



Ontario

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Ontario

■ OVERVIEW

In Ontario, the Ministry of Education is responsible for regulated child care centres, nursery schools, family child care, kindergarten, licensed school-age child care, and unlicensed Extended Day and Authorized Recreation and Skill Building before- and after-school programs.

Licensed child care includes full-day child care centres, part-day nursery schools, family child care, and licensed before- and after-school child care programs. Extended Day programs and Authorized Recreation and Skill Building programs are not required to be licensed.

Centre-based child care may be delivered by non-profit, for-profit, or public operators. Non-profit organizations operate a majority of centres. Public operators include Indigenous governing bodies, school boards, and municipal entities.

Ontario is the sole province or territory with a mandated role for municipal-level government entities. These 47 entities, termed Service System Managers (SSMs), have administrative responsibility for child care provision within provincial policy. They administer public funding, play a planning role, develop local initiatives, manage expansion, and may provide publicly delivered child care. The provincial government flows most funding to SSMs, which in turn direct it to service providers.

Family child care (termed Home Child Care) is agency-based. The majority of agencies are non-profit.

Ontario offers full school-day kindergarten for all four- and five-year-olds (termed junior kindergarten and kindergarten). Attendance is not compulsory in either year.

In January 2025, child care base fees were capped at a maximum of \$22/day for all children under age six in child care programs enrolled in the Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC) program. Parent fee subsidies are available to cover all or part of the child care fee paid by eligible parents of children younger than 13 years old. Local SSMs administer the subsidy program.

Ontario does not have a provincial wage grid. It uses a wage floor, a wage ceiling, and a wage top-up.

Ontario signed the Canada-Ontario Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement in March 2022. It allocated \$10.2 billion over five years to the province.

In December 2025, Ontario extended its bilateral agreement by one year, until March 2027.

Net growth in full-day centre spaces for children 0 – 5 years (2021 – 2025)			
	<i>2021</i>	<i>2025</i>	<i>Increase (decrease) 2021 – 2025</i>
Non-profit and public	104,960	117,250	+12,290
For-profit	75,798	93,863	+18,065
Total full-day spaces	180,758	211,113	+30,355
Percentage of full-day spaces that were for-profit	42%	44%	+3%
Percentage of growth of full-day spaces that was for-profit	-	-	60%

■ PROVINCIAL CONTEXT

Some of the following figures are rounded; however, the totals are based on exact figures. Therefore, totals may not equal the sum of the rounded figures.

Number of children 0 – 12 years (2024 rounded estimate)

<i>Age</i>	<i>Number of children</i>
0	132,200
1	131,700
2	144,100
3	131,500
4	149,900
5	152,400
6	159,500
7	157,800
8	167,000
9	162,800
10	172,800
11	176,900
12	165,000
Total	2,003,600

Number of children 0 – 12 years (aggregated) (2024 rounded estimate)

<i>Age</i>	<i>Number of children</i>
0 – 2	408,000
3 – 5	433,800
6 – 12	1,161,800
Total	2,003,600

Number of children 0 – 12 years with employed mothers (2024 rounded estimate)

<i>Age</i>	<i>Number of children</i>
0	87,400
1	87,200
2	100,700
3	86,500
4	99,200
5	102,300
6	105,700
7	105,000
8	112,800
9	108,100
10	111,400
11	121,800
12	110,700
Total	1,338,800

Number of children 0 – 12 years with employed mothers (aggregated) (2024 rounded estimate)

<i>Age</i>	<i>Number of children</i>
0 – 2	275,300
3 – 5	288,000
6 – 12	775,500
Total	1,338,800

Number of children 0 – 14 years 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 (2024 rounded estimate)

<i>Age of youngest child</i>	<i>Number of mothers</i>	<i>Participation rate (%)</i>
0 – 3	330,300	78.5
4 – 5	130,500	78.8
0 – 5	460,700	78.5
6 – 12	432,900	82.3

Living arrangements by age of child (2021)

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

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 0 – 5 years (2020)

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

KINDERGARTEN POLICY, PROGRAMS, AND DATA

KINDERGARTEN FOR FOUR- AND FIVE-YEAR-OLDS

Ontario publicly funds both non-denominational and Catholic school systems and permits, but it does not fund private/independent schools.

