

Ontario



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Ontario

■ OVERVIEW

In Ontario, early learning and child care includes junior kindergarten and kindergarten, child care centres, full- and part-day (nursery schools), regulated home (family) child care, licensed before- and after-school child care, Extended Day, and Authorized Recreation and Skill Building (not licensed) before- and after-school programs.

The Ministry of Education is responsible for kindergarten under the [Education Act](#) and its regulations. Kindergarten includes full-school day junior and senior kindergarten, which is available to all four- and five-year-olds. Full-school day junior kindergarten was introduced in 2010 and was fully phased in across the province over a five-year period. Kindergarten is not compulsory but most children attend. Every school board is required to provide both years of kindergarten in all elementary schools with limited exceptions outlined in regulation.

Ontario funds both public and Catholic (called separate) schools but does not fund private schools and does not regulate, license, accredit or oversee the day-to-day operations of private schools.

Most schools in First Nations communities are operated by Band councils.

The Ministry of Education licenses child care programs under the [Child Care and Early Years Act](#) and regulates them under [Ontario Regulation 137/15](#). Regulated centres and home child care, which uses an agency model, are delivered by non-profit, for-profit, and public (municipal) operators. Non-profit organizations operate a majority of centres and home child care agencies.

All service providers set their own fees. Parent fee subsidies are managed by 47 municipal entities and may be used in all regulated or authorized child care services.

Ontario is the sole province/territory with a mandated role for municipal level government entities. These are termed Consolidated Municipal Service Managers (CMSMs) or District Social Services Administration Boards (DSSABs), of which there are 47. These have some discretion about child care provision within provincial policy. As local service managers, they administer funding, play a

planning role, develop local initiatives and may provide publicly delivered child care. Ontario has a long history of delivering municipal child care but this sector has been considerably reduced over the past decade. The provincial government flows funding, including federal transfer payment funding, to CMSMs and DSSABs, which in turn flow it to service providers.

Ontario signed the Canada-Ontario Early Learning and Child Care Agreement (Multilateral Framework Agreement) on June 16, 2017. This allocated \$434.6 million over three years to Ontario for regulated child care; it was extended on June 9, 2020 with an additional \$146 million for the 2020 – 2021 fiscal year, and extended again in August 2021 providing between \$146 million and \$211 million per year from 2021 to 2025.

The Canada-Ontario Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care agreement was signed by Ontario on March 27, 2022. It allocated \$10.2 billion over five years to:

- reduce fees to an average of \$10/day by 2025 – 2026
- create 86,000 primarily public and non-profit spaces by the end of 2026
- develop and implement an inclusion support plan
- increase the percentage of qualified staff to at least 60% by 2025 – 2026
- provide educators with greater professional development opportunities
- establish a wage floor for child care workers and
- provide ongoing administrative support to operators.

This Canada-wide agreement does not replace but runs parallel to the Multilateral Framework Agreement.

■ PROVINCIAL CONTEXT

Note: Some of the following figures are rounded, while totals are based on exact figures and may therefore not equal the sum of the rounded figures shown here.

Number of children 0 – 12 (2021 rounded estimate)

Age	Number of children (2021)
0	131,700
1	126,000
2	136,000
3	148,600
4	154,200
5	152,700
6	161,300
7	156,700
8	154,100
9	162,000
10	151,700
11	155,400
12	149,100
Total	1,939,600

Number of children 0 – 12 years (aggregated) (2021 rounded estimate)

<i>Age</i>	<i>Number of children (2021)</i>
0 – 2	393,700
3 – 5	455,500
6 – 12	1,090,300
Total	1,939,600

Number of children 0 – 12 years with employed mothers (2021 rounded estimate)

<i>Age</i>	<i>Number of children (2021)</i>
0	85,200
1	76,900
2	86,900
3	98,200
4	96,500
5	98,700
6	102,100
7	107,300
8	98,500
9	110,600
10	100,600
11	107,000
12	95,900
Total	1,264,500

Number of children 0 – 12 with employed mothers (aggregated) (2021 rounded estimate)

<i>Age</i>	<i>Number of children (2021)</i>
0 – 2	249,000
3 – 5	293,400
6 – 12	722,000
Total	1,264,500

Number of children 0 – 14 identifying with an Indigenous group (2021)

<i>Age</i>	<i>First Nations</i>	<i>Métis</i>	<i>Inuk (Inuit)</i>	<i>Multiple</i>	<i>Other</i>
0 – 4	18,155	7,330	310	580	460
5 – 9	21,125	8,280	425	690	515
10 – 14	21,915	9,410	395	635	575
Total	61,195	25,020	1,130	1,905	1,550

Workforce participation of mothers by age of youngest child (2021 rounded estimate)

<i>Age of youngest child</i>	<i>Number of mothers</i>	<i>Participation rate (%)</i>
0 – 3	318,700	76.0
4 – 5	125,100	76.6
0 – 5	443,800	76.2
6 – 12	392,700	82.2

Living arrangements by age of child by number of parents (2021)

<i>Age</i>	<i>Living with two parents</i>	<i>Living with one parent</i>	<i>Lone mother</i>	<i>Lone father</i>
0 – 4	578,270	97,760	82,335	15,425
5 – 9	611,565	143,405	117,815	25,590
10 – 14	613,500	178,180	144,170	34,005

Languages spoken most often at home (2021)

<i>Age</i>	<i>English</i>	<i>French</i>	<i>Non-official</i>	<i>Multiple</i>
0 – 4	542,240	13,030	92,665	35,135
5 – 9	629,635	15,710	72,100	46,705
10 – 14	665,790	15,635	69,820	52,170
Total	1,837,665	44,380	234,590	134,025

Median after-tax income among families with children aged 0 – 5 (2020)

<i>Two-parent families</i>	<i>Male lone-parent</i>	<i>Female lone-parent</i>
\$106,000	\$52,400	\$48,000

PARENTAL LEAVE AND BENEFITS

Maternity and parental leave provisions in Canada outside Quebec are divided between federal and provincial/territorial governments. The federal government pays benefits under the Employment Insurance program (EI); provincial/territorial provisions for job-protected leave are established in each jurisdiction's employment standards legislation. EI is a contributory program; both employees and employers contribute.

LEAVE PROVISIONS**Maternity leave (pregnancy leave)**

17 weeks.

A pregnant employee who has been employed by the same employer for at least 13 weeks before the expected due date is eligible.

Parental leave

61 weeks for birth or adoption.

63 weeks if leave is shared.

An employee who has been employed by the same employer for at least 13 weeks and is the natural or adoptive parent of a child is eligible.

Parents can receive their weeks of benefits at the same time or one after another.

While on leave, employees retain their benefit plans and parental/pregnancy leave counts towards length of employment/service and seniority.

PARENTAL LEAVE BENEFITS**Benefit options in 2022**

Employment Insurance (EI) covers 15 weeks of maternity leave for eligible employed birth mothers up to 12 weeks prior to the expected date of birth and up to 17 weeks following the date of birth.

Two options for parental leave benefits

(parents must choose one)

Until December 3, 2017, there was one option for parental leave benefits: 35 weeks of paid leave taken over 12 months, paid at 55% of average weekly insurable earnings (up to \$638/week in 2022). This option is now known as the Standard Parental Benefit.

As of December 3, 2017, EI benefits include an additional option, the Extended Parental Benefit. This pays 61 weeks of parental leave benefits taken over 18 months and paid at 33% of average weekly earnings (up to \$383/week in 2022).

As of March 17, 2019, the Parental Sharing Benefit also became available to non-birth/second parents. Under this additional benefit, five weeks of Standard Benefits is available if parents share Standard Parental Benefits (40 weeks total) or an additional eight weeks of Extended Benefits is available when parents share Extended Parental Benefits (69 weeks total).

Parents' access to taking paid parental leave requires that provinces/territories' leave provisions must match federal benefits.

