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Date April 10, 2024 **Report No.** 2024-63

To Chair and Members
Social Services Committee

From Brian Hutchings, Chief Administrative Officer
Acting Commissioner, Community Services and Social Development

1.0 Type of Report

Consent Item ☐
Item For Consideration ☒

2.0 Topic Building Our Community From the Kids Up: 2024 Update [Financial Impact: None]

3.0 Recommendation

- A. THAT staff report 2024-63 Building Our Community from the Kids Up: 2024 Update”, BE RECEIVED; and
- B. THAT the City Clerk BE DIRECTED to forward a copy of the final resolution and staff report to the County of Brant.

4.0 Executive Summary

In January 2022, Council approved *Building Our Community from the Kids Up*, outlining 45 actions to enhance child care and EarlyON programs.

Appendix B: 2024 Status Report summarizes key accomplishments and updates over the past year including:

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- Continued Implementation of the Canada Wide Early Learning Program (CWELCC)
 - 66 new Child Care spaces in 2023 (Ages 0-12)
 - 232 new Child Care spaces (0-5) already approved for 2024 (Ages 0-5)
 - EarlyON attendance returning to nearly pre-COVID levels
 - Before and After School spaces returning to nearly pre-COVID levels
 - Launch of Indigenous-led EarlyON programming at sport and recreation centres
 - Development of an Access and Inclusion Framework
 - OMSSA Local Champions Award for the *Build Belonging* Project
 - Issuance of a Request for Proposal for additional Child Care Spaces
 - Expansion of Licensed Home based Child Care
 - Launch of an 'Early Years' Podcast hosted by Child and Family Services of Grand Erie
 - Launch of the Mental Health Capacity Building Project
 - Development of Early Years Mental Health training and resources (Dr. Jean Clinton)
 - Launch of the EarlyON at TF Warren Community Centre in Cainsville
 - Increased wages for Early Childhood Educators

Many of these initiatives will continue over the next several years, most notably the implementation of the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care program. This program will reduce parent fees to an average of \$10 / day by September 2025.

As child care costs are reduced, communities across Ontario are experiencing an increase in waitlists and wait times for child care spaces.

The Ministry of Education has indicated that Brantford-Brant will receive operational funding for an additional 985 spaces by the end of 2026. In 2022,

there were licensed child care spaces for 20% of children aged 0-5 (1 in 5). With the addition of 985 new spaces, the community will have a 32% access rate. This exceeds the target set out in *Building our Community from the Kids Up* (maintaining one in five children given population growth), however does not meet the provincial goal of a common access ratio of 37% and may not provide enough spaces for all interested families.

Expansion of child care spaces in Brantford-Brant depends on three factors detailed in the Analysis Section of this report: 1) The Province providing adequate capital funding to build or expand child care 2) the Province providing adequate operating funding to fund the new spaces and 3) a sufficient number of Early Childhood Educators (ECE) to staff current and future child care spaces.

Staff continue to advocate to the Ministry of Education for sufficient child care funding to meet the community need.

5.0 Purpose and Overview

This report provides a status update to Social Services Committee on the progress of *Building Our Community from the Kids Up*. This report further provides an overview of current service levels within the Children's Services and Early Years program areas.

6.0 Background

In January 2022, Council approved the *Building Our Community from the Kids Up* plan, which outlines 45 actions to enhance child care and EarlyON programs. (Report 2022-20, Building our Community from the Kids up).

The full plan is attached as *Appendix A*.

In March 2023, Committee was provided the first annual update (Report 2023-60).

This report provides updates to Social Services Committee on key changes, statistical trends and initiatives within the child care sector over the past year.

7.0 Corporate Policy Context

Building Our Community from the Kids Up: 10-year Children's Services Plan

County of Brant Strategic Priorities:

#5) Offer welcoming and inclusive programs, services, facilities, opportunities and events to enhance every resident's quality of life.

8.0 Input From Other Sources

Ministry of Education

Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014

Brantford Immigration Partnership

Best Start Network Recruitment and Retention Team

City of Brantford Business Resource Centre

County of Brant Community and Protective Services

9.0 Analysis

9.1 Child Care Statistics (Overall)

- There are currently 4506 Child Care Spaces (ages 0-12) in Brantford-Brant (See Figure 1).
- 71% of spaces are in the City of Brantford and 29% in the County of Brant (See Table 1).
- This number has increased by 66 spaces (ages 0-12) from 2022 to 2023 (See Figure 1).
- Spaces are projected to increase another 232 spaces (ages 0-5) by end of 2024 (See Figure 1) and an additional 658 by 2026 (see Table3).
- The number of Home-Based Licensed Child has increased by 78 spaces (ages 0-12) from 2022 to 2023 (See Figure 2) and is projected to increase by another 60 by 2026.
- The number of Before and After School Child Care spaces has decreased by 16 from 2022 to 2023 (see Figure 3)¹.
- The total number of children on the Child Care waitlist has increased by 453 from 2019 to 2023 (see Figure 4).

