

**LANARK
COUNTY**



**SOCIAL
SERVICES**



**Lanark County Children's Services
Directed Growth Plan
2023-2026**

Updated May 2026

Table of Contents

- Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC)..... 2**
- Lanark County’s Role in the CWELCC System..... 2**
- CWELCC Implementation in Lanark County..... 3**
- Ontario’s Access and Inclusion Plan..... 3**
- Original Directed Growth Plan 4**
- Updated Directed Growth Plan 9**
- Start-up Grants..... 10**
- Canada-Ontario Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC)**
- Infrastructure Fund..... 10**
- Next Steps 12**
- Lanark County CWELCC-Enrolled Service Providers 12**

Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC)

Recognizing the vital role of child care in fostering early learning, supporting working families, and driving economic growth, the Government of Canada has made child care a national priority. As part of the 2021 federal budget, Canada pledged to collaborate with provinces, territories, and Indigenous partners to develop a comprehensive, Canada-wide child care system.

On March 28, 2022, Ontario joined this national effort by signing the Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement (CWELCC) with the federal government.

Over the next six years, the CWELCC program aims to transform child care across Ontario through four key objectives:

1. Making Child Care More Affordable

- Families with children aged 0–5 will benefit from a phased reduction in fees:
 - 25% base fee reduction retroactive to April 1, 2022
 - 50% average fee reduction by the end of 2022 (based on 2020 levels)
 - Targeting an average of \$10 per day by 2025–26 for licensed child care spaces

2. Expanding Access to Quality Care

- Creation of 86,000 new licensed child care spaces for children aged 0–5, with a strong focus on not-for-profit providers.

3. Promoting Inclusive Child Care

- Removing barriers to ensure all children and families can access welcoming, equitable care environments.

4. Strengthening the Early Childhood Workforce

- Investing in professional development, training, and support for early childhood educators to enhance quality and retention.

Lanark County's Role in the CWELCC System

As the Consolidated Municipal Service Manager (CMSM), Lanark County (the County) plays a central role in delivering high-quality child care and early years programming under the CWELCC initiative. This includes oversight of licensed child care services and EarlyON Child and Family Centres.

Within the CWELCC framework, the County is responsible for:

➤ Implementing Provincial Guidelines

- Ensuring all child care services align with Ontario's standards and directives.

➤ Establishing Local Policies and Funding Models

- Designing procedures and funding approaches tailored to community needs.

- **Managing the CWELCC Application and Approval Process**
 - Creating and administering a transparent system for child care providers to join the CWELCC system.
- **Contracting Through Service Agreements**
 - Formalizing funding arrangements with licensed child care providers.
- **Providing Fiscal Oversight**
 - Monitoring budgets and ensuring responsible allocation of CWELCC funding.
- **Reporting and Accountability**
 - Communicating progress and outcomes to the Ministry of Education and Lanark County Council.

CWELCC Implementation in Lanark County

In 2022, the County began implementing the CWELCC system. Once the application process, policies, and procedures were established, licensed child care centres and licensed home child care agencies were invited to apply for participation. While joining the CWELCC system was voluntary, the majority of providers chose to opt in. The County successfully onboarded 12 out of 15 licensed providers into the CWELCC program. The few providers that did not participate were primarily specialized programs with unique service models.

Ontario's Access and Inclusion Plan

Ontario's Access and Inclusion Framework, developed under the CWELCC system, provides strategic guidance to Service System Managers (SSMs) to improve access to child care and promote inclusive practices across the province. The framework emphasizes the importance of equitable access for all families, particularly those in underserved communities, and aims to ensure that children of all abilities and backgrounds can participate meaningfully in early learning environments.

Vision: Ontario's vision for the CWELCC system is that more families in Ontario have access to high-quality, affordable, flexible, and inclusive early learning and child care no matter where they live.