Note: For further details about the EI federal benefit, Quebec benefit and leave provisions, and provincial/territorial provisions for job-protected leave, see the PARENTAL LEAVE AND BENEFITS in the front section of this publication.

■ KINDERGARTEN

The Ministry of Education is responsible for junior kindergarten and kindergarten (often referred to as senior kindergarten) under the *Education Act* and its regulations.

Responsibility for delivery of public education is delegated to 72 district school boards including English and French public and separate (Catholic) boards. In addition, a small number of schools in remote and sparsely populated areas as well as in some children's hospitals are operated by school authorities.

Full-school day junior kindergarten and kindergarten are available to all four- and five-year-olds. Full-day junior kindergarten was introduced in 2010 and fully phased in across the province over a five-year period.

Junior kindergarten and kindergarten are not compulsory but most children attend. Every school board is required to provide both junior kindergarten and kindergarten in all elementary schools with a primary division, i.e., Grades 1 to 3 with some limited exceptions outlined in regulation.

Ontario funds both public and Catholic (often called separate) school boards. Private schools operate as non-profit organizations or businesses independently of the Ministry of Education and in accordance with the requirements set by the *Education Act*. They do not receive any funding or other financial support from the government. The Ministry does not regulate, license, accredit or otherwise oversee the operation of private schools.

Most schools in First Nations communities are operated by the community's Band councils, with a few federally operated. Schools in First Nations communities are funded by Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada.



PROVINCIAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR JUNIOR KINDERGARTEN AND KINDERGARTEN

Ministry of Education
Student Achievement Division
14th Floor, 315 Front Street West
Toronto, ON
M7A 0B8
Telephone: 416-325-2929 or 1-800-387-5514
Website: <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/kindergarten>

LEGISLATION AND REGULATIONS

Ontario. Legislative Assembly. *Education Act*. – RSO1990, c. E.2. Amended 2021, C- 25, s. 3.
Ontario Legislative Assembly. *Education Act – Ontario regulation 224/10 – Full day junior kindergarten and kindergarten*. *Education Act*, R.S.O. 1990, c. E.2.
Ontario. Legislative Assembly. Ontario regulation 132/12: Class Size under the *Education Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. E.2*.

JUNIOR KINDERGARTEN AND KINDERGARTEN

DEFINITION

Junior kindergarten and kindergarten are full-school day programs available to all four- and five-year-olds in publicly funded schools in Ontario. In most ways, it is treated as a two-year program (junior and senior). It is available across Ontario in rural and urban communities with each school board responsible for its delivery.

ELIGIBILITY

To attend junior kindergarten, a child must be four years of age by December 31 of the school year (three years and eight months in September). To attend kindergarten, a child must be five years of age by December 31 of the school year (four years and eight months in September).

COMPULSORY

Junior kindergarten and kindergarten attendance in Ontario is not compulsory but most four- and five-year-olds attend. Compulsory schooling begins at age six or when the child is in Grade 1.

ENTITLEMENT

All eligible children in Ontario are entitled to attend junior kindergarten and kindergarten.

INSTRUCTIONAL HOURS PER DAY

Junior kindergarten and kindergarten are full-school days in Ontario; the full length of the instructional program is no less than five hours a day excluding recesses.

Every school year includes a minimum of 194 school days.

CLASS SIZE

In Ontario, the average class size for junior kindergarten or kindergarten must not exceed 26. This is a maximum board-wide average requirement, not a hard cap.

The class size limit of a class with students enrolled only in junior kindergarten and kindergarten is 29.

Under the following conditions, up to 10% of junior kindergarten and kindergarten classes in a school board may have as many as 32 students:

- exceeding the class size limit would reduce the number of classes that have both a pupil in junior kindergarten or kindergarten and a pupil in grade 1
- not exceeding the class size limit would negatively affect a program, such as French immersion or
- in respect of a school year during the period beginning in the 2017 – 2018 school year up until and including the 2021 – 2022 school year, purpose-built accommodation is not available. O. Reg. 245/17, s. 1. This condition expired at the end of the 2021 – 2022 school year.

CURRICULUM OR CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK

In 2016, [The Kindergarten Program \(2016\)](#) was released to be used in all kindergarten programs and an addendum was added in 2019 ([The Kindergarten Program, 2019](#)).

The use of this curriculum is mandated in all junior kindergarten and kindergarten programs in the province.

GENERAL TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS AND CERTIFICATION

Full-school day junior kindergarten and kindergarten classrooms with 16 or more students are staffed by an educator team of two:

- a certified teacher registered with the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT) (or other provincial/territorial certifying body); and
- a Registered Early Childhood Educator (RECE).

Classes with fewer than 16 students are not required to have an RECE if the class meets specific conditions as outlined in regulation (O Reg 224/10).

An elementary school teacher must have an OCT teaching certificate. This requires an undergraduate degree and two years of teacher education with qualifications in the primary/junior divisions including training in the range of curriculum subjects for kindergarten to grade 6.

Specific training in early childhood education is not required for a junior kindergarten or kindergarten teacher.

RECEs are required to have completed an early childhood education diploma from an Ontario College of Applied Arts and Technology or other approved education program and to be registered in good standing with the provincial College of Early Childhood Educators.

Note: For further details about Registered Early Childhood Educators, see Regulated Child Care in this section.

TOTAL ENROLMENT IN JUNIOR KINDERGARTEN AND KINDERGARTEN (SCHOOL YEAR 2020 – 2021)

	JK	SK
English language	108,349	122,443
French language	8,321	8,775
Total (French and English)	116,670	131,218

Source: As reported by schools in the Ontario School Information System (OnSIS), 2020 – 2021 (preliminary). Preliminary as of September 2, 2022, with all schools with completed data submissions. Data include public and Roman Catholic schools only.

FINANCIAL (FISCAL YEAR 2020 – 2021)

Estimated Grants for Student Needs (GSN) for:	
Junior kindergarten	\$1.8B
Senior kindergarten	\$1.8B
Kindergarten (total)	\$3.6B
Junior kindergarten (per pupil)	\$13,507
Senior kindergarten (per pupil)	\$13,507

Note: The estimated GSN funding for the kindergarten (junior and senior) program is based on the 2020 – 2021 projected portion of the total Grants for Student Needs (GSN) funding reflecting projected average daily enrolment at the time (June 2020). This is a funding measure, not spending. The average provincial per pupil funding was projected at \$12,525 in 2020 – 2021 school year based on information from the 2020 – 2021 GSN at the time of release as outlined in the 2020 – 2021 Grants for Student Needs Funding Memorandum 2020:B08.

■ CHILD CARE

PROVINCIAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR CHILD CARE

Ministry of Education
Early Years and Child Care Division
114th Floor, 315 Front Street West,
Toronto, ON M7A 0B8
Telephone: 416-325-2929
Website: <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/childcare/>

LEGISLATION AND REGULATIONS

Ontario. Legislative Assembly. [Child Care and Early Years Act](#). – SO2014. C 11, S. 1.
Ontario. Legislative Assembly. [Early Childhood Educators Act](#). – SO2007. C -7, S. 8.
Ontario. Legislative Assembly. [Child Care and Early Years Act – O.Reg. 137/15: General](#). – SO2014. 137/15.
Ontario. Legislative Assembly. [Child Care and Early Years Act O. Reg. 138/15: Funding, Cost Sharing And Financial Assistance](#). – SO2014. 138/15.

CHILD CARE SERVICES

UNREGULATED CHILD CARE

The Ontario government uses the term “unlicensed child care”.

In unlicensed or unregulated (informal) child care, a provider can legally care for a maximum of five children under the age of 13, with no more than three children under two years at one time. The provider’s own children under four years who are on the premises are included in the total.

There are no stipulations that unregulated child care be provided in the provider’s home or home-type residence; an unlicensed child care provider may operate from a residential or commercial premise. However, an unregulated provider may not operate child care in more than one premise.

There is no public oversight of unregulated (unlicensed) child care. Unlicensed child care providers are not required to register with the government and are not regularly inspected like licensed child care. However, the Ministry of Education is responsible for enforcing the *Child Care and Early Years Act* (CCEYA) and its regulations which capture unlicensed child care programs.

