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Zhawenimi-Anokiitaagewin
Sault Ste. Marie District

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DIRECTED GROWTH PLAN

Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement (CWELCC)



2025

Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement (CWELCC)

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

As of January 1, 2024, base fees remained at 52.75% of March 27, 2022 levels, with a minimum of $12/day; families receiving subsidized care saw an additional 50% reduction on their parent contribution, without the $12 minimum

As of January 1, 2025, daily fees in CWELCC-participating programs are capped at $22/day for children under 6 years of age.

The overarching goal is to reach an average of $10/day for licensed child care by 2026.



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

Directed Growth Plan

Access & Inclusion

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.

This plan follows the Ministry of Educations document, Ontario's Access and Inclusion Framework 2023. Ontario's vision for the CWELCC System is to enable children of all abilities and socio-economic backgrounds to participate in child care actively and meaningfully. The presence of vulnerable populations is a key consideration when identifying priority neighbourhoods.





Space Creation Targets

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 five-year 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 Ministry of Education set the target access rate at 37% for childcare spaces in Ontario. By 2026 it is expected that there be one affordable childcare space available for every 2.7 children aged 0-5 in order to reduce disparities in access to childcare across the Province.

However, in Sault Ste. Marie the access rate for children 0-5 is 32% or one affordable childcare space for every 3.1 children. This is well below the target rate set by the Ministry for childcare spaces in Ontario. Lack of childcare impacts all economic strategies and is a barrier to physician recruitment for our community and region.

Currently, Sault Ste. Marie has 1,947 licensed spaces in the community and a waitlist of approximately 2,200 children. Unfortunately, the waitlist is larger than the total licensed childcare system in our community and many families wait longer than 24 months to access a CWELCC space in our community. Projections for the Algoma district show a steady trend of children 0-5 requiring childcare spaces in our community putting more pressure on the system.

Ministry target access rate:

37%

1 space for every 2.7 children



Current access rate in the Sault Ste. Marie District

32%

1 space for every 3.1 children

Priority Neighbourhoods

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 priority neighbourhoods identified through this process include:

Upper McNabb Area | **East-End Areas** | **Downtown Area** | **Upper Pine Area**

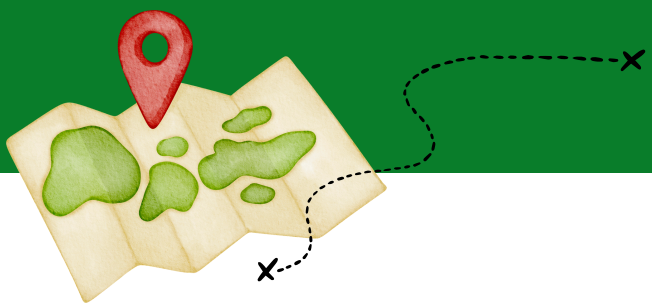
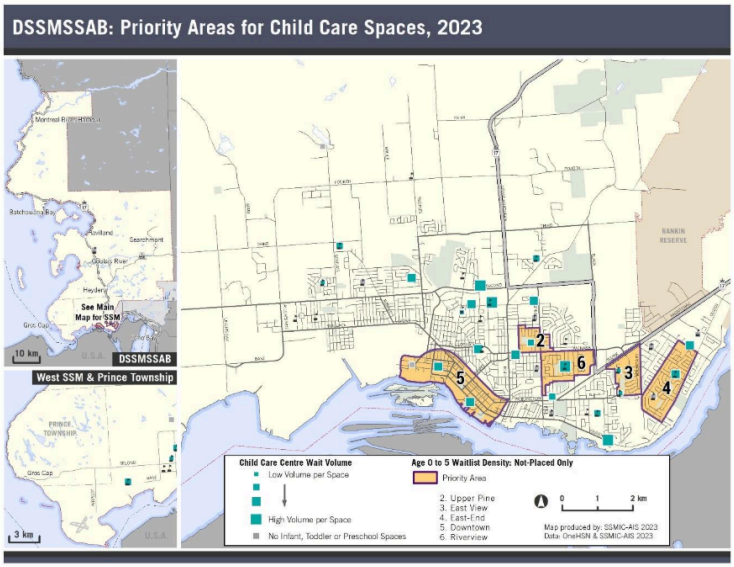


Figure 1: Priority Areas for Child Care Spaces, 2023



Priority Area 1: YMCA Child Care (McNabb)

This priority area opened five community spaces allocated to the DSSMSSAB.

