

Wait list down for subsidized child care ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

The region has cut its subsidized child care wait list by more than one-third over the past year, thanks mostly due to increased funding from the provincial and federal governments.

As previously reported in The Express, in September 2016, the wait list stood at 3,858. However, since then, Durham has received approximately \$7.9 million in funding to create more child care spaces and hire additional staff.

As a result, Roxanne Lambert, director of children's services, says the number of families waiting for child care is 2,586.

"We've had a significant reduction in the wait list and waiting times," Lambert says. "This is good news for Durham."

A year ago, families were waiting 12 to 15 months to receive subsidized child care, and now, Lambert says that time period is down to approximately nine to 10 months.

The list potentially could have been reduced more as 600 additional spots were offered to parents who were unable to accept at the time of the offer.

The majority of the money is tied to the province's plan to create 100,000 new child care spaces over the next five years.

According to Lambert, this announcement, made late last year, was welcome news with Durham expecting consistent population growth in the coming years.

"The system has been growing over the past couple years with the roll out of full-day kindergarten. There is more capacity for licensed child care," Lambert stated. "Our challenge is to create new spaces for the children to go to."

With a provincial election slated before next June, Lambert says she's not worrying too much whether a change of government could affect future child care expansion.

"Usually what has been established continues...that has been my experience."

Regardless of the future, Lambert is happy that the region has been able to take such a large step forward in a relatively short amount of time.

"This is the largest investment in child care I've ever seen and I've worked for the region for 31 years," she says.

-reprinted from The Oshawa Express

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