



Office of the Commissioner
Community and Health Services Department

Memorandum

To: Members of Committee of the Whole

From: Katherine Chislett
Commissioner of Community and Health Services

Date: May 11, 2017

Re: **Update on the Ontario Early Years Child and Family Centre
Provincial Initiative**

The Province, through the Ministry of Education, currently provides funding and directly administers provincial child and family programs. These programs include Ontario Early Years Centres, Parent and Family Literacy Centres, Child Care Resource Centres and Better Beginnings, Better Futures programs.

With the exception of the Better Beginnings, Better Futures program, there are currently 69 of these child and family program sites in York Region providing services for children and their families. The following programs are operated by five community agencies and one local school board:

- 63 Ontario Early Years Centres
- 5 Parent and Family Literacy Centres
- Child Care Resource Centre

On February 19, 2016, the Ministry of Education announced a new initiative in the modernization of the Children's Services System across Ontario, which will have an impact on municipal responsibilities. The Province intends to integrate and transform all Ministry of Education funded child and family programs into one cohesive system of services for children 0 – 6 years of age. These services will be delivered through newly created Ontario Early Years Child and Family Centres.

The future programs and services delivered in Ontario Early Years Child and Family Centres to support children, parents and caregivers must be: child and family centered; welcoming; high quality; foster positive outcomes for children; and be inclusive, accessible and responsive. These services are to be developed and delivered in collaboration with local communities to meet their unique needs.

As of January 2018, the service system manager role of municipalities will be expanded

Beginning in January 2018, the service system manager role of municipalities will be expanded to include the local management of Ontario Early Years Child and Family Centres. Municipalities will be required to manage the funding and program delivery of provincially identified mandatory core services. Municipalities will have the flexibility to determine how these core services are delivered, and by who, through a local service planning process.

In 2017, municipalities are required to complete a local needs assessment for the Ontario Early Years Child and Family Centres. York Region's local needs assessment will include information that provides an in-depth understanding of community needs as they relate to early years programs. The completion of the local needs assessment has used: 2011 census data; 2015 Early Development Instrument Data (which measures children's ability to meet age-appropriate developmental expectations at school entry); and program data gathered from agencies/community partners that currently operate child and family programs. The local needs assessment will assist in the identification of existing gaps or duplication of services in local neighbourhoods to ensure that funding is used effectively to meet the needs of children, parents and caregivers. The local needs assessment will cover a number of areas including:

- Location, number and language (English, French or non-official) of families with children ages 0 – 6
- Existing child and family programs serving children ages 0 – 6 and their families, including information on programs being offered, site location, hours of operation and utilization by Early Development Instrument data
- Child population by Early Development Instrument data and local municipality
- Parent/caregiver feedback on current child and family programs
- 2015 Early Development Instrument results by Early Development Instrument by neighbourhood

The Province has allocated one-time funding of \$175,439 to York Region to support initial service planning including staffing costs and either internal or external professional services to determine community needs and completion of the local needs assessment. This funding is also to be used to develop local service system plans and support the development of new service contracts for the delivery of services in 2018 and beyond. The Province has not confirmed future funding allocations.

The Social Services Branch has initiated discussions with community partners to inform the sector of provincial decisions and discuss possible next steps. Once Provincial direction is clarified further, staff will work in collaboration with community partners to scope out and launch the initiative in York Region.

Staff will report back to Council once the full scope of new responsibilities become clearer.

Katherine Chislett
Commissioner of Community and Health Services

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