¹ Note that future year projections are not available. The number and location of before and after spaces fluctuate by need, as determined by the Boards of Education and availability of staffing.

- Increase in waitlists have increased wait times for families, with this trend projected to increase as child care fees continue to be reduced. (See Figure 5).

9.1.1 Child Care Spaces

The licensed child care system in the City of Brantford and County of Brant is comprised of full day care for children aged 0-4 at community based child care centres. This includes school based centres, and community based licensed homes (LHCC) and Before / After school care for children aged 5-12.

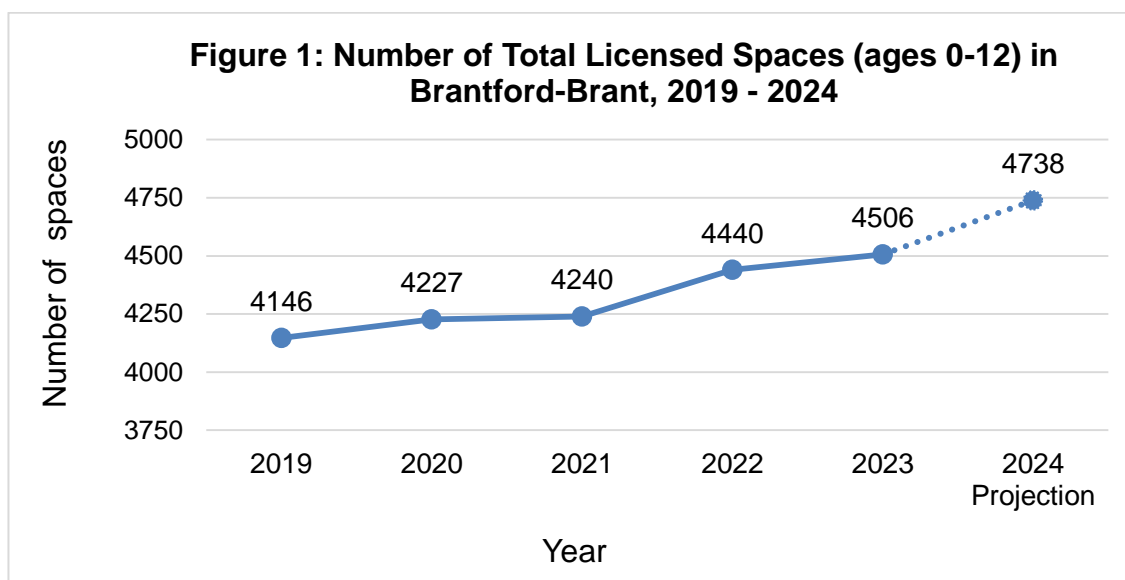


Figure 1: Number of Total Licensed Spaces (ages 0-12) in Brantford-Brant, 2019 - 2024

Community Based Child Care Spaces

Table 1: Centre-based Child Care Spaces by Location, December 31 2023		
Age group	City	County
Infant	84	43
Toddler	280	110
Preschool	701	357
Kindergarten	808	260
School Age	1,103	444
Total	2,976 (71%)	1,214 (29%)

Table 1: Centre-based Child Care Spaces by Location, December 31 2023

Licensed Home Child Care Spaces

Licensed Home Child Care locally has 316 spaces as of December 31, 2023, with approximately 82% in the City and 18% in the County. Licensed home care often provides care to families working non-traditional hours.

