



COUNTY OF WELLINGTON

COMMITTEE REPORT

CEYD-23-03

To: Chair and Members of the Social Services Committee
From: Mandy Koroniak, Director of Children's Early Years Division
Date: Wednesday, April 12, 2023
Subject: Overview of the Children's Early Years Division

Background:

The County of Wellington is the Consolidated Municipal Service Manager (CMSM) designated by the Province of Ontario under the *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014* to plan for and manage licensed child care and early years programmes for the Wellington service delivery area (County of Wellington and City of Guelph). This report, which is being shared for information, provides an overview of the Children's Early Years Division's roles and responsibilities as well as service delivery throughout our delivery area.

Children's Early Years Service System:

A key function of the Division is to perform service system planning that includes research, local data collection, and community engagement to inform a service plan that will advance a system of child care and early years programmes and services in Wellington that addresses local priorities and matters of provincial interest, as outlined in the *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014*. A collaborative approach to planning is supported through Growing Great Generations (GGG) and the Birth-Six working Group, local community planning tables involving health, community service agencies, and organizations supporting children and youth and their families.

To advance Wellington's strategic priorities of a licensed child care and early years system that is of high quality, equitably available, equitably accessible, affordable, and supported by system leadership and accountability, the Children's Early Years Division performs several key functions:

- *Operational Funding for Licensed Child Care:* Provide funding to support child care operations, as well as workforce compensation supports and minor capital
- *Special Needs Resourcing:* Improve access and optimal participation of children with special needs in licensed child care and early years programmes
- *Capacity Building:* Build the capacity of the child care and early years programmes workforce through professional learning and development opportunities to support the provision of high quality programmes
- *Directly Operated Child Care Programmes:* Operate four licensed child care centres and one licensed home child care agency
- *Child Care Fee Subsidy:* Administration of the child care fee subsidy programme, which subsidizes the costs of licensed child care for eligible families

- *EarlyON Child and Family Centres*: Plan for and oversee the system of high-quality child and family programmes and services, for all families and caregivers with children from birth to 6 years old, at no cost to participants.

Population of Children in Wellington

Geography	Birth up to Age 4	Age 4 to 12
Centre Wellington	1,300	3,300
Erin	415	1,095
Guelph	5,875	14,480
Guelph/Eramosa	495	1,460
Mapleton	755	1,765
Minto	475	1,070
Puslinch	230	695
Wellington North	655	1,415
Wellington Service Area	10,200	25,280

Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census of Population.

Operational Funding for Licensed Child Care

The Children's Early Years Division provides annualized funding grants to support operational costs related to the delivery of licensed child care programmes, including compensation supports for the child care workforce. These grants include:

- *Wellington General Operating Grant (WGOG)*: Supports the costs of operating licensed child care programmes for children ages birth to 12 years of age. Wellington's strategy is a "budget for quality" that prioritizes licensed child care programmes for children birth up to 4 years and operators with a WGOG agreement are held accountable for allocating 80% of their operational budgets to staff wages and benefits. WGOG is provided to child care operators through an annualized WGOG funding agreement with the County. Operators must meet and maintain a significant portion of Wellington's Operating Criteria, which is a research-based quality measurement tool, in order to enter into a WGOG Funding Agreement. This supports the distribution of public funding that prioritizes high quality practices. The agreement also includes a purchase of service agreement for families in receipt of child care subsidy. Currently, 29 child care operators have a WGOG funding agreement with the County which supports 3,154 spaces across our service delivery area.
- *Repairs and Maintenance*: Funding to cover one-time repair and maintenance costs to support licensed programmes that are not in compliance with licensing requirements or may be at risk of not being in compliance with licensing requirements under the *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014*
- *Play-based Materials and Equipment*: Funding to help licensed child care programmes create enriching environments both indoors and outdoors with open ended materials that promote children's learning and development through exploration, play and inquiry consistent with the views, four foundations and pedagogical approaches of *How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years*
- *Wage Enhancement (WEG)/Home Child Care Enhancement Grants (HCCEG)*: Wage enhancement support of up to an additional \$2.00/hour for Registered Early Childhood Educators (RECEs) working in licensed child care settings.

