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Un monde de possibilités



CHILD CARE DIRECTED GROWTH PLAN 2022-2026

Updated July 2025

Table of Contents

Introduction2

Local Data4

Targeted Growth6

Key Priorities7

Community Engagement8

2023-2026 Growth Summary9

Moving Forward10

Workforce Strategy10

Application Process10

CWELCC11

Start Up Grants12

Canada-Ontario Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) Infrastructure Fund13

Child Care Growth of Non-CWELCC Participating Licensees15

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 is lowering child care costs and improving 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 significantly reduced. Beginning on January 1, 2025, families with children in programs enrolled in the CWELCC system saw child care base fees capped at \$22 per day.
 - Child Care fees for eligible children are expected to reach \$10 per day on average by the end of 2025-26.
- Low earning Registered Early Childhood Educators (RECEs) working in a participating program are now receiving a minimum wage of \$24.86/hour.
 - In 2026, this minimum wage for RECEs will increase to \$25.86/hour

Both 2022 and 2023 were considered transitional years while the Ministry of Education worked with partners to create a new funding formula. Beginning in 2025, the Ministry of Education implemented a new cost-based funding formula for CWELCC enrolled child care operators serving the 0-5 age groups. Cost-based funding provides support for operating costs for licensees participating in CWELCC for the delivery of child care to CWELCC-eligible children.

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. Note: Our 2026-2030 service plan is currently being drafted and will be available on the City website by January 1, 2026.

Local Data

The following data has been used in the development of this plan. This data has provided Children’s Services with a picture of the current state of the child care system within Cornwall and SD&G and will be used to track progress over time.

The following chart represents the number of licensed child care spaces as of June 2025. Note: In the City of Cornwall there is 1 licensee who is licensed to operate 24 hours per day, 7 days a week.

Licensed Capacity Summary	Infant	Toddler	Pre-school	Kinder	Primary/ Jr S/A (68-156 months)	Junior S/A (109-156 months)	Family Age Group	Total
Total licensees in Cornwall = 16	50	185	392	377	547	120	14	1685
Total licensees in SD&G = 21	30	135	200	456	660	60	30	1571
Total Spaces by Age Group	80	320	592	833	1207	180	44	3256
Percentage of Spaces by Age Group	2%	10%	18%	26%	37%	6%	1%	100%

The age group distribution of spaces is represented in the chart below.

Age Group Distribution of Spaces	
Cornwall Children Aged 0-5	60%
Cornwall Children Aged 6-12	40%
SD&G Children Aged 0-5	54%
SD&G Children Aged 6-12	46%

Inclusion of all children of all abilities is a critical component of quality child care. All of the not-for-profit licensees in Cornwall and SD&G have submitted an inclusion plan to Children’s Services as a requirement of participating in the CWELCC system. These plans are in place to ensure that every licensee creates and maintains inclusive child care environments, engages the services of our special needs resourcing team and implements strategies as required to ensure that all children of all abilities are welcomed and included in their programs. To further support inclusion, licensees are provided with funding to hire enhanced support staff as well as to purchase adaptive toys and equipment as needed.

All of Cornwall and SD&G are considered to be in a child care desert. This means that less than 1 in 3 children, who are younger than Kindergarten age, have access to licensed child care. Our current access rates are indicated in the chart below:

	Access rate
Cornwall	26%
Stormont	12%
Dundas	15%
Glengarry	9%

It is important to recognize that there is a significant Francophone population within Cornwall and SD&G. The chart below reflects the number and percentage of licensed child care spaces that serve children from Francophone families.

Licensed Capacity Summary (French vs English Child Care Spaces in Cornwall and SD&G)	Infant	Toddler	Pre-school	Kinder	Primary/ Jr S/A (68-156 mnths)	Junior S/A (109-156 mnths)	Family Age Group	Total	
Total Francophone spaces in Cornwall & SDG	10	105	184	384	375	80	0	1138	35%
Total English spaces in Cornwall & SDG	70	215	408	449	832	100	44	2118	65%
								3256	100%

As indicated in the first chart above, there are a total of 37 licensees in Cornwall and SD&G (16 in Cornwall and 21 throughout SD&G). 36 of the 37 licensees are not-for-profit operators. The Chart below shows the distribution of profit versus not-for-profit operators.