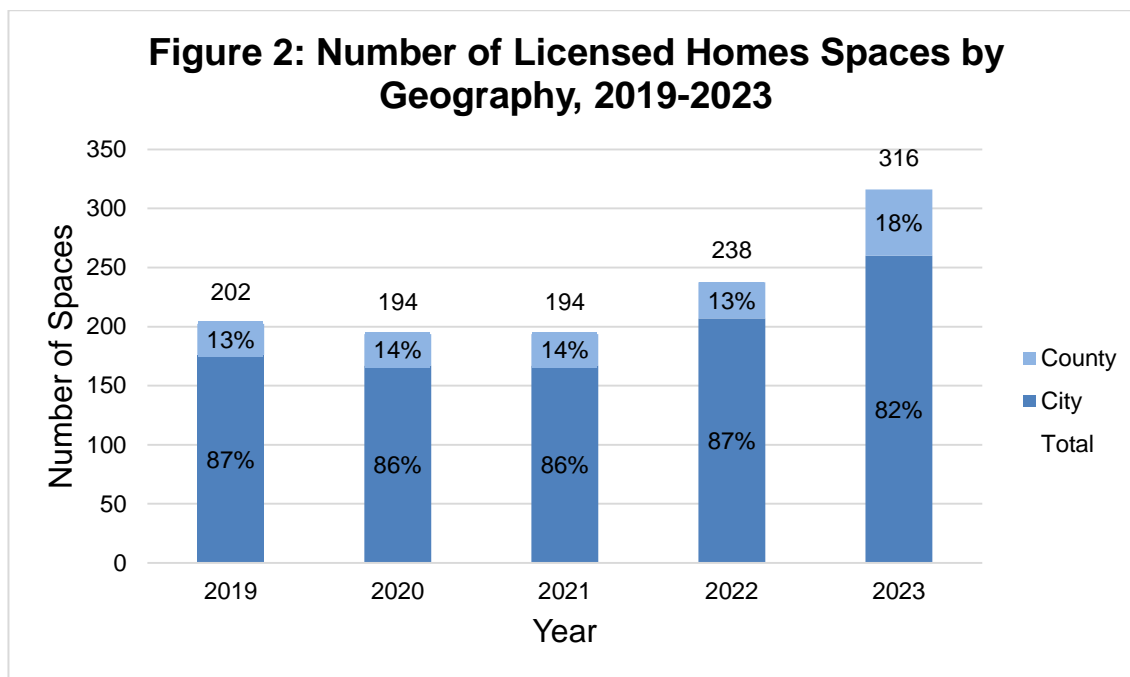


Figure 2: Total Number of Licensed Home Spaces, 2019 - 2023

Before and After Child Care Spaces

Before and After child care spaces fluctuate in number based on the needs of the families at each school and available child care operator staffing. Given current workforce shortages these positions are often the most difficult to fill, being part time and or split shift positions. The demand for Before and After spaces decreased during and immediately after the pandemic, potentially due to parents working from home.

There are signs of increased demand for Before and After school spaces post-pandemic. All local Boards of Education are supportive of Before and After on-site school programs, however space for JK/SK children are limited by operational CWELCC funding available.

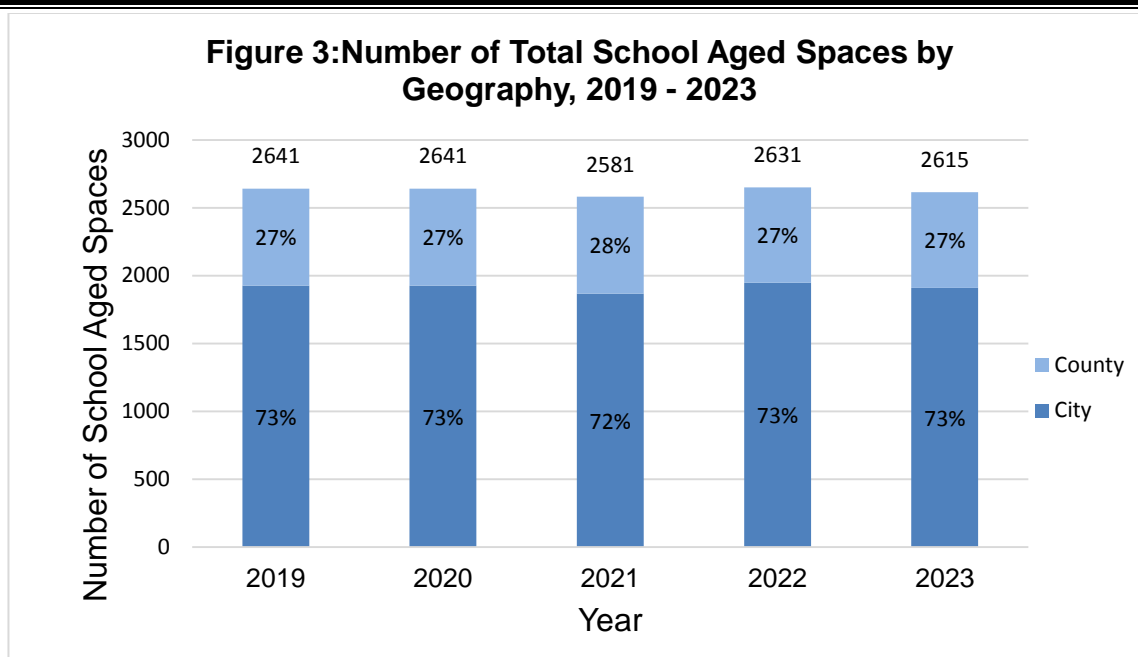


Figure 3: Total Number of School Aged Spaces, 2019 – 2023

9.2 Waitlists and Wait Times

All child care licensees in the City of Brantford and County of Brant that receive Ministry of Education funding are required to use OneList, a provincial child care waitlist system. This data is extracted and analyzed by City staff on a quarterly basis to review trends and understand local demand. While some local licensed child care providers operate independently of any Ministry subsidy, all are offered free access to OneList in Brantford-Brant. 100% of the child care spaces are on OneList.

