



# 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 the compensation for eligible child care staff.

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

The Ministry of Education's and City of Hamilton's CWELCC goals align with a focus 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 For-Profit and Non-Profit Spaces:** protection of for-profit and non-profit child care spaces in the province.
4. **Efficient Administrative System:** an efficient administrative system, with collection of minimally necessary information from licensees, to support timely enrolment and implementation of the CWELCC system.

The CWELCC system 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 September 2025.

In 2022, the City of Hamilton successfully implemented the first phase of the CWELCC system which included:

- Enrolling 214 of 223 of Hamilton's licensed child care programs into the system
- Lowering child care fees for participating providers by 52.75% from March 2022 rates
- Lowering child care contributions for families receiving financial support (subsidy) by 50%
- Issuing rebates of 25% of the costs of child care to eligible families, backdated to April 1, 2022
- Providing funding to child care providers to ensure Registered Early Childhood Educators (RECEs) receiving less than the wage floor, met the minimum standard under the agreement

Both 2022 and 2023 are considered transitional years while the Ministry of Education works with partners to create a new funding formula across the province. CWELCC funding is designed to fully offset the reduction in revenue from reduced base fees as well as cost escalation that licensees may face.

## Hamilton's Approach to Access and Inclusion

Ontario's provincial target for the ratio of spaces to children, or access rate, is 37%. This is equivalent to one affordable child care space for every 2.7 children aged 0-5. Currently, the City of Hamilton has an access rate of 31% across our full-day (infant, toddler and preschool) programs. The province has also committed to maintaining or improving the proportion of not-for-profit licensed child care spaces for children aged 0 to 5 at 70% or higher by 2026.

The Children's and Community Services Division (CCSD) 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. Further analysis and engagement with key community partners in Hamilton will be required to ensure that neighbourhoods are precisely prioritized since the composition of a ward varies greatly from one neighbourhood to another.

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

**Targeted Spaces for Priority Population** (in no particular order): Ensure spaces are allocated based on socio-economic indicators to support child care for priority populations such as:

- Children living in low-income families
- Children of newcomers to Canada and official language minorities (Francophone)
- Children with disabilities 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):** Providing responsive, high-quality, accessible and increasingly inclusive early learning opportunities for children and their families. A commitment to delivering inclusive services where everyone can be successful. Ensuring that licensed child care sites across the City of Hamilton can deliver the appropriate level of service for children with special needs, including staff, equipment and resources.

**Fee Subsidy:** Fee subsidy is an essential support for many parents that helps to balance the demands of career and family and enables parents and caregivers 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 are embedded into all plans:

- Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging
- [Hamilton Parent's Charter of Rights](#)
- [Charter of Rights for Children and Youth](#)
- [How Does Learning Happen](#)
- [Hamilton's Early Years Quality Program](#)

## Child Care Space Allocations

The Ministry of Education (MEDU) has determined the number of spaces (notional allocation) each municipality/district is allocated from 2022-2026. The City of Hamilton's MEDU allocations is as follows:

<b>Total Space Allocation*</b>					
<b>Allocation</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>	<b>2025</b>	<b>2026</b>
1814	195	488	497	414	220

*\*All numbers are subject to change based on Ministry of Education approval. The City of Hamilton requested an additional 297 spaces that have been incorporated into the chart above. Community based spaces are inclusive of both centre and-home based licensed child care.*

## Priority Wards

In January 2023, the City of Hamilton's CCSD undertook an exercise to determine priority wards based on identified socio-economic/demographic indicators layered with the current licensed capacity and population for the 0-3.8 age group in each ward. All wards across the City of Hamilton have been identified as needing spaces under the expansion plan. The expansion will be prioritized based on priority populations in identified wards.

The following allocations are the results of the preliminary evaluation of ward needs. Further analysis of neighbourhoods within each ward will occur from 2022-2026. It is important to note that there may be modifications to ward allocations as the analysis continues. The preliminary expansion plans\*\* were submitted to the MEDU and City Council as priorities across the city:

<b>Name of priority neighbourhoods/areas</b>	<b># of spaces</b>
Ward 6 East Mountain	101
Ward 7 Central Mountain	98
Ward 3 Hamilton Centre	98
Ward 4 East Lower Hamilton	90
Ward 11 Glanbrook	81
Ward 5 Redhill	81
Ward 13 Dundas	77
Ward 2 Downtown	64
Ward 8 West-Central Mountain	60
Ward 12 Ancaster - Flamborough West	60
Ward 9 Upper Stoney Creek	55
Ward 1 Chedoke-Cootes	51
Ward 10 Lower Stoney Creek	47
Ward 14 Far West Mountain	44
Ward 15 Flamborough East-Waterdown	21

\*\*[Information Report](#), [Appendix A](#), [Appendix B](#)

## Identifying Priority Neighbourhoods

To identify priority neighbourhoods, CCSD staff are planning to map assets of each ward, beginning in 2023 with the top 4 priority wards (6, 7, 3, 4). The asset map will identify key services and resources in the neighbourhoods, such as community organizations, institutions, associations and resources.

