

New provincial funding applauded by day-care providers [CA-ON]^[1]

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EXCERPTS

The \$2.3 million for Hamilton's child care program announced last week is expected to create up to 300 day care spaces by next year, say provincial officials.

"We are very excited with the announcement," said Brenda Bax, program manager of child care systems in Hamilton's parent and child department. "The money is very timely, since we are writing a three-year plan on child care plan for council."

The report, which will outline the needs of parents and children in Hamilton, is expected to be presented to politicians within the next few months, said Ms. Bax.

City child care staff were discussing the implications of the money in a meeting this week with regional officials.

Ms. Bax acknowledged the provincial funding will be cost shared with the municipality based upon an 80 per cent to 20 per cent ratio. The city will have to find the extra money for its share of the program in the 2004-2005 year, she said.

She said over the next few weeks the city will talk to area providers to hear what they need and to see how the city can meet the provincial guidelines and increase child case spaces for families in need.

Hamilton coordinates its day care programs with 148 licensed for profit and non-profit organizations across the city. There are about 1,685 children ages 6 to 12 already in full-time equivalent day care programs before and after school.

Hamilton Mountain Liberal MPP and Minister of Children and Youth Services Dr. Marie Bountrogianni announced last week the province was creating 4,000 new subsidized child care spaces across Ontario.

"This will improve our kids' basic reading, writing and math skills," said Ms. Bountrogianni. "Ontario is back in the business of helping its working families by providing access to quality, affordable child care."

Under a March 2003 agreement between the federal and provincial governments, Ontario is using the \$58.2 million in transfer payments from the federal government to create the new spaces for infants up to age five. About \$19.4 million will be used for one-time capital projects such as adding washrooms and playgrounds, while another portion of the money will create new subsidized spaces for pre-school-age children in child-care centres and around schools, said government officials.

The \$1.05 billion funding from the federal government is a five-year program.

- reprinted from the Hamilton Mountain News

Region: Ontario^[2]

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funding^[4]

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