

COMMUNICATION 132007

Received From: Tracey Freill, Manager of Carleton Place Childcare Services.
Addressed To: Committee of the Whole
Date: December 08, 2020
Topic: Carleton Place Childcare Services Parent Fee Proposal

SUMMARY:

Staff recommends an increase of 2% to childcare fees to help offset the loss of revenue due to the pandemic.

BACKGROUND:

Childcare staff are continually working to balance the Ministry of Education requirements and the Health Unit cohort guidelines to provide safe, educational, warm, and nurturing environments for children during these unprecedented times. Cohorts have impacted the overall flow and scheduling of staff and children which has also severely impacted the budget. Cost savings and fee increases will help to ease some of the financial burden.

COMMENT

Carleton Place Childcare Services offer a unique homelike atmosphere that provides small group settings allowing for more focused teaching moments that are essential to growth and development during the formative years of 0 to 4. Room capacity for preschoolers are set by the Ministry and based on square footage. The Francis Street location offers preschool rooms that have a maximum capacity of 8 children to 1 teacher. Scheduling pre-COVID allowed for movement between all 12 preschool rooms. As of November 2020, the maximum cohort set by the Health Unit is 24. This only allows for movement between three (3) groups thus greatly impacting and adding to the financial constraints.

Our School Age program is even more restricted in movement as children must be separated by schools and to the best of our ability, their individual classes. Many parents are choosing to work from home and some children are being home-schooled. This is impacting attendance within the program. Capacity numbers have also dropped due to the Health Unit's cohort size restrictions. Maintaining individual group bubbles has created a significant impact to overall attendance and revenue.

The fees at the Centre reflect the hours of operation which are longer than most centers to allow for parents commuting to their place of employment. The Centre is open from 6:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Monday to Friday. Staff absences due to sickness, vacation, COVID testing, etc. require coverage without mixing cohorts and to meet staff to child ratios and have contributed to higher costs. In addition, the Town hires qualified staff and pays salaries which promotes the exceptional care for the children in our community. Even during a pandemic, quality childcare is a factor which encourages new families to move to the area and supports the community's ongoing growth and development.

The last fee review for Carleton Place Childcare Services occurred in October 2019.

The proposed fees and charges are attached.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The proposed fees for 2021 reflect increased costs for staffing and reduced attendance resulting in the need for a 2% increase to rates. Overall, it is estimated the new rates will provide an additional \$38,000 in revenue.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

THAT the proposed Childcare fees as presented be approved based on a 2% increase effective February 1, 2021; and

THAT the necessary by-law to enact the fees be forwarded to Council for approval.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Draft Summary of Proposed Changes to Carleton Place Childcare Fees