

THE COUNTY OF WELLINGTON

# The Value of Licensed Child Care in Wellington-Guelph

Including Municipal Profiles  
for Wellington-Guelph

County of Wellington  
**Children's Early Years Division**

OCTOBER 2024

# Table of Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The Importance of Licensed Child Care in Wellington-Guelph</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Municipal Profiles</b>	<b>9</b>
Centre Wellington	10
Erin	12
Guelph	14
Guelph/Eramosa	16
Mapleton	18
Minto	20
Puslinch	22
Wellington North	24
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Notes</b>	<b>27</b>



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## The Value of Licensed Child Care in Wellington-Guelph

### Municipal Profiles for Wellington-Guelph

Research shows that high quality, affordable licensed child care<sup>1</sup> that is available at adequate levels has wide-reaching benefits for children, families, communities, and the economy.<sup>2</sup>

Through the Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC) funding, the federal and provincial governments have committed to providing families with “access to high-quality, affordable, flexible, and inclusive early learning and child care no matter where they live”.<sup>3</sup> In support of this vision, this report outlines why each of the municipalities in Wellington County and Guelph (“Wellington-Guelph”)<sup>4</sup> are a priority for expanding licensed child care. First, this report highlights the importance of expanding the provision of full-day, full year child care across Wellington-Guelph. Then, the report shares unique features of each municipality and how licensed child care expansion can support the local community.

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# The Importance of Licensed Child Care in Wellington-Guelph

Wellington County recognizes and supports child care as a critical element of supporting the local community. From Wellington County's Strategic Action Plan, proposed actions include: "assessing residents' need for quality child care spaces; identifying any gaps and opportunities in the provision of child care (all types); and exploring opportunities to fill any gaps in the delivery of child care spaces (private, public, licensed, etc.)"<sup>5</sup> As such, expansion of the licensed child care system is a priority for the Children's Early Years Division.<sup>6</sup>

Expansion planning is based on several factors, including the existing supply of licensed child care, the number of new spaces with confirmed CWELCC funding,<sup>7</sup> the current and projected demand for licensed child care, and community demographics (e.g., population, labour force participation). In the following section, information about the impacts that child care has on economic development, parents' participation in the labour force, and healthy child development are presented to demonstrate the need for expanding the provision of full-day, full-year child care for children across Wellington-Guelph.

## 1

### Supporting Economic Development in Wellington-Guelph

- Much like good roads, schools, and housing, licensed child care is an essential part of the public infrastructure needed to attract and retain a skilled labour force.
- Child care is both an industry in its own right as well as an infrastructure that enables other sectors of the economy to function. It is therefore critical for strategic planning for sustainable economic development to include planning for the infrastructure of child care.
- Investments in child care and early childhood education have a multiplier effect on the economy.<sup>8</sup> For every public dollar that is spent on child care, there is a return on investment of up to \$6.<sup>9</sup>

#### **Access to child care supports parents' participation in the labour force.**

- Research findings show that high-quality, licensed, full-time child care that provides continuity and stability of care arrangements best supports parental labour force participation.<sup>10</sup>
- Rural families benefit from stable, high-quality, and flexible licensed child care which meets the needs of those parents who choose to work.
- Providing affordable, high-quality licensed child care that includes infant spaces is key to shortening parental work interruptions and maintaining earning capacity.<sup>11</sup>

## Access to child care supports gender equity in the labour force.<sup>12</sup>

- Data from Statistics Canada shows that Canada’s labour market is characterized by an increase in dual-income families (i.e., where both parents work).<sup>13</sup> Particularly, the data shows an increase in women’s participation in the labour force, including women with young children.<sup>14</sup>
- Studies have shown that women who experience extended delays in rejoining the workforce after their child is born have reduced earning capacity, and their career prospects are negatively impacted.<sup>15</sup>
- 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. Yet, limited access to reliable, affordable high-quality licensed child care, which includes infant spaces, is a barrier to most mothers’ participation in the labour force.<sup>16</sup>

## 2

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

- When Canadian families were asked about the difficulties accessing child care, the majority (64.1%) reported the lack of available child care in their community as a significant barrier, followed by high costs (39.5%), the lack of care options that are licensed (26.6%), and a lack of flexible care that meet their family’s needs (25.4%).<sup>17</sup>

#### There is an unmet need for licensed child care across Wellington-Guelph.

- Access rates<sup>18</sup> are important for determining whether there is sufficient provision of child care spaces in a particular area.
- 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), with significant variation across the municipalities in the service delivery area (see Table 1).<sup>19</sup>
- Ontario’s Ministry of Education has set a target access rate of 37%.<sup>20</sup>



**Table 1.** Access Rates for Municipalities in Wellington-Guelph

	Full-Day, Full-Year Child Care Spaces	Population of Children Birth Up to Age 4	Access Rate
Centre Wellington	196	1301	15.1%
Erin	145	415	34.9%
Guelph	1826	5875	31.1%
Guelph/ Eramosa	162	495	32.7%
Mapleton	0	755	0%
Minto	49	475	10.3%
Puslinch	0	230	0%
Wellington North	58	655	8.9%
<b>Wellington-Guelph</b>	<b>2436</b>	<b>10,200</b>	<b>23.9%</b>

Source: Children’s Early Years Division. (2024). Wellington County Service Data. County of Wellington (as of June 30, 2024); Statistics Canada (2022). Age (in single years), average age and median age and gender: Canada, provinces and territories, census divisions and census subdivisions. Table: 98-10-0022-01. Statistics Canada.

- Flexible care options include child care offered during non-standard hours (i.e., evenings and weekends), extended hours, and overnight care. There are limited flexible care options in Wellington-Guelph.
- When parents cannot access high-quality licensed child care that meets their needs (e.g., care that is flexible around work schedules), they may have to rely on a variety of different child care arrangements and caregivers to support their participation in the workforce (e.g., family, friends, unlicensed home child care, etc.). A variety of settings and arrangements increases the instability of care that children experience.
- Caregiver stability (i.e., having consistent caregivers during the early years) supports children in building strong and trusting relationships with others, and positively impacts development and learning. Conversely, unstable care arrangements have a negative impact on children’s academic and social outcomes.<sup>21</sup>

### **Licensed child care is unaffordable for many families Wellington-Guelph.**

- In 2024, the average estimated annual cost of full-day, full-year spaces for children birth up to age 4 in Wellington-Guelph is \$16,923 for infant care, \$13,560 for toddler care, and \$11,686 for preschool care (see Table 2). Across Wellington-Guelph this represents an overall average of \$14,056 per child, per year, or \$1,171 per child, per month.<sup>22</sup>
- With the Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC) investments, the cost that families are paying for child care has significantly decreased.
- There is a significant range in the actual costs that families are paying for their child care arrangement, depending on whether a child care programme is enrolled in CWELCC (see Table 2).

**Table 2.** Average Annual of Cost Child Care Spaces in Wellington-Guelph 2024

	Infant	Toddler	Preschool
CWELCC participating programmes	\$ 7,849	\$ 6,243	\$ 5,413
Non-CWELCC participating programmes	\$ 21,600	\$ 21,300	\$ 20,250
<b>Overall average</b>	<b>\$ 16,923</b>	<b>\$ 13,560</b>	<b>\$ 11,686</b>

Note: Overall average is based on a weighted average that considers the number of CWELCC participating programmes and the number of non-CWELCC participating programmes.  
 Source: Children’s Early Years Division. (2024). Wellington County Administration Data. County of Wellington (as of June 30, 2024); Data for non-CWELCC participating programmes was collected from programmes’ public webpages as of June 30, 2024.

- The cost of child care can be prohibitive to families, particularly those living in low-income.
- Across Wellington-Guelph, the cost of care represents around 14% of families’ income or 20% of one-parent families’

income (see Table 3). This varies among the municipalities across Wellington-Guelph, with a range between 10.98% and 22.82%, depending on family income and the number of income earners in the family unit.