Junior kindergarten and kindergarten are treated as a two-year kindergarten program in Ontario.

Provincial responsibility

Ministry of Education

Student Achievement Division

Phone: 416-325-2929 or 1-800-387-5514

Email: *Not available*

Website: ontario.ca/page/kindergarten

Legislation

Ontario. Legislative Assembly. [Education Act](#). RSO 1990, c. E.2. Amended 2021, C- 25, s. 3. Ontario.

Legislative Assembly. [Education Act – Ontario Regulation 224/10 – Full Day Junior Kindergarten and Kindergarten](#). RSO 1990, c. E.2.

Ontario. Legislative Assembly. Ontario Regulation 132/12: Class Size under the [Education Act](#), RSO 1990, c. E.2.

Provision

Junior kindergarten (JK) and kindergarten (K)

Definition Full school-day program for all four- and five-year-old children.

Eligibility Four years old by December 31 for JK and five years old by December 31 for K.

Compulsory schooling Not compulsory, but most eligible children attend.

Entitlement All eligible children have access.

Instructional hours per day Full school-day (minimum five hours).

Class size Maximum 29 children, but up to 32 in some instances.

Teacher qualifications and certification

Two-year kindergarten program classrooms with 16 or more students are staffed by an educator team comprising a registered early childhood educator (RECE) and a certified teacher registered with the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT) or another provincial/territorial certifying body. Schools that offer the integrated before- and after-school program commonly have two RECEs working in a kindergarten classroom. Classes with fewer than 16 students are not required to have an RECE if the class meets specific conditions as outlined in the regulations.

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. They must also be registered in good standing with the provincial College of Early Childhood Educators.

An OCT teaching certificate 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. Kindergarten teachers are not required to have an early childhood qualification.

■ CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK

The Kindergarten Program (2016) is a mandatory curriculum framework for the two-year kindergarten program in all schools in Ontario. An [addendum](#) was added in 2019. A revised curriculum is expected to be implemented in the 2026 – 2027 school year.

■ ENROLMENT

Kindergarten enrolment (2024 – 2025 school year)

Enrolment in public and Catholic schools

Kindergarten for 5-year-olds	131,894
Junior kindergarten for 4-year-olds	120,332

Enrolment in private/independent schools

Kindergarten for 5-year-olds	9,991
Junior kindergarten for 4-year-olds	9,003

Total kindergarten enrolment	271,220
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■ FINANCIAL

Financial (2024 – 2025 school year)

Estimated spending on kindergarten for 4- and 5-year-olds	\$3.88 billion
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CHILD CARE POLICY AND PROGRAMS

■ ADMINISTRATION

Provincial responsibility

Ministry of Education

Early Years and Child Care Division

Phone: 416-325-2929

Email: See info.gov.on.ca/org?id=5519

Website: ontario.ca/page/find-and-pay-child-care

Legislation

Ontario. Legislative Assembly. [*Child Care and Early Years Act*](#). SO 2014, c. 11, sched. 1.

Ontario. Legislative Assembly. [*Child Care and Early Years Act – O. Reg. 137/15: General*](#). O. Reg. 137/15.

Ontario. Legislative Assembly. [*Child Care and Early Years Act – O. Reg. 138/15: Funding, Cost Sharing, And Financial Assistance*](#). O. Reg. 138/15.

Ontario. Legislative Assembly. [*Early Childhood Educators Act*](#). – SO 2007, c. 7, sched. 8.

Municipal role

Ontario is the only province or territory with a mandated role for municipalities in child care, a responsibility that dates back to World War II. Aspects of the municipal role have been amended multiple times since it was first mandated.

As outlined in the *Child Care and Early Years Act*, municipalities in Ontario serve as Service System Managers (SSMs), responsible for planning, funding, and overseeing local child care services within provincial policy and guidelines. SSMs have also [voluntarily assumed other roles](#), such as quality assessment and improvement, professional development, planning, and research. The 47 municipal entities may also directly operate child care centres and Home Child Care agencies, but this is discretionary. Over the years, the

municipally operated child care sector has declined significantly in Ontario.

