

***Building Our Community from the Kids
Up***
**Child Care and Early Years 10 Year Plan
2022 to 2032**

2026 Status Report / Update

Accessibility

All children have the right to fully participate in a quality licensed early learning and care child program. Unfortunately, not all children have access for a variety of reasons including cost, availability, cultural barriers and/or special needs. As the CMSM for child care and early learning, City of Brantford strives to ensure that:

- Families know about available programs and how to access them.
- Families have access to child care and early years' programs that meet their specific needs.
- Families can make informed decisions about early years and child care programs to meet their specific needs.
- The Child Care and Early Years system is responsive to increased demands and the evolving needs of families.

Key Action Update

- 1.1 Provide the opportunity for all licensed child care providers, including those without a Purpose of Service (POS) agreement with the City, to be included in the OneList waitlist management system without cost to the child care operator by 2024.
 - Achieved and ongoing.
 - 100% of local licensed child cares, including both CWELCC-enrolled and non CWELCC-enrolled child cares, use OneList.
- 1.2 Licensed child cares using OneList will continue to offer child care spaces on first-come first-served basis.
 - Amended policy.
 - Fee Subsidy Prioritization Policy implemented in 2025 requiring all CWELCC-enrolled child cares required to, through attrition, prioritize access for low-income families by reserving 20% of spaces for children receiving fee subsidy. This approach supports equity and inclusion by ensuring families with limited financial resources have dedicated spaces in the child care system.
- 1.3 In partnership with municipal recreation, provide seamless access to Child Care Fee Subsidy and City of Brantford and County of Brant summer camps.
 - In progress.
 - Working with City of Brantford Parks and Recreation to identify pain points for fee subsidy families in the fee subsidy / summer camp registration process and determine potential process adjustments.
- 1.4 Support growth of the licensed child care system to meet the growing population with licensed child care spaces for 1 in 5 children through 2032.

- Amended target.
 - Support the Ministry funded growth of CWELCC full day child care spaces by creating 1,026 new spaces by 2026, resulting in 37% of children aged 0-4 having access to a licensed child care space (1 in 3 children).
 - Growth will be in accordance with Ministry direction regarding percentage of profit-based spaces and in accordance with population in the City and the County. In 2025, 168 new CWELCC-funded spaces were created.

1.5 Support school board partners in their applications for capital funding to build child cares at existing schools and all new school builds, with the expectation of 200+ new school-based child care spaces by 2025.

- In progress.
 - In 2025, the expanded child care centre at Banbury Height Elementary School opened, offering 49 new full day care spaces.
 - Construction continued at Blanche E. Williams Public School (projected opening date of November 2026; 64 new child care spaces).
 - Construction continued at St Marguerite Bourgeoys Catholic Elementary School (projected opening date of September 2026; 24 new child care spaces).
 - Construction began at Cobblestone Elementary School (projected opening date of November 2026; 64 new child care spaces).
 - Construction began at St Padre Pio Catholic Secondary School (projected opening date of September 2027; 128 new child care spaces).
 - In January 2025, the Ministry of Education announced funding for three new elementary schools in Brantford-Brant—two in Paris and one in West Brant. Each school will include a child care centre, collectively adding 162 new child care spaces by 2029.

1.7 Leverage opportunities for capital funding through all levels of government to support the creation of additional child care spaces.

- Achieved and ongoing.
 - Between 2023 to 2025, \$5.8 million dollars in Start-Up Grant Funding was allocated to support the creation of new spaces approved through the RFP process.
 - In March 2025 the Ministry of Education announced a new funding stream called the ELCC Infrastructure Fund. This funding will complement the existing Start-Up Grant Funding by providing an additional \$2.1 million in financial support for the creation of new spaces in 2025 and 2026. This funding stream is available to non-profit operators only.

