



BOARD REPORT

REPORT No.: 2024-29

MEETING DATE: SEPTEMBER 19, 2024

SUBJECT: CONFEDERATION COLLEGE REGISTERED EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATOR
FAST TRACK AND STUDENT BURSARY PROGRAMS

RECOMMENDATION

THAT with respect to Report No. 2024-29 (Integrated Social Services Division), we The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board, approve the use of up to \$335,000 from the Early Years Reserve Fund for the Early Childhood Education Fast Track Program and Bursaries.

REPORT SUMMARY

To provide The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board (TBDSSAB or the Board) with information on the Early Childhood Education Fast Track Program and Early Childhood Education Bursary program in partnership with Confederation College and to request approval of the use of the Early Years Reserve Fund for the purpose of funding year two of these initiatives.

BACKGROUND

In early 2023, the Ministry of Education supported the child care sector by allocating funding for a Workforce and Retention Strategy for Child Care and Early Years. This support was aimed at attracting new staffing and to support staff retention in the sector.

In June of 2023, TBDSSAB embarked on a partnership with Confederation College to support the recruitment and retention of Early Childhood Educators (ECE) in the child care sector. TBDSSAB supported the development of the Fast Track ECE Program as well as bursaries for both first and second year students. The Fast Track program was designed for staff currently working in child care operations who were not Registered ECE's. The program would provide current staff with the education required to gain a diploma in Early Childhood Education which would then support the expansion of child care spaces within the sector.

COMMENTS

The Ministry of Education did not include Workforce and Retention funding in the 2024 operating funding, so Administration did not plan to continue the Fast Track and Bursary programs beyond the initial year. However, the program proved to be highly successful providing 12 out of 15 students enrolled in the Fast Track program with ECE diplomas this past August. The feedback from students and faculty at Confederation College has been positive and TBDSSAB has had a significant number of requests to offer the program again. As a result of these newly graduated Registered ECE's, it is estimated that we will reach our Targeted Growth Plan as approved in March of 2023, of 56 community-based spaces per year in 2024 and 2025.

The bursary program offered through TBDSSAB funding is intended to attract new interested students to the field of early childhood education and address financial barriers that may impede entry into the program. It is proposed to offer first-year students a bursary of \$1,000 and second-year students a bursary of \$2,000.

Current ECE Program Student Enrollment:

- 61 first year students who begin their program in September of 2024
- 48 students who will be entering into their second year in September 2024 and potentially graduate in June of 2025
- 15 Fast Track ECE students projected to start the program in September of 2024

Administration has determined that the child care system would require an additional 129 RECEs to be fully utilized based on the current licensed spaces in the service system. This initiative aligns with the provincial mandate in which they intend to increase child care spaces across Ontario.

The **key objectives** of this funding are to:

- Sustain the existing workforce to ensure a more stable and high-quality early years and child care system.
- Enhance access to opportunities for the workforce that promote retention and recruitment, including professional development, training, and qualification upgrade programs.
- Grow the number of qualified staff in the child care and early years workforce to increase access to licensed child care for families.
- Attract and support the development of an increasingly diverse workforce to reflect the children and families accessing early years and child care programs more effectively.

Accessible, inclusive, and high-quality child care is essential for the economy and Early Childhood Educators enable broader access for parents to enter or continue in the workforce. Without a viable child care workforce, there is no child care. The current Early Childhood Education workforce has seen a significant decline in registered Early

Childhood Educators. There are currently 59,000 registered Early Childhood Educators in Ontario and approximately 44 % are not working in licensed child care programs. Employment has dropped approximately 20% during the COVID-19 pandemic (Early Childhood Education Report, 2021).

As the child care service system manager in the District of Thunder Bay, TBDSSAB is committed to supporting and investing in the next generation of Early Childhood Educators. The continuation of the Fast Track and bursary programs will make the required education and training more accessible for students. TBDSSAB is working collaboratively on recruitment and retention strategies with the sector to retain and recruit new individuals to the profession, with a focus on reducing barriers to becoming a Registered Early Childhood Educator and supporting educators in accessing additional qualifications to support them in their career development.

The 2025 child care funding approach recently released by the Ministry of Education allows for the investment in workforce development and retention strategies, and as such, the use of Early Years Reserve Funds is proposed as a one-time approach to continue programs in the 2024 school year.

STRATEGIC PLAN IMPACT

This report supports the stabilizing of services within the strategic plan by supporting operators with attraction, retention and growth of ECEs throughout the District. Further, it provides responsive community partnerships by increasing collaboration among system partners creating a system responsive to the needs of the community.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS



Administration is proposing to utilize \$334,069 from the Early Years Reserve Fund to continue to deliver the above noted programs through Confederation College, to support growth in the child care and early years sector.

CONCLUSION

It is concluded that this report provides the Board with information relative to the request for use of the Early Years Reserve Fund to support the continuation of the Fast Track ECE and Bursary programs, in partnership with Confederation College, to enhance the workforce strategy for Child Care and Early Years community within the District of Thunder Bay.

REFERENCE MATERIALS

Attachment #1 [Confederation College - Early Childhood Education Fast Track Program](#)

PREPARED BY:	Dawnette Hoard, Manager, Child Care and Early Years
SIGNATURE	
APPROVED BY	Ken Ranta, Director, Integrated Social Services Division
SIGNATURE	
SUBMITTED BY:	William (Bill) Bradica, Chief Executive Officer

ECE Fast Track Program Cohort 2. July 2024

As at	17-Jul-24
Participating School	Confederation College

Activity Report	#1	#2
Effective Date		
Due Date	20-Dec-24	31-Mar-25

ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS	Budget	Actual	Actual	Actual	Actual	Total (Actual)	Variance (Budget)
Administration	16,872.20					-	16,872.20
TOTAL DEVELOPMENT COSTS	16,872.20	-	-	-	-	-	16,872.20
OPERATIONAL COSTS	Budget	Actual	Actual	Actual	Actual	Total (Actual)	Variance (Budget)
Academic Coordinator*	6,216.00 as per CA					-	6,216.00
Placement Coordinator	8,400.00 \$30/hour					-	8,400.00
Marketing	5,000.00					-	5,000.00
Tuition (Fast Track Students)	140,581.50 \$9372.10/student					-	140,581.50
TOTAL OPERATIONAL COSTS	160,197.50	-	-	-	-	-	160,197.50
FINANCIAL SUPPORT	Budget	Actual	Actual	Actual	Actual	Total (Actual)	Variance (Budget)
Bursary for 1st Year Students	61,000.00 \$1,000/studentx61					-	61,000.00
Bursary for 2nd year students	96,000.00 \$2,000/studentx48					-	96,000.00
TOTAL FINANCIAL SUPPORT	157,000.00	-	-	-	-	-	157,000.00
TOTAL PROPOSED COSTS	334,069.70	-	-	-	-	-	334,069.70

* As per collective agreement