



# EARLY YEARS UPDATE

2023-2024



## CANADA-WIDE EARLY LEARNING AND CHILD CARE (CWELCC)

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Ontario entered into a Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care agreement (CWELCC) and signed a \$13.2 billion agreement with the Government of Canada that delivers savings and relief to families. This includes lowering fees to an average of \$10 per day for children five years and younger in licensed child care by September 2025.

The key pillars of the CWELCC system are:

### Lowering Fees

25% fee reduction, for children under six years of age (or turning 6 prior to June 30th of the calendar year), retroactive to April 1, 2022

A further fee reduction of 37% bringing the provincial average fee to \$23 per day as of December 31, 2022

An average of \$10 per day by September 2025

### Increasing Access

Creating 86,000 new licensed child care spaces by the end of 2026

### Enhancing High-Quality Child Care

Valuing the early childhood workforce and providing educators with training and development

opportunities

### Supporting Inclusion

Addressing the barriers to provide inclusive child care, ensuring that space expansion supports the needs of vulnerable and diverse populations in community (ie., Indigenous, Francophone, Black and other racialized groups, newcomers, low-income families and children with special needs)

All licensed child care service providers serving children under six years of age are eligible to apply to the District of Sault Ste. Marie Social Services Administration Board (DSSMSSAB) for enrolment in the CWELCC system. Upon approval, licensed child care service providers will enter into a service agreement with DSSMSSAB.

Eligibility criteria as outlined in the *Child Care and Early Years Act*, 2014 O. Reg. 236/22:

- Licensed and demonstrate financial viability based on financial reports
- Premises is zoned appropriately at the time of application
- Identified as a priority neighborhood
- Comply with the legislation as set out in the *Child Care and Early Years Act*, 2024 and its regulations as set by the Ministry of Education



**As of November 2022,  
100% of the Non-Profit  
Licensed Child Care Operators  
opted into the CWELCC System**

## ACCESS AND INCLUSION

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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.

Under the CWELCC Agreement, Ontario will support the creation of 86,000 new CWELCC licensed child care spaces by the end of 2026.

To ensure that access to affordable child care aligns with the principles above, service system managers will play a role in directing where this growth occurs. The Ministry will provide each service system manager with growth targets and allocations for their region and in turn, will be required to incorporate these targets in their local service plans.

# DIRECTED GROWTH PLAN

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As announced in December 2022, beginning in 2023 the Ministry of Education has shifted child care expansion to a directed growth approach which will support space creation in underserved service areas.

The DSSMSSAB has developed a growth plan report that aligns with Provincial directives and space targets while meeting local needs. In January 2023, the DSSMSSAB used current child care waitlist data (2023) and demographic variables (2021 Census of Canada) to help identify priority areas where expansion in the community should focus based on the targeted approach.

The areas of focus were delineated using the following parameters:

- Population of Children Aged 0 to 5 (Census 2021)
- Children Aged 0 to 5 as a Percent of Total Population (Census 2021)
- Number of Children Aged 0 to 5 on the Waitlist (OneHSN 2023)
- Percent of Population Aged 0 to 5 on the Waitlist (Census 2021 and OneHSN 2023)

The neighbourhoods identified were upper McNabb area, East-end neighbourhood, downtown, and upper Pine area.

The Ministry of Education has provided the District of Sault Ste. Marie with the following space targets for CWELCC-funded growth between 2022-2026:

- 146 Community based spaces
  - Licensed Home Child Care and Licensed Centre-based Child Care
- 87 School based spaces
  - 2 School Expansions:
    - 1 with an existing child care centre; and
    - 1 that will include a new child care centre

Child Care operators interested in expanding their services can apply by completing the [Intent to Expand Centre-Based Services](#) form. New Child care operators can apply by completing the [CWELCC Application](#) form.

The DSSMSSAB will continue to work with the Ministry of Education and licensed child care operators to expand licensed child care and increase access to high-quality early learning programs for families in the District of Sault Ste. Marie.