building blocks for child care

Ontario Early Learning and Child Care

Vision 2046

A Shared Vision for Ontario • Initiated by B2C2

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This paper sets out a shared vision for the early learning and child care system Ontario should build over the next twenty years. B2C2 offers it as an invitation for discussion, collaboration and endorsement by organizations and individuals committed to universal, high-quality, inclusive and publicly planned services. It is deliberately ambitious, not a prediction or detailed government blueprint. Governments, public and non-profit providers, educators, school boards, families and communities all have roles in achieving it. B2C2's Strategic Plan 2026–2029 describes one practical contribution toward this collective goal, not responsibility for delivering the whole vision.

The Shared 2046 Vision

By 2046, every child and family in Ontario can access high-quality, not-for-profit, inclusive and affordable Early Learning and Child Care when and where it is needed. ELCC is understood, funded and planned as an essential public service and as social infrastructure. Expansion is intentional, equitable and sustained. The workforce is respected and supported. Public and non-profit organizations can create and operate excellent programs. Knowledge gained in one community strengthens the whole system. Child care, kindergarten and school-age programs are better coordinated, giving children and families continuity of care and support.

What This Future Looks Like

Access is universal and equitable

Families are not forced to compete for scarce spaces or rely on luck, personal connections or the ability to pay. Public planning identifies where services are needed and ensures growth reaches rural, northern, Indigenous, low-income, and rapidly growing communities, as well as established urban neighbourhoods. Flexible and culturally responsive options reflect varied family circumstances, including non-standard hours and the needs of children requiring additional support.

In the near term, B2C2 is focused on supporting the expansion of not-for-profit child care under CWELCC, preparing for the possibility that Ontario may recognize the reasonableness of increasing its current 37% coverage target and prioritize further expansion. While Ontario has not committed to an increase, B2C2 aspires to see the province adopt a 59% coverage target, consistent with commitments made by eight other Canadian jurisdictions.

Quality is built into expansion

Governments and communities do not treat the number of spaces opened as the sole measure of success. New and existing programs are designed around children's well-being, belonging, relationships, learning and development. Facilities are welcoming, accessible, sustainable and suited to excellent practice. Expansion decisions protect quality from the earliest feasibility discussion through design, staffing, opening and ongoing operation.

The workforce can build a career and a life

Registered Early Childhood Educators and other staff receive fair wages, benefits, pensions, paid planning time and meaningful professional learning. Strong supervision, thoughtful onboarding, healthy and creative workplaces and opportunities for leadership are normal expectations. Workforce planning is linked to expansion planning so that new spaces do not destabilize existing programs or open without the people needed to provide consistent, high-quality care.

ELCC is planned as social infrastructure

Early Learning and Child Care facilities are planned alongside schools, housing, health, transit, community services and economic development. Public land and public buildings are used strategically. Long-term capital programs, low-cost financing and appropriate guarantees allow public and non-profit organizations to develop facilities without assuming unsustainable risk. Operating funding and capital decisions work together.

Public and non-profit delivery is strong

Ontario has a resilient network of public and non-profit organizations with the governance, leadership, systems and financial capacity to expand and sustain quality. Smaller organizations can obtain shared administrative and professional supports, enter partnerships or consider voluntary forms of integration where these strengthen service. Multi-site organizations can grow responsibly without losing community accountability.

Children experience continuity across early learning and school-age care

Families experience a coherent early-years and school-age system rather than disconnected services. Early learning and child care, kindergarten, before- and after-school programs, schools and community supports coordinate planning, transitions and access while respecting their distinct roles. Children benefit from consistent relationships, inclusive support and fewer administrative barriers.

The system learns as it grows

Implementation knowledge is treated as a public resource. Organizations document what worked, what did not and what conditions made a difference. Practical tools, case studies, peer learning and accessible data allow others to adapt successful approaches. Governments use evidence from implementation to improve funding, policy, regulation and planning.