**Table 3:** Child Care Expenses for One Child as a Portion of Family Income<sup>23</sup>

	Average Annual Cost of Child Care	Median After-Tax Family Income	Portion of Family Income Spent on Child Care	Median After-Tax Income for One-Parent Families	Portion of Income Spent on Child Care for One-Parent Families
Centre Wellington	\$14,056	\$102,000	13.78%	\$72,500	19.39%
Erin	\$14,056	\$118,000	11.91%	\$77,500	18.14%
Guelph	\$14,056	\$99,000	14.20%	\$68,000	20.67%
Guelph/Eramosa	\$14,056	\$119,000	11.81%	\$84,000	16.73%
Mapleton	\$14,056	\$102,000	13.78%	\$76,000	18.49%
Minto	\$14,056	\$89,000	15.79%	\$63,200	22.24%
Puslinch	\$14,056	\$128,000	10.98%	\$91,000	15.45%
Wellington North	\$14,056	\$84,000	16.73%	\$61,600	22.82%
<b>Wellington-Guelph</b>	<b>\$14,056</b>	<b>\$101,000</b>	<b>13.92%</b>	<b>\$69,500</b>	<b>20.22%</b>

Source: Children’s Early Years Division. (2024). Wellington County Administration Data. County of Wellington (as of June 30, 2024); Statistics Canada (2023). Census Profile, 2021 Census of Population. Catalogue no. 98-316-X2021001. Statistics Canada.

- 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.<sup>24</sup>
- The Early Development Instrument (EDI) measures the percentage of children who are vulnerable on at least one developmental domain during their kindergarten year (i.e., children that did not meet certain developmental expectations and are at an increased risk for difficulties). In Wellington-Guelph, 36.8% of children were vulnerable on at least one domain in the last EDI cycle (2023), which is a significant increase in vulnerability compared to the previous cycle in 2018 (30.5%).<sup>25</sup>
- Further, 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).<sup>26</sup>
- Full-day, full-year care has been shown to have the most significant impact on children’s development and is considered the minimum standard for child care.<sup>27</sup>



## Municipal Profiles

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 following sections highlight the seven Wellington County member municipalities and Guelph, provide 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.



## Centre Wellington

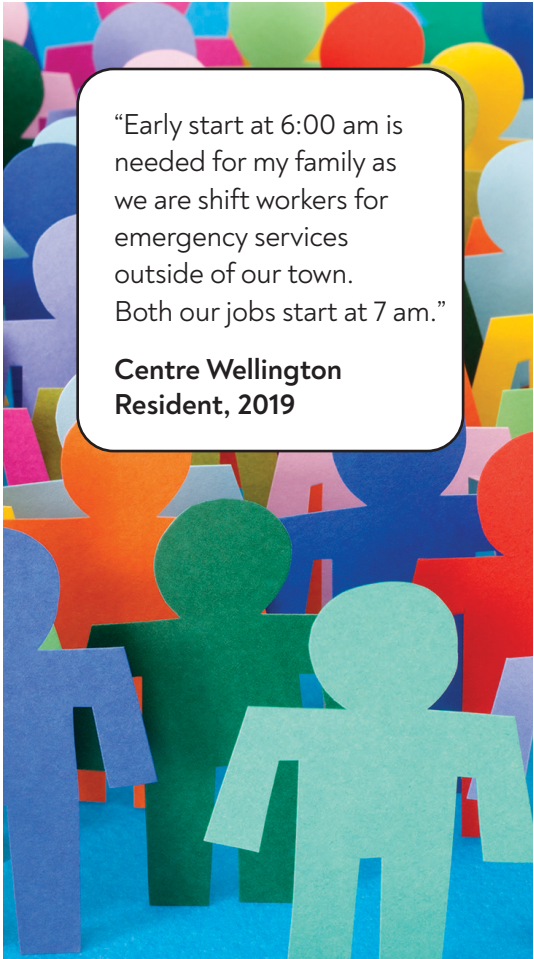
The need for additional licensed child care in Centre Wellington is driven by the significant projected population growth, the large workforce in the municipality, and the lack of existing child care spaces serving children from birth up to age 4.

**Centre Wellington is experiencing significant population growth, suggesting more families are settling in the area.**

- Centre Wellington is the most populated rural municipality in Wellington County, with a population of 31,093 and is projected to grow by 68.2% between 2021 and 2041 which represents the largest projected population growth across Wellington-Guelph.<sup>28</sup>
- Of the rural municipalities in Wellington County, Centre Wellington has the highest proportion of 2022 new residential permits (49.9%).<sup>29</sup>

**As the population of Centre Wellington grows, so too does the number of residents participating in the labour force.**

- From 2016-2021, there was a 4.5% increase in the number of Centre Wellington residents working.<sup>30</sup>
- The majority (58.4%) of people working are working full-time and 42.8% of full-time workers are women.<sup>31</sup>
- The top employers in Centre Wellington operate in the manufacturing and healthcare industries.<sup>32</sup>
- The highest proportion of Centre Wellington's residents work in the manufacturing industry.<sup>33</sup>
- These sectors operate during non-standard hours and/or have shift workers. Therefore, care options that offer flexible hours, longer hours of care, and overnight care would support the labour force in Centre Wellington.
- Out of those that commute to their place of work, 44.4% commute within Centre Wellington, 30.4% commute to other municipalities in Wellington-Guelph and 25.2% commute outside of Wellington-Guelph.<sup>34</sup>



“Early start at 6:00 am is needed for my family as we are shift workers for emergency services outside of our town. Both our jobs start at 7 am.”

**Centre Wellington  
Resident, 2019**

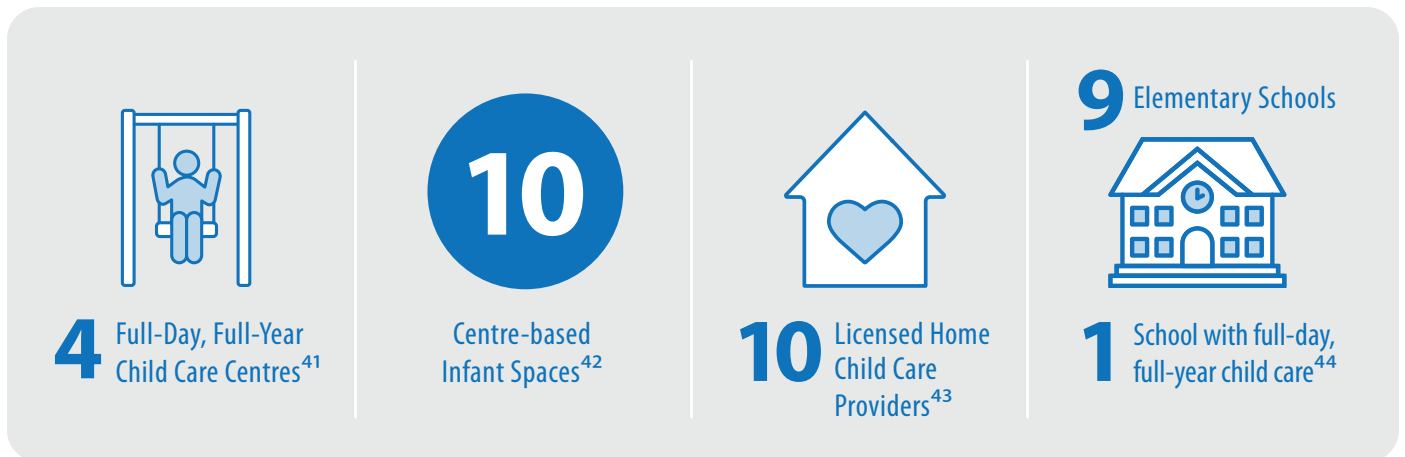
## There is not enough licensed child care in Centre Wellington for those who need it.

- Of those using child care, 59% reported using an unlicensed child care provider.<sup>35</sup>
- The average family size in Centre Wellington is 2.9, with an average number of children in a family being 1.9,<sup>36</sup> indicating that many families have multiple children to arrange care for.
- Centre Wellington has an access rate of 15.1%, which is below the Wellington-Guelph average of 23.9%,<sup>37</sup> and falls significantly below Ontario's target access rate of 37%.<sup>38</sup> With its low access rate, Centre Wellington is missing out on the

potential social and economic multiplier effect of expanding the provision of full-day, full-year licensed child care to its growing population.

- Residents of Centre Wellington indicated that the lack of availability/long waitlists, flexibility of care hours, and affordability are the main barriers to accessing care.<sup>39</sup>
- There are 922 children living in Centre Wellington who are on a waitlist for an infant, toddler, or preschool child care space.<sup>40</sup>

**Figure 1.** Availability of child care programmes in Centre Wellington.



## Erin

The need for additional licensed child care in Erin is driven by the significant projected population growth and the decreasing participation in the labour force.

