



**REPORT TO:** Co-Chairs and Members of Public Health and Social Services Committee

**SUBJECT:** Implementation of Early Learning Program in Niagara

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## **RECOMMENDATION**

That this Committee recommend to Regional Council that this report be received for information.

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- Children's Services supports the broad goals outlined in the Dr. Pascal report and Ontario's Early Learning Plan and recognizes the benefits that arise from early learning and other programs that support children, youth and families in Niagara.
- The Province is moving forward with Phase 1 of the Ontario Early Learning Program (ELP) starting September 2010 with 21 schools in Niagara offering the program.
- Children's Services has worked closely with local boards of education to best identify where children, parents and communities would most benefit from full day learning and the local availability of child care in accordance with criteria set out by the Ministry of Education.
- There are 7 child care programs presently operating in ELP chosen schools with an additional 15 centres in close proximity for which impacts will need to be determined as further details on ELP become available.
- Children's Services will continue to consult, gather information and consult with partners, service providers and stakeholders over the coming months to address the many issues related to full-day learning.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no financial implications associated with this report. As the impact of full day learning becomes known, Children's Services will work with the Ministry of Children and Youth Services (MCYS) to access any mitigation funds that the province may have available to stabilize child care.

## **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this report is to provide Committee and Council with an update of Ontario's Early Learning Program (ELP) for four and five-year-olds that will be offered locally in 21 schools starting September 2010.

## **BACKGROUND**

On October 27, 2009, the Premier followed through on an election promise made in the fall of 2007 to implement the first phase of Ontario's plan for a province-wide Early Learning Program (ELP) for four and five-year-olds. The ELP is the core component of Dr. Charles Pascal's report *With Our Best Future in Mind*. The Province remains committed to the broad vision and goals outlined by Dr. Pascal which is to have a fully integrated, high quality system of early learning and care services for all children from birth to age 12. In recognition of the significant benefits that arise from early learning and other programs and supports for children, youth and families, Niagara demonstrated strong support for the vision and broad goals outlined in Dr. Pascal's report with the Council Business Planning session in October 2009, and an interest to be a pilot community to implement the recommendations.

Rather than selecting pilot communities, the Province has placed priority on the phased-in implementation of full day learning that will be available to 35,000 four and five year olds (15% of Ontario's Junior and Senior Kindergarten (JK/SK) population) starting September 2010. The investment will grow to \$300M in 2011-12 to expand the full-day program to approximately 20% of the JK/SK population with the goal of having it fully implemented in all schools by 2015-16.

The first phase will allow school boards, the community and the Ministry of Education time to complete the necessary planning for this important new initiative while giving more children and families the support they need for success. Full-day learning will bring teachers together with Early Childhood Educators who have special training and knowledge in the area of early childhood development. They will work together to better prepare children for school by building a strong foundation for future learning. Where demand exists, parents will have the option of enrolling their children in an extended day program (before and after regular school hours) for a fee, with some subsidies available for families in need. The extended day program will be lead by Board-hired Early Childhood Educators.

In order to move forward the Ontario Early Learning Plan, the Province has established a new division under the Ministry of Education. The Early Learning Division is charged with the responsibility to lead the initiative and to coordinate with other ministries that have responsibility for early learning services and other supports for children.

The Early Learning Division has provided the criteria and process for the selection of Phase 1 and 2 school locations and will be responsible for further planning and policy that will support the Phase 1 implementation and the transition to a fully implemented program by 2015-16.

## REPORT

Niagara Region Children's Services has worked closely with local boards of education, Early Years Niagara Planning Council and the child care community on implementing the Ontario government's new Early Learning Program. Criteria for selecting schools that will offer the ELP were set out by the Ministry of Education to guide school boards and community partners during the first phase of implementation. Phase 1 school sites were to be chosen based on availability of space in the school, community need, student achievement and where there would be minimal impact on existing child care and early years programs. Availability of space was a key determinant in selecting Phase 1 ELP sites as no capital was available to make renovations or additions to schools.

