Executive Summary:

This information report provides an overview of Child Care and EarlyON planning activities and programming updates relevant for future program delivery and policy development.

Staff have initiated the creation of a Child Care and Early Years Plan as mandated by the Ministry of Education. It is expected that this plan will guide future service system planning and how funding is to be distributed. It is expected that the final plan will be presented to Council prior to the end of the second quarter of 2019.

Ontario’s renewed Early Years and Child Care Policy Framework was released in 2017 with a commitment to additional licenced childcare spaces and additional funding. The new government has shared a few minor framework changes; however, it is currently unclear if there will be any additional framework and funding changes. With a new provincial government, the uncertainty at this time of future direction in child care policy and related funding and the work on the Child Care and Early Years Plan, staff will be extending the three year service agreements (2016-2018). Licenced child care operators and special needs resourcing programs will have their current service agreements extended for one year (2019) to allow time to fully engage the community on child care priorities and strategies and understand the new government’s direction for child care and early years’ services.

EarlyON programming has been implemented at 24 different locations across the City of Kingston and the County of Frontenac. For the first three months of operations the program served over 900 children and nearly 800 parents. Earlier this year, the province approved the City’s request for capital funding (approximately $1 million) to support the expansion of licensed
child care and EarlyON programs. To date, one child care program and six EarlyON sites have been approved for capital funding in the City and the County of Frontenac. Both operational and capital costs for EarlyON are completely paid for through Provincial transfer payments to the City.

Recommendation:

This report is for information purposes only.
November 22, 2018

Authorizing Signatures:

ORIGINAL SIGNED BY COMMISSIONER
Lanie Hurdle, Commissioner, Community Services

ORIGINAL SIGNED BY CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER
Gerard Hunt, Chief Administrative Officer

Consultation with the following Members of the Corporate Management Team:

Jim Keech, President & CEO, Utilities Kingston        Not required
Desirée Kennedy, Chief Financial Officer & City Treasurer  Not required
Denis Leger, Commissioner, Corporate & Emergency Services  Not required
Options/Discussion:

This information report is providing an overview of various child care and EarlyON planning activities and programming updates that will be affecting future program delivery and policy development.

Local Child Care and Early Years Service System Plan Process

The City of Kingston is the Consolidated Municipal Service Manager (CMSM) for child care and early years programming in Kingston and Frontenac. As service system manager, the City is expected to play a critical role in soliciting and maintaining in-depth knowledge about the community’s needs, planning and maintaining the early years’ system, identifying and addressing service gaps in the early years’ system and supporting service coordination.

The Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014 requires the CMSM to establish a child care and early years programs and service system plan (service plan) for their service area that addresses matters of provincial interest under the act. This is a new requirement for the CMSM and the City.

The Ministry of Education, responsible for child care and early years, created a service plan resource outlining key elements of the service system plan which will be used locally as a guideline for the local plan development. Key elements and requirements of the plan are:

- Environmental scan assessing current and future child care and early years’ service gaps and opportunities;
- Creating a community planning process informing the development of the plan and ongoing consultation during the lifetime of the plan;
- Strategic priorities and intended outcomes that are responsive to community needs and align with Ontario’s vision for child care and early years;
- A measurable and action oriented implementation plan;
- Accountability methods; and
- Any other programs, needs, opportunities or challenges that may exist in their communities.

City staff have initiated this systems planning process by conducting an initial environmental scan of the early years system, developing a public engagement process, and procuring an external consultant to support the planning process which will occur between December 2018 and June 2019.

Provincial Policy Renewals and New Provincial Government

In 2017, the previous government released Ontario’s Renewed Early Years and Child Care Policy Framework with a vision to build an accessible, affordable, responsive and high quality early years and child care system for children aged 0 – 12. The plan identified seven areas of action. Action #1, the most relevant to this report, is to increase access to early years and child care programs and services with a commitment to help 100,000 more children from birth to age
four access licensed child care and to prioritize growth of not-for-profit child care. Kingston received approximately $3.5 million in additional funding in 2018 to support Action #1.

Between June 2018 and now, a few changes have been communicated by the new provincial government:

- Service Agreements with the service manager will be multi-year agreements instead of annual agreements;
- Expansion funding has decreased from the initial 2018 service agreement under the previous government by $190,865 starting in 2019; however, this is not anticipated to affect current child care programming; and
- The for-profit expenditure cap applied by the previous government will not apply in 2018, and funding flexibility will apply to a few more program allocations.