- *Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC) System:* 100% federal funding to reduce child care fees and support improved compensation for Registered Early Childhood Educators (RECEs) who are low wage earners. The County enters into CWELCC funding agreements with each child care programme (unlike WGOG which is entered into with a child care operator that may operate several child care programmes). Currently, 84 child care programmes have CWELCC Funding Agreements with the County which represents approximately 3,516 eligible child care spaces.

Licensed Child Care Spaces in Wellington

Geography	Infant	Toddler	Preschool	Kindergarten & School Age
Centre Wellington	10	50	154	336
Erin	10	55	80	208
Guelph	148	528	1,165	1,962
Guelph/Eramosa	10	49	119	56
Mapleton	0	0	16	0
Minto	10	15	32	0
Puslinch	0	0	16	0
Wellington North	6	20	32	56
Total	194	717	1,614	2,618

Licensed spaces as of March 2023. Includes all licensed spaces, including part-day, part-time care (e.g. nursery schools). Authorized recreation programmes that may offer before and after school care or summer programming, but are not licensed, are not included.

Special Needs Resourcing

Special Needs Resourcing (SNR) funding is used to support the inclusion and optimal participation of children with special needs in licensed child care and other early years settings such as EarlyON Child and Family Centres and authorized recreation programmes, at no additional cost to families. The principles of SNR service delivery, as outlined by the Ministry of Education, include:

- *Inclusion:* All children are able to actively and meaningfully participate in licensed child care and early years programmes and are supported to form authentic, caring relationships with their peers and educators
- *Capacity Building:* Educators are supported to increase their skills and knowledge to help address the needs of all children in their programmes and foster inclusive practices
- *Integrated Supports:* Educators collaborate and make relevant, timely referrals and connections to other programmes and services to support the needs of children and families
- *Foundational Conditions:* A strength-based view of children, families, and educators is articulated, supported by the four foundations that are essential for all children to grow and flourish: Belonging, Well-Being, Engagement, and Expression

Wellington's SNR model is referred to as its Enhanced Support System (ESS) which emphasizes building the capacity of child care and early years programmes and includes purchased service agreements with local health organizations such as KidsAbility and the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) to support inclusion with special needs. ESS also provides funding additional enhanced support programme staff and/or specialized equipment to enable inclusion through application-based approvals.

Capacity Building

The Capacity Building functions of the Children's Early Years Division focuses on the child care and early years workforce, supporting professional learning and development opportunities that build the capacity of licensed child care providers, supervisors, programme staff and caregivers, home child care providers and visitors, and non-profit volunteer board members. This supports the provision of high quality programmes for children from birth to 12 years of age that align with *How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years*.

This work begins by laying a strong foundation of thinking and coping skills that support resilience in those who care for and work with children. The Division provides the Reaching IN...Reaching OUT (RIRO) Resiliency Skills Training Programme, which gives child care and early learning staff as well as service providers the necessary theory and skills to support a relationship-based reflective practice and provides a framework for creating a "culture of resilience" in programmes serving young children. Our resilience framework also includes Bounce Back & Thrive! (BBT), which is a resiliency skills programme designed to meet the needs of parents, and those in a parenting role.

Inclusive and collaborative support that enhances reflective practice and strengthens the pedagogy of child care and early years programmes is further provided through on-site coaching, mentoring, resources and planned synchronous and asynchronous professional learning through the Early Years Professional Resource Centre (EYPRC).

RIRO and Professional Learning Supports in 2022

Capacity Building Activity	Number
RIRO Trainings	27
RIRO Trainer Intensives	2
Child Care Programmes Receiving Mentorship Support	17
Participants at Professional Learning Events	1167
Programmes Participating in Professional Learning Events	47

Directly Operated Programmes

The County directly operates 5 licensed child care programmes:

- Mount Forest Child Care and Learning Centre (Township of Wellington North, 32 spaces)
- Palmerston Child Care and Learning Centre (Town of Minto, 49 spaces)
- Wellington Place Child Care and Learning Centre (Township of Centre Wellington, 64 spaces)
- Willowdale Child Care and Learning Centre (City of Guelph, 32 spaces)
- Wellington Home Child Care (home child care providers located across Wellington)

Through its directly operated programmes, , the County was able to quickly develop and implement Emergency Child Care for front-line workers during COVID-19 during the mandated closure of child care centres in 2020.