In selecting the schools for September 2010, Niagara's local school boards and Niagara Region Children's Services have worked together to best identify where children, parents and communities would most benefit from full-day learning and the local availability of child care. Local school boards have worked collaboratively with each other, the Region and community partners to recommend where full-day learning programs will be introduced for 2010-2011. Schools that were selected were recommended to the Ministry of Education for review and were announced in January 2010. It is expected that schools that are not selected will continue to offer current programming for 2010-2011.

### Niagara schools selected to offer the ELP:

#### District School Board of Niagara

College Street, Smithville  
James Morden, Niagara Falls  
McKay School, Port Colborne  
\*Memorial School, St. Catharines  
Ontario Public School, Thorold  
\*Princess Margaret, Niagara Falls  
Richmond Street, Thorold  
Senator Gibson, Beamsville  
Stevensville Public School, Stevensville  
Valley Way, Niagara Falls  
Westdale, St. Catharines

#### Niagara Catholic District School Board

\*Holy Name School, Welland  
\*Our Lady of Fatima Separate School, St. Catharines  
St. Denis Separate School, St. Catharines  
\*St. Joseph Separate School, Grimsby  
St. Mary School, Welland  
St. Patrick Separate School, Niagara Falls  
St. Therese Separate School, Port Colborne  
Father Hennepin Separate School, Niagara Falls

#### CSD catholique Centre-Sud

\*ÉEC Immaculée-Conception, St. Catharines

#### CSD du Centre Sud-Ouest

\*École La Marsh, Niagara Falls

\*Denotes schools where child care programs are presently operating in the school

Considering the fact that Niagara has nearly 70% of child care located in close proximity to a school, it was difficult to roll-out the ELP without impacting child care in some way. Further criteria laid out by the Ministry of Education compounded this issue by limiting the flexibility of school boards to choose ELP schools where full day SK pilots were already operating (+40 schools in Niagara). Additionally, the District School Board of Niagara opted to locally fund two additional schools that had been identified as Phase 2 (2011-12) potential sites.

Of the 21 schools noted above, there are 7 child care centres (offering a total of 114 child spaces for children aged 4 & 5 years) located in a school that has been chosen to offer the ELP starting September 2010. An additional 15 child care centres are located within 500 metres of schools chosen (offering a total of 321 child care spaces for 4 & 5 year old children). Many of these programs also serve other age groups, including younger children (0-4 years) or offer before and after school programs for older children (6-12 years of age).

Children's Services continues to conduct community consultations with child care and issue communiques and fact sheets to the child care community as information becomes available. Children's Services will continue to work closely with child care operators and the Ministry of Children and Youth Services to determine Phase 1 implementation impacts and to access any mitigation funds that may be available for child care. It is expected that priority will be given to maintaining high quality spaces where demand exists and which closely align with the vision of seamless service and parental choice. Children's Services will continue to consult, gather information and consult with partners, service providers and stakeholders over the coming months to address the many issues related to full-day learning.

Submitted by:

Approved by:

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Brian Hutchings  
Commissioner, Community Services

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Mike Trojan  
Chief Administrative Officer

