

Region of Waterloo
Community Services
Children's Services

To: Community and Health Services Committee
Meeting Date: April 9, 2024
Report Title: Creating Culturally Responsive Non-Profit Child Care Spaces

1. Recommendation

That the Regional Municipality of Waterloo direct staff to explore opportunities and identify non-profit organizations to lease 30 Christopher Drive, Cambridge and 104 Stirling Avenue South, Kitchener to create culturally responsive childcare for Indigenous children and families and other families that face systemic barriers, as set out in report CSD-CHS-24-002 dated April 9, 2024.

2. Purpose / Issue:

This report seeks Council approval for staff to explore and identify non-profit organizations who will create culturally responsive licensed child care programs at the Region-owned properties located at 30 Christopher Drive, Cambridge and 104 Stirling Avenue South, Kitchener.

3. Strategic Plan:

This report addresses the following Strategic Priorities from the 2023-2027 Corporate Strategic Plan:

- **Resilient and Future Ready Organizations:** We will advance our responsibility to respond to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action #3, #5, and #12, United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) Article 14 (2-3), 21 (2), and Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) Calls to Justice 2.3, 12.3, 12.12, 16.4, 16.21 by supporting the development of culturally responsive child care for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis families.
- **Equitable Services & Opportunities:** We will work to ensure our community has access to services they need by expanding inclusive and equitable child care spaces.
- **Homes for All:** We will use Region-owned buildings to create opportunities for affordable non-profit child care spaces.

4. Report Highlights:

- Children's Services is undertaking consultations with Indigenous community partners on creating culturally safe and relevant licensed child care spaces as outlined in Access and Inclusion Plan (see Appendix A). High quality, safe, and culturally specific licensed child care programs will provide connection to culture and Indigenous ways of knowing to support healing and education of Indigenous children and families.
- Staff is proposing the Region-owned buildings located at 30 Christopher Drive in Cambridge and 104 Stirling Avenue South in Kitchener be used to create approximately 92 non-profit child care spaces for families that face systemic barriers, with an initial focus on Indigenous-led and Indigenous-focused non-profit child care. Staff will work with Office of Reconciliation, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (REDI) within the CAO office and Procurement to create an equitable application and selection process for non-profit providers.
- The creation of these spaces strongly aligns with the Region of Waterloo's directed approach to child care growth, (CSD-CHS-23-001 dated April 4, 2023 and CSD-CHS-23-002 dated August 15, 2023) and the Indigenous Space Needs report (CAO-REC-23-001 dated March 7, 2023).
- Staff propose the terms and conditions of the lease agreements be negotiated between staff and identified operators. Site location maps of the two buildings are provided as Appendix B. Staff will determine maintenance and capital repairs needed for each building and will incorporate those costs in the 2025 Budget.
- Staff will develop a transition plan with the current users of the buildings and ensure programs have adequate time to plan for wrap-up or re-location services. The new child care programs are anticipated to open in 2025 or 2026 after current building users are transitioned out and necessary renovations are completed.

5. Background:

- In March 2022, the Canada-Ontario Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC) agreement was signed to create more affordable and high-quality child care spaces. Under CWELCC, Waterloo Region has a target of 3,725 new child care spaces to be created between 2022 and 2026. As a part of the agreement, Waterloo Region is required to maintain a ratio of 85% non-profit to 15% for-profit child care spaces (CSD-CHS-23-001 dated April 4, 2023 and CSD-CHS-23-002 dated August 15, 2023). The new CWELCC spaces will be located in one of 13 priority areas and will ensure equitable access for Provincial priority groups such as: low-income families, Indigenous children, Black and other racialized children,

refugee children, and children with special needs.

- The waiting list for licensed child care has significantly increased since the implementation of CWELCC in 2022. As of April 1, 2024, there are over 10,000 children on the child care wait list and of those, 6,000 are looking for a space right now. Parents are experiencing significant delays and difficulties with accessing child care.
- As directed by Council (CSD-CHS-24-001, dated February 6, 2024), Children's Services staff has worked with Housing Services, Economic Development and Facilities to discuss available, Region-owned buildings and lands located in priority neighbourhoods and are recommending these two properties be repurposed for community based non-profit child care.
- The Region-owned properties located at 30 Christopher Drive in Cambridge and 104 Stirling Avenue South in Kitchener were operated as child care centres until September 2021. Since the closure, the buildings have been used as a vaccination clinic and temporary emergency shelter, respectively. Renovation work is required to prepare each building for use as child care centres again (e.g., removal of showers, fixtures, etc.). Both locations are located in priority areas.
- In addition to the two proposed child care locations in this report, initial plans are in place to include licensed child care facilities in the Waterloo Region Housing (WRH) redevelopment at 15-105 Mooregate Crescent and staff is exploring the potential at Courtland-Shelley WRH redevelopment (located at 1050-1064 Courtland Avenue East, and 440 - 470 Shelley Drive in Kitchener). These developments will create approximately 176 spaces, with estimated opening dates between 2029 to 2030. Staff is still exploring other Regional properties that are suitable for child care and will bring forward future reports as they are identified.

6. Communication and Engagement with Area Municipalities and the Public

Area Municipalities:

Children's Services is planning further engagement with Area Municipalities to explore opportunities for child care growth to address urgent needs for additional child care.

Public:

Children's Services is undertaking consultations with Indigenous community partners on creating culturally safe and relevant licensed child care spaces as outlined in Access and Inclusion Plan (see Appendix A). High quality, safe, and culturally specific licensed child care programs will provide connection to culture and Indigenous ways of knowing

to support healing and education of Indigenous children and families.

7. Financial Implications:

An operating and capital budget provision was not included in the approved 2024 Operating and Capital budgets for these two locations. The terms and conditions of the cost recovery lease agreements will be negotiated between staff and identified operators.

Additionally, staff will assess the maintenance and capital repairs needed for each building via new building condition audits and will bring those costs for consideration during the 2025 Budget process. The identified non-profit providers may have leasehold improvements required as part of their operational start-up and these costs may be eligible for funding through Provincial and Federal child care funding.

8. Conclusion / Next Steps:

Children's Services will bring forward further updates on land/facility opportunities, as available. Additionally, the application process for allocating new CWELCC community-based child care spaces for 2024/2025 is underway, and the results will be shared in the coming months.

9. Attachments:

Appendix A: Access and Inclusion Plan: Phase One

Appendix B: Site Location Maps

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