### Erin is experiencing significant population growth, suggesting more families are settling in the area.

- The population is projected to grow by 32.4% to 57.8% between 2021 and 2041.<sup>45</sup>
- The average family size in Erin is 2.9, with families having an average of 1.8 children, suggesting that many families have multiple children to arrange care for.<sup>46</sup>

### Erin's labour force participation is decreasing, and less than half of full-time workers are women.

- Limited access to reliable high-quality licensed child care, which includes adequate infant spaces, is a barrier to most mothers' participation in the labour force.<sup>47</sup>
- Between 2016 and 2021, the labour force participation rate in Erin decreased by 3.6%, from 73% in 2016 to 69.4% in 2021.<sup>48</sup>
- While most workers are working full-time (58.5%), less than half of full-time workers are women (42.6%).<sup>49</sup>

### Erin has a sizeable labour force that works shift work, non-standard hours, or commute for work.

- The highest proportion of Erin's residents work in the construction industry.<sup>50</sup> Many working in the construction industry work early hours and/or work shifts.
- Out of those that commute to their place of work, 23.7% commute within Erin, 10.1% commute to other municipalities in Wellington-Guelph and 66.1% commute outside of Wellington-Guelph.<sup>51</sup>
- Care options that offer flexible hours and/or longer hours of care support commuters and shift workers.



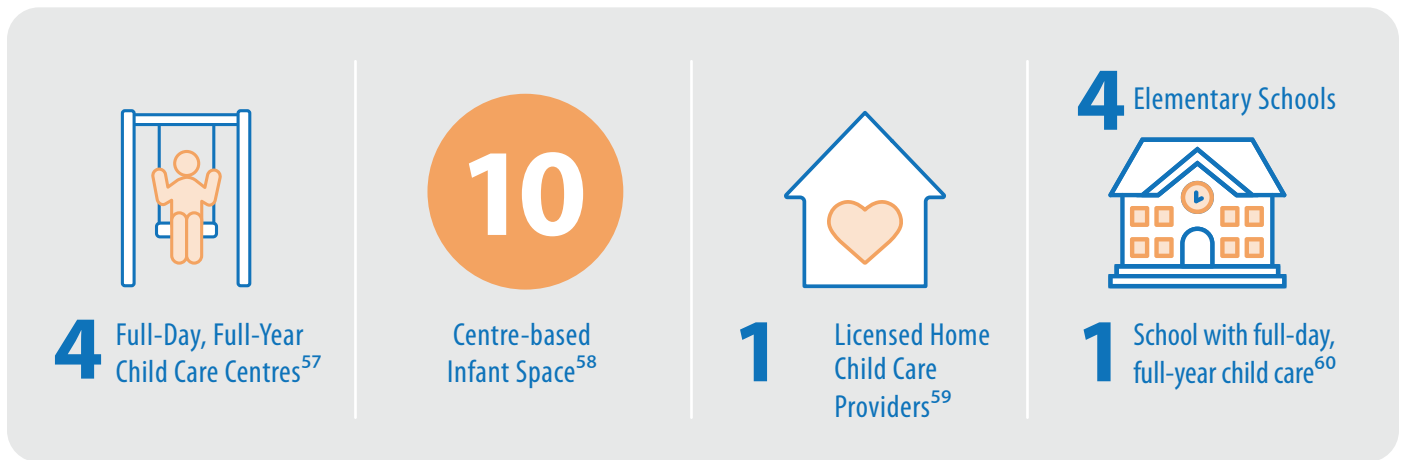
I “require care early morning (6am) and longer after care (6:30-7:00 pm) as I work 12 hour shifts”

**Erin Resident, 2019**

**There are not enough licensed child care spaces to meet the needs of families in Erin; instead, families are using unlicensed child care providers to meet their needs.**

- Of those using child care, 75% reported using an unlicensed child care provider.<sup>52</sup>
- Erin has a high access rate (34.9%)<sup>53</sup> compared to the other municipalities in Wellington-Guelph but falls below Ontario's target access rate of 37%.<sup>54</sup> While the access rate for Erin is approaching the target, the population of Erin is growing significantly and expanding child care provision will allow Erin to continue to see social and economic benefits of ensuring children have access to child care.
- Residents of Erin note the lack of availability/long waitlists, a lack of flexibility of care hours, and affordability as the main barriers to accessing care.<sup>55</sup>
- There are 104 children living in Erin who are on a waitlist for an infant, toddler, or preschool child care space.<sup>56</sup>

**Figure 2.** Availability of child care programmes in Erin.



# Guelph

The need for additional licensed child care in Guelph is driven by the growing population, the large proportion of vulnerable populations, and the high percentage of people living and working in the Guelph.

## The growing population in Guelph accounts for a large proportion of the service delivery area, suggesting more families are settling in the area.

- Guelph is a heavily populated urban municipality in Wellington-Guelph, with a population of 143,740; 59.6% of the service delivery area population in Wellington-Guelph is concentrated in Guelph.<sup>61</sup>
- Guelph's population is projected to grow by 36.4% between 2021 and 2041, representing a significant proportion of the population growth within Wellington-Guelph.<sup>62</sup>
- 4.1% of the Guelph's population is children ages birth up to 4 years old.<sup>63</sup>

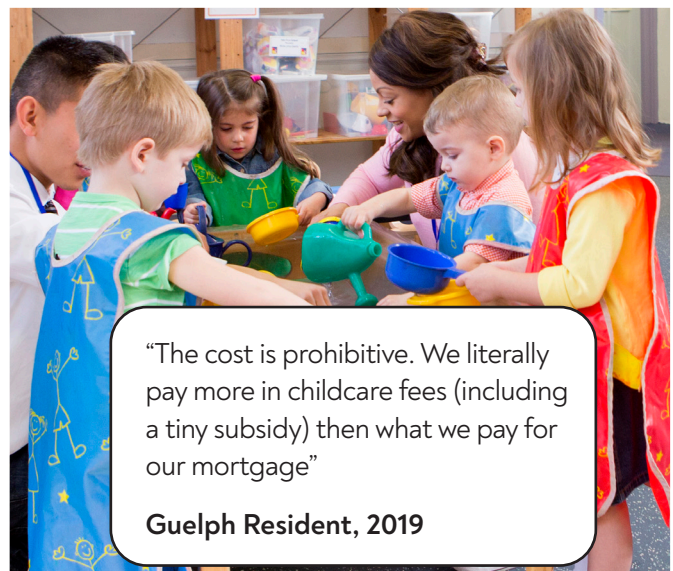
## Guelph is the only urban municipality in Wellington-Guelph and has the largest presence of vulnerable populations compared to the other municipalities.

- The Guelph is the most diverse region in the Wellington-Guelph service delivery area, as 20.9% of the population are visible minorities.<sup>64</sup>
- The median after-tax income for the Guelph (\$82,000) is low compared to the other municipalities, and about 9.5% of children under the age of 6 years are living in low-income.<sup>65</sup>
- The presence of vulnerable populations must be considered when planning for child care expansion. Factors that may prevent families from accessing licensed child care even if

available, such as affordability and families' diverse needs are barriers that may need to be addressed.

## There are not enough licensed child care spaces in Guelph for those who need it.

- Guelph has a high access rate (31.1%)<sup>66</sup> compared to the other municipalities in Wellington-Guelph but falls below Ontario's target access rate of 37%.<sup>67</sup>
- There are 4,467 children living in Guelph who are on a waitlist for an infant, toddler, or preschool child care space.<sup>68</sup>
- While the access rate for the Guelph is approaching the target, expanding child care that addresses barriers of access and affordability will allow the community to continue to see the social and economic benefits that full-day, full-year licensed child care could offer to its growing population.



"The cost is prohibitive. We literally pay more in childcare fees (including a tiny subsidy) than what we pay for our mortgage"

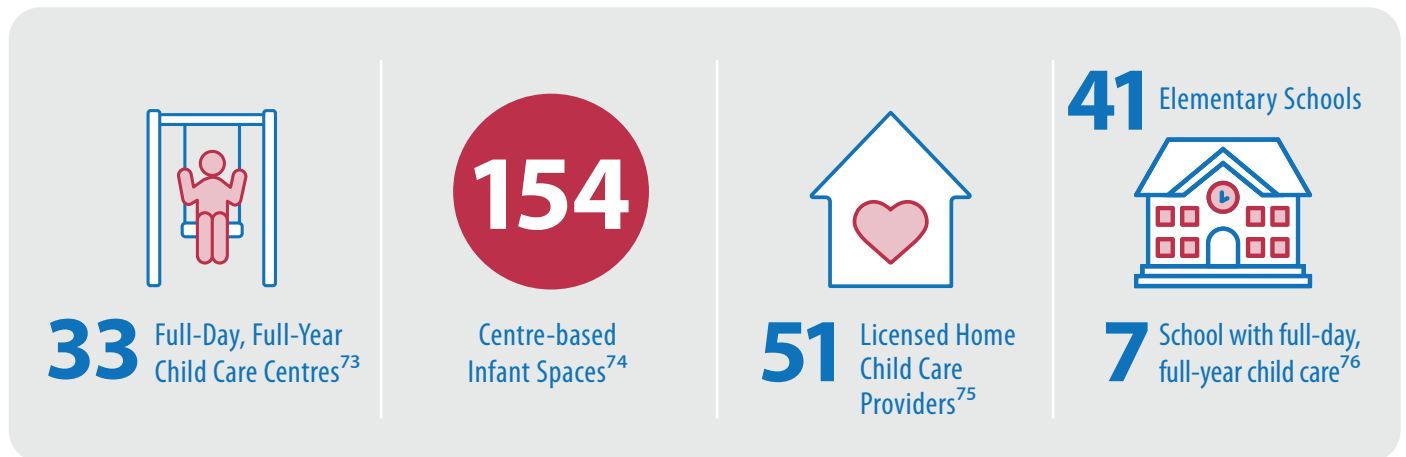
**Guelph Resident, 2019**

Guelph is a diverse, urban centre with a variety of industries, most of which would require care options that offer flexible hours and/or longer hours of care.