Priority Area 2: Upper Pine Area

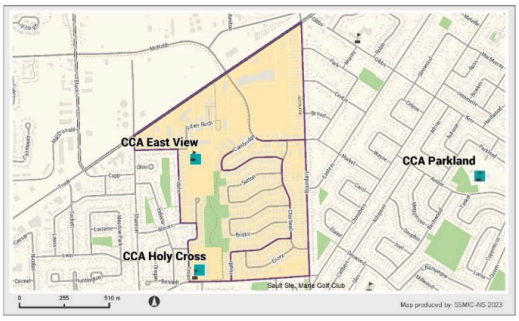
Neighbourhood Profile: Many children on waitlist and requiring subsidy; high special needs; many recent immigrants; many visible minorities; many children in low-income households; many one-parent families.

The area near Upper Pine Street contains high percentages of children aged 0 to 5 on the waitlist, children with special needs, and children requiring subsidy. This area has the highest concentration of recent immigrants in the DSSMSSAB and has a higher percentage of one-parent families and children living in low-income situations. The area is mostly comprised of medium density residential zoning, with some single-detached residential and general commercial.

Figure 2: Upper Pine Priority Area



Figure 3: East View Priority Area



Priority Area 3: East View Neighbourhood

Neighbourhood Profile: Many children on waitlist; many children in low-income households and living in one-parent families; many Indigenous children; some Francophone children.

The East View neighbourhood contains high percentages of children aged 0 to 5 on the waitlist and children requiring subsidy. This area has a higher percentage of Indigenous children on the waitlist than other areas of the DSSMSSAB. The area is a mix of single-detached, low and medium residential zones with commercial zones along Trunk Road.

Nearly half of the children in this neighbourhood are waiting for the CCA program at Queen Street/Shannon Road. The Queen Street/Shannon Road site has 11 children waiting per licensed space, the highest in the DSSMSSAB area.

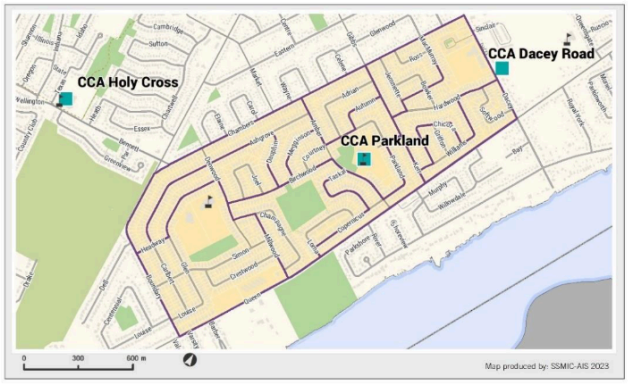
Priority Area 4: East End Neighbourhood

Neighbourhood Profile: Pockets of this area have high populations of children; many one-parent families; many visible minorities; many Indigenous children.

Several of the DAs that comprise this area have a higher concentration of children aged 0 to 5 than most other areas of the DSSMSSAB. This priority area is demographically similar to the DSSMSSAB as a whole; however, there is considerable variability amongst the DAs contained within. For example: DA 35570078 contains 65 children aged 0 to 5; 26% lone-parent families; and 10% visible minorities. The area is mostly single-detached residential zoning with several low and medium density residential zones.

The children in this area are mostly waiting for a CCA program at Queen Street/Shannon Road, Parkland or Dacey Road.

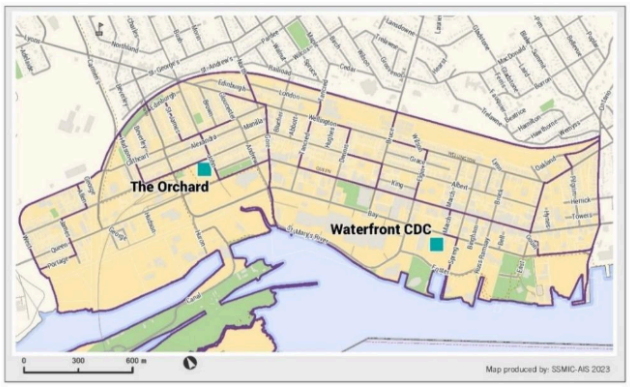
Figure 4: East End Priority Area



Priority Area 5: Downtown

Neighbourhood Profile: High percentage children on waitlist and requiring subsidy; many children in low-income households; many one-parent families; many visible minorities; many Indigenous children; no elementary schools in area; high daytime population.