As a result, the ministry will follow-up on complaints regarding an unlicensed child care program that may be operating in contravention of the *Act* and/or regs.

The *Child Care and Early Years Act* (CCEYA) includes provisions for compliance orders, protection orders, administrative penalties, and prosecution of offenses regarding unregulated child care.

Note: Additional details can be found in the [Child Care and Early Years Act](#).

Note: Additional forms of child care outside regular school hours in Ontario are not licensed but are authorized and/or funded. See the Regulated child care section below.

REGULATED CHILD CARE

Regulated child care is termed “licensed child care” by the Ontario government, which has two main types of licensed child care programs, centres and family child care. Child care centres and family child care offered through home child care agencies licensed by the Ministry of Education.

Child care centres

Licensed child care centres include full-day, part-day (nursery school), non-standard hours, and some child care outside regular school hours for children four to twelve years old.

Note: Some kinds of centre-based child care for kindergarten-age and school-age children outside regular school hours are not required to be licensed. See below.

Child care centres operate in a variety of locations including schools, community centres, places of worship, residential buildings, workplaces, commercial spaces such as storefronts and apartment block rooms, and purpose-built facilities.

Licensed home child care (regulated family child care)

Licensed home child care was previously referred to as “private home day care” in Ontario legislation and practice. Neither the providers or these homes are licensed individually. Instead, Ontario licenses the home child care agencies, which monitor the provision of care.

Home child care providers contracted by a licensed agency can care for a maximum of six children under the age of 13, based on the age of the child and the agency’s discretion. A home child care provider may care for no more than three children under the age of two, including their own children under four years of age.

In-home child care

An in-home service refers to child care provided under the aegis of a home child care agency for a child at the child's home, or at another place where residential care is provided for the child. It is provided under an agreement between a home child care agency and a child care provider. The agency provides oversight of the provision of care.

Before- and after-school programs for children in junior kindergarten to grade 6

School boards are required to offer before- and after-school programs in every elementary school serving students in junior kindergarten to Grade 6 where there is sufficient demand, although they are not required to meet full demand.

A number of authorized/recognized centre-based options for child care outside regular school hours for children in junior kindergarten to Grade 6 are offered in Ontario. Some are licensed; some are not required to be licensed.

Licensed

- Child care centres for children in junior kindergarten to Grade 6 – These are under the aegis of child care and are not located in schools.
- Third Party programs – Centre-based child care located in schools for children in junior kindergarten to Grade 6. These are under child care aegis and delivered by non-profit and for-profit child care operators.

Unlicensed

- Extended Day – Centre-based program outside school hours primarily for kindergarten-age children (four and five years) but may include children up to grade 6. These are operated by a school board.
- Third Party programs – Authorized Recreation and Skill Building programs – Centre-based programs for four- and five-year-olds in junior kindergarten to Grade 6 under the aegis of child care, offered in schools. They are permitted to operate once a day for up to three consecutive hours (e.g., after school).

School boards may operate programs via unlicensed Extended Day programs or enter into an agreement with a Third Party provider – either a licensed child care centre, or an unlicensed Authorized Recreation and Skill Building provider for after-school programs.

The age of the children for whom an unlicensed Authorized Recreation and Skill Building program may provide care was changed from 6 – 12 years to 4 – 12 years in 2019.

A 2011 regulation stipulating that Third Party programs providing child care in schools (that is, licensed child care centres) must be operated by a not-for-profit organization or a municipality was removed from regulation in 2019. As of April 1, 2019, both for-profit and non-profit child care operators became eligible to operate in schools in Ontario.

CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK

How does learning happen? Ontario's pedagogy for the early years has been in place to guide programming in child care since June 2015.

Use of this framework is a provincial requirement for a child care centre and regulations support its implementation. Licensed child care centres are required to have a program statement consistent with it, as are home child care providers working with licensed agencies. EarlyON centres and unlicensed school board-operated before- and after-school programs are also required, through guidelines, to use *How does learning happen?*

In response to child care centre closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic, in July 2020, the Ministry of Education published an additional curriculum resource for safe reopening of child care centres to supplement *Building on how does learning happen? Pedagogical approaches to re-opening early years and child care programs in Ontario*.



CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

In Ontario, a child with special needs refers to a child whose cognitive, physical, social, emotional, or communicative needs, or whose needs relating to overall development, are of such a nature that additional supports are required.

Ontario provides funding to Consolidated Municipal Service Managers and District Social Services Administration Boards (CMSMs and DSSABs) and First Nations to plan, manage, and coordinate Special Needs Resourcing funding to support the inclusion of children with special needs in early years and child care settings.

Special Needs Resourcing funding is available to not-for-profit and for-profit regulated and unregulated settings including licensed centres, licensed home child care, EarlyON Child and Family Centres, authorized recreation programs, and camps.

The Ministry of Education requires CMSMs and DSSABs (municipal entities) to spend a minimum of 4.1% of their municipal child care funding on Special Needs Resourcing. Funding must be spent in accordance with provincial policies and guidelines.

Special Needs Resourcing funding may be used to:

- hire or acquire the services of a resource teacher/consultant and/or supplemental staff where necessary (including salary and benefits) to support the inclusion of children with special needs;
- provide professional development opportunities to support staff in licensed child care settings working with children with special needs and their parents/families to support inclusion; and
- purchase or lease specialized/adaptive equipment and supplies to support children with special needs.

Resource teachers/consultants may work with several children in multiple locations and may also provide training and support to regular staff working with children with special needs in licensed child care and approved recreation programs. The type and level of service can vary, depending on each child's needs, the local service model, and available resources.

Special Needs Resourcing support by resource teachers/consultants may include: providing child care staff with program accommodation and modification strategies and/or professional development; support for individualized support plans; developmental screening, referrals to community agencies; information and resources for parents; and obtaining specialized equipment as required.

The Ministry of Education recommends (but does not require) that resource teachers/consultants hold a diploma in Early Childhood Education, be registered with the College of Early Childhood Educators, have additional training/experience/education related to working with children with special needs, and hold a standard first aid credential including an infant/child CPR certificate. Requirements for resource teachers/consultants directly employed by licensed child care operators are outlined in section 55 of O. Reg. 137/15 of the *CCEYA*.

Ontario Regulation 137/15 of the *CCEYA* requires child care operators to ensure that an up-to-date individualized support plan is in place for each child with special needs in child care, and that the plan includes:

- a description of how the centre or home child care provider will support the child to function and participate in a meaningful, purposeful manner;
- a description of any supports or aids, adaptations or other modifications to the physical, social and learning environment; and
- instructions relating to the child's use of supports/aids.

The plan must be developed in consultation with the child (if appropriate for the child's age), a parent of the child with disabilities, and any regulated health care professional or other person working with the child who would be a helpful collaborator. A centre that includes children with disabilities must be structured so that the program accommodates the individualized support plan of each child and is developmentally appropriate while being inclusive of all children.

In accordance with the *Child Care and Early Years Act*, 2014, licensees must provide evidence of compliance with the Ontario Building Code (includes accessibility requirements designed to align with the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act*, 2005).

FIRST NATIONS, MÉTIS AND INUIT CHILD CARE

FIRST NATIONS CHILD CARE ON RESERVES

Ontario funds and regulates child care in First Nations communities on reserve.

Ontario cost-shares most child care costs including operating grants, wage enhancement, parents fee subsidies and funding for children with special needs.

In 2021, 74 licensed child care centres delivering 3,291 spaces were operating in 59 First Nations in reserve communities in Ontario.

Number of licensed spaces on reserve

Infants	309
Toddlers	747
Preschool-age	1,568
School-age	667
Total licensed spaces	3,291

There were also two regulated home child care agencies with 31 homes, with spaces for 186 children on First Nations reserves.

The federal government also funds Aboriginal Head Start On Reserve Program (AHSOR). AHSOR provides part-day early childhood education programs, which Ontario licenses.

