



BUDGET 2021 – SUMMARY OF KEY ASKS

Who We Are

Founded in November 2019, Child Care Now (Ottawa) is the Ottawa chapter of Child Care Now – we represent parents of children in child care in Ottawa, early childhood educators (ECEs) and other staff working in early childhood education, and allies in the fight for universal, high-quality, public child care in this city.

Context for 2021 Budget Asks

As the COVID-19 pandemic has dramatically impacted all areas of our society, the need to immediately begin building a fully-funded, public, universal child care system in Ottawa – indeed, across Canada – has become painfully apparent. The pandemic has pushed Ottawa’s already completely insufficient child care system to the edge of collapse, while exhausting the parents of young children in a still-unfolding mental health crisis. The City of Ottawa’s own research shows that approximately two-thirds of children lacked access to a licensed child care space prior to the pandemic, with huge equity gaps in existing services that are contingent on high parent fees to operate¹.

A market-based child care system failed Ottawans before and during this pandemic. Building universal child care is a daunting task that will involve all levels of government, but the City of Ottawa must show leadership at this critical moment. Given that City Council [voted unanimously](#) to add investing in child care services as a 2019-2022 Term of Council priority on December 11, 2019, the time for action is now.

We see the following two proposals as timely and complementary initiatives that will dramatically raise quality of life in this city.

BUILDING CHILD CARE CAPACITY IN OTTAWA

Beyond being stuck in a crisis of affordability which substantially limits access, Ottawa desperately needs more child care spaces – we must renew the city’s child care leadership role, and invest in child care expansion.

A strong municipal role in child care services means we can meet the identified needs of underserved areas of the city and build capacity to respond to crises

There are 133,985 children under the age of 12 in Ottawa, and only a third of them have a chance to have a licensed child care space in the city¹. Every child deserves a place designed and intended for their care

¹ City of Ottawa – Children’s Services [Child Care and Early Years Service System Plan, 2019-2023](#)

and learning. Children, as young citizens of our city merit the opportunity to engage and learn together with educators who support and keep them safe. When families cannot find a licensed child care space that is convenient, affordable, and meets their needs, what choices do they really have? We recognize the limited budget of the City of Ottawa, and like City Council we call for an affordable child care system with funding from the provincial and federal governments³. The City of Ottawa can take the lead, and build the capacity for child care. By creating more child care spaces, the city can create jobs, and the conditions for more parents to return to work.

In 2018 and 2019, \$14.6 million in capital funding was allocated to create 459 additional licensed centre-based spaces². These spaces were created only within non-profit, community based centres and schools. Indeed the number of municipally operated spaces has declined markedly in the past decade, with the closure of two city-run centres. As such, we propose three pillars to the expansion of child care capacity in Ottawa:

1. Invest in new municipally-run child care centres

When the City of Ottawa operates centres, it sets a standard for high quality early childhood education. Additionally, by operating child care centres, the City is able to better reach the vulnerable communities and neighbourhoods it has identified. In order to avoid the challenges presented by landlords, and to take advantage of current real estate opportunities, we encourage the municipality to build new centres. Child Care Now - Ottawa based our cost estimates on the cost of purpose-built child care construction by the City of Toronto³. The City should:

- **Build two new municipal child care centres: \$3.2 million**
 - This would come as a capital cost, cost-shared with the Province of Ontario (with the newly applied 20-80 funding formula): \$640,000 from the City - \$2,560,000 from the Province
- **This would create 62 new spaces**

2. Become a license holder for home-based child care, and meet the needs of families in the COVID-19 context.

Child Care Now (Ottawa) recognizes the constraints of the COVID-19 context - many families are unable to afford the cost of centre-based child care, and others are unwilling to increase the number of contacts for their children. Home-based child care involves smaller group sizes, at a lower cost to parents.

By holding the license for home-based child care, the City can again raise the bar for standards in employment and quality early learning. The municipality is already a hub for early years information, which

² City of Ottawa – Children’s Services [Child Care and Early Years Service System Plan, 2019-2023](#)

³ City of Toronto – [Toronto’s Licensed Child Care Growth Strategy, 2017-2026](#)

home-based child care providers would benefit from along with the many connections available. The City should:

- **Create a municipal hub for licensed home-based child care: \$350,000.00/year**
 - We estimate this requiring 5 Full Time Program Advisors and 1 Manager
 - This would come at a one year cost, cost-shared with the Province of Ontario (20/80): \$70,000 from the City and \$280,000 from the Province
 - **This would create 600 new spaces**
3. Support the creation of new spaces in community based, not-for-profit child care programs by creating a Capital Fund.

The city already has ample data on which neighbourhoods are currently underserved in terms of child care provision. By providing capital funding, more targeted spaces can be created by community based child care programs.

Through renovations and additions, some centres might expand existing programs. In underserved areas, new centres might be built by not-for-profit programs already in these areas, with the help of municipal funding. The City should:

- **Create a new Capital Fund for community-based child care programs: \$25 million**
 - This would require community capital, cost-shared between the City and the Province of Ontario (20/80): \$5 million from the City and \$20 million from the Province
- **This would create 1000 new spaces**

Taken together, these initiatives would create 1662 new child care spaces

RACE-BASED DATA COLLECTION FOR CHILD CARE EQUITY

As the world reels from struggles for racial justice, developing tools to detect and analyse the impacts of systemic racism in our child care system is more urgent than ever

Sensitive data will help us make sensible investments in our social infrastructure

As the past year has dramatically shown the need for more accountability from public and publicly-funded institutions in addressing systemic racism (particularly anti-black racism), the need for more sensitive data to capture the impacts of systemic racism in Ottawa's child care sector (along with other municipal services) has become more apparent. Over the past decade, the collection of race-based data has become a more common approach to systematically identify and address equity gaps⁴. Therefore, we propose a pilot program to develop race-based data collection and analysis tools that can identify current and future impacts of race and racism in the child care sector in Ottawa, and offer Ottawa's policy makers, elected officials, and residents better information with which to design future child care policy.

- This could be a stand-alone program, or a focused work area in existing City of Ottawa programs such as the Anti-Racism Secretariat or the Women and Gender Equity Strategy
 - **A stand-alone program as proposed would cost \$850,000 total**, over one year
 - Three Senior Policy Analyst full-time equivalents (FTEs) hired at \$150,000 as dedicated Children's Services program staff (estimated cost includes salary and non-salary costs)
 - Program Operating Costs may cost as much as \$400,000 including both direct and indirect costs
 - **A new initiative integrated with existing programming could be a \$100,000 top-up** to initiate a focused data strategy using existing staff/program resources in 2021
- Regardless of program structure, an initiative such as this should not simply focus on municipally-controlled child care services, but should focus on the child care sector of the city as a whole (considering even unlicensed services) to capture the race-based impacts of service gaps and identify data needs accordingly

⁴ Major institutional human rights organizations, such as the [Ontario Human Rights Commission](#) and the [Canadian Race Relations Foundation](#), have been insisting on such programs across a range of sectors for over a decade