The Ontario government mandates local SSMs' roles. Their responsibilities include:

- Developing a local child care service plan every five years;
- Administering most services, policies, and funding for service providers on behalf of the province;
- Setting local operational policies within parameters established by the provincial government; and
- Managing provincial funding allocations using a formula introduced in 2013, reviewed in 2019 – 2020, revised in 2022 following [Ontario's entry into the CWELCC Agreement](#), and transitioned to a provincially designed [cost-based funding model](#) in 2025.

In 2024, 36 Ontario municipalities (including SSMs and other municipality types) operated 176 child care centres for children 0 – 12 years. Municipal child care made up approximately 2.5% of Ontario's 516,455 total regulated centre spaces, accounting for 12,997 full-day, part-day, and before- and after-school care spaces.

Service descriptions

UNREGULATED CHILD CARE

There is no public oversight of unregulated child care (termed unlicensed child care) in Ontario. 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* and its regulations specific to unlicensed child

care, primarily the maximum number of children. The Ministry follows up on complaints about unlicensed child care that may be operating in contravention of the Act and/or regulations.

In unlicensed child care in Ontario, 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 must be included in the total.

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

Other forms of child care outside regular school hours in Ontario are not licensed but may be authorized and/or funded. See the "Regulated child care" section below for more information.

See the *Child Care and Early Years Act* for more information about exemptions. The Act also includes provisions for compliance orders, protection orders, administrative penalties, and prosecution of offenses regarding all child care arrangements and programs.

REGULATED CHILD CARE

Child care centre

Licensed child care centres include full-day, part-day (including nursery school), non-standard hours, and some child care outside regular school hours for children 4 – 12 years. Some kinds of centre-based child care for kindergarten-age and school-age children outside regular school hours are not required to be licensed, as outlined in "School-age child care" below.

School-age child care

Before- and after-school programs are offered in public schools and other locations. School boards are required to ensure before- and after-school programs are provided in every elementary school serving students in junior kindergarten to Grade 6 where there is sufficient and viable demand. However, they are not required to meet the full demand.

School boards may operate 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.

Several before- and after-school child care options are available for children 4 – 12 years. Three before- and after-school options require a licence to operate: licensed programs located in the community, licensed programs located in schools, and licensed Home Child Care providing before- and after-school care.

Two before- and after-school options are not required to be licensed: Extended Day programs operated by school boards in schools and Authorized Recreation and Skill Building programs providing child care in schools and other settings. The latter are permitted to operate once a day for up to three consecutive hours. In 2019, the age of the children for whom an unlicensed Authorized Recreation and Skill Building program may provide care changed from 6 – 12 years to 4 – 12 years. The change in age applies to both for-profit and non-profit child care operators.

Family child care

Regulated family child care homes (termed licensed Home Child Care) are not licensed individually; individual providers are contracted by Home Child Care agencies that are licensed by the Ministry of Education and responsible for monitoring the provision of care under provincial

regulations. Family child care providers can care for a maximum of six children under the age of 13, including the provider's own children under four years old. Only three of these children are permitted to be under the age of two.

In-home Child Care

In-home Child Care services are provided under the oversight of a Home Child Care agency in a child's home or at another place where residential care is provided for the child.

CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK

[How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years](#) (2014) is a mandatory curriculum framework (termed pedagogical framework) for all licensed child care and early years programs in Ontario, including EarlyON Child and Family Centres and Home Child Care providers contracted by licensed agencies. Its use is also a requirement for school board-operated before- and after-school programs. The framework focuses on children from birth to age eight.

CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

Terminology and approach

Ontario uses the term "special needs" to encompass cognitive, physical, social, emotional, or communicative needs, or needs relating to overall development of such a nature that the child requires additional supports.

Licensed child care centres, licensed Home Child Care, camps, and Authorized Recreation and Skill Building programs are eligible to receive inclusion services. Providers must be enrolled in CWELCC or exclusively serve children 6 – 12 years to be eligible. Ineligible licensees may be supported indirectly by Service System Managers (SSMs) for services and supports such as consultants.

The province provides Special Needs Resourcing funding to SSMs to support the inclusion of children with disabilities in eligible child care programs. SSMs are required to spend a minimum of 8.5% of their Local Priorities Flex Funding allocation on Special Needs Resourcing.