In 2022, there were 123 AHSOR programs in Ontario.

INDIGENOUS CHILD CARE OTHER THAN ON RESERVE

The federal government funds part-day Aboriginal Head Start in Urban and Northern Communities (AHSUNC), for which the Public Health Agency of Canada is responsible.

In most cases AHSUNC programs are licensed in Ontario and are Indigenous-led. They may be operated by an Indigenous organization such as a Friendship Centre or another community organization, for example Native Child and Family Services of Toronto or Inuuqatigiit Centre for Inuit Children, Youth and Families in Ottawa.

In 2022, there were 14 AHSUNC programs operating in urban and northern communities in Ontario.

OTHER INDIGENOUS-SPECIFIC RESOURCES/ INITIATIVES

Seven Indigenous institutes offer an Early Childhood Education diploma in Ontario.

The funding formula used to determine allocations to CMSMs and DSSABs includes an Indigenous component to support the unique costs of providing culturally appropriate child care and child and family programs for families identifying themselves as Indigenous not living on reserve. Funding for Indigenous-led child care and EarlyON Child and Family programs must be spent on the following priorities:

- increasing access to culturally relevant licensed child care and EarlyON Child and Family programs; and
- programming delivered by Indigenous-led organizations working with CMSMs/DSSABs.

SPACE STATISTICS

NUMBER OF REGULATED SPACES (2021)

Full- and/or part-day centre spaces for 0 – 5-year-olds

<i>Centre spaces</i>	<i>Number of spaces</i>
Infants (0 – < 18 months)	14,602
Toddlers (18 months – < 30 months)	49,883
Preschool-age (30 months – < 6 years)	115,431
Family-age grouping	842

TOTAL FULL- AND PART-DAY CENTRE SPACES

(0 – 5 years) **180,758**

Note: A breakdown between full- and part-day (nursery school) spaces is not available in Ontario. However, note that 949 centres were identified by Ontario as offering a part-day nursery school program.

Before- and after-school care (licensed, regulated, approved or authorized)

Number of spaces in before- and after-school care for children in junior kindergarten/ kindergarten (44 months – < 7 years)	107,453
Number of spaces in before- and after-school care for children in Grades 1 – 6	176,327
<i>Total number of spaces in before- and after-school care for children in junior kindergarten/ kindergarten and Grades 1 – 6</i>	283,780

TOTAL CENTRE SPACES (0 – 12 years)

464,538

Regulated family child care enrolment

Full-day (Children not attending school)	10,112
Part-day (Children attending school)	2,622
<i>Total regulated family child care spaces (enrolment)</i>	12,734

TOTAL REGULATED SPACES

(centre spaces and family child care enrolment) **477,272**



Number of child care centres (2021)

<i>Total number of centres</i>	5,506
<i>Centre-based programs</i>	
Number of centres providing a full-day program	3,312
Number of centres providing a part-day (nursery school/ preschool) program	949
Number of centres providing a part-day program for children attending school (approx 4 – 12)	3,723
Number of centres providing infant care (0 – < 18 months)	1,383
Number of centres providing toddler care (18 months – < 30 months)	2,783
Number of centres providing preschool-age care (30 months – 6 years)	3,536
Number of centres providing non-standard hours care (non-standard hours as defined by the province/territory)	495
Number of centres in publicly delivered and funded schools (2019)	2,986
Number of Extended Day programs before- and after-school for kindergarten-age	260

Note: A breakdown between full-day and part-day spaces is not available by age group, hence the total number of centres by age group is not equal to the total number of centres (5,506) because some centres provide both full-day and part-day child care services.

Note: For a definition of non-standard hours care in Ontario, see [Non-standard work and child care in Canada \(pg. 89\)](#).

Number of regulated family child care homes

Number of individual family child care homes (active)	3,210
Number of family child care agencies (2019)	139

Municipal delivery

Number of municipalities or municipal entities operating child care centres	16
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Programs by auspice (2021)

<i>Centres</i>	<i>Number of centres/agencies</i>
For-profit	1,368
Non-profit	3,955
Publicly operated ¹	183
<i>Family child care agencies</i>	
For-profit	33
Non-profit	80
Municipally operated	13

¹ Municipality/ municipal entity, school authority, other government agency or Indigenous governance organization includes 109 centres operated by local government and 74 by a First Nations government

Centre spaces by auspice (2021)

	<i>0 – 5 years (full-day and/ or part-day)¹</i>	<i>6 – 12 years (part-day)</i>	<i>Total spaces</i>
For-profit	75,798	22,131	97,929
Non-profit	97,980	259,165	357,145
Publicly operated ²	6,980	2,484	9,464
Total spaces	180,758	283,780	464,538

¹ A breakdown between the number of licensed full- and part-day spaces is not available by age group for children 0 – 5 years in Ontario. The figures in this column includes a relatively small number of part-day nursery school spaces.

² Includes 6,173 spaces operated by municipal entities and 3,291 by Indigenous governance organizations.

Note: For a profile of child care auspice in Ontario, see [Risky Business](#).

FEE SUBSIDIES

Children receiving subsidies in licensed, regulated, or approved child care (March 31, 2021)

	<i>In centres</i>	<i>In family child care</i>	<i>Total</i>
Full subsidy	33,515	4,566	38,081
Partial subsidy	26,394	2,335	28,729

SPECIAL NEEDS/DISABILITY SUPPORT FUNDING

Children in licensed, regulated, or approved child care being supported by special needs/disability support funding (March 31, 2021)

	37,508
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For a list of all licensed programs and services in Ontario, see this [directory](#).

ENROLMENT STATISTICS

Centre-based enrolment (March 31, 2021)

<i>Full-day centres</i>	
Infants (0 – < 18 months)	7,112
Toddlers (18 months – < 30 months)	29,427
Preschool-age (30 months – < 6 years)	66,570

TOTAL FULL-DAY ENROLMENT **103,109**

Part-day centres

Infants (0 – < 18 months)	155
Toddlers (18 months – < 30 months)	1,154
Preschool-age (30 months – < 6 years)	7,449

TOTAL PART-DAY ENROLMENT **8,758**

Other (where age breakdowns are not available)
Family-age (in centres) 494

TOTAL ENROLMENT (0 – 5 years) 112,361

Note: This total does not include kindergarten-age children in before- and after-school child care.

Before- and after-school child care (licensed, regulated, approved or authorized)

Number of junior kindergarten and kindergarten-age children (44 months – < 7 years) enrolled in before- and after-school care 34,077

Number of children in Grades 1 – 6 enrolled in before- and after-school care 56,440

Total number of children in junior kindergarten/ kindergarten-age and Grades 1 – 6 enrolled in before- and after-school child care 90,517

TOTAL ENROLMENT (0 – 12 years) 202,878

PARENT FEES

Ontario does not set or regulate parent fees. Fees are established by individual operators.

PROVINCIAL DATA ON FEES

Ontario has collected annual survey information on parent fees from licensed child care centres and home child care agencies since 2017.

Based on the 2021 and 2022 annual survey reports, the following parent fees were reported by licensed child care centres and home child care agencies:

Median daily parent fees (2021) and mean daily parent fees (2022)

<i>Centres</i>	<i>Median daily fee (2021)</i>	<i>Mean daily fee (2022)</i>
Infant	\$69	\$75.01
Toddler	\$57	\$62.76
Preschool-age	\$50	\$55.46
Kindergarten-age	\$44	\$49.29
Kindergarten-age before- and after-school	\$26	\$26.07
School-age before- and after-school	\$22	\$23.58

<i>Home child care</i>	<i>Median daily fee (2021)</i>	<i>Mean daily fee (2022)</i>
0 – < 2 years	\$47	\$48.69
2 – 3 years	\$46	\$47.30
4 – 5 years (kindergarten-age)	\$42	\$43.57
4 – 5 years (kindergarten-age) before- and after-school	\$26	\$27.17
6 – 12 years (school-age) before- and after-school	\$25	\$27.23

Source: 2021 Licensed Child Care Operations Survey, Ontario Ministry of Education (as of March 31, 2021) and 2022 Licensed Child Care Operations Survey, Ontario Ministry of Education (as of March 31, 2022).