- The highest proportion of Guelph’s residents work in the manufacturing industry,<sup>69</sup> which often means shift-work or non-standard hours of work.
- About 55% of people in Guelph are working full-time, which is consistent with the Ontario average of full-time workers (54.5%). The percentage of women working full-time is also high (44%).<sup>70</sup>
- Out of those that commute to their place of work, 69.8% commute within Guelph.<sup>71</sup> Guelph is also a popular commuter destination where workers from other municipalities will travel into Guelph for work.<sup>72</sup>
- Guelph also has both a university and a college campus where students and staff might require flexible child care options that align with class schedules and extended hours of work.
- While expanding child care to meet the unique needs of families, consideration should be given to care options that support shift workers, those working non-standard hours, and commuters.

“Times of the site are a little restrictive (we could use broader hours given our work schedules)”  
**Guelph Resident, 2019**

Figure 3. Availability of child care programmes in Guelph.



## Guelph/Eramosa

The need for additional licensed child care in Guelph/Eramosa is driven by the need to increase participation in the labour force and support residents who commute to work.

### Labour force participation in Guelph/Eramosa is lower compared to prior years, and less than half of full-time workers are women.

- Over the years, the labour force participation rate decreased by 4.1%, from 72% in 2016 to 67.9% in 2021.<sup>77</sup>
- Further, only 40.8% of women are working full-time which is slightly below the Ontario average of women working full-time (44.3%).<sup>78</sup>
- Indeed, limited access to reliable, affordable high-quality licensed child care, which includes adequate infant spaces, is a barrier to most mothers' participation in the labour force.<sup>79</sup>

### Guelph/Eramosa has a labour force that works shift work, non-standard hours, or commute for work.

- The top employers in Guelph/Eramosa operate in the transportation industry.<sup>80</sup> Much of this sector operates during non-standard hours (e.g., overnight).
- The highest proportion of Guelph/Eramosa's residents work in the manufacturing industry,<sup>81</sup> which often means shift-work or non-standard hours of work.
- Out of those that commute to their place of work, 17.6% commute within Guelph/Eramosa, 41.7% commute to other municipalities in Wellington-Guelph and 40.6% commute outside of Wellington-Guelph.<sup>82</sup>
- Care options that offer flexible hours and/or longer hours of care support shift workers, those working non-standard hours, and commuters.



"There is none available, so this limits employment options"

Guelph/Eramosa  
Resident, 2019



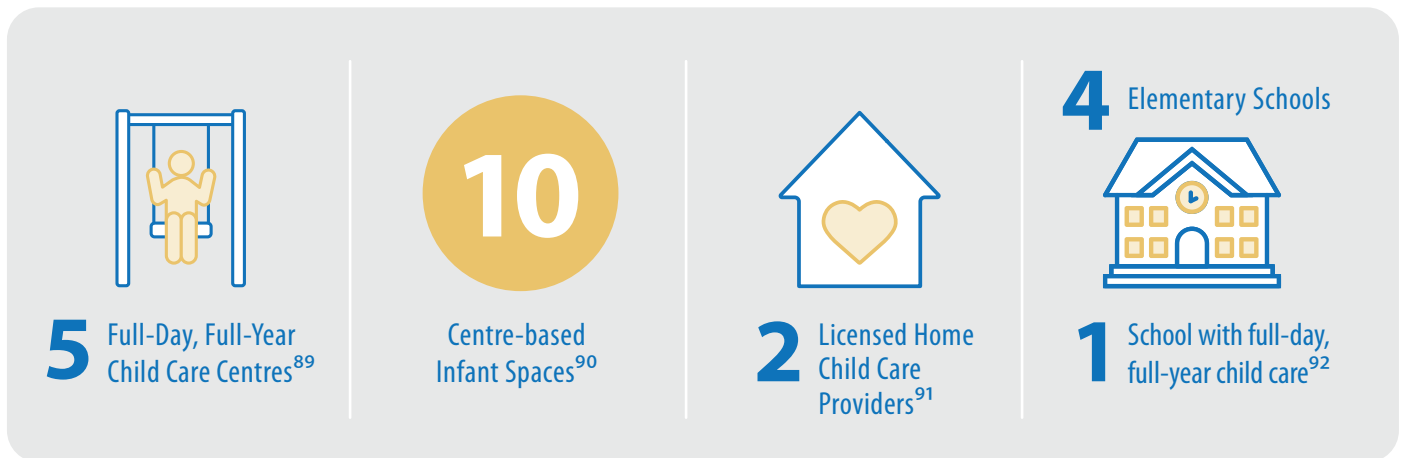
## There are not enough licensed child care spaces offering the type of care that meets the needs of families in Guelph/Eramosa.

- Of those using child care, 50% reported using an unlicensed child care provider.<sup>83</sup>
- The average family size in Guelph/Eramosa is 3.0, with an average of 1.9 children per family.<sup>84</sup> This indicates that many families have multiple children to arrange care for.
- Guelph/Eramosa has a high access rate (32.7%)<sup>85</sup> compared to the other municipalities in Wellington County but falls below Ontario's target access rate of 37%.<sup>86</sup> While the access rate for Guelph/Eramosa is approaching the target, expanding child care in Guelph/Eramosa will allow the community to continue to see the social and economic benefits of ensuring children have access to child care and parents can participate in the labour force.
- Residents of Guelph/Eramosa indicated that a lack of availability/long waitlists and affordability are the main barriers to accessing care.<sup>87</sup>
- There are 196 children living in Guelph/Eramosa who are on a waitlist for an infant, toddler, or preschool child care space.<sup>88</sup>

“Currently there aren't many options around us so we're commuting for child care and then also commuting for work”

**Guelph/Eramosa  
Resident, 2019**

**Figure 4.** Availability of child care programmes in Guelph/Eramosa.



## Mapleton

Mapleton has a critical need for licensed child care that is driven by the high proportion of children and large family sizes in the municipality and, most notably, the absence of licensed child care spaces serving children from birth up to age 4.

Mapleton has a large proportion of children, and family sizes are the largest here of all the municipalities in Wellington County. However, there is no licensed child care in Mapleton to support local families.

- While Mapleton has the highest proportion of children birth up to 4, accounting for 7% of the overall population,<sup>93</sup> yet there are no full-day, full-year child care spaces.<sup>94</sup>
- Mapleton has the largest average family size (3.6) and highest average number of children per family (2.6).<sup>95</sup>
- There are 50 children living in Mapleton who are on a waitlist for an infant, toddler, or preschool child care space. Compared to the other Wellington County municipalities, the proportion<sup>96</sup> of children on the waitlist is notably lower in Mapleton.<sup>97</sup> The proportionally low waitlist could be due to the lack of child care options in Mapleton.

“The only child care options available in Drayton are all home child care providers and they are always full. It’s very hard to find child care”

**Mapleton Resident, 2019**



“Stay at home mom, looking for proper trustworthy childcare so I can return to work full time.”