Local Impact Resulting from Provincial Changes

One Year Extension of Service Agreements

With the change in government in June 2018, the uncertainty of the government’s policy direction for child care and the anticipated feedback through the systems planning process, staff will be extending the current service agreements with the 37 operators/agencies for one year into 2019. This will provide a timely opportunity to engage our local community, receive child care feedback that will assist in shaping local policy development (including access and affordability), and become acquainted with the new government’s vision for child care. The collected knowledge will influence the development and the updating of new service agreements.

For Profit Child Care Operators Cap

In undertaking the growth of the not-for-profit child care operators, the previous government capped the amount of funding that municipalities could spend on for-profit child care operators.

As the City was projecting expenditures above the cap (24%) in 2018, City staff reported to Council (Report Number ARCP-17-007) and received approval in late 2017 to place a hold on new for-profit operators requesting a fee subsidy agreement on existing for-profit operators expanding to new site locations. This hold was to be in place until the current service agreements expire and for consistency will also be extended by one year (2019).

Operating Funding Distribution

In 2012, the previous government announced significant changes to child care funding to include the merging of wage subsidy and wage improvement funding into a general operating category, allowing child care operators greater flexibility in expending funds. Municipalities were tasked with creating local policies for allocating and distributing this general operating funding model with a 2016 implementation date.

On November 26, 2015, City Council approved staff recommendations from Report Number ARCP-15-010 for a new general operating funding distribution model and restricted access to
general operating funding to new child care operators (both for-profit and not-for-profit) to allow
time to stabilize the child care system. For consistency with other funding agreement timelines,
this policy will now be extended until December 31, 2019.

Expansion Funding
As described earlier in this report, the City has received substantial funding to undertake
expansion and access to the child care system. Staff have undertaken several strategies to
increase access to child care subsidies and are currently exploring other strategies that will
support an accessible, responsive and affordable child care system. Areas being looked at
include the incentivizing of additional infant spaces and the capping of parent fees for the
younger age groupings. Previously, funding was used to increase system affordability and
access by distributing additional funding to child care providers who agreed to maintain their
previous years’ fee rate schedule. As this funding is not guaranteed into the future, this type of
approach is not sustainable; therefore, staff are looking at other effective ways to use this
funding.

EarlyON/ON-y-va Implementation Update and Capital Investments
In 2018 The City of Kingston assumed responsibility for the management of the Child and
Family Centres (EarlyON). After a brief transition period, the City launched the new EarlyON
programming in July 2018 through three local service providers - The Boys and Girls Club of
Kingston and Area, Kingston Community Health Centres and Rural Frontenac Community
Services.

Currently EarlyON offers free drop-in programs for caregivers and children, from birth to 6 years
old, at 24 different locations across the City of Kingston and County of Frontenac. Programming
is available throughout the week including some evenings and Saturday and Sunday. Programming in French as well as indigenous programming are offered at specific locations.

For the first three months of operations (July - September 2018), EarlyON programs served over
900 children, with the majority being between the ages of 1 and 2 years old. Along with children
at EarlyON programs, there were nearly 800 adults served. Families came from far and wide to
the EarlyON programs – 74% (571) were from the Kingston area; 11% (87) from Frontenac and
15% from elsewhere.

From July to September there were a total of 9,140 visits to EarlyON programs across Kingston
and Frontenac, 59% (5,380) of the visits were from children and 41% (3,760) of the visits from
adults. Site locations, program times and number of program slots will continue to be assessed
to ensure access for children, parents and caregivers is optimal.

As part of the EarlyON program implementation, the City received approximately $1 million from
the Province specifically allocated for EarlyON capital investments. The City has approved
approximately 50% of the funding to renovate four locations in Kingston (Central, East & West)
and two locations in Central Frontenac. The remaining EarlyON capital budget will be used in
2019 and 2020 for future anticipated EarlyON site renovations.
Existing Policy/By-Law:
Not applicable

Notice Provisions:
The intent is to notify Child Care Operators and Special Needs Resourcing Program of the 1 year extension 30 days prior to the termination of the current agreement (December 31, 2018).

Accessibility Considerations:
Not applicable

Financial Considerations:
Not applicable

Contacts:
Lanie, Hurdle, Commissioner, Community Services 613 546-4291 extension 1231
Sheldon Laidman, Director, Housing & Social Services 613 546-2695 extension 4957

Other City of Kingston Staff Consulted:
Ruth Noordegraaf, Manager, Housing and Child Care
Laura Austin, Supervisor, Childcare and Early Years Services
Terry Bagnariol, Coordinator, Childcare and Early Years Services

Exhibits Attached:
Not applicable