Programs supporting inclusion in ELCC

Support through Special Needs Resourcing enables Ontario children with "special needs" to participate in licensed child care programs with their peers. SSMs and First Nations may use Special Needs Resourcing funding for the following expenses:

- Hiring or acquiring the services of a resource consultant or supplemental staff (including salary and benefits);
- Providing professional development opportunities to support staff in licensed child care and early years settings to support inclusion; or
- Purchasing or leasing specialized/adaptive equipment and supplies.

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

Resource consultants may work with several children in multiple locations and may also provide training and support to regular staff working with children with disabilities 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.

Section 55 of O. Reg. 137/15 of the *Child Care and Early Years Act* outlines the requirements for resource consultants directly employed by child care licensees.

An up-to-date individualized support plan is required for each child with “special needs.” A child care program must be structured so that it accommodates each child’s individualized support plan. The plan must be developed in consultation with the child (if appropriate), a parent of the child, and any regulated health care professional or other person working with the child who would be a helpful collaborator. The plan must include:

- 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 necessary supports, aids, adaptations, or other modifications to the physical, social, and learning environment; and
- Instructions relating to the child’s use of supports/aids or, if necessary, the child’s use of or interaction with the adapted or modified environment.

First Nations are allocated Special Needs Resourcing funding primarily based on licensed capacity. For First Nations, delivery of Special Needs Resourcing should be:

- Reflective and responsive to individual, family, and community strengths and needs;
- Accountable to the individual, family, and community;
- Sensitive to the social, linguistic, and cultural diversity of families and First Nations communities; and
- Staffed by individuals with the appropriate range of skills and abilities necessary to respond effectively to the needs of children, their families, and program staff.

The Ministry of Education does not track how many programs in Ontario are solely or primarily for children with disabilities.

Access to inclusive ELCC

Ontario does not have provincial policies specifying whether child care programs are required to accept children with disabilities, whether a diagnosis is required for a child’s inclusion in Special Needs Resourcing, or regarding waitlists for funding. Individual SSMs have the discretion to make these determinations.

Licensed child care operators must provide evidence of compliance with the Ontario Building Code, which includes accessibility requirements designed to align with the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act*.

See [Ontario Child Care and Early Years Funding Guidelines Chapter 3: Local Priorities Guideline](#) for more information.

■ FIRST NATIONS, MÉTIS, AND INUIT CHILD CARE

In Ontario, 2.9% of the total population identified as First Nations, Métis, or Inuit in the most recent census (2021). There are 207 reserves in the province, held by 127 First Nations. Approximately 32% of First Nations people live on reserve.

First Nations child care on reserve

Ontario regulates child care located on First Nations reserves.

As of March 31, 2024, 58 First Nations and one non-First Nations provider operated 72 licensed centres on reserves in Ontario.

Licensed First Nations centre spaces on reserve (March 31, 2024)

<i>Program type</i>	<i>Number of spaces</i>
Full-day	2,719
Before- and after-school	680
Total licensed spaces	3,399

Note: Full-day spaces include a relatively small number of part-day nursery school spaces.

As of March 31, 2024, two licensed Home Child Care agencies were overseeing 31 approved child care homes on First Nations reserves.

Ontario licenses Aboriginal Head Start on Reserve (AHSOR) programs. In 2025, there were 123 AHSOR programs in Ontario.

Indigenous child care other than on reserve

As of March 31, 2024, 41 off-reserve child care centres self-reported as Indigenous-led. Of these centres, 37 offered full-day child care, and 15 offered before- and after-school programs.

Licensed Indigenous child care spaces not on reserve (March 31, 2024)

<i>Program type</i>	<i>Number of spaces</i>
Full-day	1,715
Before- and after-school	537
Total licensed spaces	2,252

Note: Full-day spaces include a relatively small number of part-day nursery school spaces.

In most cases, Ontario's Aboriginal Head Start in Urban and Northern Communities (AHSUNC) programs are licensed and Indigenous-led. In 2025, there were 14 AHSUNC programs in Ontario.