Goal: Under the CWELCC Agreement, Ontario will support the creation of 86,000 new CWELCC licensed child care spaces by the end of 2026, including more than 4,900 CWELCC net new licensed 0-5 child care spaces created since April 2019.

Ontario will focus on creating affordable child care spaces in communities with populations that need them most. This directed growth approach will support space creation in underserved service areas of the province, focusing on parts of the province that have had historically low rates of space availability.

Method: The Ministry of Education will continue to work with the SSMs to develop Directed Growth Plans that support child care access for low-income children, vulnerable children, children from diverse communities, children with special needs, Francophone, and Indigenous children. In addition to collaborating with SSMs, the ministry will continue to engage with child care and early years sector partners, as well as the federal government, to strengthen the ministry's approach to access and inclusion.

Original Directed Growth Plan

In 2023, the County developed its Directed Growth Plan in partnership with the Ministry of Education. As part of this initiative, the County received a CWELCC space target of 170 new community-based child care spaces over a five-year period (2022-2026).

The ministry required the County to identify priority neighbourhoods for the new spaces using the CWELCC framework, focusing on children aged 0-5 and considering the following provincially defined socio-economic indicators:

- Low-income families
- Vulnerable communities
- Diverse communities
- Children with special needs
- Francophone families
- Indigenous families
- Families needing more flexible models of care, including evening, weekend and overnight care

Priority neighbourhoods for growth were identified through a comprehensive analysis of multiple data sources, including existing child care capacity, demographic trends, special needs resourcing, localized child care insights, and EarlyON program data. Availability of physical space was also a key consideration, as expansion funding did not originally support new construction. As a result, growth focused on increasing spaces within existing centre-based child care programs and licensed home child care settings.

To determine areas of greatest need, the following sources were reviewed staff reviewed and synthesized data from the following sources:

- 2021 Census Data:
 - Children aged 0-5
 - Lone-parent families
 - Income and government transfers (e.g., low income, shelter costs)
 - Official language spoken
- Lanark County Children's Services Plan
- Municipal Tools to Support Affordable Housing
- Ontario Works (OW) and Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP):

- % of families accessing social assistance
- # of children aged 0-5 as benefit members for social assistance
- Learning, Earning and Parenting (LEAP) Program:
 - Number of families with children aged 0-5
- Community Support Services:
 - Families with children aged 0-5 accessing services
- EarlyON Program Data:
 - Demand from Francophone families
 - Low-income households
 - Newcomer and racialized families
 - Children with special needs
- Special Needs Resource Reporting:
 - Data from ConnectWell
- Licensed Home Child Care Data:
 - Local insights from CROW and Natural Connections

To identify priority neighbourhoods for growth, the County analyzed the current licensed capacity for the CWELCC-enrolled providers in Lanark County. Table 1 presents the number of licensed child care spaces by neighbourhood available through the CWELCC-enrolled providers in 2022.

Table 1: Licensed Spaces in 2022 for CWELCC Providers			
Neighbourhood	CWELCC Ages (0-5)	Non-CWELCC Ages (6-12)	Total Spaces
Beckwith	68	30	98
Carleton Place	397	195	592
Mississippi Mills	319	210	529
Perth	286	180	466
Smiths Falls	229	120	349
Home Child Care*	229	0	229
Total	1528	735	2263

*Home child care spaces were not distinguished by neighbourhood.

The County identified six priority neighbourhoods for child care expansion, based on socio-economic indicators and alignment with communities targeted for growth. This approach supports the goal of creating 170 new community-based CWELCC child care spaces. Table 2 outlines the outcomes of the 2023 Directed Growth Plan.

