

New childcare spaces needed in Oakville as population grows ^[1]

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Source: Inside Halton

Format: Article

Publication Date: 26 Sep 2016

AVAILABILITY

Read online ^[2]

EXCERPTS

There should soon be more licensed childcare spaces in Oakville for infants, toddlers and pre-schoolers.

Exact numbers are not yet known.

“We’re looking forward to the Region of Halton being able to take up a sizeable portion of these spaces,” said Ontario Labour Minister and Oakville MPP Kevin Flynn, who visited the Margaret Drive Regional Child Care Centre Sept. 23.

He was there to expand on the Ontario government commitment, made in the Sept. 12 Throne Speech, to create 100,000 new, licensed child care spaces across Ontario within the next five years — with the first spaces opening in 2017.

Standing amid the centre’s preschoolers, some of whom were reading while others served a make-believe Thanksgiving dinner, Flynn said with no set allocation dedicated to one area, the provincial government would work with municipalities to “satisfy as much of the need as possible.”

“Our government is investing in families by supporting a modernized childcare and early years system with more capacity to care for our youngest learners,” he said.

“Adding more childcare spaces in Oakville is an investment in our children and an important step toward improving access to high-quality, licensed child care for all families.”

The Ontario government states the investment builds on ongoing work with the federal government, parents and partners to develop a childcare and early years system focused on quality, affordability, accessibility, parent choice and flexibility.

Flynn noted approximately 20 per cent of children four years old and younger are currently in licensed childcare.

The demand for licenced childcare is much higher, according to research, he said.

Flynn said the move is in right direction to address what people have wanted a long time.

Also on hand for Flynn’s visit were officials from Halton Region, the YMCA of Oakville and Our Kids Network, the latter of which is a Halton-wide partnership of organizations and agencies serving children and youths.

Halton Regional Chair Gary Carr applauded the government.

“Our most important asset is our children. Nelson Mandela famously said that,” he said. “It’s our most important resource because it’s our future.”

Carr said gone are the days when childcare centres were thought to be a babysitting service. Skills and education delivered through childcare centres today will make children “successful all the way down the road,” he said.

The regional chair also said the funding Halton Region hopes to receive from the government for childcare spaces would help it meet the need for services in a growing population.

Carr said the announcement comes as the Region is about to release the next phase in its childcare plan from 2016 through 2020.

It includes looking at ways for families to better access childcare information and recommendations on how to make services more seamless for families.

He noted Milton is growing so rapidly with many people raising families in its new neighbourhoods.

“So going forward, as we put a plan together, we need to move very quickly and plan ahead of it,” he said. “So just as we’ve planned for the roads, water and wastewater plants, when it comes to childcare, our real challenge is getting the services and making sure it’s in place.”

YMCA of Oakville President and CEO Kyle Barber said the government's "ambitious work to modernize childcare and make it more accessible for children and families in Oakville and throughout Ontario" aligns with the YMCA of Oakville's goals.

"There's a saying that if you want to go fast, go alone, but if you want to go further, go together and with the speed in which our region is growing, it's pretty important we go together," he said, noting the YMCA aligns its childcare plan with Halton Region strategies. "It's that kind of synergy that will take us much further."

-reprinted from Inside Halton

Region: Ontario ^[3]

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