



November 18, 2021

Re: Item 11.1, National Childcare Strategy – investigating the potential for direct municipal agreement with the Federal Government

Dear Members of the Emergency and Community Services Committee,

As President and CEO of the Hamilton Chamber of Commerce, Hamilton's oldest institution at 176 years old, I have the privilege of speaking for our 1,000+ members that employ over 75,000 people in our community. I am writing to express our support for the motion tabled that, if passed, would instruct City staff to investigate a direct municipal agreement with the Federal Government on its National Childcare Strategy.

Throughout the past course of the pandemic, the Chamber has been a lifeline for local businesses hosting over 40 webinars on pandemic response related subjects, conducting advocacy to all three levels of government based on the feedback of our members, and partnering with the City to launch the Hamilton COVID Concierge for Business support service, which has provided direct, one-on-one support to hundreds of Hamilton-area businesses. A major theme that has emerged over the course of the past 20 months is the near-unanimous consent among the business community that affordable and accessible childcare is an essential priority as we embark on our economic recovery.

Looking to understand and address the gender disparities that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on our local labour market, the Hamilton Chamber of Commerce conducted the [Women Out of Work](#) study over the course of 2020-2021 that heard from nearly 1,600 self-identified Hamilton women. We know that full economic recovery is not possible if women are not included. Nor is it possible if women are not provided with fair and equitable opportunities for workforce participation. Since the immediate impact of the first wave, Hamilton women have disproportionately had their careers impacted, their finances strained, and their expectations for unpaid work increase. COVID-19 has unduly affected female-dominated sectors in Canada and women are facing excessive barriers to re-entering the workforce.

During the study, the need for a national childcare strategy was repeatedly brought up via survey and focus group participants. We urge all levels of government to continue making strides towards universal, accessible and affordable childcare, which will

significantly improve workforce participation and reduce the financial burden of childcare on all Hamilton families.

Though we would prefer, and fully expect, an agreement between the Government of Canada and the Province of Ontario to be struck on the implementation of the Early Learning and Child Care and Indigenous Early Learning and Childcare system, we strongly support the motion today in hopes that an alternate process may deliver these advantages to the Hamilton labour force in a more expedient fashion.

Once again, thank you to the Emergency and Community Services Committee for the opportunity to provide comments today. Considering the experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic, accessible and affordable childcare needs to be considered integral to the economic development and success of communities moving forward.

Sincerely,



Keanin Loomis,
President & CEO
Hamilton Chamber of Commerce