

\$500K project underway for new Northumberland child care, EarlyON spaces ^[1]

Grafton Community Centre undergoing renovations now

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EXCERPTS

NORTHUMBERLAND — Work on an early learning space and first-of-its-kind child care centre which will foster sibling relationships is officially underway.

The child care centre, with 15 new spaces for the community, and new EarlyON Child and Family Centre will be housed within the Grafton Community Centre. Renovations are happening now.

“Across Northumberland and the province, we know there is steady increasing demand for licensed child-care spaces,” said Lesley Patterson, the early years services manager with Northumberland County. “This will be a unique approach to address some of that demand, by having children of all ages and siblings kept together. We’re really excited about it — this will be the first (of its kind) in the county.”

Construction at the community centre started in mid-June and is ongoing. A grand-opening event is slated for this fall.

Once the renovation project is complete, for Alnwick/Haldimand Township, this will be its first EarlyON Child and Family Centre — and the community centre will also house the first family age group licensed child-care program in Northumberland.

This means infants, toddlers and kids will be cared for in the same space, keeping siblings together. (In the larger centres, infants, toddlers and kids are separated by age.)

In the rural areas, it can be hard — but when the Ministry of Education put out a call for proposals for community-based child care and EarlyON centres, the county and township got to work quick, said Patterson.

“We met with Alnwick/Haldimand — we knew there was a need in the area — and then we toured the area and decided the Grafton Community Centre was the best location.”

Thanks to a “real partnership” and council support, the application was successful and work to sort out all the project details has been underway ever since, said Patterson.

The application process for the project started in January 2018. Approval came by the spring.

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