Figure 5: Downtown Priority Area



The Downtown area has a higher percentage of children aged 0 to 5 waiting for child care than the DSSMSSAB as a whole. This area is among the most socio-economically marginalized in all of the DSSMSSAB. Nearly half of the children are on the waiting list for the YMCA Child Care (McNabb) which is not in this neighbourhood. One child care centre in this neighbourhood may be attractive to parents who commute into downtown to work, as the main commercial and business districts are located here. The second centre is well situated and collocated with the local Indigenous High School well to the west of this area, which is a wonderful resource at this location, however is not centrally located for many families. The rest of the downtown is a mix of high, medium and low density residential, and some institutional. There are no elementary schools in this neighbourhood.

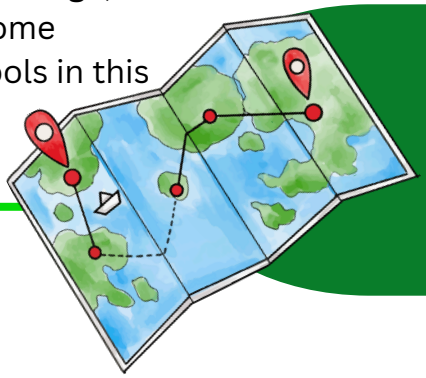
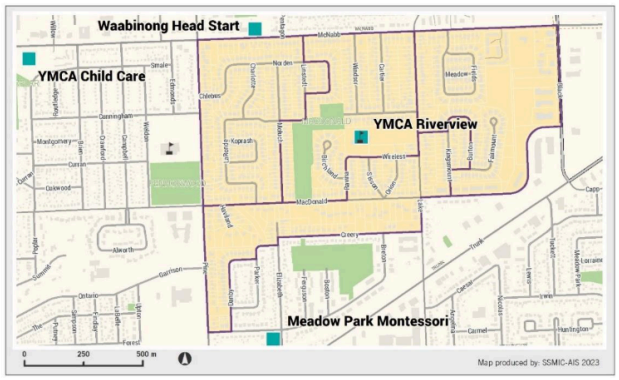


Figure 6: Riverview Priority Area



Priority Area 6: Riverview Priority Area (Upper McNabb)

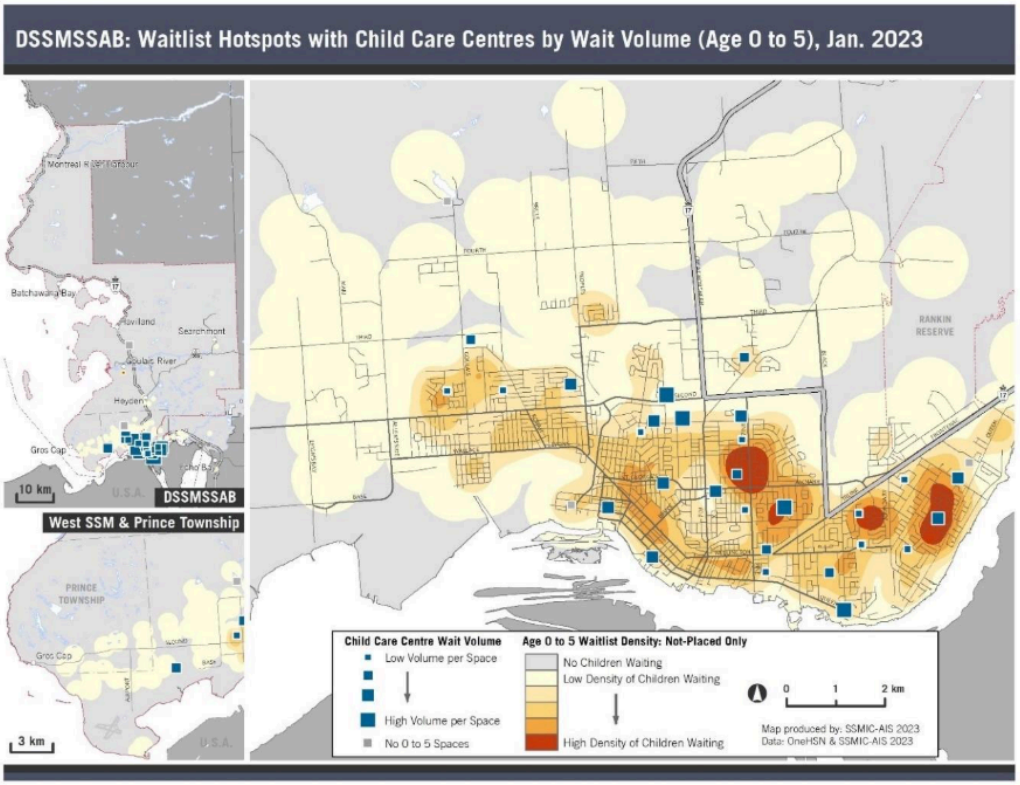
Neighbourhood Profile: High child population; many children on waitlist; child care centre in neighbourhood has many children waiting for a space.

