



Budget Service Change Request

Service Change Type

- New Service
- Service Update
- End of Service

LICENSED CHILD CARE SERVICES REVIEW

Service and Adjustment Summary

| Service | Service Description | Service Value and/or Level | 2025 Budget Adjustment |
|--|---|--------------------------------|------------------------|
| A.6.1.a Licensed Child Care | The direct provision of licensed child care for school aged children - kindergarten to grade six. | Net revenue/expenses = \$0.140 | No change recommended |

Reason for the Change?

A review assessing the Town’s provision of licensed child care services has been completed and is presented to the Committee for consideration prior to 2025 budget planning. No change is recommended.

Why change now? What is the need?

No change is recommended as the service is fulfilling a need in the community.

What is the expected impact/benefit for the community? How much of the community will be impacted and/or benefit by the change?

As a provincially licensed child care facility, the Okotoks School Age Care (OSAC) program is licensed for up to 62 children based on the square footage of the Early Child Centre (formerly known as the Okotoks Youth Centre) in the Okotoks Recreation Centre as this is the primary space that the OSAC program utilizes.

After-school programming also includes utilizing the gymnasium, pool and other multi-purpose spaces in the Recreation Centre, which maximizes opportunities for non prime time programming and provides an opportunity to involve children with recreation to promote healthy, active lifestyles.

The program is also licensed to enrol kindergarten students for full days when these students are not in school. The kindergarten program offers swimming and skating weekly as an opportunity to provide additional recreation opportunities for these children.



An additional unique feature of the OSAC program is the utilization of active transportation, walking children to and from the neighbouring schools including *École Percy Pegler*, *École Good Shepherd*, and *Dr. Morris Gibson School*. The proximity of the Recreation Centre to the neighbouring schools does remove the barrier of vehicle transportation, which can be a contributing factor for other centres in regards to their maximum capacity of children.

Additionally, the program has the luxury of utilizing the outdoor classroom and the ball diamonds and sports fields surrounding the centre. An additional benefit to the families and community is the OSAC program introduces the children to the centre, to additional programming opportunities and is very convenient for families that participate in other organized sport opportunities for example minor hockey or swim clubs.

For the 2023/2024 school year, the program had 63 children registered from 46 families. Children can be registered for full-time or part-time services. The program also had an additional 17 children from 13 families that joined the educators on school closure days, including professional development days, throughout the year. For the 2024/2025 school year, the program has 56 children from 40 families returning from last school year. The program is full with a waitlist of 37 children, which shows that the demand is much greater than what can be provided. 93% of the families are returning for the coming school year. As per the families not returning to the program, two (2) of them have children aging out of the program. Based on these numbers, it can be determined that quality child care is being provided that families and the children enjoy utilizing.

The OSAC program currently employs eight (8) permanent employees equivalent to 7.5 FTE plus four (4) casual educators who all hold provincially certified early childhood education certifications. Provincial licensing for child care outlines the ratios needed and certifications required for educators working in child care settings. Level one (1) through three (3) certified educators have extensive knowledge and training to ensure that programs are meeting children's social, emotional, physical and developmental requirements.

In June 2024, the Town of Okotoks conducted a survey to better understand the landscape of child care services in the community (see the attached What We Learned Report).

What is the expected impact/benefit for the organization?

The underlining benefit in employing highly educated early childhood educators that are required for the OSAC program is that the staff can demonstrate their expertise in all programming including preschool programs, the drop-in KinderCare babysitting service, the Okotoks Youth Centre, child and youth sport programs, summer day camps, community events and more.

Families in the community can have peace of mind in the fact that they are leaving their children with trained and qualified professionals. An additional benefit is that the program receives wage



subsidies for all administrative and in-ratio hours worked in the licensed child care centre and educators have access to up to \$2,000.00 per employee per year in professional development funding. The funding can be applied to continuing education courses, training opportunities, and conference fees. Funding is also available to cover wages for time that the educator participates in training and development. For the 2023/2024 school year the Town received over \$25,000 in wage subsidy to off-set salaries and wages, \$8,000 in professional development funding and \$4,000 in subsidy payments to offset the cost of reporting to the province and administering the income and age based subsidies that are collected on behalf of families.

Overall, the OSAC program provides employees with meaningful, professional, consistent, and reliable child care positions in the community, in an industry that is historically plagued by low retention rates due to traditionally lower wages and the lack of access to benefits. In 2023, the OSAC program generated approximately 39% of the Programs total annual revenue equal to roughly \$243,000 and the salaries and wages expense accounts for just under 25% of the total Programs salaries and wages budget. A simple representation of the OSAC programs financial impact is outlined here:

| <u>Revenue</u> | <u>2023</u> | <u>Q1 & 2, 2024</u> |
|------------------------|------------------|-------------------------|
| OSAC Registration | \$243,000 | \$147,000 |
| Grants | \$25,600 | \$24,400 |
| Total Revenue | \$268,600 | \$171,400 |
| <u>Expenses</u> | | |
| Salaries and wages | \$118,500 | \$94,294 |
| Equipment and Material | \$10,000 | \$2,000 |
| Total Expenses | \$128,500 | \$96,284 |
| Net | \$140,100 | \$75,105 |

In regards to facility utilization at the Okotoks Recreation Centre, the OSAC program provides the Town an opportunity to diversify and maximize space allocation and services to the community. Particularly in the early mornings, when demand for space and community programming is less. The program also helps to offset expenses associated with furniture, fixture, equipment and supplies that are required for other preschool and child and youth programming.



Budget Change

| | 2025 | 2026 | Total |
|--------------------------------|------|------|-------|
| Annual Estimated Change | 0 | 0 | 0 |

Attachment(s)

1. Child Care What We Learned Report
2. The Municipal Role in Childcare