After identifying the priority neighbourhoods, CCSD staff will be working directly with key community partners/members (noted in the community engagement section) in the neighbourhoods. Our goal is to ensure that each neighbourhood has a voice, is listened to and that the needs of each neighbourhood are met.

## Approach to Community Engagement

We will be implementing accessible and inclusive engagement activities to ensure we hear from a broad range of licensees and neighbourhood members. Engagement with key community partners/members including but not limited to families, advocacy groups, early years committees, as well as current and potential child care programs, to inform access and inclusion at each level of planning.

CCSD commits to being transparent throughout the application and evaluation process. The types of engagement may include:

- Community updates
- Information sessions
- Focus groups
- Surveys
- Partnerships

## Early Years Sector

The early years sector plays a key role in expansion. As a start, we have consulted the following groups:

- Equity and Engagement Advisory Committee
- CMSM Advisory Committee
- Special Needs Resource Committee
- School Boards
- Francophone Service Providers
- Indigenous Service Provider

We will be engaging more broadly with the early years community and will share information about engagement once it is finalized. The goal of engagement is to connect in a variety of ways with individuals and organizations within neighbourhoods.

## Key Community Partners/Members

CCSD commits to ongoing engagement with specific goals to ensure that results and outcomes are consistent with expectations. The engagement will help inform responsible decision-making by

allowing for a range of perspectives, experiences, and knowledge to support the creation of sustainable solutions.

## Evaluation and Monitoring of the Framework

A research-based accountability (RBA) framework will be used to evaluate and monitor Hamilton’s CWELCC Access and Inclusion Framework<sup>1</sup>. RBA provides a simple and action-based approach to turning the curve on community-based initiatives. In addition to mandated MEUD data elements (i.e., counts and impact) the RBA framework outlined in the table below shows how Hamilton will evaluate and monitor the Access and Inclusion goals during the implementation of CWELCC.

<b>What impact will Hamilton’s CWELCC Access and Inclusion Framework have?</b>		
<b>Population Indicator</b>	Ratio of spaces to children 0-3.8 years of age in Hamilton	
<b>Effort</b>	<b>Quantity</b>	<b>Quality</b>
	<b>How much was completed?</b> # of new child care spaces and targeted spaces for priority groups in priority neighbourhoods # of new licensed operators joining Hamilton’s system # of providers providing diverse, flexible and/or inclusive services # of families participating in CWELCC and # receiving SNR and Fee Subsidy # of children on waitlists for child care # of engagements with priority groups 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	<b>How well was it completed?</b> % 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 SNR 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
<b>How are Hamilton’s families, children, educators and early years system better off?</b>		
<b>Effect</b>	37% access rate (i.e., one affordable child care space for every 2.7 children ages 0-5 years) % of new spaces based on MEDU priority neighbourhood targets by type of care % of priority p access rates in priority neighbourhoods Cost: Benefit for families in Hamilton participating in CWELCC including SNR and Fee Subsidy % of child care at full operating and/or licensed capacity in the system	

<sup>1</sup> Friedman, Mark (2005). Trying hard is not good enough. Victoria, BC: Trafford Pub.

	<p>Increase and retention in ECE and non-ECE workforce<sup>2</sup> and % of RECE change in average salary over time</p> <p>Diversity of workforce as indicated from Knowing Our Numbers<sup>3</sup></p>
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## Application Process

The application and evaluation processes for CWELCC expansion are under development and will be shared once it has been finalized.

At a minimum, the application will require information regarding:

**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?

**Access policies:**

- Proximity to transportation routes
- What types of resources does your organization have to support accessibility (i.e., barrier-free access)?
- How will your locations be accessible (strategies for barrier-free access) to priority populations?

**Budget information:**

- Is your program financially viable?
- Do your base and non-base fees fall below the City’s [capped rates](#)?
- 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 flexibility in hours/days?
- Plans to communicate, drive awareness and promote the program

**Quality:**

- Do you have a quality framework?
- What is your strategy for integration? What community partners do you work with for resources and supports?
- What is your program statement? (vision/mission)
- How are you aligned with Hamilton’s EDIB principles?
- What are your staff recruitment and retention strategies?

<sup>2</sup> Early Years Community HR Workforce Committee. RBA population indicators. City of Hamilton: n.p.

<sup>3</sup> Akbari & McCuaig (2023). Knowing our numbers: a community approach to understanding the ECE workforce. University of Toronto: n.p.

## Start Up Grants

Start-up grants may be provided to support the creation of new spaces in locations and based on the needs of priority populations.

More information regarding start-up grants will be provided once policies and processes are finalized.