Child Care Fee Subsidy

The cost of licensed child care remains a barrier to many families. To support access to child care, the Children's Early Years Division administers the child care fee subsidy programme that helps eligible families pay for child care for children ages birth to 12 years of age. Eligibility is determined based on family income and a family's need for care, and families in receipt of child care fee subsidy may partly contribute to the cost of care, or be fully subsidized.

In 2022, 445 children and 334 families were supported by child care fee subsidy:

Children Supported by Child Care Fee Subsidy in 2022

Age Group	# of Children Served
Infant	27
Toddler	98
Preschool	146
Kindergarten	59
School Age	115
Total	445

Applicant Reason for Service in 2022

Reason for Service	% of Applicants
Working/Looking for Work	78%
Attending School	13%
Work & School	1%
Ontario Works	2%
Child or Family Need	6%

Child care fee subsidy may support full and part-time child care in licensed centres, licensed home child care programmes, camps, authorized recreation programmes, and before and after school programmes. To offer subsidized care, child care operators must enter into a Fee Subsidy Purchase of Service Agreement with the County, which makes payments directly to operators for the subsidized portion of child care provided. Like the WGOG, operators must meet a maintain a significant portion of Wellington's Operating Criteria, to ensure that public funding is used to purchase high quality practices.

EarlyON Child and Family Centres

EarlyON Child and Family Centres are a 100% provincially-funded family support programme for families and children from birth to 6 years of age. These high-quality programmes are provided at no cost to families. They are welcoming places that offer a range of services and resources where families can connect with other families with young children and learn from professionals trained in early child development. In Wellington, EarlyON programmes and services are provided through contracted service providers, namely, Shelldale Family Gateway, Guelph Community Health Centre, and the Community Resource Centre.

Currently, there are 7 full-time EarlyON Child and Family Centres and 10 mobile or satellite EarlyON sites, serving all municipalities across the service delivery area:

- Centre Wellington: 4
- Erin: 1
- Guelph: 3
- Guelph/Eramosa: 1
- Mapleton: 3
- Minto: 2
- Puslinch: 1
- Wellington North: 2

EarlyON Child and Family Centres are required to provide programmes that are guided by Ontario's pedagogical framework for the early years, *How Does Learning Happen?* and provide an environment that engages parents and caregivers as co-learners and leaders in influencing positive experiences and outcomes for children, families and the community.

Future Directions:

All service System Managers will continue to implement the CWELCC System in Ontario, with the current agreement between Canada and Ontario in effect until March 31, 2026. As of January 1, 2023, fees were reduced for enrolled programmes by 50%, relative to 2020 fees, to a minimum of \$12 a day. Under the agreement, fees are to be lowered to an average of \$10 a day for eligible children under the age of six in licensed child care programmes enrolled in the CWELCC System by September 2025.

In December 2022, the Ministry of Education shared its Access and Inclusion Framework with service system managers for consultation. The purpose of the framework is to support service system managers with updating service plans with an increased focus on access as it relates to inclusion, and confirmation of alignment of new licence applications with local plans for directed growth under the CWELCC System. It is expected that the ministry will provide information on the application process for capital start-up grants that will support the creation of new spaces in Spring 2023.

The ministry has further indicated that it is in the process of developing a new child care funding formula for service system managers and that it will transition from a revenue replacement to a cost recovery model for the CWELCC System in 2024. In February and March 2023, all Service System Managers and CWELCC-enrolled child care service providers were required to complete surveys related to their operations which are to inform a new child care funding formula.

Recommendation:

That the report, Overview of the Children's Early Years Division, be received for information.

