

MEMORANDUM

TO: Children's Services Managers, Consolidated Municipal Service Managers and District Social Services Administration Boards

FROM: Holly Moran
Assistant Deputy Minister
Early Years and Child Care Division Ministry of Education

DATE: December 19, 2022

SUBJECT: Access and Inclusion Framework and Notional Space Targets

Thank you for your leadership and partnership in implementing the CWELCC system across the province. By November 1, 2022, 92% of child care operators in Ontario have opted in to the CWELCC system, and families with children in these programs are already benefitting from reduced child care costs.

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. Under the CWELCC agreement with the Government of Canada, Ontario has been funded to support the creation of 86,000 new licensed child care spaces (relative to 2019) by December 2026. Since 2019, 33,000 new spaces have become operational, with another 53,000 spaces to be created.

The Ministry of Education is taking the first steps toward allocating funding to create the remaining new CWELCC spaces. A key priority will be to support creating affordable child care spaces in communities with populations who need them most. This directed growth approach will support space creation in regions of the province that have had historically lower rates of space availability.

The ministry will engage with Consolidated Municipal Service Managers and District Social Services Administration Boards (CMSMs and DSSABs) on a plan that supports 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 service system managers, the ministry will engage with various partners from the child care and early years sector, as well as the federal government to strengthen the ministry's approach to access and inclusion.

The ministry has developed an Access and Inclusion Framework for consultation. The purpose of the framework is to support CMSMs and DSSABs with updating local service

system plans with an increased focus on access as it relates to inclusion. A copy of the Access and Inclusion Framework is included as Annex 1 of this memo.

Under the Access and Inclusion Framework, the ministry has developed a model to allocate funding for new spaces for children age 0-5 across CMSMs and DSSABs, with a focus on improving equity of access by working toward a common provincial access ratio of 37%. The allocation model is based on available data and incorporates existing child care capacity, demographics, socio-economic indicators, official language minorities and capacity for growth, and provides the enclosed notional space targets in each CMSM or DSSAB for the period 2022 through 2026. Total space targets include spaces to be created in schools and those in communities. These notional targets are subject to the agreement with service system managers and ongoing monitoring. The notional space targets may be found in Annex 2.

In identifying priority neighbourhoods for space creation and updating service plans, CMSMs and DSSABs are asked to consider the degree to which new affordable child care spaces in those neighbourhoods will support access to licensed child care spaces for:

- 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.

CMSMs and DSSABs have been provided with school-based space creation targets in line with the ministry's capital planning and are asked to work together with school boards on the planning and timing of these spaces, as well as ensuring that licensees occupying purpose-built child care spaces in schools are funded as part of the CWELCC system.

Start-up Grants

Ontario's Action Plan for implementing the CWELCC system includes providing capital start-up grants to support the creation of new spaces in targeted regions, and for underserved communities and populations.

Capital start-up grants can be used to offset the initial costs required to expand or create spaces in these regions, such as equipment and leasehold improvements. The grants are available to support community-based capital projects and exclude capital projects for child care programs that run during school hours for kindergarten and school-aged children. Start-up funding may be used for retrofits, renovations or expansion projects, but cannot be used to purchase land or buildings. The eligible expenses, reporting requirements, and parameters related to the start-up grants can be found in Annex 3.

In keeping with the ministry's commitment to support all licensees regardless of auspice, for-profit and not-profit licensed child care operators who are enrolled in the CWELCC system will be eligible to apply for capital start-up grant funding.

To access capital start-up grant funding, CMSMs/DSSABs will require a commitment from the licensee to:

- participate in the CWELCC system for the remainder of the CWELCC agreement (2026), and
- spend the capital start-up grant funding within two years.

Eligible licensees will be able to receive a grant covering up to \$90 per square foot of a new or expanded space with a cap up to \$350,000 for every 50 child care spaces created.

The ministry will allocate funding for the 2023-24 capital start-up grants to CMSMs and DSSABs proportionally using the CWELCC child care allocation formula for new full day licensed child care spaces for children under six to meet the needs of underserved areas and populations.

CMSMs and DSSABs will distribute the grants to licensed child care operators in accordance with the capital start-up grant funding guidelines and provide the required reporting information back to the ministry. CMSMs and DSSABs can leverage their knowledge to support local planning and development based on the needs of their community.

Next Steps

As a first step, CMSMs and DSSABs are asked to review their notional space expansion targets and identify priority neighbourhoods for CWELCC funding. CMSMs and DSSABs are asked to complete the Reporting Template attached as Annex 4 to confirm their space targets and list the priority neighbourhoods where they propose to locate their child care spaces, both school-based and community-based, and submit it to their Early Years Advisor no later than January 20, 2023.

The ministry will review the Reporting Templates and where necessary, discuss templates with service system managers. The ministry will assess the plans to ensure that provincial commitments in the CWELCC agreement, for access and inclusion, can be met in aggregate. Following this, the ministry will confirm funding allocations for growth.

Following this confirmation, service system managers are asked to incorporate space expansion and inclusion plans into their existing five-year service plans by Spring 2023 to ensure these spaces are created in communities and for populations that need them most.

In recognition of the existing and anticipated induced demand for affordable child care, service system managers are also invited to share information related to additional capacity for growth.

Auspice

As you are aware, the CWELCC agreement requires Ontario to ensure a ratio of not-for-profit and for-profit spaces by the end of the agreement in 2025-26. The ministry is continuing to review the results of the enrolment period and expects to provide additional guidance to CMSMs and DSAABs on this in the near future, to ensure that Ontario's obligations under the agreement are met.

Updated Regulations

To support a transition from open enrolment to directed growth, the ministry has introduced new regulations and changes to the licensing process. New applicants for child care licences, and applications for expansions to existing child care licensees, will be required to seek early confirmation from CMSMs, that their program will be eligible for CWELCC funding, prior to beginning a licensing application or applicants will need to confirm that they do not intend to enrol in CWELCC. CMSMs will be asked to confirm that a new application aligns with their service system plan, and if that confirmation is provided, to reserve CWELCC funded spaces for that applicant.

This change is intended to streamline the licensing process and ensure that applicants, whether they provide home child care or centre-based programs serving children under six have early confirmation related to whether their program will be eligible for CWELCC funding as part of their licensing application.

All prospective licensees will also be required to secure local zoning approval (permitted use) prior to applying for a licence.

Licensees who opted out in 2022 and wish to enrol in 2023 may contact their local service system manager as of January 1, 2023. Local service system managers may consider enrolling these licensees in CWELCC if the program aligns with their service system plan.