Child care operators using OneList must offer spaces on a first-come-first-served basis. Exceptions are provided for siblings of current clients and children of staff, in order for families to have all children at one centre. Additionally, Six Nations Clarence Street Child Care may prioritize families who self-identify as Indigenous.

Waitlist and wait times are an emerging challenge in the child care sector. In Brantford-Brant, there has been a notable increase in both the number of unique children waiting for a space and the length of wait times, since the announcement of the Canada Wide Early Learning and Child Care program (commonly referred to as “\$10/day Child Care”).

Waitlist

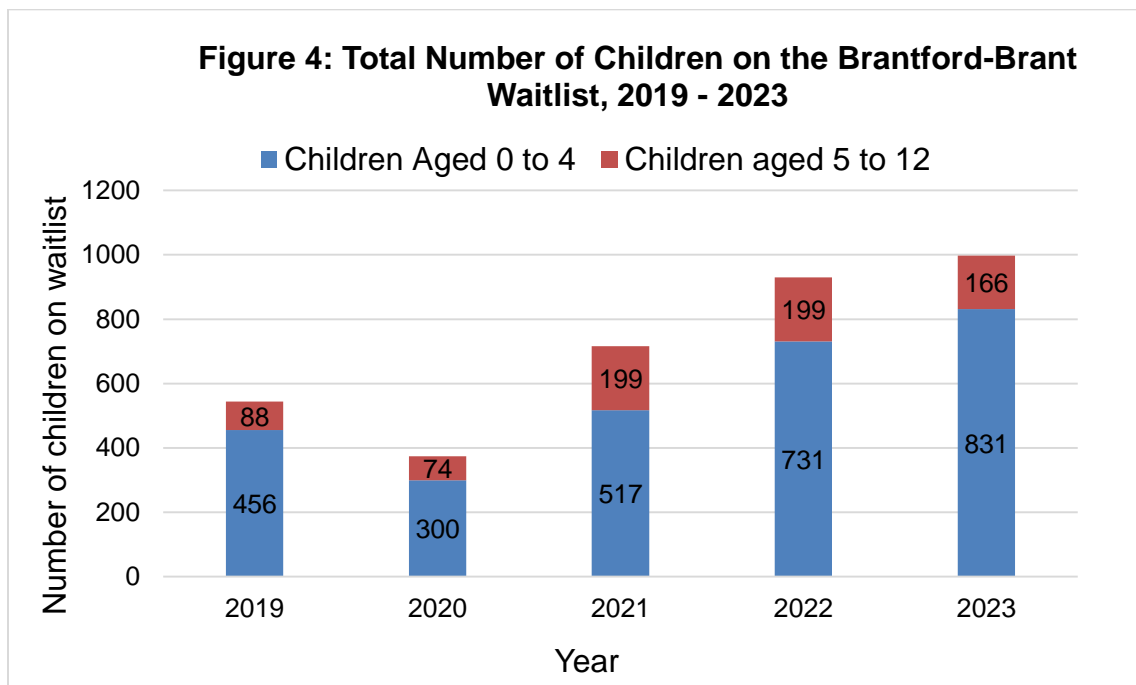


Figure 4: Total Number of Children on the Brantford-Brant Waitlist, 2019 - 2023

In Figure 4 above, significant growth periods in the waitlist are noted in both 2021 and 2022. The 2021 growth may be attributed to the return of families to licensed child care post-pandemic (families returning to work).

The 2022 growth may be attributed to the March 2022 announcement of \$10 / day child care, motivating families with private care to move into the licensed system.

Additionally, the City of Brantford and the County of Brant continue to have significant population growth resulting in an increased number of families needing care.

