



INDIGENOUS LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Here in Toronto we appreciate the opportunity to live and work on this land. We are on the traditional territory of many nations including the Mississaugas of the Credit the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat peoples and Toronto is now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples.


I also acknowledge that Toronto is covered by Treaty 13 signed with the Mississaugas of the Credit, and the Williams Treaties signed with multiple Mississaugas and Chippewa bands.



DESCRIPTION OF ONTARIO ELCC POLICIES AND PROGRAMS

by Gordon Cleveland

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Existing services: A strong foundation (mostly)

- 5,836 child care centres, 516,455 centre spaces, 78% of spaces are not-for-profit/public
- **For children 0-5:** 326,446 centre spaces, 70% of these are not-for-profit/public
- Ministry estimates that licensed spaces relative to population (called the “provincial access rate”) for children under 6 is about 36%.. Child population 2025 (0-5 years) = 873,610
- By age: Infant (3%), Toddler (11%), Preschool (25%), Kindergarten (24%), School age (37%)
- Agency model of HCC; 151 licensed home CC agencies; 5,312 active and approved homes. In 2024, 18,713 children 0-5 enrolled in HCC.
- 40,359 full-time program staff in centres
- 65% of centre spaces are **in publicly-funded schools**; 55% of centres are in publicly-funded schools
- 75 First Nations licensed centres on reserve. 3,399 spaces. 41 Indigenous-led organizations operate centres in urban and rural communities off-reserve
- 38,402 French language spaces, 8,291 bilingual

Governance/financing

- Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014. Child care is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education since 2010. Much better than before.
- 2023-24 \$4.25 billion ON spending. Of which \$2.23 billion from feds. Ontario spending of \$2.02 billion (includes \$253 million of spending on CARE tax credit that started in 2019), so **direct spending on licensed child care 0-12 by Ontario is a bit less than \$1.8 billion.**
- Historically (and still for school age) there are operating grants, wage enhancement grants and (for all ages) child care subsidies.
- Now for CWELCC – Parent fee of max \$22/day = \$5,742/yr. Cost-based funding formula for large majority of operating revenues.

Municipalities and kindergarten

- Ontario is unique in having **municipal responsibility for administration of many aspects of child care** (and some financial contribution). There are 47 SSMs (Service System Managers)
- Municipalities are responsible for managing and administering CWELCC, fee subsidies, wage enhancement, Special Needs Resourcing and school-age before and after school programs. They have also voluntarily assumed other roles, such as quality assessment and improvement, professional development, and research.
- Municipalities work with school boards and other partners to develop and implement service plans
- Municipalities directly operate child care and EarlyON programs. There are close to 150 publicly-operated child care centres in Ontario. The province has set up roadblocks to expansion of public child care.
- Ontario is unique in having **universal full-day junior and senior kindergarten** (4 and 5 year-olds). With one B.Ed. Teacher and one DECE in classroom of 26. Play-based curriculum.

Workforce

- The College of Early Childhood Educators (College) regulates and governs Ontario's Registered Early Childhood Educators (RECEs) in the public interest.
- It establishes and enforces ethical and professional standards, requirements for continuous professional learning and a complaints and discipline process for professional misconduct or incompetence. It has more than 65,000 members in good standing.
- Only a small percentage of child care centres are unionized.
- In December 2023 there were 40,359 full-time program staff in Ontario centres. 56% of these, or 22,600 were RECEs with (at least) a two-year college diploma or equivalent and recognition by the College of Early Childhood Educators
- In December 2023, 85% of RECEs earned less than \$28.60/hour. 39% of RECE Supervisors earned less than \$28.60/hour. There is now a wage floor policy (to be discussed later).

Child care subsidies

- Subsidies provide extra fee assistance for lower-income families and vulnerable children.
- Child care subsidy rules are more generous in Ontario than in many other provinces, but funding available may limit access, there are work/study requirements for eligibility of most families, and available spaces are scarce.
- Ontario subsidy rules determine how much a family will pay for all of its children, not how much government will contribute towards each child's fee. < \$20K – \$0. \$40K - \$2,000/yr/family \$60K - \$8,000/yr/family. \$80K - \$14,000/yr/family. With one child 0-5, the subsidy cutoff if fee is \$22 a day is now about \$50K. With two children 0-5, cutoff is about \$72,000.
- Subsidies are municipally administered. Eligibility rules are provincial
- In 2023, 105,328 children 0-12 received child care subsidy (not point-in-time). 66% of subsidized families earned \$40,000 or less. 88% of families earned \$60,000 or less.
- In the 2022 Action Plan, Ontario noted that it spends \$880 million annually on child care subsidies to support low-income families to access child care. How much are they spending now?

School Boards

- As of March 2021, 71% (2,800) of elementary schools had a licensed child care, and 9% (82) of secondary schools had a licensed child care"
- 72 school boards across the province. English Public, English Catholic, French Public, French Catholic.
- Mandated to ensure the provision of before and after school programming for children aged 4-12 years, where there is sufficient demand and viability. This does not mean that supply equals demand for before-and-after school care.
- Will consult with local Service System Managers to identify sites and space for early years capital investments in schools
- Responsible for facility management of their properties, including oversight of school-based capital construction projects
- In 2019, the Ontario government announced that it would invest up to \$1 billion in the creation of up to 30,000 new licensed child care spaces in schools over five years (an average of just over \$33,000 per space). At the time of the signing of the CWELCC agreement in 2022, nearly 24,000 of these new spaces had already been approved (but not necessarily completed).

Special Needs, Curriculum, EarlyON

- In 2023, 44,092 children received funding support through special needs resourcing.
- The Ontario curriculum for child care is given by *How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years, 2014* (HDLH) which is a play-based curriculum. It is broadly the same as the kindergarten curriculum.
- EarlyON is a network of child and family centres across the province for children 0-5 (drop-in). 770 are fixed-location permanent centres. There are 488 mobile EarlyON centres. There are 108 virtual EarlyON facilities.

Indigenous Child Care

- Ontario has the largest population of Indigenous people in the country, 25% of the total. In 2025, there were 514,000 Indigenous people (First Nation, Métis and Inuit) in Ontario, living either on- or off-reserve. About 3.4% of Ontario's population is Indigenous. However, 4.2% of Ontario's children 0-5 are indigenous. Children 0-5 represent 7.2% of the total Indigenous population. (CANSIM #17100144 and #17100005)
- In Ontario, there are 3,306 licensed child care spaces in First Nation communities.
- OFIFC reports at least 10,000 spaces are needed for urban Indigenous children
- The Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care Framework, co-developed with Indigenous partners in 2018, sees children and families supported by a comprehensive and coordinated system of ELCC policies, programs and services that are led by Indigenous peoples, rooted in Indigenous knowledge, cultures and languages and supported by strong partnerships.
- Building on this strong foundation and in addition to investments announced in the 2020 Fall Economic Statement, Canada's Budget 2021 included \$2.5 billion over 5 years, starting in fiscal year 2021 to 2022, and \$542 million ongoing, to advance First Nations, Inuit and Métis Nation specific early learning and child care priorities that meet the unique needs of Indigenous families.
- Approximately \$54 million in Indigenous ELCC funding is reaching Ontario in fiscal year 2021 to 2022.