



City of Hamilton Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care Access and Inclusion Framework

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Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC) Overview

On March 28, 2022, the federal and provincial governments signed the [Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care \(CWELCC\) agreement](#), aimed at making child care more affordable for families and increasing compensation for eligible child care staff.

Ontario’s Ministry of Education’s goals under the CWELCC agreement are in alignment to the [priorities for the Early Years System in Hamilton](#) — affordability, accessibility, inclusion and quality.

The Ministry of Education and City of Hamilton’s CWELCC goals align by focusing on:

1. **Quality**: ensuring the delivery of high-quality child care, as defined in the [Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014 \(CCEYA\)](#).
2. **Child and family-focused**: increasing affordability for parents/guardians.
3. **Protection of child care spaces**: protection of for-profit and not-for-profit child care spaces in the province.
4. **Efficient administration**: accomplished through an efficient administrative plan, collecting necessary information from licensees to support a timely enrolment and implementation of the CWELCC plan.

The CWELCC plan is designed to provide high-quality, affordable, accessible and inclusive licensed child care programs to support Ontario’s children, families, employers, early years professionals and the child care sector. The CWELCC agreement will provide funding to reduce child care fees for families with children 0 to 6 years of age to an average of \$12/day by March 2026.

Child Care Space Allocations

The Ministry of Education approved the following allocations for new child care spaces for the City of Hamilton. These spaces support the Ministry of Education’s directed growth plan under CWELCC to meet child care needs in Hamilton. These allocations are as follows:

Total space allocation*					
Allocation	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
Total spaces	195	488	314	388	302
School-based	49	107	49	49	0
Community-based	146	381	265	339	302

**All numbers are subject to change based on Ministry of Education approval.*

Under the new CWELCC funding guidelines, municipalities are required to maintain the Ministry of Education’s threshold for child care spaces which is currently 80% not-for-profit and 20% for-profit in the City of Hamilton.

Phase 1: Access, Socio-economic and Demographic Analysis

Hamilton's Approach to Access and Inclusion

Ontario's provincial target access rate (the ratio of child care spaces to children) is 37% by 2026. This is equivalent to one affordable child care space for every 2.7 children aged 0-5. Upon implementation of Canada Wide Early Learning and Child Care, the City of Hamilton had an access rate of 31% across full-day (infant, toddler and preschool) programs. With the current space allocation, city-wide the City of Hamilton is on track to exceed the 37% provincial target access.

The City of Hamilton is committed to ongoing engagement with families, child care providers, and other members of the community to ensure access and inclusion plans meet the needs of the community it's intended to serve.

Access and inclusion considerations are as follows:

Access equity: Provide comparable access to child care spaces across the City of Hamilton for the 0-3.8 age group by allocating spaces where the need is greatest.

Directed growth spaces for priority populations (in no particular order): As determined by the Ministry of Education, the City of Hamilton will ensure that child care spaces are allocated based on socio-economic factors to support child care needs in priority populations, including:

- Children living in low-income families
- Children of newcomers to Canada
- Official language minorities (Francophone)¹
- Children with special needs and children needing enhanced or individual supports
- Indigenous children, Black and other racialized children

Accessibility: Providing a wide range of opportunities for learning, play and inquiry in physical and teaching environments across diverse, flexible settings and contexts.

Participation and Belonging: The intentional and instructional approach that enables children to actively engage in purposeful ways in all parts of the day including play, learning activities and social interactions.

Equity: Making sure everyone has what they need to succeed by removing barriers that disadvantage some groups over others. Children should have equitable access to early learning opportunities that support them in purposeful participation as engaged learners that are competent, capable of complex thinking, curious, and rich in potential.

Special Needs Resourcing (SNR): Ensuring that licensed child care programs across the City of Hamilton can deliver the appropriate level of service for children with special needs, including staff, adaptive equipment and resources. The City of Hamilton is committed to delivering

¹ A principal of access & inclusion to maintain or grow French language spaces for ages 0-5.

responsive, high-quality, accessible and increasingly inclusive early-learning opportunities for children and their families.

Fee subsidy: Child care fee subsidy helps families with the cost of licensed child care programs. It is an essential support for many parents and caregivers that helps to balance the demands of a career and family, enabling them to participate in the workforce or pursue education or training.