Profit/Notfor Profit Licensed Child Care Spaces				
Cornwall Children Aged 0-5	1%	For Profit	99%	Not-For Profit
Cornwall Children Aged 6-12	0%	For Profit	100%	Not-For Profit
SD&G Children Aged 0-5	0%	For Profit	100%	Not-For Profit
SD&G Children Aged 6-12	0%	For Profit	100%	Not-For Profit

Additional local data can be found in our local service system plan located on the City of Cornwall website: <https://www.cornwall.ca/en/live-here/child-care.aspx>

Children’s Services will continue to gather data on a regular basis to ensure that child care growth within our area meets the needs of the children and families being served.

Targeted Growth

In May 2023, the Ministry of Education released a memo to the service system managers confirming expansion targets. On March 31, 2025, the Ministry of Education communicated the results of a space recalibration exercise they conducted based on data collected from all service managers in October of 2024 (updated expansion targets are included in the chart below). 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
Revised Expansion Target*	30	0	76	151

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

To date, together with our local child care operators, our communities have seen the following new child care spaces created as part of the CWELCC program:

- A new Family Age group (15 spaces) at St. Peter's school in Cornwall
- 26 new Kindergarten spaces at école élémentaire Rose des Vents in Cornwall
- A new child care centre in Cornwall licensed for 30 Toddlers and 32 Preschoolers
- A new child care centre in Berwick (North Stormont) licensed for 10 Infants, 15 toddlers and 24 Preschoolers

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 the end of 2025-26), 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.

Children’s Services recommends that all expansion projects are 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 must complete an [Expression of Interest for Child Care Expansion](#) form.

2023-2026 Growth Summary

It is anticipated that this directed growth plan will support the creation of an additional 129 licensed child care spaces for children aged 0–5 by December 2026. The charts below shows how this growth will be distributed. Note: Remaining 16 growth spaces, not included in this chart, will be assigned to Home Child Care.

This growth is in addition to 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 2025)						
In addition to below, we have 54 licensed Home Child Care spaces throughout Cornwall and SD&G						
	Infant	Toddler	Pre-school	Kinder- garten	Family Age Group	Total
Cornwall	50	185	368	377	14	994
SD&G	30	135	200	456	30	851

Anticipated Number of Licensed Child Care Spaces for Children aged 0-5 (as of December 2026)						
In addition to below, we anticipate having 70 licensed Home Child Care spaces throughout Cornwall & SD&G						
	Infant	Toddler	Pre-school	Kinder- garten	Family Age Group	Total
Cornwall	60	200	384	377	14	1035
SD&G	40	150	232	456	45	923

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.

Children's Services is currently working with child care operators to plan for expansion in 2026. Growth for 2026 and beyond 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

The Ministry of Education’s updated CWELCC guidelines, 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 must clearly indicate in their Parent Handbook whether the program is enrolled in CWELCC or not enrolled in CWELCC.
- Base Rates:
 - ⊖ As per O. Reg. 137/15, all licensees participating in CWELCC must have a base fee that is the lowest of the following amounts:
 1. \$22 per day.
 2. The base fee charged on December 31, 2024, if the licensee was enrolled in the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care System on that day.
 - 3. The applicable amount set out in the table below, if the licensee was not enrolled in the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care System on December 31, 2024.

Licensed infant group	Licensed toddler group	Licensed preschool group	Licensed kindergarten group	Licensed school age group	Licensed family age group
\$22.00	\$17.96	\$16.96	\$14.66	\$14.66	\$17.96

Start Up Grants

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. [Start Up Grants Applications](#) will be reviewed and assessed based on the criteria set out in this plan.