Wait Times

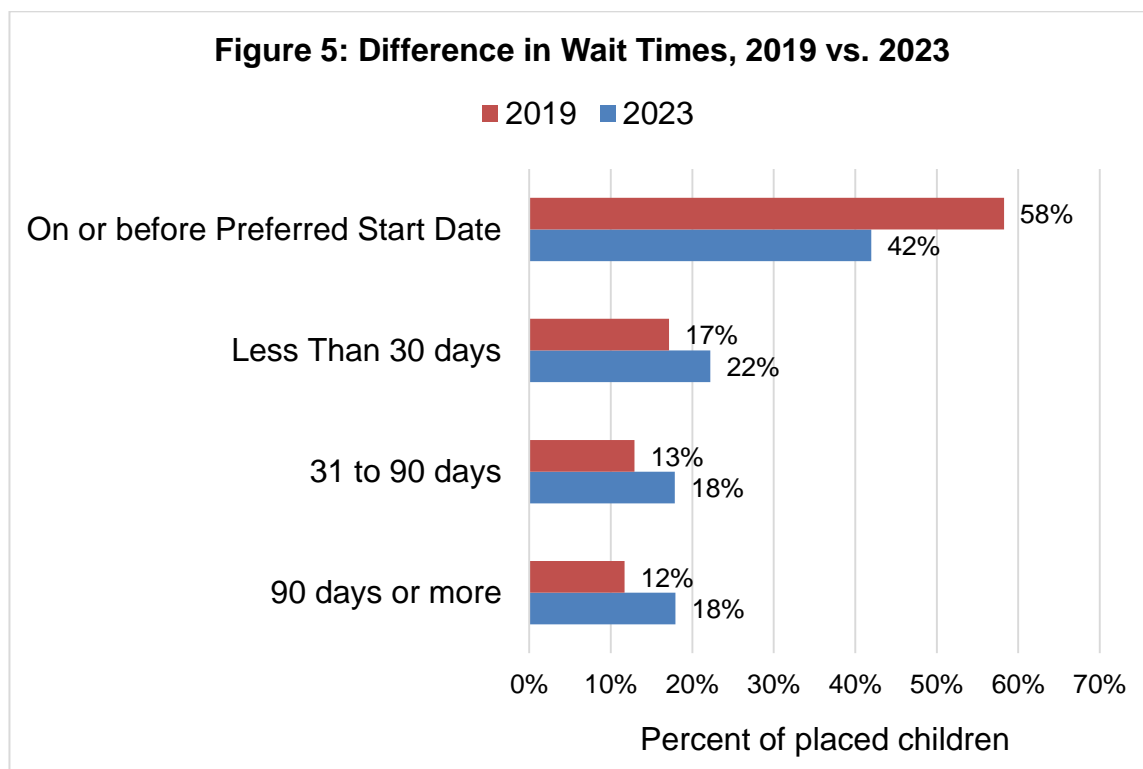


Figure 5: Difference in Wait Times, 2019 vs. 2023

Wait times are calculated using the difference between a child's preferred start date and the date they were "placed" according to OneList. Those that received a spot on or before their preferred start date are grouped together. In 2023, 42% of children were in this category. The number of days includes weekends/holidays.

The 'placed' report does not filter for families who were offered a spot but refused and thus still remain on the waitlist in hopes of going to a different child care.

9.3 Canada Wide Early Learning and Child Care ('Average \$10/day')

On March 28, 2022 the Government of Canada and Province of Ontario signed the Canada Wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC) Agreement. The CWELCC Agreement aims to:

- Lower child care costs;
- Grow child care spaces;
- Support the child care workforce; and
- Improve access, quality and inclusion.

Locally, 55 child care licensees (out of 57), including Licensed Home Child Care, have opted into the CWELCC system. Collectively, these licensees provide 2,855 child care spaces for children aged 0 to 5 in Brantford-Brant and represent 95% of all local spaces for this age group.

9.3.1 Reducing Child Care Costs

CWELCC was announced in 2022 with an initial reduction in child care fees of 25%, which were then reduced further to a total 52.75% reduction as of January 2023. Further interim reductions have not been announced, however the Ministry has advised that the goal of an average of \$10 per day will be achieved by September 2025.

Locally, the average cost of full day child care for children aged 0 to 4 decreased from \$12,168 per year in March 2022 to \$5,799 per year in January 2023. By September 2025, the cost is expected to be \$2,610 per year. (See Table 2).

Table 2: Average Cost of Child Care, 2022 to 2025						
Program Type	PRE-CWELCC		CWELCC			
	No rate reduction		52.75% rate reduction		Average of \$10 per day	
	March 2022		January 2023 - present		September 2025	
	Daily	Annual	Daily	Annual	Daily	Annual
Full Day program for children aged 0 to 4	\$46.62	\$12,168	\$22.22	\$5,799	\$10	\$2,610
Before and After School program for 4 and 5 years olds	\$19.00	\$3,686	\$12.00	\$2,328	\$10	\$1,940

Table 2: Average Cost of Child Care, 2022 – 2025

9.3.2 Expanding Child Care Spaces

Under the CWELCC agreement between the Federal and Provincial Government, Ontario was funded to support the creation of 86,000 new licensed child care spaces (relative to 2019) by December 2026. The ability to expand spaces for children 0-5 is dependent on CWELCC funding provided by the Province. The City of Brantford and County of Brant received funding for an

additional 985 spaces, including 329 school-based spaces and 656 community based spaces (see Table 3).