Workforce: The early years and child care sector continues to experience recruitment and retention challenges with Registered Early Childhood Educators (RECEs). A high-quality early years and child care system requires a comprehensive human resources workforce strategy, including fair compensation for RECEs.

The following guiding principles and foundational documents are embedded into all Children’s and Community Services:

- Hamilton Early Years Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging Policy ([English](#), [French](#))
- [Hamilton Parent’s Charter of Rights](#)
- [Charter of Rights for Children and Youth](#)
- [How Does Learning Happen: Ontario’s Pedagogy for the Early Years](#)
- [Hamilton’s Early Years Quality Program](#)

Priority Wards

The City of Hamilton determined priority wards based on identified socio-economic and demographic indicators, as well as licensed child care access rates for the 0-3.8 age group in each ward. All wards across Hamilton have been identified as needing child care spaces under the expansion plan. Expansion will be prioritized based on priority populations in identified wards.

List of Wards by Priority	2023 Child Care Access Rates
Ward 6 East Mountain	9.0%
Ward 7 Central Mountain	19.0%
Ward 3 Hamilton Centre	26.0%
Ward 4 East Lower Hamilton	17.0%
Ward 11 Glanbrook	19.0%
Ward 5 Redhill	25.0%
Ward 2 Downtown	39.0%
Ward 13 Dundas	27.0%
Ward 9 Upper Stoney Creek	32.0%
Ward 12 Ancaster - Flamborough West	36.0%
Ward 8 West-Central Mountain	42.0%
Ward 1 Chedoke-Cootes	43.0%
Ward 14 Far West Mountain	61.0%

Ward 10 Lower Stoney Creek	50.0%
Ward 15 Flamborough East-Waterdown	51.0%

It is important to note that there may be modifications to prioritization of wards as the analysis continues. Please note, the prioritization of wards has been updated to reflect the 2021 census data.

Hamilton’s CWELCC expansion plan was shared with Council and submitted to the Ministry in February 2023. The Ministry of Education approved this plan in May 2023.

Phase 2: Community Engagement

The City of Hamilton’s goal is to ensure that the voices of families are heard and that their child care needs are met.

City staff identified key services and resources in our priority wards, such as community organizations, institutions, and associations. The City of Hamilton will be engaging with these key community partners in these wards through a community engagement process.

Approach to Community Engagement

City staff have and will continue to reach out to community partners with existing relationships with diverse communities to work collaboratively on community engagement. The goal is to better understand child care needs and identify barriers that may exist for these families. The engagement outcomes will inform city-wide directed growth through to 2026.

Appendix A is circulated to community partners to invite them to participate in the Community Engagement Partnership Opportunity.

This approach to community engagement is an integral part of implementing the City of Hamilton’s Access and Inclusion Framework at a local level, as it will assist with:

- Including the voices of the community and families to determine how child care services can meet their needs.
- Cultivating meaningful engagement experiences to authentically hear from the community and families.
- Focusing on the voices of diverse and underserved populations who were identified as priority populations.
- Collaborating efforts, which include engagement through multiple community-based organizations that have existing relationships with identified priority populations to provide authentic and meaningful engagement experiences.

The feedback gained from the community engagement with families is valued and will inform child care expansion plans throughout the CWELCC implementation.

Key Community Partners

The early years sector plays a key role in expansion. In phase one of the Access and Inclusion Framework, City staff consulted the following groups:

City of Hamilton

- Consolidated Municipal Service Manager Advisory Committee
- Equity and Engagement Advisory Committee
- Special Needs Resource Committee

Community Partners

- Francophone Service Providers
- Hamilton School Boards
- Indigenous Service Providers

Phase 3: CWELCC Application and Evaluation Process

Directed Growth

The application and evaluation processes will enable CWELCC directed growth for prospective licensees to open new child care programs, and existing licensees to expand current child care programs or open new child care programs. The application and evaluation processes were finalized in 2023, with the first city-wide directed growth application being released in October 2023. The application process also includes a section on start up grants, detailed in the [next section](#). Submitting a Directed Growth Application does not guarantee participation in CWELCC.