Thank you for your ongoing collaboration and partnership as we work to support Ontario families and the child care sector. I look forward to working together to continue to strengthen the early years and child care system throughout Ontario.

Original signed by:

Holly Moran, Assistant Deputy Minister
Early Years and Child Care Division, Ministry of Education

cc: Early Years Advisors, Early Years and Child Care Division, Ministry of Education
School Board Early Years Leads

Attachments:

- Annex 1- Access and Inclusion Framework
- Annex 2 - CWELCC Five Year Space Allocation
- Annex 3- Capital Start-up Grants: Parameters, Eligible and Ineligible Expenses, and Reporting Requirements
- Annex 4- CWELCC Space Reporting Template



Ontario's Access and Inclusion Framework 2022

Draft for Consultation

Canada-wide Early Learning and Child
Care System

December 2022

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Introduction

On March 27, 2022, Ontario reached a \$13.2 billion agreement with the federal government on funding for and the terms of a Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC) system. The new system will lower child care costs and improve access, quality and inclusion across Ontario's child care and early years sector.

Quick Facts

- There are more than 5,500 child care centres, 139 licensed home child care agencies, and around 464,000 licensed spaces in Ontario.
- Ontario's child care system offers a range of options for families with differing needs, including licensed, unlicensed, for-profit, not-for-profit, centre/school-based and home-based child care.
- Since 2018, the Ontario government has invested over \$1.5 billion in capital projects within the education sector, including 4,908 new, licensed child care spaces within schools. In 2021, the Ontario government invested more than \$95 million to create 3,094 more school-based licensed child care spaces for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers.

Child care is foundational to supporting early childhood development, learning, well-being and student success. It is also a key enabler of workforce participation, particularly for women, both as parents and providers. The Ontario government is committed to providing access to high quality, affordable child care to as many families as possible. Currently, children are supported by a system of early learning and child care that is integrated with publicly funded schools to support access and seamless experiences for all Ontario families.

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.

Under the CWELCC Agreement, Ontario will support the creation of approximately 86,000 new licensed child care spaces by December 2026, including more than 33,000 licensed child care spaces created since 2019.

A focus will be given to creating affordable child care spaces in communities with populations who need them most. This targeted growth approach will support space creation in regions of the province that have had historically low rates of space availability.

The Ministry of Education will engage with Consolidated Municipal Service Managers and District Social Services Administration Boards (CMSMs and DSSABs) on a plan that supports 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 service system managers, the ministry will engage with various partners from the child care and early years sector, as well as the federal government to strengthen the ministry's approach to access and inclusion.

Ontario will release the finalized Access and Inclusion Framework in November 2022, which will be used by service system managers to guide the development and implementation of local service management plans.

Purpose of the Access and Inclusion Framework

The purpose of Ontario's Access and Inclusion Framework is to support CMSMs and DSSABs with developing and implementing local service system plans with an increased focus on access as it relates to inclusion. These plans build on existing service plans and will be integrated into the broader provincial Access and Inclusion Framework.

The ministry will work with CMSMs and DSSABs to gather data, assess barriers, and support a plan for increased access to affordable licensed child care, which will include the analysis of underserved geographic regions, as well as an inclusion plan.

By December 2022, CMSMs and DSSABs will be required to confirm space expansion targets and identify priority neighbourhoods for CWELCC funding, and incorporate space expansion and inclusion plans into their existing five-year service plans by spring 2023 to inform the provincial allocation of funding for new affordable child care spaces and to ensure these spaces are created in communities and for populations that need them most.

Simultaneously, throughout the fall and winter, the ministry will update *How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years* and will continue to work with CMSM and DSSAB partners to review updates to the Special Needs Resourcing guideline (and the income test for fee subsidy).

Opportunities and Challenges

The CWELCC system presents opportunities for the ministry and service system managers to plan for and build an affordable child care system that is inclusive and accessible to all.

Opportunities

The ministry's strong relationships with CMSMs and DSSABs and child care partners provides opportunities to:

- collectively assess the data and limitations related to diversity, equity, and inclusion within the child care system;
- gather information about the types of data that CMSMs and DSSABs collect and leverage this information to support future policy/program initiatives; and
- engage with external organizations working with vulnerable and diverse populations to acquire insights into gaps in data collection related to underrepresented communities.

Challenges

To fully implement a comprehensive service plan, the plan must be informed by the appropriate data. The lack of availability of sufficient data poses several challenges, including:

1. demographic and socio-economic data related to children in licensed child care settings is limited;
2. data related to Special Needs Resourcing such as the type of special needs (i.e., cognitive, physical, behavioural, communications) or professional learning supports has not been collected.

Access and Inclusion Principles and Approach

Ontario's Action Plan includes a focus on improved access and inclusion.

Access

Through the CWELCC system, Ontario will improve access to child care by allocating funding to support the creation of 86,000 new, high-quality, affordable child care spaces. This includes more than 33,000 new spaces already created between 2019 and August 2022. These new licensed child care spaces will include a mix of not-for-profit and for-profit settings to provide families with choice and flexibility. Under the agreement, Ontario has committed to maintaining or improving the proportion of not-for-profit licensed child care spaces for children aged 0 to 5 at 70% or higher by 2026.

The province recognizes the critical role CMSMs and DSSABs play in gathering and maintaining in-depth knowledge about their community's needs, planning and managing the system, identifying and addressing service gaps, and supporting service coordination.

Currently, the *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014*, requires service system managers to establish a child care and early years programs and service system plan (service system plan) for their service area that addresses matters of provincial interest under the legislation.

Service system plans include the following key elements:

- environmental scan results that assess current and future child care and early years service gaps and opportunities;
- a description of the community planning processes used to inform the development of the plan and a commitment to consult, at regular or relevant intervals, through the life of the plan;
- strategic priorities and intended outcomes that are responsive to community needs and align with Ontario's vision for child care and early years and provincial interest;
- a measurable and action-oriented implementation plan that describes how strategic priorities and outcomes will be met; and
- accountability methods including the public posting of plans and reporting in accordance with the *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014*. In addition to the key areas identified, service system managers should also identify any other programs, needs, opportunities and/or challenges that may exist in their communities in their service system plan to support the ongoing reporting and planning process.

In order to ensure improved access to licensed child care, service system managers will build on their existing plans to identify areas where targeted expansion of affordable child care spaces is most needed in their communities.

