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CHILD CARE DIRECTED GROWTH PLAN 2022-2026

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Introduction

On March 27, 2022 the federal and provincial governments signed the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement (CWELCC) aimed at making child care more affordable for families. The new CWELCC system will lower child care costs and improve access, quality and inclusion across Ontario’s child care and early years sector.

For more information about CWELCC please follow this link: [CWELCC](#)

Vision:

Ontario’s vision for the CWELCC system is that more families in Ontario have access to high quality, affordable, flexible, and inclusive early learning and child care no matter where they live.

Goal:

Under the CWELCC Agreement, Ontario will support the creation of 86,000 new CWELCC licensed child care spaces by the end of 2026 (relative to 2019), including more than 4,900 CWELCC net new licensed 0-5 child care spaces created since April 2019.

Ontario’s Child Care Vision



CWELCC System: where more families in Ontario have access to high quality, affordable, flexible, and inclusive early learning and child care throughout the province.

- Child care is foundational to supporting early childhood development, learning, well-being and student success. It is a key enabler of workforce participation, particularly for women, both as parents and providers
- Ontario has developed an Action Plan with **five key pillars to achieve this vision:**



Quality

Increase number of RECs to 60% of workforce & implement wage minimums



Inclusion

Ensure affordable spaces and access to child care for priority populations, including low income, vulnerable children, Francophone, Indigenous and other diverse communities



Affordability

Reduce parent fees for children aged 0-5 to achieve \$10/day average fees.



Access

86,000 new child care spaces created in high need areas by December 2026.



Data and Reporting

Support successful implementation through data and reporting

Supporting Ontario's child care vision, the CWELCC program is providing the following benefits to families and childcare staff:

- Families accessing care through a participating program have seen childcare fees for children under 6 years old reduced by up to 52.75% (to not below the floor of \$12/day)
 - A further decrease in child care fees for eligible children is anticipated to take effect in the fall of 2024 (to not below the floor of \$12/day)
- Low earning Registered Early Childhood Educators working in a participating program are now receiving a minimum wage of \$19/hour.
- Each year up to and including 2026, Registered Early Childhood Educators earning less than \$25/hour will receive up to \$1/hour increase in their wages.

In 2022, Children's Services successfully implemented the first phase of the CWELCC system which included:

- Enrolling 36 of 37 licensed child care programs throughout Cornwall and SD&G into the system (97% participation rate in the CWELCC system).
- Lowering child care fees for families at participating providers by up to 52.75% from March 2022 rates.
- Lowering child care contributions for families in receipt of child care fee subsidy by 50%.
- Providing funding to child care providers to ensure Registered Early Childhood educators (RECEs) receiving less than the wage floor, met the minimum standard under the agreement.

Both 2022 and 2023 are considered transitional years while the Ministry of Education works with partners to create a new funding formula. CWELCC funding is designed to fully offset the reduction in operator revenue from reduced base fees, the increase in staff wages as well as eligible cost escalation expenses.

This plan follows the expectations as set out by the Ministry of Education for service system managers, as outlined in *Ontario's Access and Inclusion Framework 2023* document. Ontario's vision for access and inclusion is that more children (of all abilities and socioeconomic backgrounds) can actively and meaningfully participate in child care, and be supported in forming authentic, caring relationships with their peers and educators. As such, this plan outlines how the Children's Services division will work with child care operators in Cornwall and throughout SD&G to support increased access to licensed child care for:

- Low income families
- Vulnerable children
- Children with special needs
- Francophone families

- Indigenous families
- Children from diverse communities
- Newcomer families
- Families needing more flexible models of care, including evening, weekend and overnight care
- Neighbourhoods with less than a 37% access rate (underserved communities)

Children’s Services is responsible for planning, overseeing, and managing licensed child care and early years programs and services in Cornwall and throughout SD&G. This includes managing and directing CWELCC-funded growth at a local level. Data from our local [Child Care and Early Years Service System Plan 2021-2025](#) has been used to inform this child care directed growth plan. In addition, recent data collected through surveys and consultations have also been considered in the development of this plan.

Targeted Growth

In May 2023, the Ministry of Education released a memo to the service system managers confirming expansion targets. Child Care expansion targets for 2023-2026 for Cornwall and SD&G are all for community-based projects and are allocated as per the chart below.

Year	2023	2024	2025	2026
Expansion Target *	30	0	98	98

*changes to expansion targets must be approved by the Ministry of Education

The 2023 space allocation as noted in the above chart include spaces that have already been created and/or are already approved and expected to open in 2023. The spaces for 2025 and 2026 in the above chart include 49 spaces in each of the following geographic areas: Cornwall, Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry.

Due to the reduced fees already in place due to CWELCC, local child care operators throughout our region have already seen a significant increase in families looking for care. Wait lists for child care spaces have significantly increased. As the fees continue to become more affordable for families (to \$12/day by 2026), it is expected that the demand for child care spaces will continue to grow. As such, discussions continue with the child care sector for targeted expansion of child care spaces within Cornwall and SD&G.