Table 2: Original Child Care Access and Inclusion Expansion Plan (2023)

Priority Neighbourhood	Identified Communities for New Spaces	# of spaces	Rationale
#1- Smiths Falls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Low-Income families <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Children with disabilities and children needing enhanced or individual supports 	35	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4th highest community with population of ages between 0-9 • 2nd highest community for lone-parent families • Highest number of families receiving OW, with lowest income level per household • 2nd highest to spend more than 30% on shelter cost • Highest population to have parents accessing community support services • Largest population to access special needs services • Highest for accessing Learning, Earning and Parenting (LEAP) • EarlyON reports highest for low-income families and special needs accessing their services and visible minorities
# 2- Carleton Place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Low-Income families <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Children with disabilities and children needing enhanced or individual supports <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Francophone 	40	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Largest population of lone-parent families • 46% of renters are spending more than 30% on income on shelter • 2nd highest population for accessing special needs services • 2nd most populated municipality in Lanark County • 2nd highest for family access to Ontario Works • 2nd highest new immigrant population • Highest population of French only, with the only French school and child care in Lanark County. • Highest Francophone population accessing EarlyON services and most diverse population accessing EarlyON

# 3- Lanark Highlands	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Low-Income families <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Children with disabilities and children needing enhanced or individual supports	8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3rd highest for lowest income • 3rd highest for government transfers and tied with Smiths Falls for highest employment insurance income • No licensed home child care and no centre-based programs
# 4- Mississippi Mills	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Children with disabilities and children needing enhanced or individual supports <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> New Immigrants	43	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3rd largest lone parent families • 3rd highest spending more than 30% on income and shelter • Highest new immigrant population • Most populated and seeing a significant growth in population • Only two licensed home child care to serve the municipality • 3rd highest in accessing special needs • EarlyON- one of the highest demand areas for offering services to racialized children and children with disabilities and enhances support
# 5- Perth	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Low-Income families <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Children with disabilities and children needing enhanced or individual supports	24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3rd highest Ontario Works • 2nd highest Learning, Earning and Parenting (LEAP) • 4th highest special needs resourcing
#6- Beckwith	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> New Immigrants	20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3rd highest population of new immigrants
Total- 6 priority neighbourhoods		Spaces (Total 170)	
1. Smiths Falls		35	
2. Carleton Place		40	
3. Lanark Highlands		8	
4. Mississippi Mills		43	
5. Perth		24	
6. Beckwith		20	

Due to ongoing challenges in the child care sector, including a shortage of Registered Early Childhood Educators and rising operational costs, many providers were unable to consider expansion. Additionally, one CWELCC-enrolled provider was discontinued from the program, resulting in additional CWELCC spaces to be allocated from underused capacity. In response, the County issued an Expression of Interest (EOI) to identify potential opportunities for child care growth from 2024 to 2026. The EOI closed on June 30, 2024, and five submissions were received. Of these, three applications were deemed unsuccessful for various reasons. The remaining two met all required criteria, prompting a revision of the County’s Directed Growth Plan to more accurately reflect the feasible expansion efforts.

Table 3 provides an overview of the originally approved space allocations, completed expansions, anticipated future growth, and additional spaces created by optimizing underused capacity.

Table 3: CWELCC Child Care Expansion Plan Targets				
Municipality	Original Space Allocation (2023)	Revised Space Allocation (2024)		
		Completed Expansion	Future Expansion	New Spaces from Under Capacity
Beckwith	20	4 (all HCC)	16	
Carleton Place	40	18 (all HCC)		45 (19 HCC)
Drummond North Elmsley	0			12 (all HCC)
Lanark Highlands	8			
Mississippi Mills	43	6 (all HCC)	75	5
Perth	24		24	6 (all HCC)
Smiths Falls	35	27 (all HCC)		
*Home Child Care (HCC)				

With new funding changes outlined in the 2025 CWELCC guidelines, providers that had previously opted not to enroll in the CWELCC program were provided with a final opportunity to apply to ensure that they continued to receive routine funding from the County. This resulted in the onboarding of two new providers into the CWELCC program. With these new providers and the official approval for expansion with the Municipality of Mississippi Mills, the County’s CWELCC child care expansion plan targets were further revised.

