



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

**SUBJECT:** Directly Operated Child Care Centres and Home Child Care  
2008 Year End Report

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## **RECOMMENDATION**

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

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- In 2008, Children's Services' five directly operated child care centres supported a total of 381 children and 315 families while Home Child Care provided support for a total of 676 children and 475 families, a combined total of 1,057 children and 790 families. The majority of families (95%) enrolled were eligible for fee subsidy.
- Centre-based care provided by Direct Operations continues to service a higher percentage of children with identified special needs and those with behavior issues as compared to the broader system of service operators. Home Child Care continues to provide mainly part-time and alternative hours of care that cannot be serviced by centre-based childcare.
- Direct Operations centres continue to identify efficiencies to reduce operating costs, preserve and support aging facilities, comply with new legislation, and ensure the health and safety of staff and children.
- All Direct Operations staff are qualified Early Childhood Educators (ECE) who are members of the College of Early Childhood Educators and who focus on continuous learning and innovative approaches to programs and delivery of services.
- Direction for 2009 will be a continued focus on Children's Services priorities of stability, quality and partnership to provide the best quality service at the lowest possible cost.

## FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications directly associated with this report.

## PURPOSE

To provide Committee and Council with a summary of the activities and accomplishments within Children's Services directly operated programs in 2008 in support of Council's Strategic Objective of "Community and Social Well-Being".

## BACKGROUND

In the early 1970's child care was established as an important part of Niagara Region's services and programs for families. Today we provide comprehensive early learning programs within five licensed child care centres in Fort Erie, Niagara Falls, Port Colborne, Welland and St. Catharines. The licensed Home Child Care program has been operated by the Region since 1973. This program arranges care for approximately 700 children in homes throughout Niagara, providing variable and extended hours of care.

## REPORT

Niagara Region Children's Services Direct Operations has demonstrated leadership in program development, delivery, and maintenance of high quality programs that support the healthy growth and development of children in our community. All ECE are trained in Quality Child Care Niagara Phase 1 and 2, the HANEN program "Learning Language and Loving it" and the newly implemented Standard of Practice which serves as a self-evaluation and planning tool for supervisors and staff. All practicing ECE were registered with the College of Early Childhood Educators under new legislation and to ensure Ministry compliance. Ongoing specialized staff training has supported the complexity of families enrolled in direct operations and the high quality of services delivered in 2008.

### Direct Operations Expenditures

January 1 - December 31, 2008

Program	Expenditure	% of Children's Services Total Budget
Directly Operated Centres (5)	\$1,328,209	11.7
Home Child Care	\$1,693,523	6

In 2008, Children's Services' five directly operated child care centres supported a total of 381 children and 315 families. The majority of families (95%) enrolled in Children's Services' directly operated programs were eligible for fee subsidy with thirty-one families paying the full cost of care. With the introduction of income testing, families with higher incomes have been able to access partial fee subsidies. More of these parents have to pay a portion of the fees requiring supervisors to institute practices for invoicing, collecting fees and parent account record keeping.

Home Child Care provided support for a total of 676 children and 475 families most of which required either alternative hours of care, such as overnight, evening or weekend care, or have a requirement for part-time hours that is not easily accommodated by Niagara's system of centre-based care. The highest demand for home child care continues to be in Niagara Falls and St. Catharines (see Appendix A). Quality Child Care Niagara training for caregivers was implemented in 2008 along with other quality improvements.

### Value Driven Outcomes

Niagara Region's corporate values have been guiding principles that help staff achieve the vision and fulfill the mission of Children's Services.

<b>We Serve</b>	We help children learn best through an active involvement with their environment. Children have the opportunity to make choices, set their own goals, select materials, activities and play partners. Our goal is to provide children with an enriching, rewarding child care and educational experience while demonstrating respect and inclusiveness.
<b>We Promote Choice</b>	Parents are offered a range of options and hours of service in the five directly operated centres and the Home Child Care Program. We meet the needs of children and their families for quality, flexible, accessible and affordable services particularly for the more difficult to serve.
<b>We Value Honesty</b>	Children's Services direct operations provide services that are accountable, responsive, efficient and effective. Seeking regular feedback through staff meetings, parent surveys and daily parent communications results in new ideas for improvement in policies, practices services. Children's Services staff practice high standards and conduct with openness that inspires trust with clients.
<b>We Show Respect</b>	Staff have taken action to strive to be environmental champions in the community recognizing that children have the ability to create the greatest impact on future sustainability by learning about good choices. At the same time, staff respect of the environment has a significant impact on child-well being and they incorporate this principle into daily programs and education for children.
<b>We Foster Partnerships</b>	Partnerships with parents and other family members are a crucial component of our programs, supporting a high quality early learning setting. Children's Services reaches out in various ways to provide support in the community and provide enhanced services to all families.

By staff acting on these values daily, the following highlights some of Direct Operations 2008 achievements under Children's Services priorities of Stability, Quality and Partnership:

### Stability

- Replaced old lights at Welland, Port Colborne and Fort Erie with high efficiency lighting which has reduced overall consumption of kilowatt hours by 9.2%.
- Low cost improvements with interior painting at Port Colborne, St. Catharines and Fort Erie resulting in improved environments for children and staff.
- Introduction of standardized menus at all centres to provide nutritious foods without any increase in food costs achieved by preparing foods, selecting affordable recipes and purchasing local, seasonal fresh produce.