Indigenous-specific resources/initiatives

The funding formula used to determine allocations to Service System Managers (SSMs) includes an Indigenous component to support Indigenous-led, culturally appropriate licensed child care and child and family programs for Indigenous families not living on reserve. This funding must be spent on the following priorities:

- Increasing access to culturally relevant licensed child care and child and family programs for Indigenous children and families; and
- Programming delivered by Indigenous-led organizations working with SSMs.

In Ontario, seven Indigenous institutes offer an early childhood education program in partnership with an Ontario College of Applied Arts and Technology.

Ontario also offers the early childhood educator (ECE) [Qualifications Upgrade Program](#), which supports eligible individuals in obtaining an ECE diploma. The program includes First Nations, Métis, and Inuit (including on-reserve) program components, and it prioritizes applicants living and/or working in these communities. First Nations, Métis, and Inuit applicants are prioritized through targeted outreach such as webinars and participation at conferences. Indigenous applicants are exempt from the requirement of having been employed in the sector for at least six months.

■ PARENT FEES

In Ontario, fee reductions apply to both centres and licensed Home Child Care. Fee reduction funding primarily supports child care for children under six years of age.

Between 2022, when Ontario joined the Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC) program, and December 31, 2024, reduced

parent fees were based on pre-CWELCC fees that individual operators had established.

Through 2024, each provider enrolled in CWELCC was required to reduce base fees for children 0 – 5 years by the following percentages:

- On April 1, 2022, base fees were reduced by an average of 25%; and
- On December 31, 2022, base fees were further reduced by an additional 37% (average fee of \$23/day).

Beginning January 1, 2025, child care base fees were capped at a maximum of \$22/day for all children under age six in child care programs enrolled in CWELCC.

Operators set their own fees for child care programs not enrolled in CWELCC and those serving school-age children older than six years.

Ontario’s target is an average of \$10/day for eligible children by March 31, 2026.

AVERAGE FEE INFORMATION

Average child care centre daily parent fees prior to the introduction of the \$22/day set fee (2022, 2024)

Age group	Average daily fee (2022)	Average daily fee (2024)
<18 months	\$75.01	\$36.95
18 – <30 months	\$62.76	\$31.97
30 months – <6 years	\$55.46	\$29.40
4 – 5 years (full-day)	\$49.29	\$20.74
4 – 5 years (before- and after-school)	\$26.07	\$13.18
6 – 12 years (before- and after-school)	\$23.58	\$23.57

Note: These are average fees for all child care centres across Ontario, not just those enrolled in CWELCC.

Average Home Child Care daily parent fees prior to the introduction of the \$22/day set fee (2022, 2024)

Age group	Average daily fee (2022)	Average daily fee (2024)
0 – <2 years	\$48.69	\$24.43
2 – 3 years	\$47.30	\$23.36
4 – 5 years (full day)	\$43.57	\$21.68
4 – 5 years (before- and after-school)	\$27.17	\$14.02
6 – 12 years (before- and after-school)	\$27.23	\$24.99

Note: These are average fees for all Home Child Care across Ontario, not just homes enrolled in CWELCC.

Additional fees

Operators are not permitted to charge waitlist fees or additional fees for food, extended hours, or other services required by regulation. They are permitted to charge optional fees in addition to the \$22/day set fee for transportation and field trips.

Parent fee subsidies

Parent fee subsidies are available to cover all or part of the child care fee paid by eligible parents of children younger than 13 years old. The child care provider must have a service contract (“purchase of service agreement”) with the local Service System Manager (SSM), which administers the subsidy program. The SSM pays fee subsidies to the child care service provider on behalf of the family. Subsidized parents are responsible for paying the service provider any fee balance not covered by the fee subsidy.

Since January 1, 2025, fee subsidies are no longer available for children 0 – 5 years if the centre/ agency is not enrolled in CWELCC.

Fee subsidies 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. The amount a subsidized family is required to pay is determined on a whole family basis, not per child. The test has no upper limit on family income, and there is no maximum subsidy rate.