Start-up grant funding must be used to improve access to licensed child care in communities with vulnerable children from diverse populations including:

- children living in low-income families.
- children with special needs.
- Indigenous children.
- Black and other racialized children.
- children of newcomers to Canada.
- Francophone children.

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 projects for child care programs that run during school hours for kindergarten and school-aged children. Start-up grant funding may be used for retrofits, renovations, or expansion projects, but cannot be used to purchase land or buildings.

All 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 can receive a grant of up to \$350,000 for every 20 child care spaces created. Eligible home child care licensees can receive grants of up to \$1,200 per CWELCC space created, to a maximum of \$7,200 per provider.

To access start-up grant funding, the licensee must agree to:

- participate in the CWELCC system for at least 7 years after opening the new child care spaces, and
- spend the start-up grant funding prior to December 31, 2026.

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.

- Changes to outdoor play space that are required as a result of the expansion of child care spaces in the centre so that the licensee continues to comply with O. Reg. 137/15. Funding to cover the costs incurred to make outdoor play space changes are subject to the overall project cap of \$350,000 per 20 child care spaces created.
- Leasehold improvements.

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.
- Expenditures related to care of children aged 6 to 12.
- School-based child care spaces.
- Indoor and outdoor renovations, additions or repairs to home child care licensee premises or potential home child care licensee premises

Canada-Ontario Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) Infrastructure Fund

Infrastructure Funding supports the creation of new community-based not-for-profit child care spaces in centres for children aged 0 to 4 (excluding children eligible to attend junior kindergarten) that are approved for enrolment in the CWELCC system and that align with the local Directed Growth Strategy.

[CWELCC Infrastructure Fund Funding Applications](#) will be reviewed and assessed based on the criteria set out in this plan.

ELCC Infrastructure Fund funding must be used to create new, licensed child care spaces that support one or more of the following underserved communities:

- communities in rural and remote regions,
- communities with low-income households,
- communities with barriers to access (for example, Black and other racialized communities; Indigenous communities; communities with newcomers; communities with parents, caregivers and children with disabilities; official language minority communities including Francophone children),
- communities requiring child care during non-standard hours.

To access ELCC infrastructure funding, CMSMs/DSSABs will require a commitment from the licensee to:

- remain enrolled in the CWELCC program and continue operating in the facility for at least 7 years after opening the new child care spaces.
- spend the funding and have the new spaces open prior to December 31, 2026.
- ensure that all child care spaces are inclusive and accessible to all children of all abilities

Eligible expenses:

- Purpose built new construction, renovations, retrofits, and additions to community-based child care facilities. This includes expenses incurred through the planning, design and building stages of these projects.
- Purchase of land or buildings.
- Purchase of play-based materials, equipment, and furnishings (both indoors and outdoors) as outlined in O. Reg. 137/15 under the CCEYA.
- Purchase of non-consumable supplies/equipment to support the ongoing regular operation of the child care program (for example, appliances, IT equipment, supplies to support learning environments while adhering to health and safety requirements).
- Changes to outdoor play space that are required as a result of the creation of new child care spaces so that the licensee continues to comply with O. Reg. 137/15.
- Leasehold improvements.

Ineligible expenses:

- Debt costs, including principal and interest payments related to capital loans, mortgage financing, and operating loans
- Property taxes.
- Amortization of existing assets.
- Operating expenses.
- Expenditures related to licensed child care programs for kindergarten and school-aged children and before and after school programs.
- Expenditures related to facilities owned by school boards.
- Expenditures related to licensed home child care spaces.

Child Care Growth of Non-CWELCC Participating Licensees

Licensees that serve children aged 0 to 5 and do not participate in CWELCC must continue to run their operations under the existing provincial licensing and regulatory framework.

As of January 1, 2025, licensees that do not participate in CWELCC must not directly receive any funding from their CMSMs/DSSABs that they may have previously had access to (for example, wage enhancements, general operating) and may continue to set their own parent fees and wages.

Licensees are required to indicate in their parent handbook that they are not participating in CWELCC and must include their fee amounts.