- 1.9 Support increased number of licensed home child care providers by 18% by 2027.
- Achieved.
 - From January 2022 to December 2025, the number of licensed home child care providers increased by 42% (19 providers).
- 1.10 Prioritize and incentivize growth to child care spaces in (a) the 5 identified high growth population areas (b) in under serviced locations (c) offering non-traditional hours such as evenings or weekends (d) for age groups in most need (e) meeting other demand (i.e. French language or indigenous) by 2027.
- In progress.
 - 1,026 new community and school-based CWELCC child care spaces in the City and County have been approved.
 - Growth is prioritized in areas with the lowest child care access rates.
 - Use the Access and Inclusion Framework as a guide to prioritize further space expansion. Future RFPs will continue to focus on equitable access to child care for children of low-income families, vulnerable children, children from diverse communities, children with special needs and Francophone and Indigenous children. Also focusing on access to flexible child care to support those who work non-traditional hours and in non-traditional locations, such as shift workers.
- 1.13 County of Brant to source space for a dedicated Paris EarlyON location.
- In progress.
 - In discussions with the County of Brant to establish a dedicated full-time EarlyON site in the new Brant Sports Complex and/or new Paris Public Library.
- 1.16 NEW - Ensure that children with special needs have equitable access to EarlyON programs that are inclusive, supportive, and responsive to their individual needs.
- Achieved.
 - Accessible EarlyON program continues to be offered. This The EarlyON program offers a welcoming space for children aged 0–6 with special needs and their families. This accessible program features sensory-friendly environments and activities tailored to developmental goals. Additionally, participants can connect with guest speakers who share expert insights and practical resources.

Affordability

Attending a high-quality licensed child care program comes at a significant financial cost to families. The City of Brantford administers funding to local licensed child care operators to help offset the costs of operating a child care site and reduce daily fees. Financial assistance through the Child Care Fee Subsidy program is available to eligible families to cover part or all of the cost of attending child care.

Key Action Update

- 2.1 Continue to provide timely Child Care Fee Subsidy for eligible families.
 - Achieved.
 - Continued implementation of the revised Fee Subsidy Intake Process which has streamlined application timelines for families.
 - New Fee Subsidy Prioritization Policy implemented. Through natural attrition, this policy has successfully increased the proportion of spaces occupied by children receiving subsidies from 16.8% to 19.4%.

- 2.2 Leverage funding from all levels of government to keep fees affordable.
 - Achieved and ongoing.
 - As of January 1, child care fees are capped at \$22 per day, meaning families will pay no more than this amount for licensed child care for children aged 0 to 5.
 - Locally, the average cost of full day child care for children aged 0 to 4 decreased from \$12,168 per year in March 2022 to \$5,412 per year in January 2025. See Figure 3 for further information.

Average Cost of Full Day Child Care for Children Aged 0 to 4	Daily	Annual
Pre-CWELCC – No Rate Reduction (March 2022)	\$46.62	\$12,168
CWELCC \$22 cap (Current)	\$20.74	\$5,412
Average of \$10 per (TBD)	\$10.00	\$2,610

Table 1: Average Cost of Full Day Child Care for Children Aged 0 to 4

Average Cost of Before and After School program for 4 and 5 year olds	Daily	Annual
Pre-CWELCC – No Rate Reduction (March 2022)	\$19.00	\$3,686
CWELCC \$22 cap (Current)	\$12.00	\$2,328
Average of \$10 per (TBD)	\$10.00	\$1,940

Table 2: Average Cost of Before and After School program for 4 and 5 year olds

Inclusivity

Children with social or special needs must be welcome and included in child care and early learning programs. Inclusion supports healthy child development and positive self-esteem, facilitates the development of positive social skills, and supports the families of children with special needs. Research shows that all children benefit from inclusive child care, as it promotes respect and celebration of diversity.

