

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**March 2, 2026**

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### **Child Care Expansion in Township of Rideau Lakes – New Centre Now Open in Portland**

Portland, ON – The United Counties of Leeds and Grenville, in partnership with the Township of Rideau Lakes and the Rideau Lakes Early Learning Centre, is pleased to announce the completion of a new child care centre at 2767 Highway 15, Portland, ON. The centre officially opened on January 5, 2026, welcoming 23 children into newly created, affordable, high-quality licensed child care spaces at the Emmanuel Heritage Centre.

This expansion forms part of the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC) initiative and aligns with the Leeds and Grenville CWELCC Leeds and Grenville Directed Growth Strategy, funded jointly by the federal and provincial governments. Through this strategy, a total of 685 new affordable, licensed child care spaces will be created across Leeds and Grenville by the end of 2026. To date, the County has successfully led the creation of 370 of these new CWELCC Directed Growth Strategy spaces, since 2022.

“Congratulations to everyone involved in the opening of the Rideau Lakes Early Learning Child Care Centre. I’m pleased that our government is supporting the creation of these new spaces, which is tremendous news for parents who rely on high-quality, affordable care for their children,” said Steve Clark, MPP for Leeds-Grenville-Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes. “As MPP, I’m committed to working with the United Counties, its partners, and our government to expand access to affordable childcare in our rural communities.”

Warden Corinna Smith-Gatcke celebrated the milestone, saying, “I am very pleased to see this new centre open its doors, as it represents a major step forward in meeting both the current and future child care needs of families in Rideau Lakes. By expanding access to high-quality, affordable child care close to home, we are helping parents pursue work, education, and opportunity while giving children the strongest possible start. Access to child care remains a top concern for families across Leeds and Grenville, and this expansion is a meaningful step forward. I am grateful for the collaboration between our municipal, provincial, and federal partners, and proud of the progress we continue to make to ensure families have the support, choice, and opportunities they deserve.”

In addition to the new centre in Portland, a new Kindergarten/School Age program, Centre éducatif Les Petits Trésors, has been created at Lombardy Public School. Combined, the new Rideau Lakes Early Learning Centre and Centre éducatif Les Petits Trésors have expanded access to 36 CWELCC Directed Growth Strategy spaces within the Rideau Lakes community.

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The United Counties of Leeds and Grenville, the Township of Rideau Lakes, the Rideau Lakes Early Learning Centre and Centre éducatif Les Petits Trésors remain committed to providing inclusive, affordable, and high-quality child care, supporting families living in the northern part of the region with greater access, choice, and flexibility, while giving children the strongest possible start in life.

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