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. This may result in waiting lists for fee subsidies in some SSMs.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

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

As of January 1, 2025, to receive a fee subsidy, children must be enrolled in one of the following programs:

- CWELCC-enrolled centre/agency (fee subsidy available for children 0 – 12 years);
- A centre/agency exclusively serving children 6 – 12 years;
- Children’s camp or recreation program;
- Before- and after-school program offered directly by school boards;
- Before- and after-school program operated by a third-party program; or
- Unlicensed child care for Ontario Works participants.

Existing fee subsidy agreements at otherwise ineligible centres/agencies for children aged 0 – 5

years are exceptions to these criteria. Funding for existing fee subsidy agreements may continue until the benefiting child ages out of the program or leaves the centre/agency.

SSMs are required to make reasonable efforts to work together, or with eligible child care programs, to facilitate access for eligible families seeking subsidized child care outside their home region.

Parents are required to meet specified employment or social criteria to receive a fee subsidy. Criteria include employment, attendance at an educational/training program, medical needs, or other circumstances. A fee subsidy may also be provided based on special or social needs of the child, or disabilities of a parent. SSMs have discretion to determine the appropriate amount of subsidized child care.

Families in receipt of social assistance (Ontario Works and the Ontario Disability Support Program) are eligible for full subsidy without undergoing a financial eligibility test provided the parents are in approved employment assistance activities, unless the child or parent has a disability or the child has a social need.

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

FINANCIAL ELIGIBILITY

Eligibility for a fee subsidy in Ontario is determined by a provincial income test based on net income. In addition to the eligibility criteria noted above, the following rules apply:

- Fee subsidy is based on adjusted net family income and total actual or projected cost of child care for the family;
- 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;
- For families with adjusted income 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, parental contribution is calculated at 10% of the amount over \$20,000 up to \$40,000, plus 30% of the amount over \$40,000; and
- If the calculated parental contribution exceeds the cost of child care, the family is not eligible for a fee subsidy.

SSMs may make an [online subsidy calculator](#) available to support parents’ planning.

Additional programs that subsidize individual families

The provincial government introduced the Ontario Child Care Tax Credit in 2019. Eligible families can claim up to 75% of their eligible child care expenses, including unlicensed arrangements and services provided by child care centres, family child care homes, and camps. The Ontario Child Care Tax Credit supports families with incomes up to \$150,000. In 2025, families could receive up to \$6,000 per child under the age of seven, \$3,750 per child ages 7 – 16, or \$8,250 per child with a severe disability.

[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’ licensed or unlicensed child care costs 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.

WORKFORCE

Child care staff wages

Ontario does not have a provincial wage grid. It uses a wage floor, a wage ceiling, and a wage top-up.

Individual operators set the wages and benefits of registered early childhood educators (RECEs) and other child care staff. Operators must meet the requirements of the wage floor and annual wage increase, as well as other requirements related to wages detailed in [Chapter 3 of Ontario Child Care and Early Years Funding Guidelines](#).

In Ontario, public funding to increase child care staff wages has two main components: provincial wage enhancement and the CWELCC wage improvement program (including a wage floor and wage top-up, up to a wage eligibility ceiling). The funding is associated with the position, not the employee.

PROVINCIAL WAGE DATA

Average wage data for staff in licensed child care centres are not available.

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

<i>Hourly wage range</i>	<i>RECE (%)</i>	<i>Director-approved (%)</i>	<i>Non-RECE/not director-approved (%)</i>
\$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	-	-
\$40.01+	-	2	-

Percent of full-time program staff in licensed child care centres by hourly wage ranges (2023)

<i>Hourly wage range</i>	<i>RECE (%)</i>	<i>Director-approved (%)</i>	<i>Non-RECE/not director-approved (%)</i>
\$16.55 – \$19.99	8.7	22.2	47.8
\$20.00 – \$25.00	46.7	55.3	45.8
\$25.01 – \$28.59	29.9	14.5	4.4
\$28.60 – \$29.99	4.6	2.1	0.6
\$30.00 – \$32.49	3.9	1.9	0.6
\$32.50 – \$34.99	3.8	2	0.3
\$35.00 – \$37.49	1.2	0.9	0.1
\$37.50 – \$39.99	0.8	0.6	0.1
\$40.01+	0.6	0.6	0.3

WAGE ENHANCEMENT

Ontario originally introduced [wage enhancement](#) (now called the Wage Enhancement Grant and Home Child Care Enhancement Grant) in 2015. A modification of the wage enhancement program is still in place at \$2/hour for eligible staff in licensed centres and for family child care providers. They must either be enrolled in CWELCC or exclusively serving children 6 – 12 years.