- A 75% reduction of paper products by introducing recyclable towels and luncheon napkins to reduce purchasing costs and to drastically reduce daily garbage
- Reduction of WSIB claims due to back injuries by providing all staff training, low cost ergonomical equipment and modifications, designated a Health and Safety work team and Foot Wear Policy that has resulted in no lost time in the past 6 months.
- Redeployment of staff to eliminate the need of additional ECE staff to assist with increased attendance and children requiring additional supports has saved approximately \$8,000 in staff costs, which represents the highest component of total operating costs.

## **Quality**

- Providing parents and caregivers access to resource kits and training to assist them in enhancing child development representing a low cost option that creates parent engagement and encourages parent's confidence as a "First teacher".
- Training staff at Fort Erie Child Care to facilitate Esso Family Math for families to encourage their children to experience success in math. Low income families, minority families or single parent families often have difficulty overcoming their own challenges with numeracy, a critical contributor to school success.
- Extending Quality Child Care Niagara training to home child care caregivers as a means to providing a program choice comparable to centre-based for parents that would prefer the benefits of home child care.
- Reducing childhood obesity by working in consultation with dieticians to provide healthy menus at the lowest possible cost and a daily physical activity (DPA) program above and beyond legislated outdoor active play requirements setting a benchmark for the broader service system and making it easy for children to make healthy food and activity choices.
- Capital funding projects to improve environments for children and staff with the installation of playground storage sheds and outdoor play structures at four sites.
- Posting and enforcing "No Idle" signs at each child care centre and implementing a chemical inventory cleanout at all facilities.
- Participation of three supervisors in the provincial Mentoring Pairs initiative offering a no cost enhanced training opportunity while demonstrating corporate leadership.

## **Partnership**

- Fully leveraged assets by providing shared space for community groups such as Bethlehem Place, Public Health and Speech Services Niagara as a means to provide integrated service to clients and the community.
- St. Catharines Child Care Centre is providing low-cost, nutritious daily snacks for children and youth at neighbourhood projects at Manchester and Stokes leveraging the staff and facility resources of this centre to benefit the broader community.
- Branscombe Early Learning & Family Centre is providing lunches and snacks to Adolescent Family Support Services of Niagara (AFSSN), which was co-located under a lease agreement in 2008 to leverage synergies and sustain AFSSN services in Niagara Falls.

- Promotion of Oscar garbage bins in Campbell East to collect gently used toys and equipment to provide education materials to child care centres and caregivers at no cost.

### **Directions 2009**

- Provide excellent customer service through staff's commitment and experience in early childhood development with the use of a program audit tool to benchmark and measure desired outcomes including cost of service provision and service quality.
- Continue our commitment to leadership in the child care community with involvement in new initiatives and projects. Work in partnership with other child care service providers in the purchasing of local fruits and vegetables for nutrition needs.
- Continue to support staff through ongoing training, workshops and regular communication. Staff will be trained in "Reaching In, Reaching Out Resilience Skills", a program for child care professionals to promote resilience in children aged six years and younger.
- Expand Home Child Care to provide and support variable client hours. Work in collaboration with Ontario Works Case Managers in the recruitment and training of potential caregivers.
- Continue service planning that allows resources to be used in a way that is efficient and has maximum impact on families and supports to individuals. Focus on how we can help ensure that children get the mental health services and treatments they need to lead normal, productive, and happy lives.
- Create a green footprint by conducting a waste audit in collaboration with children and staff. Continue to find creative ways to promote recycling and protect children's health from environmental contaminants in Direct Operations. Children's Services believes that all children have the right to a clean, safe, healthy environment.

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 Rosemary Martin, Manager Children's Services and reviewed by Kathryn O'Hagan-Todd, Director, Children's Services.*

**Appendix A**  
**Direct Operations – Centre Based**  
**Licensed Capacity and Children Served**  
 (Jan. – Dec. 2008)

<b>Program</b>	<b>Toddlers (18-30 months)</b>	<b>Preschool ( 2.6- 5 years)</b>	<b>Total Capacity</b>	<b>Total Children Served</b>
Branscombe Early Learning and Family Centre	15	33	48	91
Fort Erie Regional Child Care Centre	0	48	48	81
Port Colborne Regional Child Care Centre	10	24	34	33
St. Catharines Regional Child Care Centre	0	72	72	110
Welland Regional Child Care Centre	10	32	42	50
Total	35	209	244	365

**HCC – Centre Based**  
**Children Served by Municipality**  
 (Jan. – Dec. 2008)

<b>Breakdown by Lower Tier</b>	<b>Children Served (<i>Formal Home Child Care</i>)</b>
FORT ERIE	34
GRIMSBY	4
LINCOLN	5
NIAGARA FALLS	176
NIAGARA-ON-THE -LAKE	4
PELHAM	2
PORT COLBORNE	11
ST. CATHARINES	366
THOROLD	37
WAINFLEET	0
WELLAND	34
WEST LINCOLN	3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>676</b>