Table 3: 0-5 Child Care Space Targets, 2022 to 2026						
	Open		Approved	In Progress		
	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	Total
Community-based Spaces	39	57	232*	147	181	656
School Based Spaces	0	0	0	177	152	329
Total	39	57	232	324	333	985

Table 3: Child Care Spaces Targets, 2022 - 2026

CWELCC growth is occurring in community based child care centres, community based licensed homes (LHCC) and School Based centres.

Expanding Community-Based Child Cares

The Ministry of Education is providing start-up funding to support expansion of community spaces. In fall 2023, a Request for Proposal invited applicants to submit a proposal to provide full day CWELCC child care spaces for children ages 0-5 (including Infants, Toddlers and Preschool). This process has resulted in the approval of 281 spaces to be opened 2024 and early 2025.

A second RFP process will be facilitated in mid-2024 for the remaining spaces to be opened in 2025 and 2026. This RFP process will prioritize (a) growth in areas where access to child care is limited and (b) growth in the non-profit sector.

The Ministry of Education requires the City to ensure that 81% of spaces are provided by the non-profit sector. This ratio is in effect for the five-year implementation period (2022-2026).

“Start-Up” Funding for Child Care Spaces

To support the expansion of community child care spaces, the Ministry of Education has provided a Start-Up Grant’ Fund. However, the funding is limited and does not cover the full cover of building or expanding a child care. As a result, most non-profits child care operators do not have the resources to undertake expansion.

Expanding Licensed Home Child Care

Licensed Home Child Care (LHCC) is an integral part of our growth strategy. Home based child cares are often able to better support families with non-traditional working hours or days. The LHCC agency serving Brantford and the County of Brant is CWELCC participating and has been focusing on growth to support the needs of the community with an increase of 78 spaces from 2022 to 2023. Of note, two new homes are bilingual (French and English).

Expanding School Based Child Care

A total of 329 full day spaces will be opened in local schools (See Table 4). The Ministry of Education is providing capital funding to Boards of Education to support building of new child cares.

Table 4: New Child Care Spaces in Schools		
Location	Projected Open Date	# Spaces
Banbury Public School	January 2025	49
Cobblestone School Paris	January 2025	64
West Brant School	September 2025	64
École élémentaire Catholique Sainte-Marguerite-Bourgeoys	January 2026	24
St. Padre Pio Catholic Secondary School	September 2026	128

Table 4: New Child Care Spaces in Schools

9.3.3 Supporting the Child Care Workforce (ECE)

The child care sector is experiencing a staffing shortage across the Province. Provincial and local efforts have been and continue to be made to increase and support staff, and recruitment and retention of a qualified workforce continues to be a required focus.

The 2022-2023 Ministry of Education Workforce project was completed March 31st, 2023. Over the course of the 15 month project, 2 full day paid PD days were provided to Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) educators.

Training regarding working with young children / children with higher needs was provided to authorized summer camp staff (including City of Brantford and County of Brant).

In addition, marketing campaigns were undertaken to promote working as an ECE in the City and County, career fairs and presentations to high schools were

held, and bursaries were developed in partnership with Conestoga College for students in their Brantford ECE program to offset the costs of tuition and expenses. Positive results included the recruitment of new ECEs in the community and 23 students supported through bursaries.

In November 2023, the Ministry of Education announced Ontario’s Child Care Workforce Strategy to be implemented in 2024. The Strategy builds on efforts to improve wages for RECEs employed by licensees participating in CWELCC by increasing the wage floor in 2024 to \$23.86 per hour for RECE Educators and to \$24.86 for RECE Supervisors and Home Visitors. The wage floor will then increase by \$1 per hour each year up to 2026, as depicted in Table 5.

Table 5: Wage floor per hour, 2024 to 2026		
Year	RECE Educators	RECE Supervisors and RECE Home Visitors
2024	\$23.86	\$24.86
2025	\$24.86	\$25.86
2026	\$25.86	\$26.86

Table 5: Wage floor per hour, 2024 - 2026

The City of Brantford and the Best Start Network Recruitment and Retention team continue to support the local workforce through training and development, informed by the Knowing Our Numbers project (Atkinson Foundation) and the 2023 Staff Engagement Survey.