Key Action Update

- 3.2 Make access to funded special needs resources available to all licensed child care, including those without a purchase of service agreement with the City of Brantford by 2025. This initiative will continue as funding allows.
 - Achieved and ongoing.
 - All (100%) of licensed child cares in Brantford-Brant, including both CWELCC and non-CWELCC participating licensees have access to special needs resources through Lansdowne Children's Centre.
 - In 2025 all full day licensed child cares received a one-time supply of high-demand Universal Design for Learning equipment at no cost to the child care. This equipment supports universal design principles and provides child cares with immediate access to resources that may otherwise need to be borrowed.
- 3.3 Provide the opportunity to licensed child care to embed indigenous culture and teachings in programming, supported by indigenous cultural facilitators.
 - Achieved and ongoing.
 - Indigenous Cultural Facilitators continue to provide enriching cultural programming and support to all licensed childcare centres.
 - Continued implementation of the Fun in the Sun program which offers Indigenous-led summer activities at Harmony Square, where families explore culture and language through interactive storytelling, crafts, and play.
- 3.5 Support the expansion of French language child care, increasing by 50 % by 2024.
 - In progress.
 - Construction underway for the French language child care expansion at St Marguerite Bourgeoys Catholic Elementary School (projected opening date of September 2026; 24 new child care spaces).
- 3.7 Further embed Indigenous programming into EarlyON programming at all sites.

- Achieved and ongoing.
 - Indigenous Cultural Facilitators continue to provide enriching cultural programming and support to EarlyON sites across the City and County.

3.10 Develop an assessment and evaluation framework to measure inclusivity.

- Achieved and ongoing.
 - Inclusion and Access Pathway for Early Learning and Child Care developed in 2023 and rolled out in 2024.
 - Pathway provides child care and EarlyON staff with comprehensive knowledge, skills and practical tools to enhance equity and inclusion in learning environments including a self-assessment tool for ongoing reflection and goal setting.

Quality

A strong child care and early years' system is comprised of high-quality programs that provide environments and experiences allowing children to safely explore and learn through play and inquiry. Educators are trained professionals who have experience in early child development and participate in ongoing professional development. High quality programs use materials and teaching styles that are age-appropriate, evidence-based and respectful of children's cultural background. Moreover, high-quality programs continuously look for ways to improve through quality improvement and capacity building initiatives.

Key Action Update

- 4.1 Make access to funded professional learning and communities of practice available to all licensed child care, including those without a purchase of service agreement with the City of Brantford by 2023.
 - Achieved and ongoing
 - The City of Brantford continues to support all licensed child cares, regardless of participation in CWELCC with free access to Capacity building opportunities and support.
 - In 2025 all licensed child cares had the opportunities to participate in a paid 1-day professional learning opportunity offered by the Early Childhood Community Development Centre focusing on the How Does Learning Pedagogy and Inquiry-based learning. Closure costs were provided to child cares to support the full participation of their staff group.
- 4.2 Support the Best Start Network (BSN) focused efforts on the recruitment and retention of Registered Early Childhood Educators (RECEs).
 - Ongoing
 - Children's Services Data and Program Analyst participates in the Best Start Network's Retention and Recruitment Taskforce and supports their efforts by sharing local and provincial workforce data, analyzing local trends and facilitating regular Staff Engagement Surveys.
 - Best Start Network Parent Fair to engage young families and share information about community programs and resources through interactive activities.
- 4.3 Create mentorship opportunities for local ECE students and graduates.
 - Achieved and ongoing.
 - Delivery of presentations to high school students to create awareness of potential careers in ECE.