It must be noted that the childcare sector is experiencing a critical shortage of staff, most significantly, there is a lack of Registered Early Childhood Educators (RECEs). Without available workers, expansion of childcare spaces will be challenging.

Key Priorities

As the service system manager for child care, the Children Services division has identified the greatest need for child care expansion is for Infants and Toddlers (children aged birth to 30 months). Therefore, applications to expand CWELCC-funded spaces will be considered only if they include services for this age demographic. Expansion for non-CWELCC spaces (spaces for school aged children) will be supported based on identified need.

Ontario has committed to maintaining or improving the proportion of not-for-profit child care spaces for children aged 0-5. As such, the Children’s Services division is committed to only expanding not-for-profit child care spaces for CWELCC-funded spaces.

In addition, approved expansion will be prioritized to align with our local 10-Year Housing Development Plan. This will increase accessibility for low-income families to access quality early learning and child care environments.

Additional priorities that all approved child care expansion must adhere to include:

- Alignment with [How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years](#)
Accessibility, including but not limited to:
 - Having a current inclusion plan to support the meaningful and active participation of children of all abilities.
 - Removal of barriers for families to access care (example having flexible days and hours of care, offering both full-time and part-time care options, offering francophone or bilingual services as appropriate, etc.)

It must be noted that licensing for all child care spaces is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education, and that receiving a license does not guarantee funding.

The Ministry of Education has stipulated that all expansion projects are required to be created, retrofitted, renovated, and/or expanded to accommodate a maximum group size for each age grouping for children under the age of six (please see chart below).

Age Group	Infant	Toddler	Preschool
Maximum Group Size	10	15	24

Community Engagement

Throughout the duration of this plan and beyond, Children’s Services will implement accessible and inclusive engagement activities to ensure we hear from a broad range of stakeholders.

Engagement will include key community partners including, but not limited to:

- Families
- Current and potential child care operators
- Members of the Cornwall SD&G Early Years Planning Table
- School Boards
- Administration from various municipal departments in Cornwall and SD&G

Engagement may include many types such as, but not limited to:

- Community updates
- Information sessions
- Surveys
- Partnerships
- Consultations

Community stakeholders wanting to engage in conversations related to child care expansion can reach out to the Children’s Services division via email at childrensservices@cornwall.ca.

2023-2026 Growth Summary

It is anticipated that this directed growth plan will support the creation of an additional 211 licensed child care spaces for children aged 0–5 by December 2026. The charts below shows how this growth will be distributed.

This growth is in addition to recent expansion in 2022-early 2023 that added 87 licensed child care spaces for children aged 0-5 in our region (25 in Cornwall and 62 in SD&G).

Number of Licensed Child Care Spaces for Children aged 0-5 (as of June 2023)					
	Infant	Toddler	Pre-school	Family Age Group	Total
Cornwall	50	155	336	15	556
SD&G	20	120	176	30	346

Anticipated Number of Licensed Child Care Spaces for Children aged 0-5 (as of December 2026)					
	Infant	Toddler	Pre-school	Family Age Group	Total
Cornwall	60	170	360	15	605
SD&G	50	165	248	45	508

It is important to note that the current staffing crisis may limit the ability to have all expanded spaces open and operational by the end of 2026.

Moving Forward

Throughout the duration of this plan and beyond, Children’s Services will implement accessible and inclusive engagement activities to ensure we hear from a broad range of stakeholders. In addition, Children’s Services will continue to work with our local child care operators to support, and encourage growth of our child care workforce.

Workforce Strategy

Quality childcare, supported by qualified early years professionals, is essential for the economy as well as for familial well-being. It is a known fact that there exists Early Childhood Educator (ECE) staffing shortages, not only in Cornwall but also in Ontario and across the country. The current child care workforce will need to increase to support this plan for expansion.

Children's Services is committed to continuing to support our local child care workforce. The following strategies that were implemented in 2022-2023 as part of our local workforce strategy will continue to be supported in 2024 and beyond:

- Annual Child Care and Early Years Conference
- ECE of the Year Award
- Awareness and Value Campaign (using the "Profession in Play" marketing materials)

Additional workforce strategies will be supported based on available budget.

Application Process

As announced by the Ministry of Education in December 2022, beginning in 2023 CWELCC-funded child care expansion has shifted from open enrolment to a targeted plan to create new child care spaces. This targeted growth approach will ensure funding is available to support new spaces in communities most in need of access to high -quality, affordable child care.

For 2023, the approval of new CWELCC-funded expansion spaces is now complete. Approvals were provided to operators by Children's services in alignment with our growth plans and service targets. Growth for 2024-2026 must align with the service plan as well as with current and any new provincial guidelines.