Approximately 53,000 of the 86,000 child care spaces in Ontario's Action Plan remain to be created by 2026.

Planning allocations have been developed for these spaces to support local plans for the expansion of licensed child care spaces aligned with the objectives described below.

Principles for Access

The ministry's approach to the funding allocations that will support access are:

1. Access Equity:

- Provide a similar level of access to 0-5 child care spaces across the province by allocating funding for spaces to CMSMs and DSSABs towards a common proportion of spaces to children over the next five years.

2. Targeted Spaces for Vulnerable Populations:

- Allocate funding for additional spaces based on socio-economic indicators to support child care for vulnerable populations. These spaces are in addition to the access equity allocation.
- Meet or exceed the proportion of French language spaces for ages 0 to 5 proportional to the population of Francophone people in Ontario.

Approach to Access

To ensure that access to affordable child care aligns with the principles above, service system managers will play a role in directing where this growth occurs. The ministry will provide each service system manager with growth targets and allocations for their region and in turn, CMSMs and DSSABs will be required to incorporate these targets in their local service plans. These plans will outline where affordable child care spaces are required in their communities, how new affordable child care spaces will be best supported, which populations are most in need, and will align with ministry target requirements.

Service plans should aim to address questions such as:

- Which geographic areas are facing a lack of access to affordable child care options?
- How will the needs of Black, racialized, Indigenous and Francophone populations be addressed?
- How will the needs of vulnerable groups, including newcomers, low income families and children with special needs be addressed?
- How will child care be targeted to support labour market participation, including through flexible models of child care to support parents who are shift workers?
- How many spaces are needed and where?
- Should these spaces be centre-based or home-based?
- Are additional interventions needed to ensure that new spaces are made available to vulnerable populations?

Allocation Model

The ministry has developed a model to allocate funding for new age 0-5 child care spaces across regions in line with the objectives above. This model incorporates demographics, socio-economic indicators, and existing licensed child care capacity. Since 2019, some 33,000 new CWELCC eligible spaces have become operational, with another 53,000 to be created.

Access Equity

The majority of funding for spaces is allocated to help each region progress towards a target provincial ratio of spaces to children, or access rate, of 37%. This is equivalent to there being one affordable child care space available for every 2.7 children aged 0-5.¹ Working towards this ratio will significantly decrease the disparities in access to child care across the province.

Targeted Spaces for Vulnerable Populations

In addition to the above, funding for a portion of spaces will be allocated to regions based on five socio-economic factors in order to support access to affordable child care for vulnerable populations. These additional spaces are to ensure that regions with high-needs populations have capacity to provide affordable child care for those who need it most. These spaces should not be interpreted to be the number of spaces required to meet the needs of vulnerable populations. Ensuring vulnerable populations have access to affordable child care should be a consideration in planning all new child care spaces allocated to a region.

Socio-economic variables used in the allocation model:

- *Children age 0-5 in lone-parent families*
- *Low Income Measure (with children age 0-5)*
- *Households spending >30% of income on shelter costs*
- *Recent immigrants, 2011-2016*
- *Women age 25-44 not participating in labour force*

Each variable was weighted evenly, and spaces were distributed in proportion to each region's population of each variable.

Funding for growth has also been allocated to ensure equitable access to French-language child care. The age 0-5 population of each region with knowledge of French was used to ensure an access rate for these children that is proportional to Francophone presence in each CMSM and DSSAB.

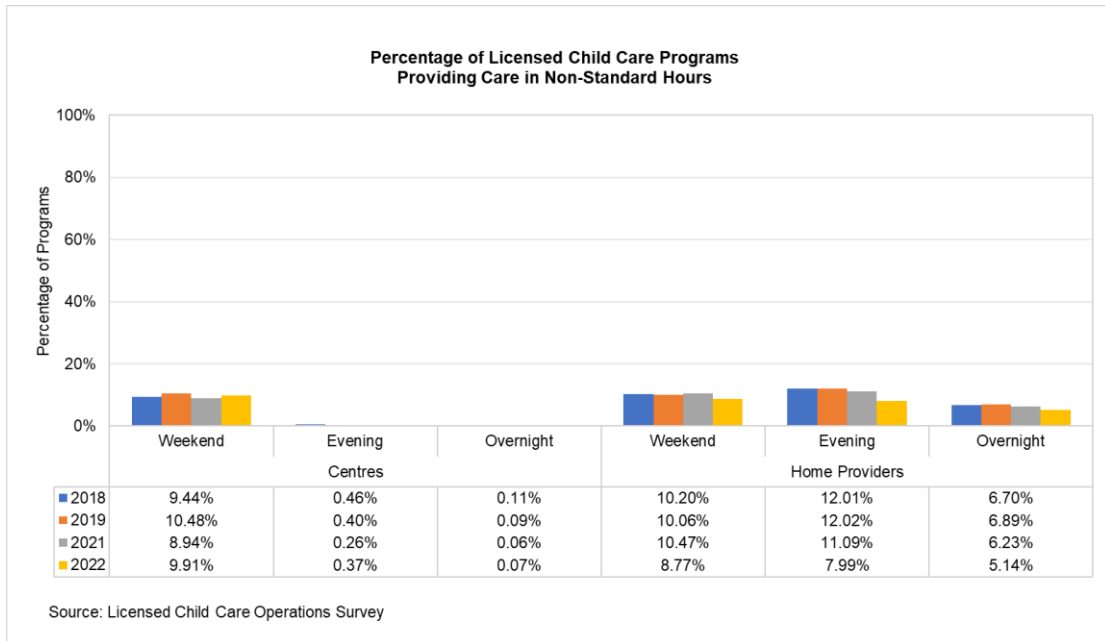
Flexible Child Care Models

The ministry will work with CMSMs and DSSABs to enable increased parental labour market participation with flexible spaces for those who work non-traditional hours and in non-traditional locations. To support parents who are shift workers, further consideration is needed to funding spaces that will increase the availability of flexible models of care. This includes evening, weekend, and overnight child care.

The ministry collects data on licensed child care programs providing care in non-standard hours (such as evenings, overnight, and weekends):

- Child Care Centres: less than 1% identify offering service in the evenings or overnight; 9%-10% identify offering weekend care
- Home Child Care: 8-12% identify offering service in the evenings, 5-7% offering services overnight; 9-10% offering services on weekends (see below).

¹ The access rate of 37% is based on the estimated 2025 population of children age 0-5 and the anticipated total licenced child care spaces in Ontario by the end of 2026 once all of the 86,000 new affordable licenced spaces have been created.