The directed growth application prompts all licensees to reflect and share their experience regarding the following:

Inclusion policies:

- Do you have an inclusion policy?
- How will your program ensure that the needs of the priority populations are being met?
- How do you ensure hiring practices are inclusive and equitable?

Access policies:

- What types of resources does your organization have to support instructional and facility accessibility (i.e., barrier-free access)?
- How will you ensure your locations are accessible to priority populations? What are your strategies for barrier-free access to child care?

Budget information:

- Is your program financially viable?
- Do your child care base and non-base fees meet the Ministry of Education's [capped rates](#) as outlined in the Child Care Early Years Act?
- What are your staff salaries?

Program information:

- How will the number of spaces and age groups you are offering meet the needs of the community and priority populations?
- Do you provide flexible care to families as it relates the days and hours offered?
- Describe your program's wait list policy. Are there any families that are prioritized?

Quality:

- What is your program statement?
- What is your programs quality framework and vision?
- What community partners do you work with for resources and supports? What is your strategy for collaboration?
- How are you aligned with the principals of equity, diversity, inclusion and belonging?
- What are your staff recruitment and retention strategies?

Start Up Grants

Start up grants support directed growth for the creation of new licensed child care spaces approved for enrolment in CWELCC. This funding intends to offset the initial costs of creating the new spaces at the location specified on the Directed Growth Application and based on the priority populations' needs.

The City of Hamilton's Directed Growth Application includes the start up grant application within it. The approved applicant(s) will have the start up grant section of their application evaluated and approved based on the square footage of the secured location and eligible expense(s) submitted. The application process will be an equitable and transparent process for licensees. The start up grant funding application must include an estimated date for the creation of the new licensed full-day child care spaces. This date should be within two years of the date of the application.

It will be allocated to licensees following a signed agreement between the licensee and the City of Hamilton. These grants must be allocated to projects to create, retrofit, renovate, and/or expand child care facilities, to accommodate the licensed capacity for each age group under the age of six.

Eligible centre-based applicants will be able to receive a grant of up to a cap of \$350,000 for every 20 child care spaces created. Licensed home child care applicants will be able to receive grants of up to \$1,200 per CWELCC space created, to a maximum of \$7,200 per provider.

Eligible Expenses

- Eligible expenses for **centre-based** child care recipient include:
 - Play based materials, equipment and furnishings (both indoors and outdoors) as outlined in [Section 19 of O. Reg. 137/15](#) under the *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014*.

- Non-consumable supplies/equipment to support the ongoing regular operations of the child care program (for example, 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 Hamilton
- Changes to outdoor play spaces that are required as a result of the expansion of child care spaces in the centre so the recipient continues to comply with [Section 24 of O. Reg. 137/15](#) under the *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014*.
- Leasehold improvements
- Eligible Expenses for **home-based** child care Recipients include:
 - Play based materials, equipment and furnishings (both indoors and outdoors) as outlined in Section 19 of O. Reg. 137/15 under the *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014* that can be transferred between home child care licensees as required.

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 the 5–12-year-old age groups
- School-based child care spaces
- Indoor and outdoor renovations, additions or repairs to home child care providers premises or potential home child care providers premises
- Capital projects for licensed child care programs that run during school hours for kindergarten and school-aged children and before and after school programs
- Harmonized Sales Tax (HST)

Please refer to our [Sample Start Up Grant Agreement](#) posted to [the City of Hamilton website](#).

Accountability

In the application, the prospective licensee must include an estimated date for the new licensed full day spaces. This date should be within two years of the date of the application.

When approving applications for start up grants, the City will consider:

- available operating funding
- capacity of program to access funds through other means
- current licensed and operational capacity
- investment in quality programming
- long-term viability
- program budget and financial history
- secured location legally zoned for child care
- squared footage of location (2023 only)

Upon Approval of Start Up Grant

City staff will work with the recipient to provide funding to support the creation of the child care spaces. Once licensed, the licensee must enter into a funding agreement with the City of Hamilton. Please refer to the [City of Hamilton's CWELCC Guideline](#) for more details.