- Received Ministry of Education approval to utilize Innovation Funding to provide financial support to childcare operators for student placements to offset the costs of expert mentorship, specialized materials, and high-quality student training.
- 4.4 Continue to provide support to collaborative early learning workshops with the local Boards of Education, the Haldimand Norfolk CMSM and capacity building agencies in Brantford and the Counties of Brant, Haldimand and Norfolk.
 - Achieved and ongoing.
 - Workshops for ongoing professional development.
 - Distribution of Early Learning supports.
- 4.9 Align grant funding to support all licensed child care operators with access to the OneList wait list, Special Needs Resource supports, capacity building opportunities and base funding for the increasing number of licensed home child care providers.
 - Achieved and ongoing.
 - All licensed child care operators have the opportunity to participate in OneList waitlist, receive Special Needs Resource support, and participate in capacity building opportunities.
 - Amended.
 - Base funding for licensed home child care embedded into Cost-based Funding Formula.
- 4.10 Leverage local expertise and existing community mental health resources to support children, families and the workforce.
 - Achieved.
 - Staff from Lansdowne Children's Centre and Child and Family Services of Grand Erie EarlyON continue providing Circle of Security program, focusing on attachment and relationships to parents and child care staff.
 - Continued promotion of the Messiness of Parenting Podcast. A podcast that shares honest stories, practical tips, and real-life experiences to support parents and caregivers through the joys and challenges of parenting, creating a welcoming space where every parent can feel understood, encouraged, and reminded they are not alone.
- 4.11 NEW - Marketing and Promotion of ECE as a Career Option.
 - In progress.
 - Received Ministry of Education approval to use Innovation Funding envelope to raise awareness of careers in Early Childhood Education, highlighting the value, impact, and opportunities within the ECE profession in an effort to attract new talent to the sector.

4.12 NEW - Partner with local colleges to fund targeted micro-credential programs for child care staff.

➤ In progress.

- Received Ministry of Education approval to use Innovation Fund to develop offset costs of micro-credential opportunities for aspiring and current supervisors, ensuring high-quality professional development is accessible to the childcare workforce.

Accountability

Early years and child care system management must be future-oriented, responsive and accountable. The CMSM is financially responsible in the distribution of funding to local operators.

Key Action Update

- 5.2 Grow funded child care spaces through support of school-built child cares and through a competitive process open to both current and potential operators, prioritizing those applicants whose proposals meet community needs such as:
- 5 identified high growth population areas.
 - In under serviced locations.
 - Offering non-traditional hours such as evenings or weekends.
 - For age groups in most need.
 - Meeting other demand (i.e. French language or Indigenous).
 - Achieved and ongoing.
 - Competitive RFP processes for new CWELCC child care spaces were conducted in fall 2023, spring 2024 and spring 2025. Combined these will result in the addition of 828 new CWELCC-funded community-based child care spaces for children aged 0 to 5.
 - The RFPs were open to both new and existing operators, as well as for-profit and non-profit operators in adherence to ministry required auspice ratios.
 - RFPs prioritized growth in areas with the lowest child care access rates.
 - Participation in City of Brantford's comprehensive by-law review to ensure clear and updated terms and provisions, in line with current legislation.
- 5.3 Update general operating fund practices by 2023 to ensure:
- The funding calculation is equitably applied to all eligible child care operators.
 - The funding calculation is transparent and easy to understand.
 - Funding is pro-rated for sites operating at capacity lower than a pre-determined threshold.
 - The funding calculation includes all age groups.
 - Funding is pro-rated dependent upon hours and days of operation.
 - Amended and Achieved.
 - New CWELCC Child Care Funding Formula released by the Ministry of Education in August 2024 and implemented for January 1, 2025.

- The Cost-Based Funding Formula uses benchmarks based on data metrics to represent the typical costs of child care, ensuring that the funding model is both straightforward and reflective of actual expenses.
- The funding approach aims to be transparent, consistent across CMSMs and DSSABs, and clear for licensees; representative of the true costs of delivering child care in Ontario; simple to understand with minimal administrative burden; and accountable through cost controls and safeguards to ensure fair and responsible use of public funds.
- Locally, developed and shared clear procedures and instructions, along with a transparent funding calculation and reconciliation process, to ensure a clear understanding of CWELCC and City requirements among child care operators.

5.5 Look for opportunities to target, leverage, and work with other municipal services in the City of Brantford and the County of Brant (i.e. municipal recreation departments, libraries, etc.)