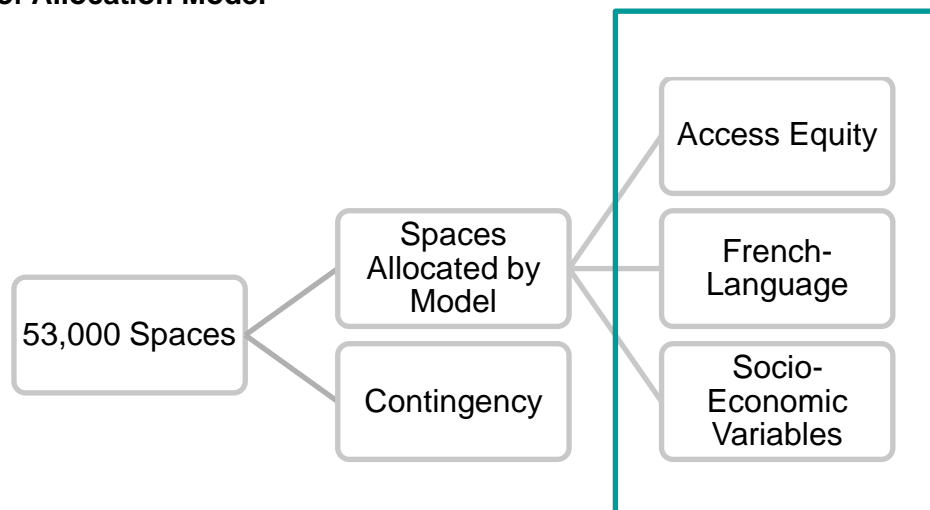


Implementation Considerations

The allocation model also supports successful implementation through the following contingencies:

- A small portion of the new spaces to be created are set aside to address potential space pressures in the planning discussions with CMSMs and DSSABs.
- This may include allocations to reflect the needs of specific vulnerable populations, and fast growing CMSMs and DSSABs.
- As well, allocations will take into account the ministry's current and ongoing build out of school based child care spaces.

Overview of Allocation Model



Inclusion

The CWELCC system presents an opportunity for Ontario to introduce initiatives that support the needs of diverse and underserved populations, including low-income, Francophone, Indigenous, Black, other racialized and newcomer communities, as well as vulnerable children and those with special needs.

Ontario's inclusion framework is intended to help reduce barriers for vulnerable children and children from diverse populations. It aims to support children to have access to inclusive environments where they can participate and collaborate in meaningful ways and form authentic, caring relationships.

This vision is supported by the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities which both highlight how all children, including those with special needs, are entitled to the same opportunities – for example to health care, nutrition, education, social inclusion, and protection.²

Principles for Inclusion

Local service plans from CMSMs and DSSABs should consider the principles of accessibility, participation and belonging, and equity. Adopting inclusive practices is vital for ensuring that children, despite their background or who they are, have an equal opportunity to succeed.

1. Accessibility

Providing a wide range of opportunities for learning, play, and inquiry in physical and teaching environments across diverse settings and context is essential.

Key components of accessibility involve:

- Removing/reducing physical and systemic barriers (e.g., transportation, space and socioeconomic, cultural, language).
- Ensuring opportunities are sufficient in terms of intensity and frequency for every individual.³ Incorporating multiple means of representation, engagement, and expression in learning spaces and programs (i.e., Universal Design, Universal Design for Learning). Rather than modifying/adapting the physical and learning/instructional environments after the fact, programs need to be ready to support all children at the front end.⁴

2. Participation and Belonging

This principle involves the intentional and instructional intervention approaches that enable children to actively engage in all parts of the day including play and learning activities and social interactions.

Participation fosters a sense of belonging which contributes to developmental and lifelong well-being. Belonging refers to a sense of connectedness to others, an individual's

² How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years (Ministry of Education, Ontario, 2014).

³ Barton, E. E., & Smith, B. J. (2014). Fact sheet on preschool inclusion. Pyramid Plus: The Colorado Center for Social Emotional Competence and Inclusion. Denver, CO. Practice, 17(1), 1-13.

⁴ Strain, P., Schwartz, I., Barton, E.E. (2011). Providing Interventions for Young Children With Autism Spectrum Disorders: What We Still Need to Accomplish. Journal of Early Intervention, 33, 321-332.

experiences of being valued, of forming relationships with others and making contributions as part of a group, a community, the natural world.

Participation requires strategies, accommodations, modifications and adaptations to spaces and programs so that children can fully engage with each other and their environment.

Key considerations of participation and belonging include:

- Values, policies, and practices that support the right of every child and their family, regardless of ability, to participate in a broad range of activities and contexts as full members of families, communities, and society.
- Employing engagement approaches that ensure participants feel that they belong, are valued and heard.
- Ensuring diversity in engagement approaches, spaces and programs (e.g., staff share similar backgrounds and lived experience as participants, participant interaction is maximized through multiple mediums and languages).

3. Equity

Making sure everyone has what they need to succeed by removing barriers that disadvantage some groups over others, is a fundamental principle. Children should have equitable access to early learning opportunities that support them in realizing their capacity as engaged learners that are competent, capable of complex thinking, curious, and rich in potential.

Key considerations of equity include:

- Programs, services and supports that take account of the backgrounds and intersecting identities of children and their families.
- Ensuring assessment tools are unbiased and designed for use with children.
- Providing differing levels of support for children depending on their individual needs.

Approach to Inclusion

Ontario has been working to advance inclusion through the following initiatives:

- **Special Needs Resourcing:** In Ontario, Special Needs Resourcing (SNR) provides support for the inclusion of children with special needs with their peers in child care and early years settings. Funding is provided to CMSMs, DSSABs and First Nation communities for SNR costs to support the inclusion of children with special needs at no additional costs to parents. CMSMs and DSSABs are required to spend at least 4.1% of total child care funding allocation on SNR. The ministry is currently completing a review of SNR policies to inform updates to the guideline. As the child care system expands, there will be a need to ensure that children with special needs can be supported as required in the new spaces.
- **Fee Subsidy:** Fee subsidy is an essential support for many parents that helps to balance the demands of career and family and enables parents and caregivers to participate in the workforce or pursue education or training. Ontario's child care fee subsidy provides \$880 million in direct support annually for low-income families to access child care. The amount a subsidized family pays for child care is determined through the income test. Other factors include the parents' employment/education

activities and/or the special needs of the child, as well availability of subsidy funds within the budget of the CMSM or DSSAB, and space availability.