Principles for Building the Future

Shared responsibility and collaboration. The vision depends on public leadership and investment, strong public and non-profit delivery, purposeful partnerships and coordinated planning. Collaboration is an approach to change; integration, continuity and more equitable access are intended system outcomes.

Principle	What it means
Children and families first	Decisions begin with children's well-being, family access and community need.
Quality and access together	Ontario expands supply without treating quality as a later correction.
Public responsibility	Governments plan, fund and steward the system even when services are delivered through partners.
Workforce at the centre	Wages, benefits, working conditions, leadership and professional learning are core infrastructure.
Equity by design	Resources and expansion reach communities that markets and fragmented programs have underserved.

Non-profit and public capacity	Growth strengthens accountable, community-serving organizations.
Learning and transparency	Evidence is shared, results are measured and approaches improve over time.
Long-term stewardship	Facilities, organizations and funding arrangements are designed to endure.

B2C2's Contribution to the Shared Vision

The distance between current conditions and this vision is precisely why a practical Centre is needed. Large system change depends on government action, but it also depends on organizations and communities having the knowledge, relationships and capacity to implement policy well. The Centre will work in that space between intention and delivery.

Long-term condition	Contribution the Centre can begin now
Planned and equitable access	Help partners assess readiness, document barriers and connect local experience to system planning.
Quality built into every project	Embed quality, inclusion, workforce, design, governance and viability in practical expansion tools.
A respected and stable workforce	Develop employer-focused learning on onboarding, supervision, planning time and healthy workplaces while supporting policy work on compensation and benefits.
Reliable social infrastructure financing	Convene expertise, document projects and advance grant, loan, guarantee, community-finance and social-infrastructure options.
Strong public and non-profit organizations	Provide selective advice, useful tools, peer learning and evidence on partnerships, shared services and organizational growth.
A learning system	Turn cases and demonstrations into resources, evaluation findings and policy advice that can travel across Ontario.

A Twenty-Year Path

Horizon	What progress could mean
2026 to 2029 Establish and demonstrate	Build the Centre's minimum viable capacity; produce useful tools and case studies; test learning and advisory approaches; strengthen partnerships; establish credible measures and a sustainable funding base.
2030 to 2035 Extend and embed	Support wider use of proven resources and approaches; deepen municipal, operator, school-board and community partnerships; contribute evidence to more consistent provincial planning, funding and quality expectations.

2036 to 2041 Strengthen system capability	Help normalize shared implementation knowledge, long-term infrastructure planning, strong public and non-profit delivery capacity and continuous improvement across Ontario.
2042 to 2046 Sustain a mature system	Contribute to a universally accessible, publicly planned and accountable ELCC system in which expansion and quality are inseparable and learning is built into stewardship.

How We Will Know Ontario Is Moving in the Right Direction

- Families experience shorter and more equitable access to appropriate ELCC.
- New spaces are created where community need is greatest and remain viable over time.
- The workforce experiences improving compensation, benefits, stability, leadership and working conditions.
- Facilities and programs demonstrate quality, inclusion, accessibility and environmental responsibility.
- Public and non-profit organizations have stronger governance, operating and expansion capacity.
- Implementation evidence changes practice, public planning, funding and policy.
- Children and families experience greater continuity across ELCC, kindergarten, school-age and community supports.

B2C2's Distinctive and Enduring Role

B2C2 does not need to become the largest organization in the field to make a lasting contribution. Its value can remain focused: connecting policy with practice, helping capable partners act, making implementation knowledge useful to others and keeping high-quality expansion on the public agenda. The Centre should grow only where there is demonstrated need, useful impact, sustainable support and appropriate oversight.

The 20-year vision gives the immediate work its purpose. A toolkit, a case study, an advisory engagement, a demonstration project or a policy brief matters because it helps Ontario learn how to build a better system. The Centre's task is to make each practical contribution useful now and cumulative over time.