The Riverview School area as shown in the map has a higher concentration of children aged 0 to 5 than most other areas of the DSSMSSAB. There are 51 children aged 0 to 5 currently on the waitlist for child care, half of whom are on the list for YMCA Riverview, which has a high number of children waiting per space (9:1). The area is mostly single-detached residential zoning with several medium density residential zones.

Figure 7

Shows the locations of children aged 0 to 5 who are currently waiting for child care as a hotspot density map. The dark orange colour indicates a high volume of children currently waiting for care. The locations of licensed child care centres that contain spaces for infants, toddlers, preschoolers or JK/SK are sized by the number of children waiting per licensed space. A large symbol indicates a high number of children waiting per space. For example, the Child Care Algoma's Queen/Shannon Road Site currently has 11 children waiting per licensed space, the highest in the DSSMSSAB area (this site is the most southerly site within the main map in Figure 1).

Figure 7: Waitlist Hotspots with Child Care Centres by Wait Volume for Children Aged 0 to 5, January 2023



The Ministry of Education has provided the DSSMSSAB with the following space targets for CWELCC-funded growth between 2022-2026:

Year	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	Total
Expansion Target	0	5	79	30	119	**233**
2025 Recalibration	0	5	55	3	7	**134**

Prior to the 2025 Recalibration, 60 spaces had been created in the Sault Ste. Marie district in 2023 and 2024.

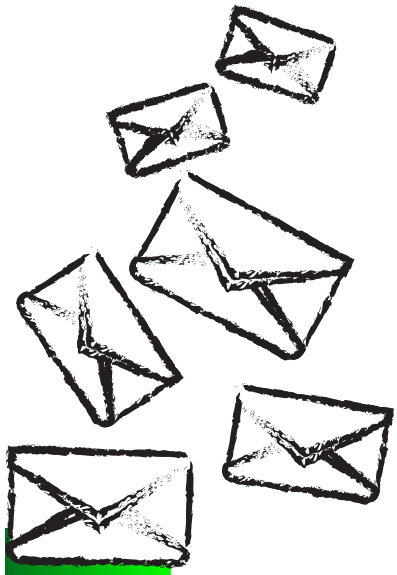
While 24 additional spaces in 2024 had been designated for Licensed Home Child Care, the recalibration process resulted in these spaces, as well as most of the 2025 and 2026 allocations, being redistributed to other districts within Ontario.

Year	Number of New Spaces	Location
2023	5 Toddler Spaces	YMCA Child Care, Upper McNabb
2024	10 Infant, 5 Toddler, 8 Preschool Spaces	YMCA Tarentorus
2024	32 Spaces	Child Care Algoma Licensed Home Child Care
2025	3 Preschool Spaces	East End Location
2026	7 Toddler Spaces	Upper Pine Area



POTENTIAL OPPORTUNITIES

Year	Number of New Spaces	Location
2025-26	10 Infant, 30 Toddler, 40 Preschool Spaces	Upper Pine area
2026	10 Infant, 15 Toddler, 24 Preschool Spaces	Near Downtown
2026	15 Toddler, 24 Preschool Spaces	East End Location
2026	10 Infant, 15 Toddler, 24 Preschool Spaces	East End Location
2026	10 Infant, 15 Toddler, 24 Preschool Spaces	East End Location
2026	10 Toddler, 16 Preschool Spaces	East End Location - Francophone



In response to the recalibration of spaces, the District of Sault Ste. Marie Social Services Administration Board (DSSMSSAB) presented a business case to the Ministry of Education to address the loss of net new spaces. The submission was strongly supported by letters from community partners and organizations, reinforcing the critical need for these spaces. The DSSMSSAB remains committed to actively pursuing potential opportunities should another recalibration occur, with the goal of securing additional space allocations for Sault Ste. Marie.

The plan will be updated on an ongoing basis to reflect the most up-to-date data available. As these are projections, adjustments may be required to respond to changing community needs and future economic developments.

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.



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District of Sault Ste. Marie Social Services Administration Board

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