Table 4 below outlines the Directed Growth Plan that was updated in January 2025, with the remaining 78 spaces being allocated to the Municipality of Mississippi Mills for their approved child care expansion project. With this project, the County will successfully meet its CWELCC space creation target of 170 new community-based spaces by 2026.

Table 4: CWELCC Expansion Spaces from 2023 to 2026

Municipality	2023	2024	2025	2026	Total
Beckwith	4*				4
Carleton Place	6*	21*			27
Drummond North Elmsley			5*		5
Mississippi Mills	6*	6		78	90
Montague		6*			6
Perth		23			23
Smiths Falls	11*	4*			15
Total	27	60	5	78	170

* Home Child Care spaces.

Updated Directed Growth Plan

In December 2025, SSMs provided the Ministry with updated information on projected space creation plans and commitments to inform the CWELCC space growth assessment. The County identified ongoing pressures for CWELCC space expansion as a result of space target constraints. In response, the Ministry performed a CWELCC space recalibration exercise in March 2026, and the County's total CWELCC space allocation was increased from 1,624 to 1,730 spaces to be created by December 31, 2026. With these additional spaces, the County issued an EOI to current licensed child care providers in Lanark County that were seeking to expand or enroll in CWELCC. As auspice ratio targets remained unchanged, the County prioritized applications from not-for-profit child care providers. Based on the EOI results, Lanark County's Directed Growth Plan was further updated.

Table 5 below summarizes the updated Directed Growth Plan, including the proposed allocation of CWELCC spaces by municipality to support achievement of the County's total target of 1,730 spaces. Both centre-based and home child care spaces are included in the overall CWELCC space count. Home child care spaces by municipality may fluctuate if home premises close or if the home child care agency onboards new homes in different municipalities. As a result, municipal-level projections may shift over time; however, the overall CWELCC space count will remain unchanged.

Table 5: CWELCC Space Allocation by December 31, 2026

Municipality	# of CWELCC Spaces
Beckwith	74
Carleton Place	624
Drummond North Elmsley	22
Mississippi Mills	486
Montague	25
Perth	211
Smiths Falls	282
Tay Valley	6
Total	1730

Start-up Grants

The Start-up Grant is to support the creation of new child care spaces for infant, toddler and preschool age groups. Start-up Grants must fund projects required for child care facilities to be created, retrofitted, renovated or expanded to accommodate a maximum group size for each age grouping for eligible children.

Eligible center-based applicants can receive a grant of up to \$350,000 for every 20 child care spaces. Eligible home child care licensees can receive grants of up to \$1200 per CWELCC space created, to a maximum of \$7200 per provider.

Eligible expenses under the Start-up Grant for licensed child care centres can include:

- Play materials, equipment, and furnishings (both indoors and outdoors).
- Non-consumable supplies/equipment to support the ongoing regular operation of the child care program (for example, appliances, IT, supplies to support learning environments, etc.)
- Renovations, additions, or repairs to licensed child care facilities or potential child care facilities as approved by the County.
- Leasehold improvements.
- Changes to outdoor play space that are required as a result of the expansion spaces.

Ineligible expenses include:

- Purchase of land or buildings.
- Debt costs.
- Property taxes.
- Expenditures related to the care of children aged 6 to 12.
- Expenditures related to pre-existing child care spaces.
- School-based child care spaces.

Canada-Ontario Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) Infrastructure Fund

The Canada-Ontario ELCC Infrastructure Fund supports infrastructure projects with a goal of increasing inclusion in child care for underserved communities through the creation of new, licensed child care spaces. The ELCC Infrastructure Fund supports not-for-profit licensed child care centres in alignment with Ontario's Access and Inclusion Framework and will complement the Start-up Grant program.

The ELCC Infrastructure Fund is to be used to support the creation of new, licensed child care spaces that meet all the following criteria:

- Provided by a not-for-profit licensee or directly operated by a Service Manager.
- Centre-based and community-based
- Approved for enrollment in CWELCC.