**Mapleton Resident, 2019**

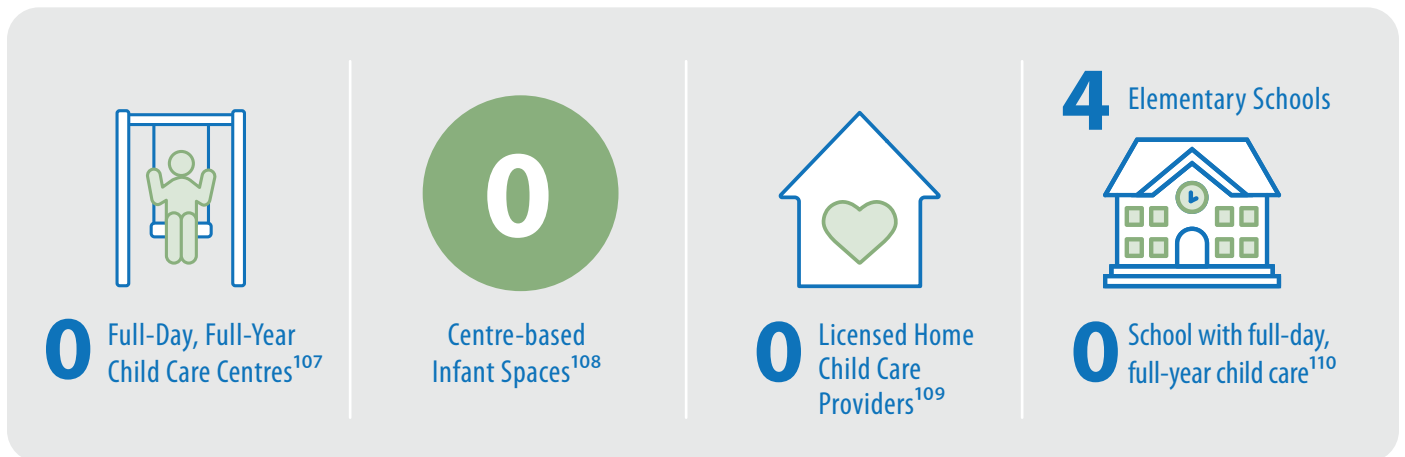
- 100% of those accessing child care are using unlicensed child care providers.<sup>98</sup>
- Further, Mapleton has the highest proportion of children under 6-years-old living in low income (18.2%) in Wellington-Guelph.<sup>99</sup>
- In the absence of full-day, full-year licensed care, children in Mapleton are denied the benefits that high-quality licensed early childhood education offers, particularly for children from vulnerable backgrounds.

- Mapleton is working to expand the provision of local child care spaces. A new child care centre, co-located in a new Wellington Catholic elementary school in Drayton is expected to open in 2026 and the child care centre will have 64 spaces.<sup>100</sup> The addition of these spaces will increase the access rate from 0% to 8.5%.<sup>101</sup>

**Mapleton has a large full-time labour force, yet less than half of full-time workers are women.**

- Limited access to high-quality licensed child care, is a barrier to mothers’ participation in the labour force.<sup>102</sup>
- In Mapleton, there is a high percentage of people working full time (63.9%) compared to the Ontario average of full-time workers (54.5%).<sup>103</sup>
- However, only 34.8% of women are working full-time which is lower than the Ontario average of women working full-time (44.3%).<sup>104</sup>
- The top employers in Mapleton operate in the agriculture industry.<sup>105</sup> The highest proportion of Mapleton’s residents work in the agriculture, forestry, fishing, or hunting industries.<sup>106</sup> These industries operate for long hours, and hours change seasonally.

**Figure 5.** Availability of child care programmes in Mapleton.



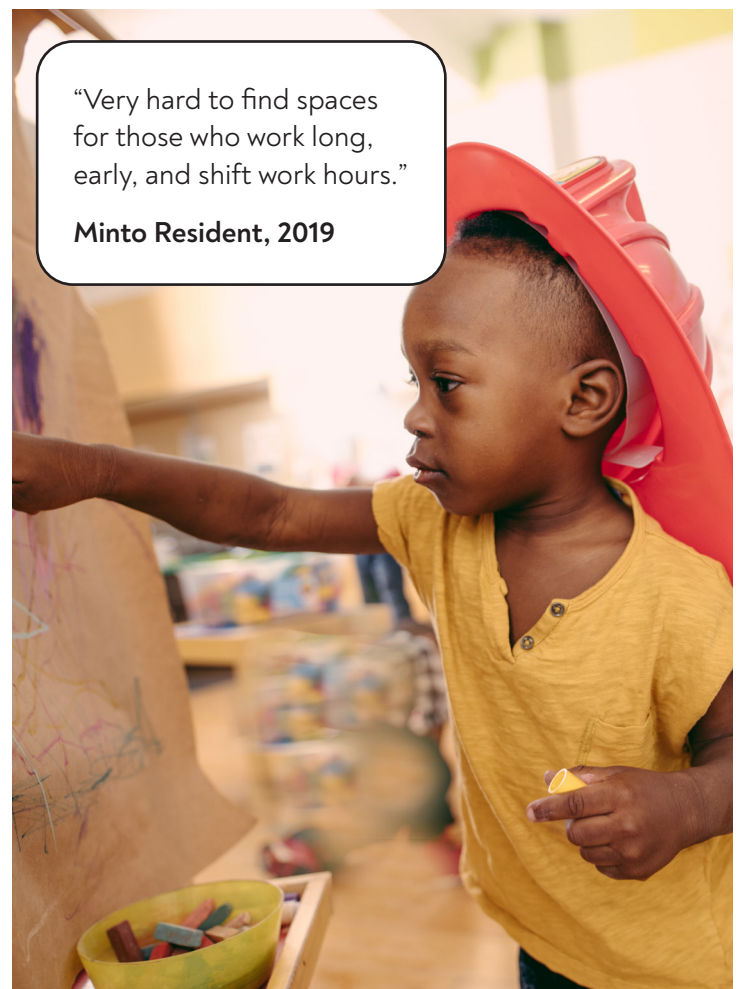
The need for additional licensed child care in Minto is driven by the significant projected population growth, the large workforce in the municipality, and the number of children and families living in low income who are missing out on the benefits that high-quality licensed early childhood education offers, particularly for children from vulnerable backgrounds.

**Minto is experiencing significant population growth, suggesting more families are settling in the area. However, many families are living in low income.**

- The population is projected to grow by 40.9% between 2021 and 2041.<sup>111</sup>
- Minto has the third highest proportion of new residential permits, accounting for 7.5% of all residential permits issued in 2022.<sup>112</sup>
- The median after-tax family income in Minto is low (\$74,500) compared to other municipalities.
- Like Wellington County's other northern, rural municipalities, there a high percentage (16%) of children under the age of 6 living in low-income in Minto.<sup>113</sup>
- Without an adequate supply of child care, Minto is missing out on the potential economic multiplier effect that full-day, full-year licensed child care could offer to its growing population.

**Minto's has a sizeable labour force including many full-time workers.**

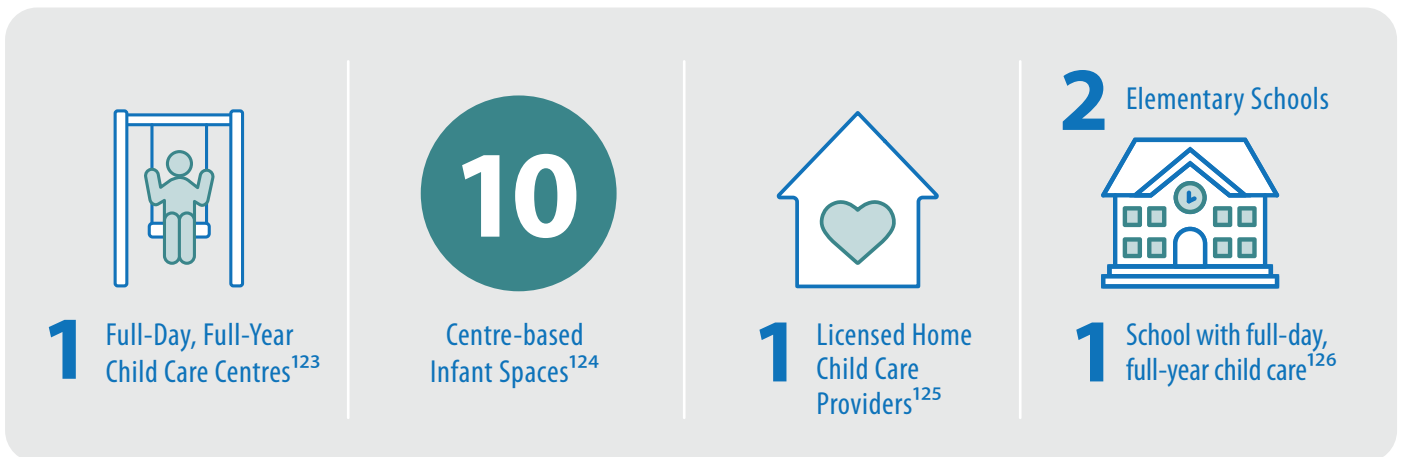
- In Minto, the labour force participation rate (65.1%) is slightly above the Ontario average (62.8%). Further, when compared to the average of full-time workers in Ontario (54.5%), a large proportion of people in Minto are working full-time (60.8%).<sup>114</sup>
- The top employers in Minto operate in the manufacturing industry and most Minto residents work in this sector.<sup>115</sup> The manufacturing sector often operates during non-standard hours and/or have shift workers.



