

Ontario invests \$2M in childcare spaces at Shelburne elementary school^[1]

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AVAILABILITY

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EXCERPTS

The availability of childcare spaces in the north end of Dufferin County is about to get a \$2 million boost from the provincial government.

Earlier this week, Dufferin County's community services committee learned that the province has approved an Upper Grand District School Board (UGDSB) request to create 73 childcare spaces at Centennial Hylands Elementary School in Shelburne.

The capital project will allow for four new rooms at the school, including one for infants and toddlers, as well as two pre-school rooms. Construction is expected to be complete by March of 2017.

"This investment is another step towards a modernized child care and early year's system that will enhance programs and support for children in Dufferin County under age 12," Keith Palmer, Dufferin's director of community services, reported to the committee on Tuesday (Nov. 17).

"With steady growth in the Town of Shelburne, the awarding of capital funds for the creation of 73 childcare spaces will create needed childcare spaces in Shelburne and strengthen the overall childcare system in Dufferin County."

The Shelburne announcement is part of a much larger commitment by the province to improve the childcare sector in Ontario.

During the next decade, Palmer noted the province is providing school boards with more than \$11 billion to help build new schools in areas of high growth and improve conditions at existing ones.

In 2015, the province's Ministry of Education announced \$498 million in funding to school boards for priority capital projects needed in the next three years.

Of that, \$120 million in new funding will be dedicated to building licensed childcare spaces across Ontario. The province has committed to adding 2,900 licensed childcare spaces to the education sector's existing infrastructure.

"The new spaces are also being built in areas where there is significant demand, giving families more options when it comes to quality licensed child care that is close to home," Ministry spokesperson Derek Luk told The Banner in an email.

"Creating more licensed child care spaces in local schools will give children the opportunity to transition from child care into full-day kindergarten at the same location, making for an easier adjustment."

In early 2015, county officials recommended to the UGDSB that new childcare spaces be considered in Shelburne. Based on criteria used by the ministry, it was determined Centennial Hylands be the site selected for capital funding.

"In total, the ministry received 145 requests from 42 school boards for childcare capital funding, totaling more than \$200 million," Luk said. "The Centennial Hylands Elementary School project was high on the priority list and is receiving \$2.06M in funding for a total of four new rooms and 73 licensed childcare spaces."

Within the UGDSB's boundaries, Centennial Hylands and Palmerston Public School will receive a total of \$3.5 million in funding. School board officials report a total of 49 new childcare spaces will be created in Palmerston.

"Palmerston and Shelburne are areas the board and the counties identified as areas in need of licensed care for infants, toddlers and preschoolers," UGDSB chair Mark Bailey said in a news release. "We are looking forward to working together to bring a much needed service to these two communities."

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Region: Ontario^[3]

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