Respectfully submitted,



Mandy Koroniak
Director of Children's Early Years Division



Children's Early Years Division

Service System Functions and Service Delivery

April 12, 2023

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Service System Manager for Child Care and Early Years

- ▶ Designated by the Province of Ontario under the *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014* to plan for and manage licensed child care and early years programmes and services.
- ▶ Perform the research, local data collection, and community engagement to inform planning and advance a system of child care and early years programmes and services in Wellington that addresses local priorities and matters of provincial interest

Population of Children in Wellington

Geography	Birth up to Age 4	Age 4 to 12
Centre Wellington	1,300 (13%)	3,300 (13%)
Erin	415 (4%)	1,095 (4%)
Guelph	5,875 (58%)	14,480 (57%)
Guelph/Eramosa	495 (5%)	1,460 (6%)
Mapleton	755 (7%)	1,765 (7%)
Minto	475 (5%)	1,070 (4%)
Puslinch	230 (2%)	695 (3%)
Wellington North	655 (6%)	1,415 (6%)
Total	10,200	25,280

Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census of Population



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Operational Funding for Licensed Child Care

- ▶ Wellington General Operating Grant (WGOG)
- ▶ Wage Enhancement Grant (WEG)/ Home Child Care Enhancement Grant (HCCEG)
- ▶ Minor capital and repairs:
 - ▶ Play-based Materials and Equipment
 - ▶ Repairs and Maintenance
- ▶ Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care System

Licensed Child Care in Wellington

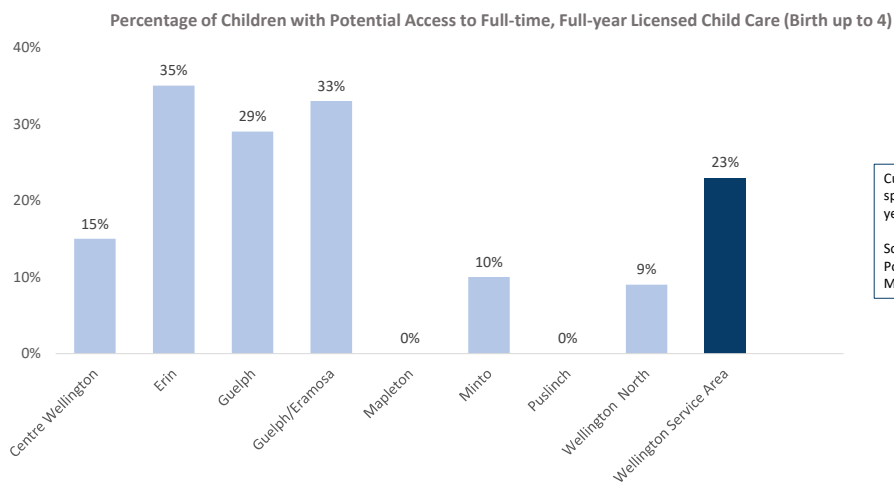
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Access to Full-time, Full-year Licensed Child Care (Birth up to 4)



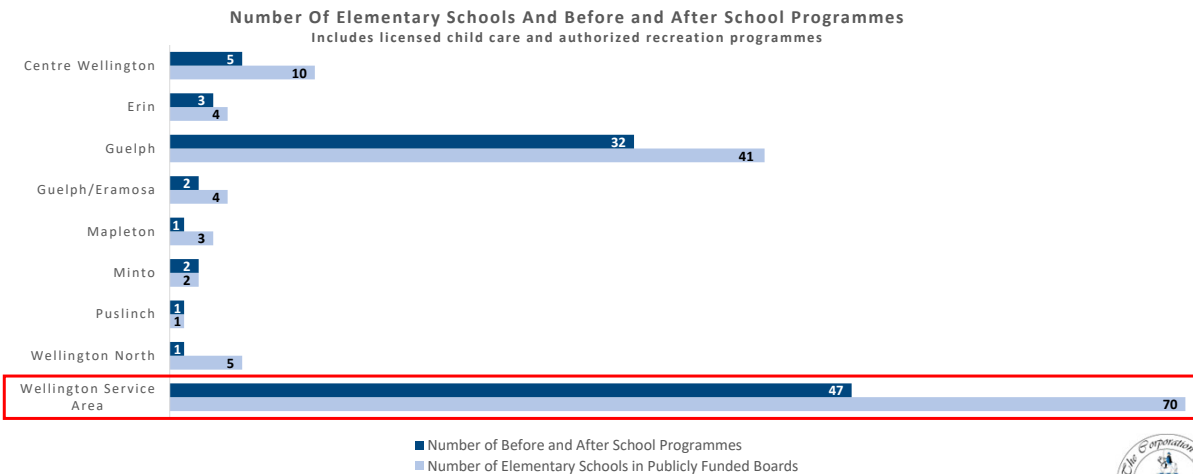
Current *full-time, full-year* licensed child care space availability for children birth up to 4 years by municipality.

