

# Region of Waterloo releases its new child care system plan <sup>[1]</sup>

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## AVAILABILITY

Access online <sup>[2]</sup>

## EXCERPTS

The Region of Waterloo released a new five-year plan for its child care system on Thursday.

The goal, said the region, is to create a more accessible, affordable and equitable child care system.

"We know the Early Years and Child Care (EYCC) system is not working for all families – many are unable to access the high-quality, affordable, and responsive child care they need and deserve," said Barbara Cardow, the Director of Children's Services, in the report.

The region said that in addition to research and data, they gathered feedback from 2,900 parents and community partners.

Some of their findings include:

Only 26 per cent of children between the ages of 0 and 4 in Waterloo Region have access to a licensed child care space

Waitlists are significant, and families reported that the application and waitlist process is unclear and lacks transparency

Child care spaces are not equitably distributed across Waterloo Region

Parents with higher income and who were born in Canada reported greater access to licensed child care than parents born outside of Canada and who had a lower income

21 per cent of Black parents who were surveyed indicated they did not feel comfortable accessing EYCC programs and services

In terms of affordability, the report found:

Approximately 50 per cent of families who were surveyed said child care was not affordable

Child care fees in Waterloo Region increased an average of 10 per cent between 2017 and 2020

Fees for full-time child care (between the ages of 0 and 4) are between \$9,012 and \$23,939 annually per child

The 2022-2026 Early Years and Child Care plan outlines how the region intends to improve the current system.

According to the release, that would include:

Increasing access to child care through growing the number of high-quality licensed spaces and sustaining the existing spaces

Improving affordability of licensed child care to ensure that families can access child care regardless of their income

Improving the quality of early years and licensed child care programs and strengthening the workforce to create consistency across programs

Removing system barriers to increase equity and responsiveness, ensuring that Indigenous, Black and racialized families, and other families that experience inequities are able to fully participate in early and child care programs and services

The region said the pandemic has amplified the challenges of the child care system, especially when it comes to employee recruitment and retention, and their plan addresses these issues.

However, they indicated that without new ongoing funding, "there is limited ability to reduce fees to established affordability thresholds." They add that the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Plan, otherwise known as \$10 a day child care, is critical to meeting this need. It has not yet been approved in Ontario.

**Region:** Ontario <sup>[3]</sup>

**Tags:** child care plan <sup>[4]</sup>

child care system <sup>[5]</sup>

funding <sup>[6]</sup>

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