Note: These parent fees do not reflect the fee reduction under the two phases committed to in the Ontario-Canada-wide ELCC Agreement as below.

Note: In 2022, market parent fees under the Ontario-Canada-wide ELCC Agreement were reduced in two phases: a first reduction of an average of 25% of fees as of March 28, 2022 to a minimum of \$12/day (retroactive to April 1, 2022) with a second average 25% reduction in December, 2022, resulting in an average fee reduction of 50% by the end of 2022.

Median monthly fees in Ontario: Annual Fee Survey

In 2021, a national survey of child care fees in Canada's large cities included the following Ontario cities:

Median monthly fees for full-time child care

<i>City</i>	<i>Infant</i>	<i>Toddler</i>	<i>Preschool-age</i>
Windsor	\$998	\$890	\$792
London	\$1,269	\$1,215	\$1,085
Kitchener	\$1,253	\$1,139	\$1,072
Hamilton	\$1,472	\$1,194	\$1,023
Brampton	\$1,638	\$1,309	\$1,150
Mississauga	\$1,530	\$1,318	\$1,194
Oakville	\$1,584	\$1,378	\$1,248
Richmond Hill	\$1,479	\$1,327	\$1,200
Vaughn	\$1,550	\$1,327	\$1,199
Toronto	\$1,948	\$1,615	\$1,300
Markham	\$1,475	\$1,302	\$1,200
Ottawa	\$1,020	\$1,254	\$1,031

Source: Macdonald, D., & Friendly, M. (2022). *Game changer: Will provinces and territories meet the new federal child care fee targets? Canadian child care fees 2021*. Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

Note: These median monthly figures include fees from centre-based child care and regulated home child care.

WORKFORCE

According to the College of Early Childhood Educators' 2020 – 2021 annual data report, there was a total of 58,867 Registered Early Childhood Educators, of whom 32,965 were working in licensed centres and home child care.

EARLY CHILDHOOD CERTIFICATION

Ontario's College of Early Childhood Educators manages provincial certification of "Registered Early Childhood Educators" (RECE). There are no levels within the RECE designation.

College of Early Childhood Educators (CECE)

The [College of Early Childhood Educators \(CECE\)](#) was created in 2009 by the Ontario government. It has a statutory mandate to govern and regulate the profession of early childhood education in Ontario under the [Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice](#). The CECE is governed by the [Early Childhood Educators Act, 2007](#).

Individuals with a minimum of a two year Ontario ECE diploma or equivalent from an [approved CECE program](#) must become a member of the College to be considered "qualified", or to use the Registered Early Childhood Educator (RECE) title.

Registered Early Childhood Educator

To be registered with the College of Early Childhood Educators requires successful completion of an early childhood education diploma or equivalent from an accredited Ontario College of Applied Arts and Technology or a university or a program approved by the CECE.

To maintain designation as an RECE, educators must take part in [continuous professional learning \(CPL\)](#). There is no determined number of hours needed for professional development.

CECE members must renew membership on a yearly basis and are referred to as Registered Early Childhood Educators (RECE).

Early childhood assistant

"Early childhood assistant" is not a specified provincial category although a number of colleges across Ontario offer early childhood assistant programs. Individuals without RECE certification may be termed "early childhood assistants" by an employer. There are no requirements for an "early childhood assistant" to have any training or education in early childhood education.

STAFF WAGES

Wages and benefits of RECEs and other child care staff are set by individual operators.

Ontario does not have a provincial wage grid.

Provincial wage data

Percent of full-time program staff in licensed child care centres in the following hourly wage ranges (2021)

Hourly wage range	RECE (%)	Director approved (%)	Non-RECE/ not director approved (%)
\$14.25 – \$15.00	2	4	17
\$15.01 – \$20.00	36	50	64
\$20.01 – \$28.31	51	39	18
\$28.32 – \$30.00	3	2	1
\$30.01 – \$35.00	5	2	–
\$35.01 – \$40.00	2	1	–
\$40.01+	–	1	–

Percent of full-time program staff in licensed child care centres in the following hourly wage ranges (2022)

Hourly wage range	RECE (%)	Director approved (%)	Non-RECE/ not director approved (%)
\$15.00 – \$17.50	10	14	40
\$17.51 – \$20.00	22	31	36
\$20.01 – \$22.50	21	26	15
\$22.51 – \$25.00	22	14	6
\$25.01 – \$27.50	11	6	2
\$27.51 – \$28.59	3	2	1
\$28.60 – \$30.00	2	2	–
\$30.01 – \$32.50	2	2	–
\$32.51 – \$35.00	2	1	–
\$35.01 – \$37.50	1	–	–
\$37.51 – \$40.00	1	–	–
\$40.00 +	–	–	–



Wage floor

As of April 2022, a new wage floor applies to Registered Early Childhood Educators (RECEs) working in licensed child care centres for children aged 0 – 5 years that are enrolled in the Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care agreement.

Wage improvement funds, transferred to licensees, are aimed at bringing up RECE wages to the wage floor.

Wage floor by job title

	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
RECE program staff					
	\$18	\$19	\$20	\$21	\$22
RECE child care supervisors or RECE home child care visitors					
	\$20	\$21	\$22	\$23	\$24

Note: Ontario has committed an additional \$395 million for RECEs working in before- and after-school child care with 6 – 12-year-olds parallel to the wage increases for RECEs for the 0 – 5 age group; the federal funding covers only educators working with 0 – 5-year-olds.

Source: [Press release](#), Ontario Ministry of Education, March 28, 2022

Also see the Funding section for further information on Provincial Wage Enhancement funding.

Median annual employment income (\$) and median hourly wage range (\$) for Early Childhood Educators and Assistants working in day care services full-time, full-year

<i>Median annual employment income</i>	\$40,000
<i>Median hourly employment income</i>	\$19.23 – 21.98

Note: Calculated using 2,080 hours/year (40 hours/week) and 1,820 hours/year (35 hours/week).

Source: Canadian Census (2021). Special run by Statistics Canada.

Note: These data include Early Childhood Educators and Assistants, as defined in NOC 4214 and “working in the day care services industry in centre-based environments with children aged 0 – 12 years”, as defined in NAICS 6244. Included are individuals who worked full-time (30+ hours/week) and full-year (48+ weeks/year), did not work at home, and were not self-employed. Included are supervisors but not managers. Employment income refers to income from all jobs if the Early Childhood Educator or Assistant holds a second job providing a wage, salary or commissions.

Note: See Table 18 in this report for comparable data from other provinces/territories and Canada average.

STANDARDS AND REGULATIONS

REGULATED CHILD CARE CENTRES

In Ontario, child care centres are licensed and regulated by the [Child Care and Early Years Act](#) and [Regulation 137/15 General](#).

Ontario does not specify a maximum centre size.

Staff:child ratios and maximum group sizes

Age group	Staff:child ratios	Maximum group sizes
Infant (0 – < 18 months)	3:10	10
Toddler (18 – 30 months)	1:5	15
Preschool-age (30 months – 6 years)	1:8	24
Kindergarten-age (44 months – < 7 years)	1:13	26
Primary/junior school-age (68 months – < 13 years)	1:15	30
Junior school-age (9 – < 13 years)	1:20	20

Note: Mixed-age groupings are permitted with requirements specific to age groupings and mix of child ages in the group. For more details, see [Ratios of employees to children and group size](#).

Note: The Ministry of Education may give approval for a child care centre to use a mixed-age grouping for any licensed age group.

Staff:child ratios in child care centres for family-age grouping

“Licensed family age group” permits a group of not more than 15 children, and not more than six children younger than 24 months.