Licensees interested in opening new locations or expanding spaces and participating in the CWELCC system must apply to the City of Cornwall, Children's Services Division for confirmation that their project aligns with the regional expansion plan and falls within space targets. If the project location and proposed capacity aligns with the expansion plan, the licensee will be required to complete the CWELCC application process for final confirmation. [CWELCC Guidelines and Application](#) are located on the City of Cornwall website.

CWELCC

In June 2023, The Ministry of Education released updated CWELCC guidelines, which include the following key changes and clarifications:

- Application Requirements:
 - Licensees must complete and submit an application to Children's Services to demonstrate that they meet the regulatory requirements to be eligible to participate in the CWELCC System.
 - Note: Children's Services has the discretion to deny enrolment to licensees where the program is not consistent with the local Directed Growth Plan
 - All licensees opting into CWELCC will need to demonstrate financial viability.
 - All licensees participating in CWELCC must maintain existing (pre-CWELCC announcement on March 28, 2022) licensed spaces for children ages 0-5 (e.g., a licensed infant space must remain an infant space). Any revisions or use of alternate capacity must be reported to Children's Services and Children's Services will determine whether this may result in a funding adjustment or recovery from the licensee.
 - Licensees applying to participate in CWELCC are required to communicate to all parents and staff within 14 days of receiving notice from Children's Services of the approval or denial of their application.
- Base Rates:
 - All licensees participating in CWELCC must maintain their child care fees at the rate charged prior to the CWELCC announcement on March 27, 2022 (the 2022 fee freeze) and implement the subsequent fee reductions.
 - For licensees who did not enroll in 2022 and are opting in for 2023, the base fee for the purposes of fee reduction will be the base fee in effect during the 2022 fee freeze (even if fees increased in the interim).
 - Newly enrolled licensees in 2023 will be required to directly reduce base fees by 52.75%. Newly enrolled licensees will only receive funding starting the date of enrolment and with due consideration to operating capacity.
 - Child care operators that obtained their license after March 27, 2022, are required to set their base fees at or below a regional maximum (see Appendix 1), as set out by age group pursuant to O.Reg.137/15 of the Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014.
- Cost escalation:
 - Cost escalation funding will only be provided only for the portion of the year between the enrolment date and December 31, 2023 for newly enrolled licensees.

Start Up Grant

Funding to support the creation of new licensed full day child care spaces for children under age 6 is limited and will be application based and is not guaranteed. Applications for the [start-up grant](#) will be reviewed and assessed based on the criteria set out in this plan.

Capital start-up grants can be used to offset the initial costs required to expand or create community-based spaces such as equipment and leasehold improvements. The grants exclude capital projects for child care programs that run during school hours for kindergarten and school-aged children. Capital start-up grant funding may be used for retrofits, renovations, or expansion projects, but cannot be used to purchase land or buildings.

All capital start-up grant funded projects are required to be created, retrofitted, renovated, and/or expanded to accommodate a maximum group size for each age grouping for children under the age of six.

Eligible licensees will be able to receive a grant covering \$90 per square foot of a new or expanded space with a cap of \$350,000 for every 50 child care spaces created.

To access capital start-up grant funding, CMSMs/DSSABs will require a commitment from the licensee to:

- participate in the CWELCC system for the remainder of the CWELCC agreement (2026), and
- spend the capital start-up grant funding within two years.

Eligible expenses:

- Play materials, equipment, and furnishings (both indoors and outdoors).
- Non-consumable supplies/equipment to support the ongoing regular operation of the child care program (e.g. appliances, IT, supplies to support learning environments while adhering to health and safety requirements).
- Renovations, additions, or repairs to licensed child care facilities or potential child care facilities as approved by the City of Cornwall's Children's Services division.

Ineligible Expenses:

- Purchase of land or buildings.
- Debt costs including principal and interest payments related to capital loans, mortgage financing, and operating loans.
- Property taxes.

Appendix 1: Base Rates

Child care operators that obtained their license after March 27, 2022, are required to set their base fees at or below a regional maximum, as set out by age group pursuant to O.Reg.137/15 of the Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014.

For Cornwall and SD&G, the regional maximum base rates are listed below.

CHILD CARE CENTRE DAILY FEES FOR FULL-DAY PROGRAMS

Licensed Infant Group	Licensed Toddler Group	Licensed Preschool Group	Licensed Kindergarten Group	Licensed School Age Group	Licensed Family Age Group
\$46.68	\$38.00	\$35.90	\$31.02	\$31.02	\$38.00

CHILD CARE CENTRE DAILY FEES FOR BEFORE AND AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMS

Kindergarten	School Age
\$18.39	\$19.24

HOME CHILD CARE DAILY FEES FOR FULL-DAY PROGRAMS

Younger than 2 years	2-3 years	4-6 years
\$38.99	\$36.94	\$34.88

HOME CHILD CARE DAILY FEES FOR Before and After School Programs

4-5 years	6-12 years
\$12.31	\$12.31