To maintain stability throughout this transitional year of the CWELCC system, the ministry will continue with the current fee subsidy model to assist families who are in need of financial assistance. The ministry has ensured that an equivalent fee reduction is applied to families currently in receipt of child care fee subsidy to support equity within Ontario's child care system.

- **How Does Learning Happen (HDLH): Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years:** In Ontario, structural quality (e.g. ratios of adults to children, staff qualifications, health and safety requirements) is supported through provincial licensing standards and program quality is guided by *How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years (2014)*.

HDLH sets out values, goals and approaches to guide program development. Together with the *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014* regulations, HDLH helps to ensure children experience positive, responsive relationships and engaging programs and environments that support learning, development, and well-being. HDLH is mandated under the *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014*, for educators and administrators to support pedagogy and program approaches which aligns with the Kindergarten Program and is informed by early brain development research.

- **Indigenous and Francophone Child Care:** The ministry provides funding for professional learning supports for Indigenous and Francophone child care professionals to support the implementation of HDLH. These supports are intended to enhance culturally relevant programs and the delivery of high quality child care and early years programs, which will help promote Francophone and Indigenous culture in Ontario.

Additionally, the Canada-Ontario Early Childhood Workforce Funding Agreement provides \$1.5 million in one-time federal funding over 2021-22 and 2022-23 to enhance existing Communities of Practice for Francophone and Indigenous communities to meet the growing professional learning needs related to mental health, cultural diversity, mentorship, and networking. This initiative is intended to enhance safe, culturally relevant child care and early years programs.

- **Ontario Child Care Tax Credit:** The Ontario Child Care Tax Credit remains in effect to support parents with the cost of child care and help them re-enter the workforce. This program continues to provide an estimated 300,000 families each year with up to 75 per cent of their eligible expenses, including for licensed and unlicensed child care in centres, home based care, camps, and other settings.
- **Canada-Ontario Early Childhood Workforce Funding Agreement:** In August 2021, the governments of Ontario and Canada signed the new Early Childhood Workforce Funding Agreement. This agreement provided \$149.9 million in one-time federal funding to help retain the current child care and early years workforce, as well as attract new individuals into the profession. This included a professional learning and development strategy (\$74 million); workforce capacity and innovation fund (\$71.5 million); enhancements to the Early Childhood Educators Qualifications Upgrade Program (\$3 million); and support for equity-based communities of practice (\$1.5 million).

In the late Fall of 2022, the province began to engage with service system managers, other provincial government ministries, and a broad range of external partners on the framework for inclusion. This framework will be used by service system managers to guide the development and implementation of local service plans.

Research Demonstrates:

- High quality inclusive settings benefit all children – with and without special needs.
- Social outcomes are critical and a key indicator that an inclusive program is successful.
- Collaboration is critical to the success of inclusive programs.

To support the needs of diverse communities and populations, service system managers will collaborate with service providers and the community, to gather data to assess the barriers focused on:

- enhanced service accessibility for children and families, particularly isolated, newcomer, and low-income families;
- active engagement with those populations who are Francophone, Indigenous, Black, racialized, newcomer, LGBTQ2S+, persons with disabilities, or from low-income households to dismantle barriers in the planning, management and delivery of responsive programs and services;
- support for local decision making to enrich programs, facilitate smooth transitions and enhance integration between child care and early years services, schools and specialized community services; and
- regular collection and insights from parents, caregivers and children to inform local programs and services.

In the Winter of 2022, municipal service system managers will be required to submit access and inclusion plans to ensure a broad range of communities and populations have access to high quality, affordable and inclusive child care. These plans will be used to help inform the provincial allocation of funding for new child care spaces across the province.

The plans will require the inclusion of specific access and inclusion targets, which will be implemented by the province and service system manager based on provincial direction and local context and priorities. Examples of specific local priorities include an identified need for more Indigenous child care spaces in a community, more licensed child care spaces in a specific area where there is a high newcomer population, and others. At a minimum, the targets set out in each service system manager's plan must reflect the demographics of their region and ensure that sufficient licensed child care spaces are available for priority groups. These negotiated targets will be used to inform reporting to the federal government.

Opportunities to Address Barriers to Access and Inclusion

Recognizing that inclusion is a shared responsibility, the ministry is building from its current initiatives to ensure that the above noted principles are embedded in the provision of child care.

In addition to providing funding to create new affordable child care spaces in targeted regions and for underserved communities and populations, Ontario has several other initiatives that provide opportunities to address barriers to access and inclusion: start-up grants, pedagogical framework, Special Needs Resourcing, fee subsidy funding, and workforce development (see Table 1).

Start-up Grants	Pedagogical Framework	Special Needs Resourcing	Fee Subsidy Funding	Workforce Development
<p>Provide start-up grants to support the creation of new spaces in locations and for populations most in need.</p> <p>Enable new space creation in regions that may not be accommodated through natural market growth. Identify regions with high need populations.</p> <p>Start-up grants would be used to offset the initial costs required to expand or create spaces in these regions, such as equipment and leasehold improvements.</p>	<p>Make changes to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure Indigenous practices that foster children’s learning are prominent • raise awareness of systemic barriers for racialized children and families • address educator bias, attitudes and beliefs that impact children’s sense of belonging and competence • support CWELCC commitments related to equity, inclusion and quality 	<p>Clarify policies to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • focus funding on evidence-based supports to improve access and participation of children with inclusion support needs in early years and child care settings • foster consistency in the provision of SNR-funded services across the province • reduce duplication with other early intervention services • engage in discussions with partner ministries on the delivery of out of scope services currently being funded through SNR • Address service gaps identified for medically fragile children requiring nursing supports in licensed child care. 	<p>Maintain fee subsidies to support families, including families with children age 0 to 5, for whom lower fees under the CWELCC system continue to be unaffordable.</p>	<p>Continue funding for existing professional learning strategies for Francophone and First Nation, Métis, Inuit and Indigenous communities to meet the growing professional learning needs related to mental health, cultural diversity, mentorship and networking, and expansion of this funding to additional organizations and areas of focus.</p>

Scope of Investments

CWELCC System funding will be targeted toward licensed programs and activities for children under age six that will have an impact on families, including families more in need such as lower-income families, Indigenous families, and families in underserved communities, including Black and racialized families; families of children with disabilities and children needing

enhanced or individual supports; and families with caregivers who are working non-standard hours and Francophone families with limited or no access to programs in their language.