Source: Statistics Canada. 2021 Census of Population and Child Care Licensing System March 2023.



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Child Care Coverage: Before and After School Programmes



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Special Needs Resourcing: Supporting Inclusion

- ▶ Supports the inclusion of children with special needs in licensed child care and early years settings at no additional costs to families, following the principles of:
 - ▶ Inclusion
 - ▶ Capacity Building
 - ▶ Integrated Supports
 - ▶ Foundational Conditions of *How Does Learning Happen?*

ENHANCED
SUPPORT
SYSTEM



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Capacity Building: Supporting the Provision of High Quality Programmes

- Builds upon the foundation of thinking and coping skills that support resilience developed through Reaching In... Reaching Out training programmes
- Grows the capacity of licensed child care providers, staff, and non-profit volunteer board members through on-site coaching, mentoring, resources and planned synchronous and asynchronous professional learning



**Early Years
Professional
Resource Centre**

Children's Early Years Division County of Wellington



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Directly Operated Programmes

Mount Forest Child Care and Learning Centre



Wellington Place Child Care and Learning Centre



Palmerston Child Care and Learning Centre



Willowdale Child Care & Learning Centre



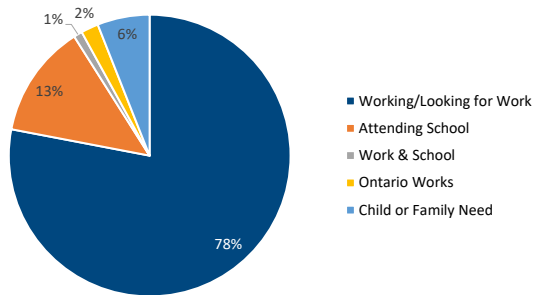
8

Child Care Fee Subsidy: Supporting Affordability for Families

**Children Served by
Child Care Fee Subsidy (2022)**

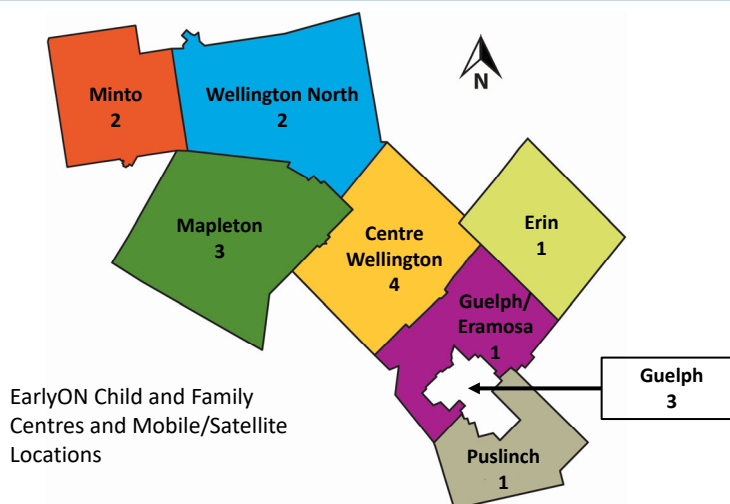
Age Group	# of Children
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School Age	115
Total	445

Applicant Reason For Service (2022)



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EarlyON Child and Family Centres



10

System Planning and Service Delivery Partners



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Future Directions

- ▶ Continued implementation of the CWELCC System with increasing fee reductions for families
- ▶ CWELCC directed growth expansion of child care and associated capital funding
- ▶ New child care funding formula and transition to a cost recovery model for child care providers enrolled in the CWELCC System



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