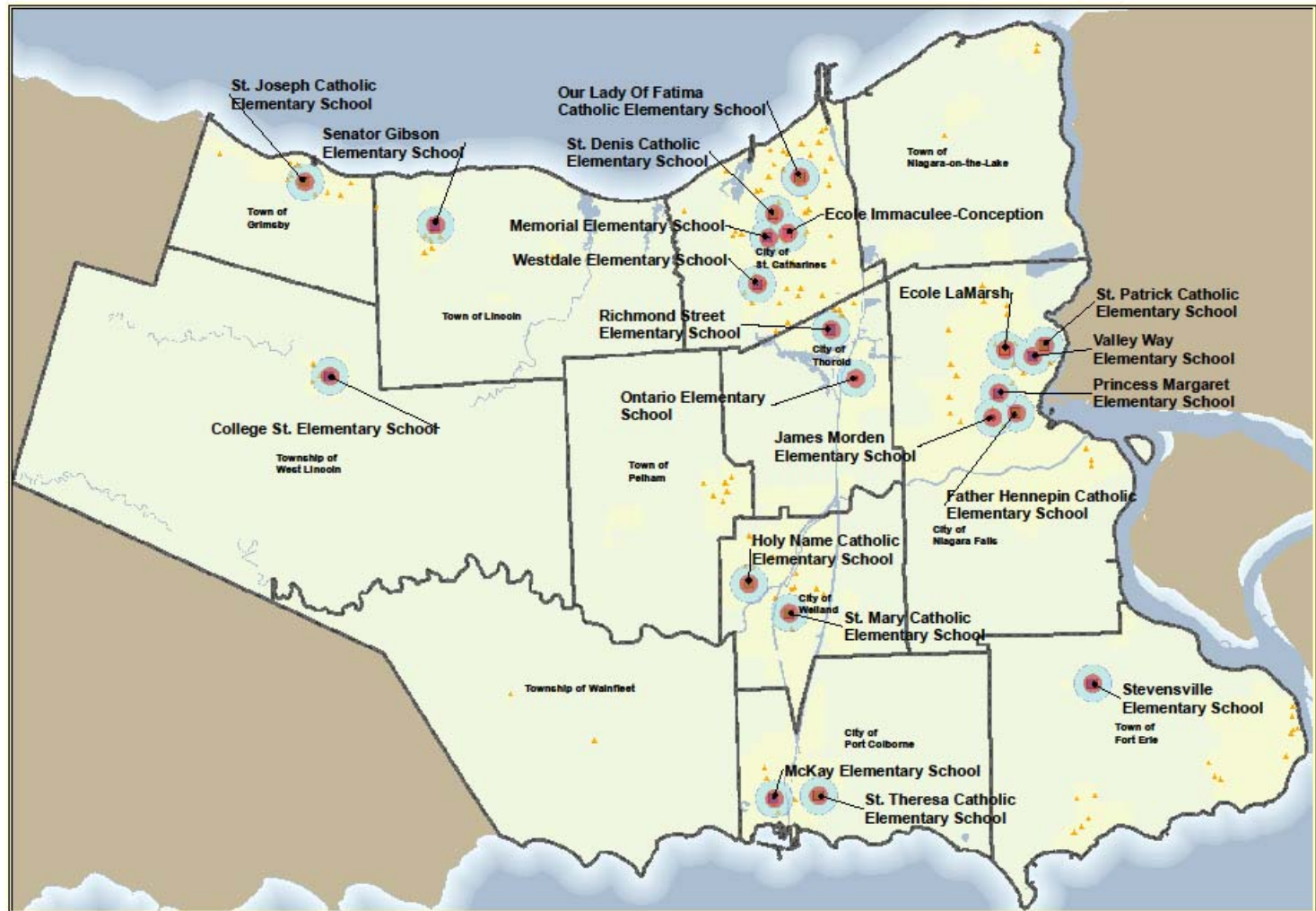
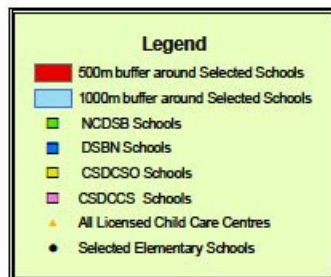
*This report was prepared by Kathryn O'Hagan-Todd, Director, Children's Services.  
Appendix 1 – Early Learning Program (2010-2011)- Identified Schools & Licensed Child Care Centres*

## Early Learning Program (2010-2011) - Identified Schools & Licensed Child Care Centres

Niagara region view



Niagara Region  
 COMMUNITY SERVICES



0 10 20 40 Kilometers

Maps created January 11, 2010  
 for display purposes.