- In progress and ongoing.
 - Establishing communication channels with key City departments and staff that play a role in planning and building approvals for new child care sites to ensure the timely development of new child care centres approved under the CWELCC Directed Growth plan.
 - Continued discussions with the County of Brant to establish a dedicated full-time EarlyON site in the new Brant Sports Complex and/or new Paris Public Library.
 - Continued regular EarlyON programming at TB Costain SC Johnston Community Centre, TF Warren Cainsville Community Centre, Burford Community Centre, Scotland Community Centre and Wayne Gretzky Sports Centre.

5.7 Maximize EarlyON resources through the use of consistent hours and locations.

- Achieved and ongoing.
 - All EarlyON providers required to annually submit a Service Plan outlining regular program hours at each EarlyON site.
 - EarlyON providers collectively contribute to an online calendar, providing parents / caregivers with a centralized location for viewing upcoming EarlyON programs.

5.8 Provide all Fee Subsidy services online or by telephone.

- Achieved and ongoing.
 - Continued implementation of the revised Fee Subsidy Intake Process which has streamlined application timelines.

- 5.9 Amend service agreements to allow for an attestation regarding required policies, decreasing submission requirements in 2022.
- Achieved and ongoing.
 - Service agreement requirements were updated to remove the need for annual document submissions. Operators must keep required documents on file and provide them upon request, reducing administrative burden and streamlining the renewal process while maintaining accountability.
- 5.11 Investigate the feasibility of multi-year service agreement with an annual budget schedule by 2024.
- On hold.
 - To ensure flexibility during the ongoing implementation of the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC) system, we are maintaining annual service agreements to accommodate evolving province-wide requirements and the transition to a new integrated data system.
- 5.12 Participate in the consultative process and support the development of the announced new Ministry of Education data system, aligning / replacing current data systems. Projected launch date 2027/2028.
- Achieved and ongoing.
 - Continued participation in consultation opportunities provided by the Ministry of Education to identify pain points within current data systems and provide recommendations for the new IT system.
 - Participating in IT Modernization Service System Manager Advisory Committee (SSMAC) to help shape and pilot test new child care and early years data system.
- 5.14 Conduct annual Compliance Audits with a sample of CWELCC-participating child care licensees, auditing each operator at least every four years. The purpose of the Compliance Audits are to:
- Support child care licensees with adherence to new requirements under the CWELCC Guidelines; and
 - Ensure accountability for public funding by verifying that funding has been used for its intended purpose, and the goals of the CWELCC system are being upheld.
- Achieved and ongoing.
 - Beginning in 2023, staff conducted Compliance Audits on 4-5 child care operators each year.
 - In 2025 Compliance Audits were expanded to include audit of OneList first-come, first-serve policy and new 20% fee subsidy requirement.

- 5.15 Conduct Cost Reviews on CWELCC-funded centres / agencies with the most disproportionately high top-up allocations. The goal of cost-reviews is to gradually shift the overall cost of providing child care more standardized costs, as represented by Ministry developed benchmark allocations.
- Achieved and ongoing.
 - Cost review process developed and implemented with the highest top-up allocations. Opportunities for cost savings identified and implemented where feasible.
- 5.16 Annually select a 5% sample of CWELCC-funded centres / agencies to undergo a Direct Engagement Report to verify that reported base fee revenue and cost are eligible, compliant with guidelines and that a reasonable methodology is used to pro-rate costs between eligible and non-eligible age group where applicable.
- In progress.
 - Secured local auditing firm to conduct Direct Engagement Reports in 2026 based on 2025 year-end reporting.
- 5.17 Collection and monitoring of operating capacity and vacancy data reported by child care operators to ensure that funding calculations are in alignment with actual service levels and spaces are filled where staff are available and there is a demand for services.
- Achieved and ongoing.
 - Staff collect and analyze operating capacity and vacancy data on a monthly basis. Child care operators with long-term vacancies are required to explain the rationale for vacancies and develop action plans to mitigate such vacancies where applicable.
 - If long-term vacancies remain unmitigated, the City may provide funding based on actual enrollment as opposed to operating capacity. This measure ensures accountability for public funds.