9.3.4 Improving Access, Quality and Inclusion

In June 2023, the Ministry of Education launched Ontario’s Access and Inclusion Framework. This ‘framework’ directed Service System Managers to develop a local Inclusion and Access Pathway for Early Learning and Child Care.

Key Strategies of this plan include:

- Strengthening Community Engagement and Partnerships
- Enhancing Language Support and Multilingualism
- Supporting Special Needs and Mental Health Services
- Expanding Professional Learning Opportunities

The report additionally provides a self-assessment tool to allow ELCC providers to evaluate their current practices in alignment with the Inclusion and Access

Pathway. This tool is being rolled out in 2024 and incorporated with existing child care Quality Improvement tools.

9.4 EarlyON Child and Family Centres

EarlyON Child and Family Centres saw a significant increase in child and family participation over recent years, including a 74% increase in child visits over 2022.

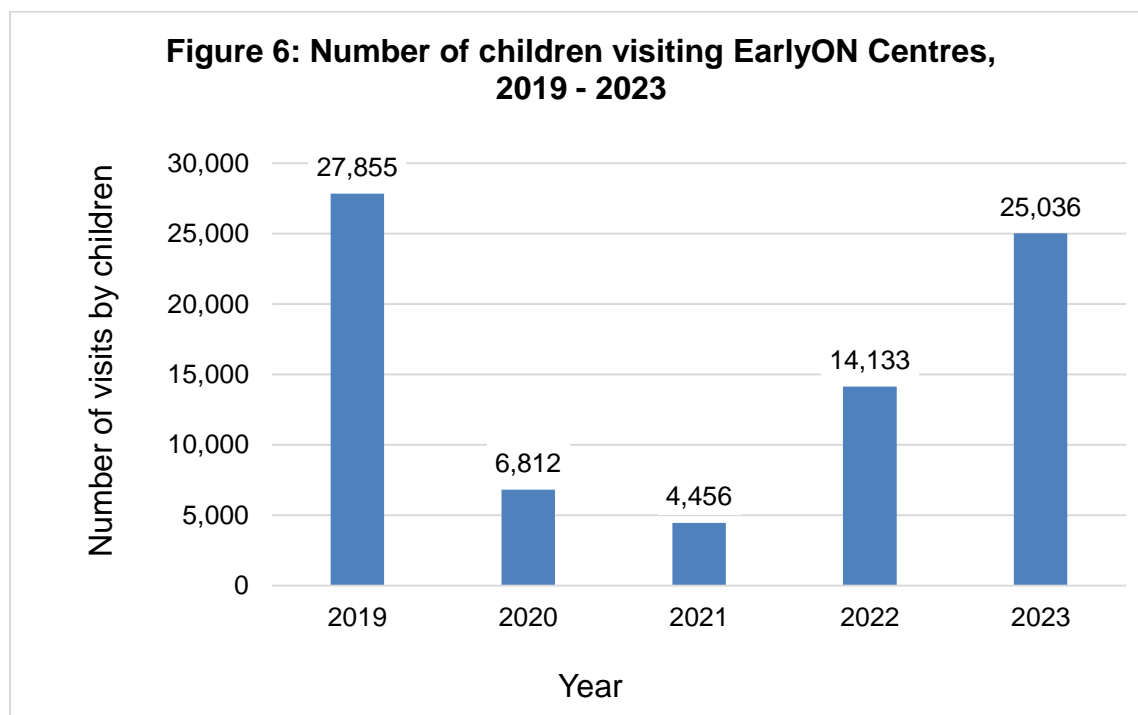


Figure 6: Number of children visiting EarlyON Centres, 2019 - 2023

EarlyONs continue to focus on reaching out to all members of the community, providing welcoming and inclusive spaces. There are 27 EarlyON sites in operation, including 20 (70%) City-based sites and 8 (30%) County-based sites.

- The new EarlyON Child and Family Centre at TF Warren Community Centre opened in the fall of 2023 with a celebratory Open House that included Indigenous drumming and dancing, and a children's story read by County of Brant Mayor Bailey.
- The EarlyON at both Wayne Gretzky Sports Centre and TB Costain have increased their hours open to families.
- Six Nations Family Gatherings has developed partnerships with City of Brantford Harmony Square programming, including "Fun in the Sun" a weekly summer program, which will occur again in 2024.

- Support to meal programs such as the breakfast program and Community dinners and Eastdale, Northland and Riverside Gardens sponsored by Brant Food for Thought and the Child and Family Services of Grand Erie Foundation.