## There is not enough child care in Minto for those who need it.

- 5.2% of the Minto population are children under 4 years of age.<sup>116</sup>
- The average family size in Minto is 3.0, with an average number of children in a family being 2.1<sup>117</sup> signalling that many families have multiple children to arrange care for.
- Minto has an access rate of 10.3%, which is low compared to the Wellington-Guelph average of 23.9%,<sup>118</sup> and falls significantly below Ontario's target access rate of 37%.<sup>119</sup>
- Residents of Minto indicated a lack of availability/long waitlists, flexibility of care hours (including a lack of care providing longer hours), and affordability as the main barriers to accessing care.<sup>120</sup>
- There are 62 children living in Minto who are on a waitlist for an infant, toddler, or preschool child care space. Compared to other Wellington County municipalities, the proportion<sup>121</sup> of children on the waitlist is lower in Minto. The proportionally low waitlist could be due to the lack of child care options in Minto.<sup>122</sup>

**Figure 6.** Availability of child care programmes in Minto.



## Puslinch

The need for additional licensed child care in Puslinch is driven by the increasing residential areas, the need to support residents who commute to work and, most notably, the absence of licensed child care spaces serving children from birth up to age 4.

**Puslinch has a rapidly growing residential area and residents commute to larger population centres. Child care is an essential service that can support the growing population and decrease the high unemployment rate.**

- Limited access to high-quality licensed child care, including infant spaces, is a barrier to parents' participation in the labour force.<sup>127</sup>
- Over half of Puslinch residents are participating in the labour force (64.9%),

including a high percentage of women participation (61.4%).<sup>128</sup> However, Puslinch also has an unemployment rate of 9.3%, which is the second highest in Wellington-Guelph.<sup>129</sup>

“In general, more non-profit quality childcare for infants is mandatory.”

**Puslinch Resident, 2019**



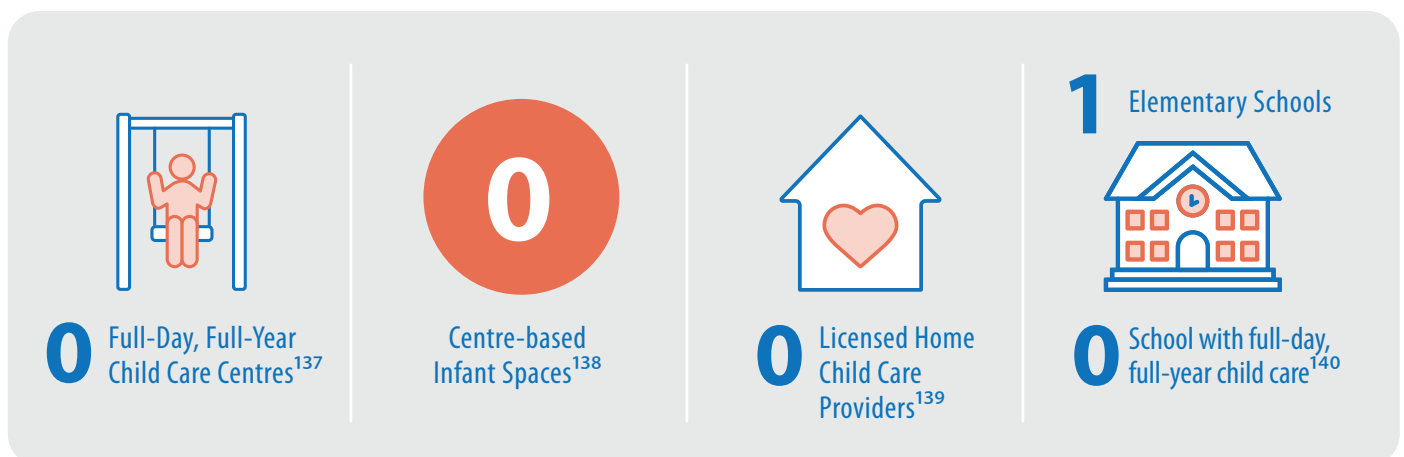
**The labour force in Puslinch works shift work, non-standard hours, or commutes for work, indicating a need for flexible child care options.**

- The top employers Puslinch operate in the manufacturing, construction, and crane rental and heavy lifting industries.<sup>130</sup> These sectors often operate long hours and/or during non-standard hours (i.e., overnight).
- The highest proportion of Puslinch residents work in the professional, scientific, and technical services industry (e.g., accounting, marketing, scientific research).<sup>131</sup>
- Out of those that commute to their place of work, 18.1% commute within Puslinch, 39.2% commute to other municipalities in Wellington-Guelph and 42.5% commute outside of Wellington-Guelph.<sup>132</sup>
- Indeed, residents of Puslinch indicated that the lack of child care offering flexible care and/or extended hours to suit shift workers or commuters is a barrier for their family.<sup>133</sup>
- Care options that offer flexible hours and/or longer hours of care support shift workers, those working non-standard hours, and commuters.

**Puslinch has a growing population of families, however, there is no licensed child care to support the local families.**

- Puslinch has no child care spaces for children birth up to age 4.<sup>134</sup>
- There are 73 children living in Puslinch who are on a waitlist for an infant, toddler, or preschool child care space.<sup>135</sup>
- Residents of Puslinch indicated that a lack of availability/long waitlists, less than ideal locations of care options and affordability are the main barriers to accessing care.<sup>136</sup>
- In the absence of full-day, full-year licensed care for ages birth up to 4, children in Puslinch are denied the benefits that high-quality licensed early childhood education offers.
- Expanding child care in Puslinch will allow the community to support economic development and children’s social development through ensuring children have access to child care and parents can participate in the labour force.

**Figure 7.** Availability of child care programmes in Puslinch.



## Wellington North

The need for licensed child care in Wellington North is driven by the significant projected population growth, the large workforce in the municipality, and the number of children and families living in low income who are missing out on the benefits that high-quality licensed early childhood education offers, particularly for children from vulnerable backgrounds.

**Wellington North is experiencing significant population growth, suggesting more families are settling in the area. However, many families are living in low income.**

- Wellington North has a high projected population growth between 2021 and 2041 (42.3%).<sup>141</sup> Much of this expansion will be supported by residential growth with Wellington North accounting for a high proportion (28.6%) of the new residential permits issued across the rural municipalities in Wellington County.<sup>142</sup>
- With a high percentage of children in the municipality (5.3%),<sup>143</sup> expanding licensed child care will support the growing population of families with young children.
- The median after-tax family income in Wellington North (\$69,500) is the lowest in Wellington-Guelph, and like Wellington County's other northern, rural municipalities, there is a high percentage (17.2%) of children under the age of 6 living in low-income.<sup>144</sup>

**Wellington North has a large full-time labour force, but women's participation in the labour force is decreasing.**

- Expanding licensed child care supports women's participation in the labour force which has numerous benefits for the economy and for children's well-being by contributing to family income, reducing family poverty, supporting economic growth, contributing to tax revenue, and supporting gender equity.<sup>145</sup>
- Many people living in Wellington North are working full-time (58.6%), yet less than half of full-time workers are women (38.1%). Further, women's participation rate in Wellington North has decreased by almost 4% from 2016 (59.8%) to 2021 (55.9%).<sup>146</sup>





## The labour force in Wellington North works shift work or non-standard hours indicating a need for flexible child care options.

- The top employers in Wellington North operate in the manufacturing industry and most residents work in healthcare.<sup>147</sup>
- These sectors operate during non-standard hours and/or have long-hours and shift workers
- Care options that offer flexible hours, and longer hours and overnight care would support the labour force in Wellington North.