To access funding for start up grants, the of City of Hamilton will require a commitment from the licensee to:

- participate in CWELCC for the remainder of the current CWELCC agreement (March 31, 2026)
- spend the start up grant within two years from the date of the application
- prioritize the creation of, and access to, new licensed full day spaces for children 0-4 years for our priority populations as outlined in this document

The City of Hamilton will receive progress updates on the use of these funds as intended within the two-year timeframe of the date of application through our progress reporting.

If acquiring goods, services or both, the recipient of these funds must undertake a process that promotes the best value for money. At minimum, the recipient is to obtain no less than three quotes for construction/capital improvements and any equipment or fixtures purchased.

If the applicant withdraws from CWELCC or ceases their operations, the City of Hamilton will recover the start up grant funding and return to the Ministry of Education as part of regular financial reporting processes.

Please see a sample of the start up grant agreement posted to the [City of Hamilton website](#).

Licensed Home Child Care

Home child care licensees must receive written confirmation from the City of Hamilton that the proposed child care homes are aligned with the directed growth approach and eligible for CWELCC funding.

Funding agreements for start up grants for home child care licensees must include a commitment from the licensee to maintain the number of approved child care spaces in the service area for the duration of the CWELCC agreement, even if the licensed capacity of the licensee changes prior to March 31, 2026.

Per Regulation Update 138/15, "Any unused capacity (i.e., inactive homes) will be designated as "unassigned capacity" and HCCAs² will not be permitted to open homes using their unassigned capacity. If licensees wish to open these homes, and they are enrolled in CWELCC, they will be required to demonstrate that a service system manager³ has advised that these homes will be eligible for CWELCC before they are assigned to a service system area."

² Home Child Care Agencies

³ City of Hamilton

Phase 4: Space Creation and Evaluation

Phase 4 of the City of Hamilton Access and Inclusion Framework is not a stand-alone phase. It is an ongoing part of our Access and Inclusion Framework where we evaluate and monitor our framework.

The City of Hamilton is committed to ensuring the entirety of the allocated spaces to the City be utilized in the community.

Evaluation and Monitoring of the Framework

A research-based accountability (RBA) framework will be used to evaluate and monitor City of Hamilton’s Access and Inclusion Framework⁴. RBA provides a simple and action-based approach to community-based initiatives. In addition to mandated Ministry of Education data elements (i.e., counts and impact), the RBA framework outlined in the table below identifies how City Staff will evaluate and monitor the access and inclusion goals during the implementation of CWELCC.

What impact will Hamilton’s Access and Inclusion Framework have?		
Population Indicator	Ratio of spaces to children 0-3.8 years of age in Hamilton	
Effort	Quantity	Quality
	<p>How much was completed?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> # of new child care spaces and directed-growth spaces for priority populations in priority neighbourhoods # of new licensees joining Hamilton’s system # of licensees providing diverse, flexible and/or inclusive services # of families participating in CWELCC and # receiving special needs resourcing and fee subsidy # of children on waitlists for child care # of engagement activities with priority populations to inform expansion # of ECEs and non-ECE professionals in workforce and RECE salary ranges # of new community partnerships to cultivate diverse, flexible and inclusive child care 	<p>How well was it completed?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> % change in ratio of spaces to children 0-3.8 years of age in Hamilton by type of care % change of new spaces based on priority neighbourhood targets by type of care % of Hamilton families with children 0-3.8 years participating in CWELCC including special needs resourcing and fee subsidy % change in children waiting for child care % of staff pressures in the system (operating capacity/licensee engagement) % of newly licensed operators participating in Hamilton’s Quality Program % change in ECE and non-ECE professionals in workforce and average RECE salary change % of third-party child care partnerships in the system that cultivate diverse, flexible and inclusive child care

⁴ Friedman, Mark (2005). Trying hard is not good enough. Victoria, BC: Trafford Pub.