Start-Up Grants

Start-up grants will be provided to support the creation of new spaces in locations and for populations most in need and would enable new space creation in regions that may not be accommodated through natural market growth. Ontario will use a variety of existing tools to identify regions with high need populations including vulnerable children, children from diverse populations, children with special needs and Indigenous and Francophone communities.

The ministry will provide additional information about start-up grants in December 2022.

Framework Accountability

In Ontario, CMSMs and DSSABs are designated under the *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014*, as service system managers responsible for planning, managing and coordinating child care within their regions.

The *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014*, requires CMSMs and DSSABs to develop and update their child care and early years service plan every five years. The ministry publishes the [“Ontario Child Care and Early Years Service System Plan Resource”](#) which outlines the requirement for CMSMs/DSSABs to conduct an environmental scan, strength/gaps analysis and the identification of action items to improve access to child care and early years programs for children and families.

The review of access and inclusion plans, which service system manager are required to submit in late Fall 2022, enables the province to monitor and assess if a broad range of communities and populations have access to high quality, affordable, and inclusive child care.

Ontario will work with service system managers and other sector partners to gather data and conduct assessments on barriers to access for children of diverse populations and children with varying abilities to implement targeted strategies that support these children to access licensed child care.

Reporting

Ontario’s Action Plan commits to enhancing existing data collection activities to support reporting to the federal government on key indicators associated with the CWELCC system. Ontario has laid out specific measures and indicators under the CWELCC system in its Action Plan for each of the key priority areas and will publish its results in the province’s Early Years and Child Care Annual Report starting in 2023.

Specific to access and inclusion priorities, this includes:

- number of net new spaces created during the fiscal year, broken down by age groups of child, auspice and type of setting
- number of net new spaces supported with start-up grants during the fiscal year, broken down by age groups of child, auspice and type of setting

- annual funding and percentage of total provincial child care allocation spent on Special Needs Resourcing
- number of licensed child care spaces for children under the age of six that offer French-language and bilingual programs
- outcomes of engagement undertaken with Indigenous partners.

Specific measures and indicators to be reported in the service system manager's plan would encompass, but would not be limited to:

1. Total number of current licensed child care spaces for the aforementioned priority groups, through statistical methods where possible, segmented by:
 - age group of child (i.e., under age 6 and 6-12)
 - type of setting
2. Total number of inclusive licensed child care spaces created/converted for the aforementioned priority groups, through statistical methods where possible, segmented by:
 - age group of child (under age 6 and 6-12)
 - type of setting
3. Number of children receiving fee subsidies segmented by:
 - age group of child (under age 6 and 6-12)
 - children that receive partial subsidies
 - children that receive full subsidies
4. Number and proportion of children under age six and 6-12 years in flexible licensed early learning and child care arrangements and number and proportion of centres/providers that provide flexible arrangements (i.e. non-traditional arrangements such as flexible/irregular hours, weekend and emergency services); and geographic distribution of spaces
5. Number of children under age six and 6-12 years with disabilities and children needing enhanced or individual supports that are in licensed early learning and child care spaces
6. Number or proportion of child care service providers who provide services that are adapted to the needs of children with special needs and children needing enhanced or individual supports.

The targets set out in each service system manager's plan must reflect the demographics of their region and ensure that licensed child care spaces are available for priority groups such as:

- children living in low income families
- children with disabilities and children needing enhanced or individual supports
- Indigenous children, Black and other racialized children
- children of newcomers to Canada and official language minorities.

Qualitative Reporting

Additional narrative reports may be requested in the service system manager's plan. These reports may include, but would not be limited to:

- how systemic barriers to access to licensed child care are currently being addressed (e.g. implementation of recommendations, data collection for evidence informed strategy/policy creation, progress reports)
- diversity and equity initiatives/projects undertaken and their impacts and outcomes.

Qualitative reporting may also explore areas within these following reflective questions specific to licensed child care:

- What are your access and inclusion initiatives currently underway?
- What are the specific considerations for different priority groups?
- What are your other equity and inclusion priorities that have yet to be developed?
- What strategies have worked well when identifying gaps and opportunities to inform your service plan?
- How can the ministry best support CMSMs and DSSABs to develop and implement an inclusion plan?

Conclusion

The CWELCC system aims to make high-quality child care in Ontario affordable, accessible, and inclusive. The province is committed to a child care system that is accessible for children and will be working towards developing a plan that supports access to affordable child care for low-income families, vulnerable children, and children from diverse communities, including Indigenous, Francophone, Black and other racialized, newcomer, LGBTQ2S+ children and families, and children with special needs.

The purpose of Ontario's Access and Inclusion Framework 2022 is to support CMSMs and DSSABs with developing and implementing local service plans with an increased focus on access and inclusion. These plans build on existing service plans and will be integrated into the broader provincial Access and Inclusion Framework.

By Spring of 2023, CMSMs and DSSABs will be required to incorporate access and inclusion plans within their existing five-year service plans to ensure a broad range of communities and populations have access to high quality, affordable, and inclusive child care. As it expands its child care system, the ministry will work with service system managers and a range of other partners to ensure equitable funding approaches based on community need. Ontario will also provide capital start-up grants to support the creation of new spaces in targeted regions and underserved communities and populations. The start-up grants will assist operators to purchase equipment or renovate spaces to support licensing requirements.

Where possible, Ontario will report the annual public expenditures on child care programming dedicated to children from diverse and/or vulnerable families. The province will also work with the federal government on monitoring quality and inclusion goals with statistical data. Ontario will work with partners to gather data and conduct assessments on barriers to access.