Age of child	Staff:child ratios
0 – < 12 months	1:3
12 – < 24 months	1:4
24 months – < 13 years	1:8

Staffing requirements for centre-based programs

This section describes the minimum requirements for staff needed for a regulated centre to operate. It includes early childhood qualification requirements for centre staff and supervisors/directors, as well as other requirements (e.g., age, first aid, background check).

“Qualified” staff for any licensed age group must be a Registered Early Childhood Educator (RECE) in good standing with the College of Early Childhood Educators (CECE).

Early childhood requirements for staffing a centre

In Ontario, early childhood qualification requirements in centres are specified at the individual group or room level.

Junior school-age or primary/junior school-age groups/with only junior school-age children may have staff with the following qualifications instead of an early childhood education credential (RECE):

- a diploma/degree in child and youth care or recreation and leisure services or
- good standing with the Ontario College of Teachers.

To meet licensing requirements, centres must maintain the following proportions of qualified staff in each room/group:

Proportion of qualified staff required in each room/group

Age group	Proportion of staff who must be qualified
Infant	1:3
Toddler	1:3
Preschool-age	2:3
Kindergarten-age	1:2
Primary/junior school-age	1:2
Junior school-age	1:1

Director approval may be granted for an individual who does not meet the requirements for a qualified employee outlined in the *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014*, to take the place of a qualified staff member in a specific age group. Each staff director approval is reviewed on a case by case basis at the time of the request and at least annually thereafter. Director approvals are not transferable and only apply to one specific licensed age group.

Requirements for on-site centre supervisors and directors

A centre must have a supervisor or director who is a Registered Early Childhood Educator (RECE) in good standing with the College of Early Childhood Educators (CECE) and has at least two years of experience providing licensed child care.

According to the *Early Childhood Educators Act, 2007*, supervisors must have a strong theoretical background in the practice of early childhood education and is able to “plan and deliver inclusive play based learning and care programs” for children of all ages.

Director approval for a supervisor who does not meet the requirements of the Regulation may be granted in exceptional cases where there is evidence of knowledge and expertise that has been acquired in other ways.

As of June 27, 2022, there were 1,010 director approvals granted for non-Registered Early Childhood Educator supervisors in Ontario.

Other staffing requirements

Centre supervisors and all employees counted towards staff:child ratios must have standard first aid (including infant and child CPR) certification. All staff, volunteers and students must also complete a health assessment and immunization prior to employment or educational placement.

Licensing, monitoring and enforcement of regulated child care centres

A child care centre licence may be approved between one to two years based on their compliance history and tier.

Ontario adopted a tiered licensing system (risk-based assessment) for centres in 2016, which determines the monitoring schedule for that centre. A centre’s tier determines the maximum length of a centre’s licence (up to two years) as well as the type of inspection. Tiered licensing applies to centres that have been licensed for three years or more.

Inspections are conducted at least once annually by Ministry staff, who may enter a licensed child care centre at any reasonable time. Ministry staff may also conduct unannounced inspections.

Licensees must also post any additional information as required through conditions on their licence, such as their licence inspection summary.

Source: [Child Care Centre Licensing Manual | Ontario.ca](#).

If non-compliance that does not pose imminent health and safety risks to children is found during an inspection, a provisional licence may be issued for no more than one year. The non-compliance must be remedied within a limited time frame. If a provisional license is issued, the centre must send parents a letter detailing the issuance of the provisional license and unmet requirements.

Ontario requires child care centres to develop and make accessible a parent handbook providing specific information about child care regulations.

REGULATED FAMILY CHILD CARE

The Ontario government terms regulated family child care “licensed home child care”.

Home child care is governed under the [Child Care and Early Years Act](#) and regulated by the [O.Reg 137/15](#).

Model of organization

Regulated home child care in Ontario uses an agency model.

Individual home child care providers are not licensed but contracted by a licensed agency.

Home child care agencies may be publicly operated (municipal), non-profit or for-profit.

A home child care agency is required to employ home visitors to ensure regulations are met.

Maximum capacity

Up to six children under the age of 13 are allowed in a regulated child care home. Of those six, there must be no more than three under two years. The providers’ own children are counted if those children are under four years old.

Licensing, monitoring, and enforcement

A home child care provider becomes regulated by entering into an agreement with a licensed home child care agency which is responsible for ensuring that the legislation and regulations are met.

Tiered licensing does not apply to regulated home child care.

Regulations regarding home inspections/visits

A home visitor is required to conduct unannounced quarterly visits to every home child care provider and complete the Ministry Inspection Checklist.

Home visitors must be Registered Early Childhood Educators and have a minimum two years of experience working with children under 13 years old.

They must follow up on non-compliances, serious occurrences and complaints.

Home visitors also provide support to providers on programming, nutrition and equipment.

There is no specified number of child care homes a home child care visitor carries in their caseload.

At least once per year, the Ministry of Education inspects each licensed home child care agency and some child care homes to ensure the agency complies with the CCEYA and its regulations.

Requirements for family child care providers

Home child care providers are not required to have specific training or educational qualifications. Regulations require that each home child care agency have written policies and procedures with respect to training for each home child care provider.

Home child care providers are defined as independent contractors, (not agency employees) who contract an agreement with a home child care agency to provide regulated child care under the licensed agency’s oversight.

Providers must be at least 18 years old, cannot have been convicted of an offence under the CCEYA, cannot have been convicted of any of the prescribed offences under the Criminal Code as detailed in the CCEYA (e.g., sexual interference, child pornography), cannot have had their membership revoked under the *Early Childhood Educators Act*, *Ontario College of Teachers Act*, or *Social Work and Social Service Work Act*.

Providers must have undergone health assessment and public health recommended immunizations, and valid certification in standard first aid, including infant and child CPR.

The provider and anyone else normally resident in the home child care environment who is regularly on the premises when children are present are required to have a Vulnerable Sector Check.



■ FUNDING FOR REGULATED CHILD CARE

CHILD CARE SERVICES' ELIGIBILITY FOR FUNDING

All licensed non-profit, public and for-profit child care services are eligible for all available funding including capital funding.

TYPES OF FUNDING

PARENT FEE SUBSIDIES

Fee subsidies are managed and administered at the municipal level by Community Municipal Service Managers (CMSMs) and District Social Services Administration Board (DSSABs). This includes decisions regarding social criteria for parent eligibility.

CMSMs and DSSABs are responsible for maintaining a flexible mix of subsidies for part- and full-day child care, across all age groups that reflects the range of local service needs.

Characteristics of Ontario's approach to parent fee subsidies:

- administration of parent fee subsidies is part of the mandate of local (municipal) service managers;
- fee subsidies in Ontario are determined by a provincial income test that uses a calculation between net family income and total child care fees charged for all children in the family;
- there is no upper income limit on the provincial income test that determines subsidy eligibility and amount of subsidy;
- there is no maximum subsidy rate; and
- eligibility and assessment for a fee subsidy does not guarantee the parent a subsidy. The supply of fee subsidies for eligible families is linked to availability of subsidy funding, resulting in waiting lists for fee subsidies in some municipalities.

Eligibility criteria

From the perspective of the Ontario government, to access a fee subsidy, parents are not required to have recognized needs themselves (for example, employment, attendance at an educational/training program, or other circumstances, including medical needs). If the parent has recognized needs, the parents' circumstances should be taken into consideration.

CMSMs and DSSABs have discretion to determine the appropriate amount of subsidized child care based on a consideration of the parent's needs and what would be in the best interests of the child.

Subsidy may also be provided based on the special needs or social needs of the child, or special needs of a parent.

Social criteria policies do not apply to First Nations on reserve which may establish their own criteria.

Financial/income eligibility (2021)

Family eligibility for a fee subsidy in Ontario is determined by a provincial income test based on net income. The amount a subsidized family is required to pay is determined on a whole family basis, not per child.

CMSMs and DSSABs must use the provincial income test prescribed by O. Reg. 138/15: Funding, Cost-sharing and Financial Assistance under the CCEYA, to determine eligibility for fee subsidy and the amount of the parental contribution.

