

Why Child Care Should Be a Priority for Ottawa's Next City Council

What is City Council's Responsibility for Child Care?

Municipal Council is responsible for planning and managing child care services and early years programs for Ottawa. The province provides funding for these programs, along with the flexibility to determine the allocation of funding to best meet the needs of children, families and service providers. Ottawa contributes additional funding to meet the needs of the community. In 2017, Ontario contributed \$104.6 million and Ottawa contributed \$25.6 million for such services.

The province's Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014, requires each city to establish child care and early years programs, and a service system plan that addresses matters of provincial interest under the Act.ⁱ In this context it is worth noting that the province currently projects 11% growth in the pre-school population of Ottawa in the next five years.ⁱⁱ

What Ottawa Needs Now

The new Council needs to assign a higher priority to early childhood and care and identify it as a strategic initiative in the 2018-2021 term to address current and growing demand and reflect the influence, impact and importance it has on the daily lives of Ottawa residents. The current City Council identified 7 priorities and 65 strategic initiatives in its 2015-2018 Term of Council Priorities. Early learning and child care did not make the list.



Why Is Child Care So Important?

Research is clear, access to licensed quality and affordable not-for-profit early learning and care impacts cities and families in many ways including by influencing:

Economic Stability of Families

Canada's Conference Board concluded, in a 2017 report analyzing early childhood education and care from a socio-economic perspective, that the introduction of an expanded early childhood education program would allow more women to enter the labour force, resulting in about 23,000 families, many of them single-parent families, being lifted out of poverty.ⁱⁱⁱ The Governor of the Bank of Canada has also recently underlined the economic potential of a higher labour participation by women.^{iv}

Positive Early Learning Outcomes for Children

The Conference Board report also indicated that children who benefit from effective early childhood education develop better human capital skills that may enable them to find better jobs and earn higher income than those who don't attend similar programs.

City Growth and Prosperity

A 2011 study conducted by the Centre for Spatial Economics established that for every public dollar that is spent on child care in Ontario, there is a return on investment of \$2.27 in economic outputs to the benefit of the regional economy.^v

Andrew Fleck Children's Services (AFCS) plays a leadership role in the child care community and in early childhood education. Over the past 100 years, in response to the changing needs of the Ottawa community, it has developed innovative programs and expanded the organization to provide a comprehensive range of services that meet the diverse early learning and child care needs of Ottawa families. AFCS takes pride in being progressive, responsive and - most importantly - committed to excellence.

ⁱ https://efis.fma.csc.gov.on.ca/faab/Memos/CC2017/Memo1_attach_EN.PDF ⁱⁱ <https://www.fin.gov.on.ca/en/economy/demographics/projections/#tables>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.conferenceboard.ca/e-library/abstract.aspx?did=9231> ^{iv} <https://www.bankofcanada.ca/2018/03/todays-labour-market-future-work/>

^v http://d3n8a8pro7vnmx.cloudfront.net/childcareon/pages/319/attachments/original/1372448533/EarlyLearningEconomicForum_Fairholm.pdf?1372448533