How are Hamilton’s families, children, educators and early years system better off?	
Effect	<p>37% access rate (i.e., one affordable child care space for every 2.7 children ages 0-5 years)</p> <p>% of new spaces based on Ministry of Education priority neighbourhood targets by type of care</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">% of priority populations access rates in priority neighbourhoods</p> <p>% of Francophone spaces in proportion to population is maintained or increased for ages 0-5</p> <p>Cost: Benefit for families in Hamilton participating in CWELCC including SNR and fee subsidy</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">% of child care at full operating and/or licensed capacity in the system</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">% of for-profit vs. not-for-profit enrolled in CWELCC</p> <p>Increase and retention in ECE and non-ECE workforce⁵ and % of RECE change in average salary over time.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Diversity of workforce as indicated from Knowing Our Numbers⁶</p>

Conclusion

The City of Hamilton is committed to a child care system that is accessible for all children and their families. This plan aims to support affordable child care for all populations, including, but not limited to, children living in low income families, children with special needs and those needing enhanced or individual supports, Indigenous children, Black and other racialized children, children of newcomers to Canada, and official language minorities.

Community engagement is integral to the Access and Inclusion Framework, which seeks input from families to tailor child care services to their needs.

This document guides Hamilton's space creation process via the Directed Growth Application. Applicants are assessed based on program quality, long-term sustainability, and responsiveness to priority populations. Through start up grants, financial assistance is provided to create new child care spaces. As System Service Managers, we will establish funding agreements with new child care providers and provide ongoing support through our early years quality team and community partners.

⁵ Early Years Community HR Workforce Committee. RBA population indicators. City of Hamilton: n.p.
⁶ Akbari & McCuaig (2023). Knowing our numbers: a community approach to understanding the ECE workforce. University of Toronto: n.p.

Appendix A



Hamilton

Healthy & Safe Communities Department
Children's & Community Services Division
28 James Street North, 6th Floor
Hamilton ON L8R 2K1

Community Engagement Partnership Opportunity

As part of the local implementation of the [Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care \(CWELCC\)](#) plan, the City of Hamilton's Children's and Community Services Division is seeking your assistance in reaching the community your organization serves to better support their child care needs. The CWELCC plan seeks to increase child care access and create new targeted child care spaces for identified priority populations. This work is guided through [Hamilton's Access and Inclusion Framework](#).

Through this collaborative effort, we would like to honour the relationship your organization has with these identified populations by inviting your organization to take the lead on this community engagement.

This will be a compensated opportunity to ensure your organization's efforts are acknowledged and respected.

Guidelines for Community Engagement

- Intended for families from priority populations serving children **below 6 years of age**.
- Engagement can be completed in any manner to best suit your organization's needs and the community you serve.
- Engagement must be completed using **informed consent** (e.g. written, verbal, or as relevant to the community you serve).
- In a collective commitment to **transparency**, the City of Hamilton and the partnering organization agree to share the outcome of this engagement and how it will be used.
- Engagement must be completed in a **safe and accessible** space.

The City of Hamilton is seeking the following information:

- Understanding child care needs (full or part-time, age of care, type of care)
- Types of child care preferences (home or centre-based)
- Resources that would better support finding or learning about child care options
- Previous attempts or challenges accessing quality child care
- Sense of belonging experienced in child care programs
- Culturally responsive programming
- Inclusion of children with differing abilities

Appendix A continued

City of Hamilton's Community Engagement Support

With your organization's guidance, we will make every effort to remove any possible barriers to community engagement based on your previous experiences with families, including:



After community engagement is completed, the City of Hamilton will:

- Accept and review the results of your engagement.
- Provide a report back to your organization and the families involved.
- Use the information to inform current and future child care expansion plans.

Organizational Considerations

- Do you have the willingness and capacity to take on this community engagement?
- Can you incorporate this engagement with an existing community event or initiative that is already scheduled to take place?
- What would you need from the City of Hamilton to make this a meaningful engagement opportunity for the population you serve?
- Can your organization commit to the timeline set out by the City of Hamilton?

Timeline

Our goal is to complete all community engagement by **October 2023**.

Next Steps

To move forward with this community engagement opportunity with us, please email cwelcc@hamilton.ca by end of day on **Monday, July 31, 2023**.

If you have additional questions or require further information please reach out to Kornelia Banach at Kornelia.Banach@hamilton.ca 905-546-2424 x 4881 or Brenda Bax at Brenda.Bax@hamilton.ca 905-546-2424 x 4120.

Thank you in advance for your consideration. We look forward to hearing from you.