In 2021, the following rules applied:

- fee subsidy is based on adjusted net family income (line 236 of the latest income tax Notice of Assessment) and total actual or projected cost of child care for the family (the subsidy calculation is for all children in the family, not per child);
- if the parent/ family has a total adjusted income of \$20,000 or less, the parent pays no child care costs (is fully subsidized);
- there is no specified upper net income limit;
- when the family's annual adjusted income is above \$20,000, the parental contribution is calculated based on 10% of adjusted income over \$20,000;
- when the family's annual adjusted income is above \$40,000, the parental contribution is calculated at 10% of the amount over \$20,000 up to \$40,000, plus 30% of the amount over \$40,000;
- if the calculated parental contribution exceeds the cost of child care, the family is not eligible for fee subsidy; and
- Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program recipients are eligible for full subsidy without being subject to the income test, providing they meet other social criteria.

Parent fee subsidies are intended to cover all or part of the fee for individual eligible parents. Parents are responsible for paying the assessed fee (the unsubsidized balance).

Service providers' eligibility to deliver subsidized child care

Under provincial policy, fee subsidies may be available for use in all licensed child care (centres and home-based, public, not-for-profit and for-profit). In addition, child care exempt from licensing under the CCEYA and its regulations (school board-operated before- and after-school programs such as the Extended Day, Authorized Recreational and Skill Building programs, and camps that meet specified criteria) are also eligible to receive children whose fees are subsidized.

To be eligible to provide child care for a child whose fees are subsidized, a child care operator must have a service contract with the CMSM or DSSAB (sometimes called a “purchase of service agreement”).

Until 2021, CMSMs and DSSABs were able to set their own criteria (in addition to provincial criteria) for services receiving subsidized children or other funding. These included: minimum quality ratings based on municipal quality assessment tools, meeting identified targets such as a salary scale, or having non-profit incorporation. This changed in 2022; CMSMs and DSSABs are no longer permitted to set such criteria.

Surcharges above the fee subsidy

A parent/family receiving a full subsidy is not required to pay an additional fee. However, if the amount paid by the CMSM or DSSAB is less than the service providers' actual cost, the parent/family may have to pay the difference.

Subsidy rates

The maximum subsidy rate is the amount the government pays a centre or regulated family child care home on behalf of a fully subsidized parent to cover all or part of the parent fee.

Ontario does not use specified subsidy rates provincially. The province permits subsidization up to the full (actual) cost of the space, as determined by CMSMs and DSSABs.

ADDITIONAL PROGRAMS SUBSIDIZING INDIVIDUAL FAMILIES OR CHILDREN

Ontario Child Care Tax Credit

In 2019, the provincial government introduced the [Ontario Child Care Tax Credit](#). This tax credit, which goes directly to parents, could provide about 300,000 families with up to 75% of their eligible expenses for child care in centres, home-based care, camps, and other settings; the care is not required to be regulated.

Families with low and moderate incomes can receive up to \$6,000 per child under the age of seven years, or up to \$3,750 per child between seven and 16 years; and up to \$8,250 per child with a severe disability. In 2021, a COVID-associated top-up of 20% of the credit entitlement was made available to families.

Maximum potential funding per child per year under the Ontario Child Tax Credit

<i>Criteria</i>	<i>2019</i>	<i>2021 Additional top-up amount</i>
A child under 7	\$6,000	\$1,200
A child between 7 – 16	\$3,750	\$750
A child with a severe disability	\$8,250	\$1,650

According to the Expenditure Estimates for the Ministry of Education 2021 – 2022, Ontario identified \$430,319,600 for the Ontario Child Care Tax Credit.

Source: [Expenditure estimates, Ministry of Education \(2021 – 2022\)](#).

Ontario Works

[Ontario Works](#) is a provincial training and employment support program. An employed parent who is receiving Ontario Works may be eligible for a regular fee subsidy.

In addition, [Ontario Works Child Care](#) also provides a temporary child care option to cover participants' child care costs (not required to be licensed child care) incurred while participating in an approved activity until a regular fee subsidy and a space in a licensed child care centre or home child care becomes available.

OPERATIONAL FUNDING

Operating funds

Operational funding in Ontario is designated as “operating funding” to municipal entities. Operating funding for municipalities and First Nations includes funds for general operating expenses, Special Needs Resourcing, funds used for staff salaries and benefits and other operating costs. Funds to cover fee subsidies are also part of “base” operating funding transferred to CMSMs and DSSABs.

The provincial general child care allocation for each CMSM and DSSAB is based on a funding formula introduced in 2013. It is based on data such as the Low Income Cut-Off (LICO), Population of Ontario, Level of Education Attainment and knowledge of either Official Language. CMSMs and DSSABs are responsible for managing child care operating funding within the parameters of legislation, regulations, standards, and policies established by the ministry in a way that is responsive to local needs.

It was announced that as of January 1, 2022, the threshold for allowable administrative funding that CMSMs and DSSABs can spend on child care was reduced from 10% to 5% in addition to the ongoing 50/50 administrative cost sharing requirements previously introduced. In 2022, the ministry provided a One-Time Transitional Grant to CMSMs and DSSABs to help offset the new 5% administration threshold and the administration cost share change.

However, as of January 2023, municipalities and First Nations were still allowed to use a total of 10% of provincial operating funding towards administration.

Funding for parent fee reductions

Between April and December 2022, Ontario parent fees in participating centres were reduced by an average of 50% in two phases. Funding, to cover the loss of parent fee revenue as fees are being reduced, is provided to service providers by the Ontario government using federal funds transferred under the Canada-Ontario Canada-wide ELCC Agreement.

Between 2023 and 2025 – 2026, Ontario has committed to further reducing parent fees to an average of \$10/day. Ontario has committed to developing a new funding formula in 2023 to determine how the new financial arrangements will take effect.

Provincial Wage Enhancement and Home Child Care Enhancement Grants

The Government of Ontario introduced the Wage Enhancement Grant (WEG) and Home Child Care Enhancement Grant (HCCEG) in 2014 and has continued to provide them to date.

Licensed child care centres and home child care agencies must apply to receive the funding, which is allocated to and distributed to service providers by CMSMs and DSSABs (municipal entities acting as local service managers).

The WEG is available to eligible child care professionals (e.g., child care supervisor, RECE or otherwise counted towards staff: child ratio) working in licensed child care settings, and home child care visitors employed by a licensed home child care agency. The full rate for WEG is \$2/hour plus 17.5% benefits. A position is fully eligible if the hourly wage is \$26.31 or less and partially eligible if the hourly wage is between \$26.32 and \$28.30

Additionally, in 2022 (as identified above in the section on Staff Wages), Ontario introduced a wage floor (\$18/hour in 2022) for program staff and \$20/hour for a supervisor or home visitor for RECEs only for Provincial Wage Enhancement and Home Child Care Enhancement.

For RECEs who make equal to or more than the wage floor, but less than \$25.00/hour; there is a \$1.00/hour annual increase beginning January 1, 2023.

As part of the Provincial Wage Enhancement/Home Child Care Enhancement Grant, the ministry provides CMSMs and DSSABs with an additional annual supplemental grant of \$150 for each eligible centre-based full-time equivalent (FTE) or home visitor FTE and \$50 for each eligible home child care provider. The supplemental grant allows licensees some flexibility to provide and implement wage enhancement in a way that aligns with their regular operations. The supplemental grant must be used by the licensee to support staff, home visitors' and providers' hourly/daily wage or benefits. CMSMs and DSSABs must work with licensees to set priorities on how to use the supplemental grant.

The Provincial Home Child Care Enhancement Grant (HCCEG) applies to home child care providers contracted with a licensed home child care agency.

A home child care provider that provides full-time services (6 hours or more a day) is eligible if they receive \$263.10 or less per day in parent fees. A provider that provides part-time services (less than 6 hours a day) is eligible if they receive \$159.86 or less per day in fees. The full eligibility rate for providers is \$20 per day and the partial eligibility rate is \$10 per day.