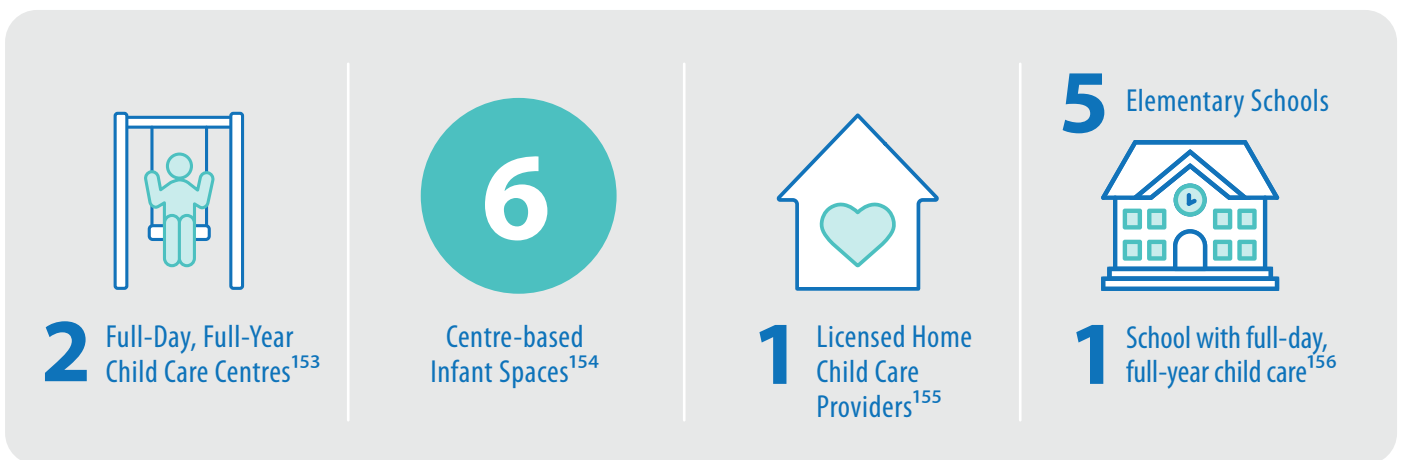
## There is not enough child care in Wellington North for those who need it.

- Wellington North has an access rate of 8.9%, which falls significantly below the Wellington-Guelph average of 23.9%,<sup>148</sup> and Ontario's target access rate of 37%.<sup>149</sup>
- There are 165 children living in Wellington North who are on a waitlist for an infant, toddler, or preschool child care space.<sup>150</sup>
- Residents of Wellington North indicated that the lack of available licensed child care, and the cost of existing child care are large barriers to making child care accessible.<sup>151</sup>
- Of those accessing child care, 53.3% of people are using an unlicensed provider.<sup>152</sup>

“Wait lists are long most places and working shift work makes finding child care impossible. Families need access to child care with hours past 6pm. Not all parents work 9-5 Monday to Friday. Most now work shift work and weekends.”

**Wellington North Resident, 2019**

**Figure 8.** Availability of child care programmes in Wellington North.



## Conclusion

When child care is equitably available, accessible, affordable, and of high quality, it is known to support economic development, parents' work-life balance and children's development.<sup>157</sup> Across Wellington-Guelph, child care is difficult to arrange, does not support the needs of all families (i.e., those working non-standard hours or shiftwork), and is costly. Parents are left with the challenge to make child care arrangements that are typically unlicensed and unstable, sometimes forcing them to leave the workforce. Expansion of the licensed child care system in all seven municipalities will support children's development and local economies.

When Canadian families who use child care were asked about why their care arrangement worked for their family, they indicated that the location met their needs (63.9%), they trusted the nurturing dispositions of the caregiver(s) (50.8%), the care was licensed (41.1%), and the hours of operation met their family's needs (40.4%).<sup>158</sup> This is also reflected on a local level; families in Wellington-Guelph have reported that ideal child care arrangements include flexible care, affordable care, and available care.<sup>159</sup> Expansion of licensed child care also includes consideration of rural communities, which often have less access to services but a greater proportion of children living in low-income. Optimal licensed child care in rural communities would recognize commuting patterns and align hours of operation (e.g., early/late hours) and location (e.g., commuter towns) to support parents commuting to and from work. Considering these populations will help better understand barriers to accessing licensed care, and to identify effective solutions that are tailored to the unique qualities of each municipality within Wellington-Guelph.

Despite the numerous social and economic benefits that come from expanding the licensed child care system, expansion will be limited without investment in the early learning and child care workforce. Therefore, planning for licensed child care expansion must include providing stable and supportive employment for early childhood professionals. A holistic planning and policy approach that considers the needs of children, families, and the child care workforce at large is essential for expansion of licensed child care and community development.



# Notes

<sup>1</sup> Note: The term “child care” is used throughout this report to refer to the non-parental supervision of children in licensed child care and early childhood education programmes for children from birth up to age 4.

<sup>2</sup> Alexander, C., Beckman, K., Macdonald, A., Renner, C., & Stewart, M. (2017). *Ready for Life: A Socio-Economic Analysis of Early Childhood Education and Care*. Ottawa: Conference Board of Canada; Children’s Early Years Division. (2022). *Child Care Counts*. County of Wellington. <https://www.wellington.ca/childcarecounts>

<sup>3</sup> Government of Canada. (2022). *Canada – Ontario Canada-wide early learning and child care agreement – 2021 to 2026, Section 1.1*. <https://www.canada.ca/en/early-learning-child-care-agreement/agreements-provinces-territories/ontario-canada-wide-2021.html>

<sup>4</sup> Note: The County of Wellington is the service system manager for Wellington County and the City of Guelph.

<sup>5</sup> County of Wellington. (2023). *Proudly Moving Forward Together: Strategic Action Plan*. County of Wellington. <https://www.wellington.ca/media/file/2023-strategic-action-plan>

<sup>6</sup> Children’s Early Years Division. (2023). *Child Care and Early Years Service Plan 2023 - 2027*. County of Wellington. <https://www.wellington.ca/childcare/about-early-years/data-and-planning>

<sup>7</sup> Children’s Early Years Division. (2023). *Wellington Directed Growth Plan, CWELCC System*. County of Wellington. <https://www.wellington.ca/childcare/about-early-years/data-and-planning>

<sup>8</sup> Alexander, C., Beckman, K., Macdonald, A., Renner, C., & Stewart, M. (2017). *Ready for Life: A Socio-Economic Analysis of Early Childhood Education and Care*. Ottawa: Conference Board of Canada; Children’s Early Years Division. (2022). *Child Care Counts*. County of Wellington. <https://www.wellington.ca/childcarecounts>

<sup>9</sup> McCain, H. M. N., James, A., & Bertrand, J. (2020). *Early Years Study 4: Thriving Kids, Thriving Society*. Margaret and Wallace McCain Family Foundation

<sup>10</sup> Melhuish, E. (2012). *Provision of quality early childcare services*. *Early Childcare Services, Czech Republic*.

<sup>11</sup> Grimshaw, D. & Rubery, J. (2015). *The motherhood pay gap: A review of issues, theory and international evidence*. Working Paper No.1. International Labour Organization.

<sup>12</sup> Oxfam Canada. (2019). *Who Cares? Why Canada needs a public child care system*. Oxfam Canada. [https://www.oxfam.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/who-cares-report-WEB\\_EN.pdf](https://www.oxfam.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/who-cares-report-WEB_EN.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> Uppal, S. (2015). *Employment patterns of families with children*. Statistics Canada. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/75-006-x/2015001/article/14202-eng.htm>

<sup>14</sup> Moyser, M. & Milan, A. (2018). *Fertility rates and labour force participation among women Quebec and Ontario*. Statistics Canada. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/75-006-x/2018001/article/54976-eng.htm>

<sup>15</sup> Evertsson, M., & Grunow, D. (2012). *Women’s work interruptions and career prospects in Germany and Sweden*. *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*. 32 (9/10), 561-575; Grimshaw, D. & Rubery, J. (2015). *The motherhood pay gap: A review of issues, theory and international evidence*. Working Paper No.1. International Labour Organization.