- Aligned with the Service Manager’s Directed Growth Plan.
- Supports children aged 0 to 4 (excluding children eligible to attend junior kindergarten).
- Supportive of inclusion for underserved communities including:
 - Communities in rural and remote regions,
 - Communities in high-cost urban areas,
 - Communities with low-income households,
 - Communities with barriers to access (for example, Black and other racialized communities; Indigenous communities; communities with newcomers; communities with parents, caregivers and children with disabilities; official language minority communities including Francophone children),
 - Communities requiring child care during non-standard hours.

Additionally, the following are not eligible to receive the ELCC Infrastructure Fund:

- Licensed home child care agencies.
- Licensees operating for-profit child care centres.
- Licensees operating school-based child care centres.
- Licensed child care programs for kindergarten and school aged children, and before and after school programs.

To access funding from the ELCC Infrastructure Fund, the licensee must commit to:

- Continue operating in the facility for at least 7 years after opening the new child care spaces.
- Participate in the CWELCC system for at least 7 years after opening the new child care spaces.
- Spend the ELCC Infrastructure Fund funding by December 31, 2026.
- Have a purchase of service agreement with the Service Manager and be eligible to receive fee subsidy payments from the Service Manager.

The ELCC Infrastructure Fund must be used for projects required for child care facilities to be created, retrofitted, renovated or expanded to accommodate a maximum group size for each age grouping for eligible children in accordance with O. Reg. 137/15.

Eligible expenses include:

- Purpose built new construction, renovations, retrofits, and additions to community-based child care facilities. This includes expenses incurred through the planning, design and building stages of these projects.
- Purchase of land or buildings.
- Purchase of play-based materials, equipment, and furnishings (both indoors and outdoors) as outlined in O. Reg. 137/15.
- Purchase of non-consumable supplies/equipment to support the ongoing regular operation of the child care program (for example, appliances, IT equipment, supplies to support learning environments while adhering to health and safety requirements).
- Changes to outdoor play space that are required as a result of the creation of new child care spaces so that the licensee continues to comply with O. Reg. 137/15.
- Leasehold improvements.

Next Steps

With the latest CWELCC space target recalibration exercise, the County remains committed and firmly on track to achieve its CWELCC initiative target of 1,730 spaces by December 31, 2026. This milestone marks a significant step toward enhancing access to affordable, high-quality early learning opportunities for families across the region.

As the County approaches this target, no further CWELCC provider applications will be accepted at this time. Instead, strategic efforts will shift toward reinforcing the operational sustainability of existing CWELCC providers. This includes closely monitoring utilization trends, supporting workforce stability, and ensuring that families continue to benefit from consistent, high-quality care.

To guide this next phase, the County will prioritize the following actions:

- **Ongoing collaboration** with current providers to address staffing challenges, strengthen recruitment and retention of Registered Early Childhood Educators, and improve service delivery models.
- **Regular evaluation** of space utilization and evolving community needs to inform future planning and ensure resources are effectively allocated.
- **Continued alignment** with provincial directives, funding frameworks, and quality standards to maintain program integrity and responsiveness.

Together, these efforts will reinforce the long-term sustainability of the CWELCC system in Lanark County, helping to ensure that child care remains accessible, inclusive, and responsive to the evolving needs of families.

Lanark County CWELCC-Enrolled Service Providers

Beckwith

- Apple Seeds (Calvary Christian Academy)
- Beckwith Child Care Centre

Carleton Place

- Carleton Place Child Care Services
- La Coccinelle- J.L Couroux
- Centre Éducatif Les Petits Trésors

Mississippi Mills

- Almonte Cooperative Nursery School
- Pakenham Community Early Learning Centre

- Mississippi Mills Child Care Services

Perth

- Perth Children's House
- TayCare Children's Centre

Smiths Falls

- Nursery Rhyme Day Care
- Rideau Child Care Centre
- Smiths Falls Child Development Centre

Home Child Care Agency

- Children's Resources on Wheels (CROW)