Annex 2: CWELCC Five Year Space Allocation

CMSM / DSSAB	CMSM Allocation	Total Space Allocation					School-based Space Allocation					Community-based Space Allocation							
		2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026			
#																			
300	Algoma District Services Administration Board	204	26	51	51	46	30	64	-	-	64	-	-	140	26	51	-	46	17
200	City of Brantford	740	95	183	186	168	107	216	-	-	152	64	-	524	95	183	34	104	107
201	City of Cornwall	465	60	115	117	105	67	83	83	-	-	-	-	382	-	115	117	105	44
202	City of Greater Sudbury	219	28	54	55	50	32	210	49	88	73	-	-	9	-	-	-	-	9
203	City of Hamilton	1,517	195	376	382	344	220	343	49	196	49	49	-	1,174	146	180	333	295	220
204	City of Kawartha Lakes	443	57	110	112	100	64	49	-	49	-	-	-	394	57	61	112	100	64
205	City of Kingston	265	34	66	67	60	38	122	-	122	-	-	-	143	34	-	67	-	42
206	City of London	2,080	268	516	524	471	302	582	88	191	215	88	-	1,498	180	325	309	383	302
207	City of Ottawa	1,545	199	383	389	350	224	713	151	279	205	-	78	832	48	104	184	-	496
208	City of Peterborough	261	34	65	66	59	38	39	39	-	-	-	-	222	-	65	66	59	32
209	City of St. Thomas	702	90	174	177	159	102	128	-	128	-	-	-	574	90	46	177	159	102
210	City of Stratford	569	73	141	143	129	83	88	-	88	-	-	-	481	73	53	143	129	83
211	City of Toronto	5,764	742	1,429	1,452	1,306	836	4,795	137	298	2,828	1,096	436	969	605	364	-	-	-
212	City of Windsor	1,540	198	382	388	349	223	678	146	288	146	98	-	862	52	94	242	-	474
301	Cochrane DSSAB	164	21	41	41	37	24	49	-	-	49	-	-	115	21	41	-	37	16
213	County of Bruce	645	83	160	162	146	93	117	-	117	-	-	-	528	83	43	162	146	93
214	County of Dufferin	478	62	118	120	108	69	-	-	-	-	-	-	478	62	118	120	108	69
215	County of Grey	504	65	125	127	114	73	283	39	49	-	39	156	221	26	76	119	-	-
216	County of Hastings	827	107	205	208	187	120	98	-	98	-	-	-	729	107	107	208	68	240
217	County of Huron	391	50	97	98	89	57	-	-	-	-	-	-	391	50	97	98	89	57
218	County of Lambton	521	67	129	131	118	76	210	-	-	137	-	73	311	67	129	-	37	78
219	County of Lanark	169	22	42	43	38	25	-	-	-	-	-	-	169	22	42	43	38	25
220	County of Lennox & Addington	432	56	107	109	98	63	98	-	-	49	49	-	334	56	107	60	49	63
228	County of Norfolk	441	57	109	111	100	64	196	98	-	-	98	-	245	-	109	111	2	23
221	County of Northumberland	310	40	77	78	70	45	59	10	-	-	-	49	251	30	77	78	25	41
222	County of Oxford	437	56	108	110	99	63	176	-	-	88	-	88	261	56	108	22	36	39
223	County of Renfrew	427	55	106	107	97	62	322	127	122	73	-	-	105	-	-	34	-	70
224	County of Simcoe	3,082	397	764	776	698	447	616	176	342	-	-	98	2,466	221	422	776	698	349
225	County of Wellington	1,721	222	427	433	390	250	113	49	64	-	-	-	1,608	173	363	433	390	250
226	District Municipality of Muskoka	307	40	76	77	69	44	166	-	166	-	-	-	141	40	-	77	-	24
306	Kenora District Services Administration Board	246	32	61	62	56	36	45	-	30	15	-	-	201	32	31	47	56	36
307	Manitoulin-Sudbury District Services Administration Board	183	24	45	46	42	27	10	10	-	-	-	-	173	14	45	46	42	27
227	Municipality of Chatham-Kent	315	41	78	79	71	46	49	-	-	49	-	-	266	41	78	30	71	46
302	Nipissing District Services Administration Board	109	14	27	27	25	16	73	-	73	-	-	-	36	14	-	-	-	22
303	Parry Sound District Services Administration Board	131	17	32	33	30	19	49	-	-	49	-	-	82	17	32	-	-	33
308	Rainy River District Services Administration Board	147	19	36	37	33	21	88	49	-	39	-	-	59	-	36	-	-	22
229	Regional Municipality of Durham	2,029	261	503	511	460	294	1,152	404	221	405	49	73	877	-	282	106	-	489
230	Regional Municipality of Halton**	880	113	218	222	199	128	880	215	176	225	88	176	-	-	-	-	-	-
231	Regional Municipality of Niagara	1,951	251	484	491	442	283	382	98	-	235	-	49	1,569	153	484	256	442	234
232	Regional Municipality of Peel	7,621	982	1,889	1,919	1,727	1,105	1,111	278	268	492	73	-	6,510	704	1,621	1,427	1,654	1,105
233	Regional Municipality of Waterloo	1,871	241	464	471	424	271	907	288	88	355	88	88	964	-	376	116	-	472
234	Regional Municipality of York	1,049	135	260	264	238	152	391	-	137	166	49	39	658	135	123	98	189	113
304	Sault Ste. Marie District Services Administration Board	118	15	29	30	27	17	113	-	-	49	-	64	5	5	-	-	-	-
309	Thunder Bay District Services Administration Board	419	54	104	106	95	61	49	49	-	-	-	-	370	5	104	106	95	61
305	Timiskaming District Services Administration Board	125	16	31	31	28	18	-	-	-	-	-	-	125	16	31	31	28	18
235	United Counties of Leeds & Grenville	397	51	98	100	90	58	177	49	25	64	-	39	220	2	73	36	90	19
236	United Counties of Prescott & Russell**	207	27	51	52	47	30	207	197	10	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Totals	44,968	5,792	11,144	11,323	10,190	6,519	16,296	2,878	3,713	6,271	1,928	1,506	28,672	3,558	6,794	6,426	5,771	6,122

Capital Start-up Grants: Parameters, Eligible and Ineligible Expenses, and Reporting Requirements

PURPOSE

Capital start-up grants are intended to support the creation of new licensed full day spaces for children under age six in targeted regions for underserved communities and populations. High need populations include vulnerable children, children from diverse populations, children with special needs, and Indigenous and Francophone communities.

PARAMETERS

In keeping with the ministry's commitment to support all licensees regardless of auspice, for-profit and not-for-profit licensed child care operators who are enrolled in the CWELCC system will be eligible to apply for capital start-up grant funding.

Capital start-up grants can be used to offset the initial costs required to expand or create spaces such as equipment and leasehold improvements. The grants exclude capital projects for child care programs that run during school hours for kindergarten and school-aged children. Capital start-up grant funding may be used for retrofits, renovations or expansion projects, but cannot be used to purchase land or buildings.

When approving capital start-up grant funding, Consolidated Municipal Service Managers (CMSMs) and District Social Services Administration Boards (DSSABs) should consider:

- local child care plans
- accommodation pressures/service gaps and demand
- cost effectiveness
- location
- available operating funding
- capacity of program to access funds through other means
- program budget and financial history
- child care licensing history
- current licensed and operational capacity
- age groups
- long-term viability
- investment in quality programming.

