

# The Regional Municipality of York

Committee of the Whole  
Community and Health Services  
November 7, 2019

Report of the Commissioner of Community and Health Services

## **It Starts With Kids: York Region's 2020 to 2023 Child Care and Early Years Service System Plan**

### **1. Recommendation**

Council approve York Region's 2020 to 2023 Child Care and Early Years Service System Plan (Attachment 1).

### **2. Summary**

This report seeks Council's approval of the 2020 to 2023 Child Care and Early Years Service System Plan provided in Attachment 1. The Region is required to have a Council approved plan in place under the *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014*. This System Plan sets priorities to focus actions of the Region and other organizations involved in supporting children aged 0 to 12 years.

Key Points:

- The recommended System Plan was developed in partnership with school boards, child care operators and staff, parents and school councils, local cities and towns, regional staff across departments, and community agencies serving children including mental health.
- By establishing priorities, and through coordination and integration with partners also working in the children's sector, the System Plan will help provide stability to children's services in an environment where provincial funding is being reduced, future provincial service requirements are unknown and family needs are changing.
- Changes to the provincial funding announced so far include asking for Regional tax levy contributions to improve the affordability of childcare by continuing to provide child care subsidies and by funding supports for child care operators beginning January 2020, and reduced funding for program delivery costs beginning in 2021.

### 3. Background

#### **York Region's plans, oversees and manages child care and early years services in our communities**

York Region is one of 47 Service System Managers mandated by the Province to plan, oversee and manage child care and early years services for children aged 0 to 12 years. Child care and early years programming falls under the direction of the Ministry of Education, as part of the broader education portfolio. The overarching Provincial goal is to support Ontario's families and children with a system of responsive, high quality, accessible, integrated services that are sustainable and contribute to healthy child development and to the growth of the economy.

#### **In 2018, approximately 70,000 children and their families benefited directly or indirectly from the programs and services provided by or contracted through the Region**

Most services are delivered through a strong network of not-for-profit and private agencies and other partners, such as school boards and local hospitals. For the most part, the Region's role in the system is to manage funding, program eligibility and service planning, however, the Region does directly deliver some programs for children with special needs.

Programs administered by the Region include the following:

- **Child Care Fee Subsidy:** 10,907 children living in low and moderate income households received Child Care Fee Subsidy to attend licensed child care so their parents could afford to go to work or attend school
- **Infant Child Development Services:** For 2,171 children with special needs, some unable to attend licensed child care, Early Interventionists made sure they had equitable access to the social, emotional and developmental supports they need to be ready for school and life
- **Inclusion Support Services:** Supported 2,008 children with special needs to attend licensed child care, so they can learn and develop alongside their peers
- **EarlyON Child and Family Centres:** Approximately 13,000 children and their caregivers benefited from access to Early Childhood Educators to support their child's learning and development, and to build community connections
- **Community Programs:** 7,200 children living in families with low and moderate income received a subsidy for recreation, swimming and camp programs provided by Local Municipalities and community agencies, or were able to attend community programs (such as the All Our Kids program, which provides drop in programs across the region for parents and caregivers of children 0-6 years to support healthy child development and connections to other resources).

- **Social Housing After School Programs: 194** children and youth built life skills and confidence through after school programs in four social housing communities. Improvements were seen in family relationships, high school achievement, and reduced community complaints/police calls.

In addition, the Region provides indirect supports which benefit about **49,000** children. This includes providing funding to licensed child care centres for:

- Wage enhancements to attract and retain quality Registered Early Childhood Educators (to close the gap between wages in the education sector and licensed child care sectors)
- Purchase of play-based and other specialized equipment and repairs and maintenance funding, to create welcoming, safe environments for children.
- General operating costs to support licensed child care operators to ensure access and affordability for families.

More information on children’s services is available at [York.ca/children](http://York.ca/children)

## 4. Analysis

### **2020 TO 2023 CHILD CARE AND EARLY YEARS SERVICE SYSTEM PLAN**

#### **The Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014 requires Service System Managers have a Council-approved Child Care and Early Years Service System Plan**

The primary purpose of the Child Care and Early Years Service System Plan, is to support collaboration and integration among the many partners in the sector to manage resources even more effectively and keep a system that remains as accessible, affordable, and responsive to resident’s needs as possible.

#### **Parents, caregivers, service providers, partners, Regional and local municipal staff were consulted to develop the System Plan**

The recommended System Plan (Attachment 1) sets out priorities for children’s services and plans for meeting the unique needs of local families. The System Plan was informed by a detailed profile of children age 0-12 years (Attachment 2), and through an extensive consultation process which helped identify community needs and priorities, areas where efficiencies can be realized, and additional partnership opportunities.