- <sup>16</sup> Alexander, C., Beckman, K., Macdonald, A., Renner, C., & Stewart, M. (2017). *Ready for Life: A Socio-Economic Analysis of Early Childhood Education and Care*. Ottawa: Conference Board of Canada.
- <sup>17</sup> Statistics Canada. (2023). Type of difficulty encountered by parents and guardians in finding a child care arrangement, children aged 0 to 5 years. Table: 42-10-0008-01. Statistics Canada.
- <sup>18</sup> Note: Access rates measure the number of licensed child care spaces available for an age group as a proportion of the number of children in that age group.
- <sup>19</sup> Children's Early Years Division. (2024). Wellington County Service Data. County of Wellington; Statistics Canada (2022). Age (in single years), average age and median age and gender: Canada, provinces and territories, census divisions and census subdivisions. Table: 98-10-0022-01. Statistics Canada.
- <sup>20</sup> Ontario Ministry of Education. (2023, June). *Ontario's Access and Inclusion Framework 2023: Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care System*. Government of Ontario.
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- <sup>22</sup> Children's Early Years Division. (2024). Wellington County Administration Data. County of Wellington.
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- <sup>24</sup> OECD. (2016). What are the benefits from early childhood education? *Education Indicators in Focus*, 1-4.
- <sup>25</sup> Offord Centre for Child Studies. (2024). Early Development Instrument Data for Wellington-Guelph. McMaster University; Offord Centre for Child Studies. (2024). Early Development Instrument County of Wellington Summary Report. McMaster University.
- <sup>26</sup> Armstrong S. (2020). Universal access to quality childcare is good policy and a positive determinant of health. *Let's invest. Paediatrics & Child Health*, 26(2), 82–84. <https://doi.org/10.1093/pch/pxaa054>
- <sup>27</sup> Penn, H. (2011). Policy Rationales for Early Childhood Services. *International Journal of Child Care and Education Policy*. 5(1), 1-16.
- <sup>28</sup> County of Wellington. (2024, February). *County Of Wellington: Official Plan*. County of Wellington; Statistics Canada (2023). *Census Profile, 2021 Census of Population*. Catalogue no. 98-316-X2021001. Statistics Canada.
- <sup>29</sup> Museum and Archives: Economic Development. (2023, August). *County of Wellington Credit Review*. County of Wellington. <https://www.wellington.ca/media/file/2023-economic-profile>
- <sup>30</sup> Statistics Canada (2017). *Census Profile, 2016 Census of Population*. Catalogue no. 98-316-X2016001. Statistics Canada; Statistics Canada (2023). *Census Profile, 2021 Census of Population*. Catalogue no. 98-316-X2021001. Statistics Canada.
- <sup>31</sup> Statistics Canada (2023). *Census Profile, 2021 Census of Population*. Catalogue no. 98-316-X2021001. Statistics Canada.
- <sup>32</sup> Museum and Archives: Economic Development. (2023, August). *County of Wellington Credit Review*. County of Wellington. <https://www.wellington.ca/media/file/2023-economic-profile>
- <sup>33</sup> Statistics Canada (2023). *Census Profile, 2021 Census of Population*. Catalogue no. 98-316-X2021001. Statistics Canada.

- <sup>34</sup> Statistics Canada (2023). Census Profile, 2021 Census of Population. Catalogue no. 98-316-X2021001. Statistics Canada.
- <sup>35</sup> Children’s Early Years Division. (2019). Community Engagement: Centre Wellington. County of Wellington.
- <sup>36</sup> Statistics Canada (2023). Census Profile, 2021 Census of Population. Catalogue no. 98-316-X2021001. Statistics Canada.
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- <sup>38</sup> Ontario Ministry of Education. (2023, June). Ontario’s Access and Inclusion Framework 2023: Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care System. Government of Ontario.
- <sup>39</sup> Children’s Early Years Division. (2019). Community Engagement: Centre Wellington. County of Wellington.
- <sup>40</sup> OneHSN. (2024). Wellington-Guelph Child Care Application and Waitlist. OneHSN. As of June 24, 2024.
- <sup>41</sup> Ontario Ministry of Education. Child Care Licensing System as of June 30, 2024. Government of Ontario.
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- <sup>43</sup> Ontario Ministry of Education. Child Care Licensing System as of June 30, 2024. Government of Ontario.
- <sup>44</sup> Conseil scolaire catholique MonAvenir. (2024). List of Catholic and French-language schools in Ontario. Conseil scolaire catholique MonAvenir; Conseil scolaire Viamonde. (2024). Find your school. Conseil scolaire Viamonde; Ontario Ministry of Education. Child Care Licensing System as of June 30, 2024. Government of Ontario; Upper Grand District School Board. (2024). School Directory. Upper Grand District School Board; Wellington Catholic District School Board. (2024). Schools. Wellington Catholic District School Board.
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- <sup>50</sup> Statistics Canada (2023). Census Profile, 2021 Census of Population. Catalogue no. 98-316-X2021001. Statistics Canada.
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- <sup>54</sup> Ontario Ministry of Education. (2023, June). Ontario's Access and Inclusion Framework 2023: Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care System. Government of Ontario.
- <sup>55</sup> Children's Early Years Division. (2019). Community Engagement: Erin. County of Wellington.
- <sup>56</sup> OneHSN. (2024). Wellington-Guelph Child Care Application and Waitlist. OneHSN. As of June 24, 2024.
- <sup>57</sup> Ontario Ministry of Education. Child Care Licensing System as of June 30, 2024. Government of Ontario.
- <sup>58</sup> Ontario Ministry of Education. Child Care Licensing System as of June 30, 2024. Government of Ontario.
- <sup>59</sup> Ontario Ministry of Education. Child Care Licensing System as of June 30, 2024. Government of Ontario.
- <sup>60</sup> Conseil scolaire catholique MonAvenir. (2024). List of Catholic and French-language schools in Ontario. Conseil scolaire catholique MonAvenir; Conseil scolaire Viamonde. (2024). Find your school. Conseil scolaire Viamonde; Ontario Ministry of Education. Child Care Licensing System as of June 30, 2024. Government of Ontario; Upper Grand District School Board. (2024). School Directory. Upper Grand District School Board; Wellington Catholic District School Board. (2024). Schools. Wellington Catholic District School Board.
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- <sup>64</sup> Statistics Canada (2023). Census Profile, 2021 Census of Population. Catalogue no. 98-316-X2021001. Statistics Canada.
- <sup>65</sup> Statistics Canada (2023). Census Profile, 2021 Census of Population. Catalogue no. 98-316-X2021001. Statistics Canada.
- <sup>66</sup> Children's Early Years Division. (2024). Wellington County Service Data. County of Wellington; Statistics Canada (2022). Age (in single years), average age and median age and gender: Canada, provinces and territories, census divisions and census subdivisions. Table: 98-10-0022-01. Statistics Canada.
- <sup>67</sup> Ontario Ministry of Education. (2023, June). Ontario's Access and Inclusion Framework 2023: Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care System. Government of Ontario.
- <sup>68</sup> OneHSN. (2024). Wellington-Guelph Child Care Application and Waitlist. OneHSN. As of June 24, 2024.
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- <sup>70</sup> Statistics Canada (2023). Census Profile, 2021 Census of Population. Catalogue no. 98-316-X2021001. Statistics Canada.
- <sup>71</sup> Statistics Canada (2023). Census Profile, 2021 Census of Population. Catalogue no. 98-316-X2021001. Statistics Canada.
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- <sup>73</sup> Ontario Ministry of Education. Child Care Licensing System as of June 30, 2024. Government of Ontario.
- <sup>74</sup> Ontario Ministry of Education. Child Care Licensing System as of June 30, 2024. Government of Ontario.

- <sup>75</sup> Ontario Ministry of Education. Child Care Licensing System as of June 30, 2024. Government of Ontario.
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- <sup>77</sup> Statistics Canada (2017). Census Profile, 2016 Census of Population. Catalogue no. 98-316-X2016001. Statistics Canada; Statistics Canada (2023). Census Profile, 2021 Census of Population. Catalogue no. 98-316-X2021001. Statistics Canada.
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- <sup>82</sup> Statistics Canada (2023). Census Profile, 2021 Census of Population. Catalogue no. 98-316-X2021001. Statistics Canada.
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- <sup>88</sup> OneHSN. (2024). Wellington-Guelph Child Care Application and Waitlist. OneHSN. As of June 24, 2024.
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- <sup>92</sup> Conseil scolaire catholique MonAvenir. (2024). List of Catholic and French-language schools in Ontario. Conseil scolaire catholique MonAvenir; Conseil scolaire Viamonde. (2024). Find your school. Conseil scolaire Viamonde; Ontario Ministry of Education. Child Care Licensing System as of June 30, 2024. Government of Ontario; Upper Grand District School Board. (2024). School Directory. Upper Grand District School Board; Wellington Catholic District School Board. (2024). Schools. Wellington Catholic District School Board.
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- <sup>94</sup> Children’s Early Years Division. (2024). Wellington County Service Data. County of Wellington
- <sup>95</sup> Statistics Canada (2023). Census Profile, 2021 Census of Population. Catalogue no. 98-316-X2021001. Statistics Canada.
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ALTERNATE FORMATS AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST.  
<sup>SM</sup> Official Mark of The Corporation of the County of Wellington