EarlyON: Enhanced Mental Health Supports

In 2023, the Ministry of Education initiated a 3 year funded Mental Health project to leverage local expertise and existing community mental health resources to support children, families and the workforce. This project supports children, families and educators. Led locally by Child and Family Services of Grand Erie (CFSGE) a three-pronged approach is being taken:

1. “Circle of Security” training and group programs available to parents and educators, which focuses on attachment and relationship building.
2. An EarlyON Podcast for parents and families will be developed in 2024. Bringing together parents and “experts”, each podcast will discuss parenting / caregiving challenges, providing ideas, strategies and positive reinforcement for the effort being made by parents.
3. Training by Dr. Jean Clinton linking *How Does Learning Happen*, the early childhood learning pedagogy, and positive mental health.

OMSSA Local Champions Award

The Build Belonging Project was recognized with a Local Champions Award from the Ontario Municipal Social Services Association for Service System Managers that, “have made outstanding contributions to their communities, recognizing their commitment to planning, managing and delivering quality human services in Ontario.”

The Build Belonging pilot was hosted at St Gabriel’s school, and was a partnership between the Brantford Immigration Partnership, Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic District School Board and YMCA Immigration and Settlement Services. The goal of the project was to create a welcoming environment for children from all cultural backgrounds, including culturally diverse programs and marketing, and the development of ‘EarlyON Community Champions’ from various cultural communities.

Indigenous Led Programming

Six Nations of the Grand River continues to provide Indigenous Led Child Care and Early Learning Programs with on ongoing emphasis in embedding

Indigenous culture and understanding in all local children's programming. In 2023, efforts included:

- Best Start Network members attended a tour of Six Nations child care and EarlyON.
- Six Nations Cultural Facilitators provided weekly "Lunch and Learn" for child care and EarlyON staff to incorporate culture and language into classrooms.
- Six Nations Cultural Facilitators continued to attend / support individual child cares and EarlyONs through attendance and programming.
- Six Nations Family Gatherings expanded from one existing location at Harmony Square to add permanent scheduled days at TB Costain Community Centre, Wayne Gretzky Community Centre and TF Warren Community Centre. The new EarlyON Child and Family Centre at TF Warren Community Centre opened in the fall of 2023 with a celebratory Open House that included indigenous drumming and dancing and story time by Mayor Bailey.
- Six Nations Family Gatherings has developed partnerships with City of Brantford Harmony Square programming, including "Fun in the Sun" a weekly summer program, which will occur again in 2024.

9.5 Moving Forward

During 2024, staff will focus on continued implementation of the *Building the Community from the Kids Up* plan, including:

- Continued implementation of CWELCC ("Average \$10/day").
- Continued efforts with the Ministry of Education to increase capital and operational funding to meet the long-term child care needs of the community.
- Implementation of new data system that will provide an integrated child care application and waitlist system for families, reporting mechanism for child care licensees and efficient program and statistical reporting mechanisms for the CMSM (projected 2025/26).
- Implementation of new Ministry of Education funding formula (projected late 2024 / early 2025).

- Second RFP process for CWELCC funded spaces, with a focus on areas with greater access need. (See Appendix A).
- Implementation of the Inclusion & Access Pathway for Early Learning and Child Care.
- Implementation of the Ministry of Education Ontario's Child Care Workforce Strategy.

10.0 Financial Implications

There are no financial impacts associated with this report.

As noted in the February 7, 2024 report to Social Services Committee *Child Care Funding Update* (Report No 2024-54), the Ministry of Education announced a reduction in administrative funding for municipal children's services with a potential impact of \$646,567. As a result of continuous improvement projects, staffing realignments and strategic use of One-Time Transitional Funding grants, an impact to the 2024 budget is not projected and the 2025 municipal impact is projected to \$268,000.

11.0 Climate and Environmental Implications

This report has no direct climate or environmental implications.

12.0 Conclusion

This report summarizes key deliverables of the Building the Community From the Kids Up plan over the past year.

Staff continue to implement the plan, including the ongoing expansion of the CWELCC program (average \$10/day).

Staff will continue to advocate for additional resources from the Ministry of Education to support child care expansion, and will provide annual reports to Social Services Committee to summarize key changes and actions within the Children's Services sector.



General Manager or CAO Signature

Prepared By:

Michelle Connor, Manager Children's Services and Early Years

Attachments:

Appendix A – Building Our Community from the Kids Up 10 Year Child Care and Early Years Plan 2022-2032

Appendix B – Building Our Community from the Kids Up 2024 Status Report

Appendix C – Inclusion & Access Pathway for Early Learning and Child Care

In adopting this report, is a by-law or agreement required? If so, it should be referenced in the recommendation section.

By-law required ☐ yes ☒ no

Agreement(s) or other documents to be signed by Mayor and/or City Clerk ☐ yes ☒ no

Is the necessary by-law or agreement being sent concurrently to Council? ☐ yes ☒ no