#### **The System Plan will support enhanced collaboration among the partners and stakeholders across the child care and early years system in York Region**

The System Plan is based on the following vision:

- To work with partners and stakeholders to support children’s learning and development and families’ overall well-being through:
  - Services that are accessible, affordable, responsive, and high-quality, and that are welcoming to all York Region children and families
  - Planning decisions that are focused on outcomes, evidence-based and are financially sustainable

The needs of families are changing, provincial funding is being reduced, and future provincial service requirements are unknown. Having a shared vision, shared priorities and a shared blueprint is even more important in this time of uncertainty to ensure continued stability. The System Plan will support better targeting of services, cost-effective investments and ways of providing services that use limited resources to focus on the needs of children and families. Its priorities and actions are flexible enough to adapt to changes in the funding landscape and community needs.

**Partners and stakeholders have agreed to five priorities which will establish a common focus**

The System Plan priorities are outlined in Table 1.

**Table 1**  
**2020-2023 Child Care and Early Years Service System Plan Priorities**

System Plan priority	What it means
1. Decisions based on <b>data</b>	Enhancing access to data so all stakeholders can understand the impact of programs and services to make the right investments
2. A system that <b>works together</b> to plan services	Supporting a seamless system of services that exist where they are most needed
3. Parents, caregivers and professionals have the <b>knowledge and capacity</b> to support child development	Building capacity in the community so parents, caregivers and child care and early years professionals understand and can support children’s growth and development without over reliance on government
4. A <b>responsive</b> system that reflects the needs of children, families and stakeholders	Building a system that responds to changes in the population and provides enhanced, relevant customer service to ensure investments are worthwhile
5. Children are <b>included</b> and have <b>access</b> to services	Enhancing awareness of services and increasing access so all children can benefit

## **Twenty-five key actions are identified to realize the priorities and vision, which can be scaled in response to provincial funding and service changes**

The recommended System Plan includes 25 key actions to address the priorities (see pages 28 and 29 of Attachment 1). Actions include updating policies related to child care to more efficiently respond to the Region's current demographic patterns, and bringing programs together to avoid duplication.

An example of avoiding duplication is the action to merge the All Our Kids programs into EarlyON Child and Family Centres. These programs have similar mandates and serve similar audiences; bringing them together will result in more consistent service. This merger will be recommended to Council as part of the 2020 budget process.

The actions may be enhanced or reduced in response to funding and/or service changes the province may make over the 2020-2023 timeframe of the System Plan. For example, reimagining how services are delivered and working with community partners to meet goals within our resources, and choosing the most effective and efficient delivery methods.

## **5. Financial**

The approved 2019 operating budget for Child Care is \$176 million, of which \$158 million (90 per cent) is funded by the province.

### **The province is changing the funding model for children's services beginning in 2020**

These Province seeks to address its deficit by finding savings, driving efficiencies and modernizing service delivery across many different program areas. For children's services, the following changes have been announced so far:

- Starting January 1, 2020, Service System Managers will be asked to pay 20% of the cost to expand the system; currently the province funds 100% of these costs. This includes increasing availability of child care subsidies, increasing affordability for all parents by giving more funding to support child care operators.
- Starting January 1, 2021, Service System Managers will be required to pay 50% of the cost for managing program delivery for child care. Since 2013, the province has funded 100% of these costs.
- Starting January 1, 2022, the amount permitted for managing program delivery for child care will be reduced from 10% of the provincial funding allocation for child care to 5%, and the Region will be required to fund half of that 5%.

These Provincial funding reductions will be addressed through the 2020 budget process. The actions set out in the System Plan can be scaled in response to provincial funding and service decisions.

## 6. Local Impact

York Region supports and invests in children and their families in all local municipalities to receive cost-effective, equitable, quality service regardless of where they live in the Region. All local municipalities contributed to development of the recommended System Plan, and will benefit from its implementation.

## 7. Conclusion

The recommended 2020-2023 Child Care and Early Years Service System Plan for York Region was developed through extensive engagement with community partners and stakeholders, including parents. It sets a vision, priorities and key actions to better use community resources to strengthen and integrate child care and early years services over the next four years for children aged 0 to 12 years and their families. Promoting children's learning and development, supporting parents and caregivers to understand their child's needs and helping participate in the workforce supports a strong economy and healthy, vibrant communities.

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For more information on this report, please contact Cordelia Abankwa, General Manager, Social Services at 1-877-464-9675 ext. 72150. Accessible formats or communication supports are available upon request.

Recommended by: **Katherine Chislett**  
Commissioner of Community and Health Services

Approved for Submission: **Bruce Macgregor**  
Chief Administrative Officer

October 25, 2019  
Attachments (2)  
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