



Committee Report

CEYD-24-07

To: Chair and Members of the Joint Social Services and Land Ambulance Committee
From: Mandy Koroniak, Director of Children's Early Years
Date: Wednesday, October 09, 2024
Subject: **The Value of Licensed Child Care**

Background:

Access to licensed child care is a critical support for children, families, communities, and the economy. The Government of Canada and Province of Ontario have committed to providing families with "access to high-quality, affordable, flexible, and inclusive early learning and child care no matter where they live" through their vision for the [Canada – Ontario Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care \(CWELCC\) Agreement – 2021 to 2026](#).

Under its expansion plans for the CWELCC System, Ontario has identified the principle of "access equity" as a key component of its principles for access and set a target of reaching an average provincial access rate of 37% by 2026. There are considerable variations in access rates across the municipalities that comprise the service delivery area of Wellington-Guelph, however the average access rate for licensed centre-based care overall is 23.9% and there is not enough licensed child care for those who need it.

Update:

The Children's Early Years Division is pleased to share the attached report, The Value of Licensed Child Care, in order to support ongoing planning and advocacy for the expansion of licensed child care across Wellington County and Guelph. This report details the multi-faceted importance of access to licensed child care, and emphasizes economic components, including:

- 1. Supporting the health, well-being, and development of all children.*
 - High-quality early childhood education and care provides opportunities for children to develop and strengthen important domains of development including language, cognition, numeracy, and social and emotional skills.
 - In Wellington-Guelph, 36.8% of children were vulnerable on at least one domain in the last (2023) cycle of the Early Development Instrument (EDI), a measure of the percentage of children who are vulnerable on at least one developmental domain during their kindergarten year. This is a significant increase in vulnerability compared to the previous cycle in 2018 (30.5%).
 - The long-term, positive impact of quality child care (e.g., an increase in high school graduation rates and adult earnings) is particularly evident in children from vulnerable populations or disadvantaged families (e.g., families living in low-income).

2. *Supporting economic development in Wellington-Guelph*

- There is a multiplier effect to investments in child care and early childhood education, and for every public dollar that is spent on child care, there is a return on investment of up to \$6.
- Access to high-quality, licensed, full-time child care that provides continuity and stability of care arrangements best supports parental labour force participation, shortening work interruptions and maintaining earning capacity.
- Supporting women's participation in the labour force has numerous benefits for the economy and for children's well-being such as increasing family income, reducing family poverty, contributing to tax revenue, and supporting gender equity.

3. *Addressing the high level of unmet need for affordable licensed child care for young children*

- The average access rate across Wellington-Guelph for children birth up to 4 years of age is 23.9% (14.1% in Wellington County and 31.1% in Guelph).
- Licensed child care is unaffordable for many families in Wellington-Guelph. While the cost of licensed child care has significantly decreased under the CWELCC System, across Wellington-Guelph, the overall average cost of licensed child care for children from birth to age 4 represents around 14% of families' income or 20% of one-parent families' income.

While there is a need for licensed child care across Wellington-Guelph, each municipality is a unique community and benefits from the expansion of licensed child care in unique ways. The report further highlights the seven Wellington County member municipalities and Guelph, provides local data, including the most recent census data, and explains how licensed child care can support the economic development and well-being of children and families in the local community.

Strategic Action Plan:

This report relates to the following objectives and priorities in the County's Strategic Action Plan:

- Doing What the County Does Best – Providing Critical Daily Services for Your Residents

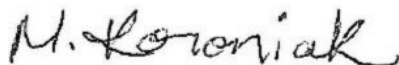
Attachment:

The Value of Licensed Child Care in Wellington-Guelph

Recommendation:

That the Joint Social Services and Land Ambulance Committee recommend to County Council that the report, The Value of Licensed Child Care, be received for information.

Respectfully submitted,



Mandy Koroniak
Director of Children's Early Years Division