before the space can be offered to another family. The requirement to maintain parental fees at pre-closure (March 2020) levels has also been lifted. In order to mitigate impacts on families, the City has extended the Affordability Grant which reduces the cost of child care by \$10/day for children aged 0-3.8 years until December 31, 2020.

Children's Services and Neighbourhood Development staff are currently working closely with Public Health staff to develop and update both child care and EarlyON guidelines to reflect these recent announcements. Community meetings are being held with child care and early years operators to support them in this reopening process. Staff are also working closely with our school board partners to plan for the reopening of child care centres and EarlyON Child and Family Centres located in schools.

**APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED**

None