Special Needs Resourcing

Special Needs Resourcing funding is intended to support inclusion of children with special needs in licensed child care settings, including home child care, camps and “children’s recreation programs”, at no additional cost to parents/guardians. The provincial government requires CMSMs and DSSABs to spend a minimum of 4.1% of their child care allocation on Special Needs Resourcing.

Small Water Works

Small Water Works funding is available to support regular ongoing water testing and maintenance expenses, including laboratory testing, chemicals, supplies/filters, courier costs, maintenance of water treatment equipment including replacement UV bulbs and training. Costs related to the purchase and installation of systems and equipment are not eligible.

CMSMs and DSSABs with child care centres that have historically received SWW funding are provided with a notional allocation. There is no maximum amount indicated for Small Water Works as part of the Transfer Payment Agreement with CMSMs and DSSABs.



ONE-TIME FUNDING

Capital funding

Capital for schools

In 2019, the child care capital strategy focused on aligning future early years and child care capital investments to construction of new schools. In 2019, Ontario committed up to \$1.0 billion in funding to create up to 30,000 child care capital spaces in schools over the next five years.

As of April 1, 2019, both for-profit and non-profit child care operators are eligible to operate in schools in Ontario.

In 2021, the Ontario government invested more than \$95 million to create 3,094 school-based licensed child care spaces.

Source: [Press release](#), Ontario Ministry of Education, March 28, 2022.

Other child care-related funding

Qualifications Upgrade Program

The ECE Qualifications Upgrade Program (QUP) supports individuals with experience in early years and child care settings to obtain an Early Childhood Education diploma and become eligible to apply for membership with the College of Early Childhood Educators.

The QUP also provides financial assistance to Supervisors, RECEs designated to leadership positions and/or responsibilities, and to RECEs aspiring to leadership roles for post-secondary courses that will build their leadership capacity.

The program prioritizes funding for Francophone and First Nations, Métis and Inuit applicants. Funding is provided through education grants, training allowances, travel grants and book allowances.

EarlyON Child and Family Centre funding

EarlyON Child and Family Centres offer free daily family resource programs for families and children from birth to six years old. CMSMs and DSSABs are responsible for the local management and funding of EarlyON Child and Family Centres.

See a further description and details about EarlyON Centres at the end of this Ontario section.

PROVINCIAL FUNDING FOR REGULATED CHILD CARE (2020 – 2021)

FEE SUBSIDIES	\$600,013,830
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Note: Funding for fee subsidies is considered to be part of the operating funding that the Ontario government transfers to CMSMs and DSSABs. It is separated here so as to be consistent with other provinces and territories.

OPERATIONAL FUNDING (OPERATING FUNDS TO CMSMs AND DSSABs)

<i>Program</i>	<i>Amount</i>
Operating funds (excluding fee subsidies and Special Needs Resourcing)	\$647,114,113
Wage Enhancement/Home Child Care Enhancement Grant	\$153,634,224
Special Needs Resourcing	\$113,748,889
Small Water Works	\$231,533
Territory Without Municipal Organization	\$1,258,428
Total operational funding	\$915,987,186

Note: Fee subsidy information and Special Needs Resourcing figures are based on the latest financial reporting available.

ONE-TIME FUNDING

One-time funding – capital (major and minor)

<i>Program</i>	<i>Amount</i>
Capital for Schools	\$78,036,518
French language schools	\$5,147,962

Other child care-related funding

<i>Program</i>	<i>Amount</i>
Qualifications Upgrade Program	\$5,500,000
Total one-time funding	\$88,684,480

Municipal contribution

Definition: Funds contributed by CMSMs/DSSABs to regulated child care.

Total municipal contribution	\$202,035,339
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Note: The municipal contribution figure for CMSMs and DSSABs is based on the latest financial reporting available.

TOTAL FUNDING FOR REGULATED CHILD CARE (fee subsidies, operational funding, and one-time funding)	\$1,604,685,496
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OTHER ELCC FUNDING

<i>Program</i>	<i>Amount</i>
EarlyON Centre funding	\$171,284,060

FEDERAL TRANSFERS TO PROVINCE

<i>Federal transfers</i>	<i>Amount</i>
Multilateral Early learning and Child Care Bilateral Agreement	\$146,679,300
Safe Restart Agreement (child care specific funding)	\$234,606,000

Note: The COVID-19 related spending is in addition to the total funding for regulated child care.

COVID-19 RELATED SUPPORTS

2020 and 2021 Emergency Child Care	\$49,366,790
2021 Provincial Re-Investment	\$66,000,000
2021 One-Time Transitional Grant	\$49,000,000

Note: The COVID-19 related spending is in addition to the total funding for regulated child care.

OF INTEREST

MUNICIPAL ROLE

Ontario is the sole province/territory with a mandated role for municipalities in child care. This role dates back to World War II but has been amended many times between 1943 and today.

In Ontario today, local government municipal entities play several key roles in child care. They are organized by the province into 47 Community Municipal Service Managers (CMSMs) and District Social Services Administration Board (DSSABs), designated as local service system managers by the Ontario government, and are responsible for planning and managing licensed child care services at the local level. This includes developing a local service plan every five years, which is mandated by the provincial government.

The 47 municipal entities may also directly operate child care centres and home child care agencies but this is discretionary. At one time, municipally operated child care comprised a substantial child care sector in Ontario but over the years, it has been reduced to a small sector representing less than 2% of total spaces (5,508 of 446,596 total full- and part-day regulated centre spaces) in 2019. Data on the number of total licensed spaces operated by municipal entities was not available for this report but provincial enrolment data reported 6,173 children 0 – 12 enrolled in municipally operated child care.

The Ministry of Education allocates provincial child care funds to the CMSMs and DSSABs using a funding formula introduced in 2013 and reviewed in 2019 – 2020. CMSMs and DSSABs determine how to use child care funding within their respective communities within the parameters set by the provincial government.

The allocations to CMSMs and DSSABs are based on publicly available data largely drawn from Statistics Canada such as child population, Low-Income Cut-Off, cost of living indicators, Indigenous population data, French speaking populations and measures related to rural and remote communities. (See [Ontario Child Care and EarlyON Child and Family Centres Service Management and Funding Guideline 2022](#).)

In 2019, the funding formula was modified using 2016 census data from Statistics Canada, together with updated data from the Ontario Ministry of Finance. These updated data elements resulted in changes to CMSM and DSSAB 2019 child care allocations.

Local service system managers are required to contribute a share of at least 20% of the funds for a portion of the child care general allocation, and are asked to contribute funding toward one other child care funding allocation (known as Expansion Plan funding).

[Provincial guidelines](#), amendments and updates published regularly outline the funding, program and accountability requirements of local service system managers.

FAMILY RESOURCE PROGRAMS

[EarlyON Child and Family Centres](#) offer free daily family resource programs for families and children from birth to six years old. They are funded by the Ministry of Education. EarlyON programs provide family programming, advice and support from professionals trained in early childhood development and connections to other family services in the community. Families have the opportunity to learn and play with their child, meet people and get advice from early childhood professionals.

As of March 2022, there were 611 EarlyON Child and Family Centres, and an additional 358 locations operating out of libraries, schools, parks and community centres. EarlyON programs were created from a combination of four previous programs: Ontario Early Years Centres, Parenting and Family Literacy Centres, Child Care Resource Centres and Better Beginnings, Better Futures. In 2021, Ontario spent \$141.5 million for EarlyON child and family centres.

PROVINCIAL ECEC ORGANIZATIONS AND ADVISORY GROUPS

[Association of Early Childhood Educators of Ontario](#)

[Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care](#)

[Home Child Care Association of Ontario](#)

[Association francophone à l'éducation des services à l'enfance de l'Ontario \(AFÉSEO\)](#)

[The Association of Day Care Operators of Ontario \(ADCO\)](#)

[College of Early Childhood Educators Ontario \(CECE\)](#)

[Quality Early Learning Network](#)