All capital start-up grant funded projects are required to be created, retrofitted, renovated, and/or expanded to accommodate a maximum group size for each age grouping for children under the age of six.

Eligible licensees will be able to receive a grant covering \$90 per square foot of a new or expanded space with a cap of \$350,000 for every 50 child care spaces created.

To access capital start-up grant funding, CMSMs/DSSABs will require a commitment from the licensee to:

- participate in the CWELCC system for the remainder of the CWELCC agreement (2026), and
- spend the capital start-up grant funding within two years.

Should the licensee fail to use funding in accordance with the terms and conditions of their agreement, CMSMs and DSSABs must have policies and procedures in place as part of their financial review and reconciliation process with licensees related to the recovery of funds. Any unspent funding provided to licensees during the funding year, or funding not used for its intended purpose, must be recovered by the CMSM/DSSAB and returned to the ministry. This may also include the right to withhold payment or to reduce funding to a licensee when the licensee does not meet the obligations related to the use of capital start-up grant funding.

ELIGIBLE EXPENSES

- Play materials, equipment, and furnishings (both indoors and outdoors) as outlined in Section 19 of Ontario Regulation 137/15 under *the Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014*.
- Non-consumable supplies/equipment to support the ongoing regular operation of the child care program (e.g. appliances, IT, supplies to support learning environments while adhering to health and safety requirements).
- Renovations, additions, or repairs to licensed child care facilities or potential child care facilities as approved by CMSMs/DSSABs.

INELIGIBLE EXPENSES

- Purchase of land or buildings
- Debt costs including principal and interest payments related to capital loans, mortgage financing, and operating loans
- Property taxes.

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

- Expenditures to support capital start-up grants
- Number of spaces supported with capital start-up grants by age group (i.e. infant, toddler, preschool, kindergarten).
- Number of spaces supported with capital start-up grants broken down by auspice (i.e. for-profit, not-for-profit)
- Number of spaces supported with capital start-up grants by type of setting (i.e. child care centre, home child care, directly operated).

CWELCC Space Reporting Template

CMSM/DSSAB: _____

On behalf of the above CMSM/DSSAB, I confirm that our community will commit to open _____ total spaces between 2022 and 2026 under the CWELCC system, consisting of _____ school-based spaces [a] and _____ community-based spaces [b].

	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
School-based Spaces [a]					
Community-based Spaces [a]					
Total Spaces [a + b]					

Community-based spaces will be opened in the following priority neighborhoods/areas of our CMSM/DSSAB.

Name of priority neighborhoods/areas	Check communities the new spaces will serve (Choose all that apply)	# of spaces to be opened
[Priority Neighbourhood #1]	<input type="checkbox"/> Low-Income families <input type="checkbox"/> Children with disabilities and children needing enhanced or individual supports <input type="checkbox"/> Francophone <input type="checkbox"/> Indigenous children <input type="checkbox"/> Black children <input type="checkbox"/> Other racialized children (please specify _____) <input type="checkbox"/> New Immigrants	
[Priority Neighbourhood #2]	<input type="checkbox"/> Low-Income families <input type="checkbox"/> Children with disabilities and children needing enhanced or individual supports <input type="checkbox"/> Francophone <input type="checkbox"/> Indigenous children <input type="checkbox"/> Black children <input type="checkbox"/> Other racialized children (please specify _____) <input type="checkbox"/> New Immigrants	

Name of priority neighborhoods/areas	Check communities the new spaces will serve (Choose all that apply)	# of spaces to be opened
[Priority Neighbourhood #3]	<input type="checkbox"/> Low-Income families <input type="checkbox"/> Children with disabilities and children needing enhanced or individual supports <input type="checkbox"/> Francophone <input type="checkbox"/> Indigenous children <input type="checkbox"/> Black children <input type="checkbox"/> Other racialized children (please specify _____) <input type="checkbox"/> New Immigrants	
[Priority Neighbourhood #4]	<input type="checkbox"/> Low-Income families <input type="checkbox"/> Children with disabilities and children needing enhanced or individual supports <input type="checkbox"/> Francophone <input type="checkbox"/> Indigenous children <input type="checkbox"/> Black children <input type="checkbox"/> Other racialized children (please specify _____) <input type="checkbox"/> New Immigrants	
[Priority Neighbourhood #5]	<input type="checkbox"/> Low-Income families <input type="checkbox"/> Children with disabilities and children needing enhanced or individual supports <input type="checkbox"/> Francophone <input type="checkbox"/> Indigenous children <input type="checkbox"/> Black children <input type="checkbox"/> Other racialized children (please specify _____) <input type="checkbox"/> New Immigrants	
[Priority Neighbourhood #6]	<input type="checkbox"/> Low-Income families <input type="checkbox"/> Children with disabilities and children needing enhanced or individual supports <input type="checkbox"/> Francophone <input type="checkbox"/> Indigenous children <input type="checkbox"/> Black children <input type="checkbox"/> Other racialized children (please specify _____)	

Name of priority neighborhoods/areas	Check communities the new spaces will serve (Choose all that apply)	# of spaces to be opened
	<input type="checkbox"/> New Immigrants	
[Priority Neighbourhood #7]	<input type="checkbox"/> Low-Income families <input type="checkbox"/> Children with disabilities and children needing enhanced or individual supports <input type="checkbox"/> Francophone <input type="checkbox"/> Indigenous children <input type="checkbox"/> Black children <input type="checkbox"/> Other racialized children (please specify _____) <input type="checkbox"/> New Immigrants	
[Priority Neighbourhood #8]	<input type="checkbox"/> Low-Income families <input type="checkbox"/> Children with disabilities and children needing enhanced or individual supports <input type="checkbox"/> Francophone <input type="checkbox"/> Indigenous children <input type="checkbox"/> Black children <input type="checkbox"/> Other racialized children (please specify _____) <input type="checkbox"/> New Immigrants	
Total		

HIS MAJESTY THE KING IN RIGHT OF ONTARIO as represented by Minister of Education

by:

Date: _____

Name: Holly Moran

Title: ADM, Early Years and Child Care Division

Authorized Signing Agent

[Name of CMSM/DSSAB here]

by:

Date: _____

Name:

Title:

Authorized Signing Agent

[Name of CMSM/DSSAB here]

by:

Date: _____

Name:

Title:

Authorized Signing Agent

I/We have authority to bind the Recipient.