Planning for the Future of Child Care and Early Learning in Waterloo Region

February 9, 2021

Opportunities for Early Years and Child Care System Change

We know that there are things about the child care system that are not working well for families. From our engagement with families since 2016 we have heard that the following areas are priorities:

- Affordability

- Access (including sustainability)

- Equity & Inclusion

- Quality

Early Learning and Child Care Service System Plan

▶ System Plans identify local strategic directions, goals, and targets and must align with provincial direction

▶ The current local System Plan is being updated based on engagement and an environmental scan

Timeline	Key Tasks
Jan-Feb 2021	Develop engagement plan
Feb-May 2021	Conduct widespread stakeholder engagement (including with Indigenous and racialized communities and other diverse families) and environmental scan (including analysis)
June 2021	Update to Regional Council on findings of stakeholder engagement
May-July 2021	Prepare goals, targets and action plans based on engagement and environmental scan findings • Focused engagement and research as needed
Jul-Aug 2021	Final writing and document design
Fall 2021	New System Plan presented to Regional Council for approval

Reinvestment of Provincial Funding

- The System Plan will inform priorities for new and/or revised funding investments

- Provincial funding available for reinvestment as a result of the Region of Waterloo Children's Centres transition:

    - $1.0M in 2021

    - $3.1M in 2022

    - A total of up to $4.3M will be available when the transition is completed

- Short-term (2021) funding reinvestment priority will be sustainability grants for community child care operators

    - Details will be released to operators in spring 2021

- Long-term funding reinvestment priorities, starting in 2022, will support Council priorities including the "Healthy, safe and inclusive communities" and "Thriving economy" Focus Areas and align with the System Plan

    - Draft priorities will be provided to Council in June 2021

    - Specific funding policy details will be released in fall 2021

Equity & Inclusion

▶ Children's Services staff is working with the Region of Waterloo Equity, Inclusion and Human Rights unit to develop a strategy for engagement with Indigenous and racialized communities and other marginalized families:

   ▶ Short-term engagement plan (spring 2021)

      ▶ Will inform System Plan and initial actions

      ▶ Identify and act on potential opportunities for immediate action

   ▶ Long-term engagement plan (beginning summer 2021)

      ▶ Focused on identifying and removing child care system barriers and inequities

▶ Environmental scan

   ▶ Reviewing available data to support data disaggregation

Quality Improvement

▶ Children's Services is enhancing quality supports and processes for all licensed child care and early years programs in Waterloo Region

Timeline	Key Tasks
January-August 2021	• Research quality measurement tool options • Engage with key stakeholders (through System Plan engagement and focused engagement) • Develop quality priorities and approach
Fall 2021	• System Plan presented to Council – will include clear quality actions and targets • Provide details about new quality improvement approach
2022	• Begin implementation of new quality improvement approach

▶ Long-term funding for new quality improvement supports, including supports to address barriers faced by Indigenous and racialized communities, will be identified as part of the system planning processes.