WAGE FLOOR AND WAGE TOP-UP

In 2022, as part of CWELCC, Ontario introduced a wage floor and wage top-up to bring all RECEs up to at least the wage floor. It also introduced a wage ceiling – the level up to which a wage top-up will be paid.

For RECE centre staff and supervisors and RECE home visitors in family child care to be eligible for the wage floor top-up, the child care program must be enrolled in CWELCC. The funding is associated with the position, not the employee.

Ontario has committed an additional \$395 million for RECEs working in before- and after-school child care with children 6 – 12 years parallel to the wage increases for RECEs for the 0 – 5 age group, as the federal CWELCC funding covers only educators working with children 0 – 5 years.

WAGE FLOOR FOR CENTRES AND FAMILY CHILD CARE AGENCY STAFF

In April 2022, Ontario introduced a wage floor for RECEs working in licensed child care centres and Home Child Care agencies with children 0 – 5 years.

In November 2023, Ontario increased the wage floor and wage ceiling for eligible RECEs, effective January 2024.

Between 2023 and 2026, the wage floor increased up to \$1/hour each year.

WAGE CEILING

The wage ceiling represents the upper eligibility cut-off for wage top-up for RECE program staff, supervisors, and home visitors.

Wage floor rates by job title (2022 – 2026)

<i>Position</i>	<i>2022</i>	<i>2023</i>	<i>2024</i>	<i>2025</i>	<i>2026</i>
RECE program staff	\$18	\$19	\$23.86	\$24.86	\$25.86
RECE child care supervisors and RECE Home Child Care visitors	\$20	\$21	\$24.86	\$25.86	\$26.86

Wage ceiling by job title (2022 – 2026)

<i>Position</i>	<i>2022</i>	<i>2023</i>	<i>2024</i>	<i>2025</i>	<i>2026</i>
RECE program staff	\$25	\$25	\$26	\$27	\$28
RECE child care supervisors and RECE Home Child Care visitors	\$25	\$25	\$29	\$30	\$31

In 2025, wage ceiling eligibility for the top-up was expanded to include RECE program staff in centres earning less than \$27/hour, and in 2026 for those earning less than \$28/hour. RECE supervisors and Home Child Care visitors earning less than \$29/hour in 2024, less than \$30/hour in 2025, and less than \$31/hour in 2026 are also eligible.

Staff benefits

There are no province-wide benefits, such as pension or medical benefits, for Ontario child care staff.

Early childhood certification

The practice of early childhood education in Ontario, including the use of the titles “early childhood educator” and “registered early childhood educator,” is regulated by Ontario’s [College of Early Childhood Educators \(CECE\)](#). The CECE manages provincial certification of RECEs. The Ontario government created the CECE in 2009. 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](#).

According to the CECE’s [2023 – 2024 Annual Report](#), there were a total of 59,682 RECEs in Ontario, of whom 33,422 were working in licensed centres and family child care. In order to be considered “qualified” and use the RECE title, individuals must be registered with the CECE. Registration with the CECE requires successful completion of an early childhood education diploma or equivalent from a [CECE-approved program](#). There are no additional registration or certification levels in Ontario.

To maintain RECE designation, educators must take part in [continuous professional learning](#). The number of hours needed for professional development is not specified. CECE members must renew their membership annually.

“Early childhood assistant” is not a specified provincial category. Individuals without RECE certification may be termed “early childhood assistants” by their employer. There are no requirements for an early childhood assistant to have training or education in early childhood education. However, several community colleges and other training facilities across Ontario offer early childhood assistant programs.

STANDARDS AND REGULATIONS

Child care centres and family child care homes must adhere to standards and regulations regarding staffing requirements, grouping of children, and licensing. Some additional key elements of child care standards and regulations, such as physical environments and food provision, are covered in the comparative tables in this publication, while others may be found in the [Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014](#) and [Regulation 137/15: General](#).

Regulated child care centres

Child care centres are licensed under the [Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014](#) and [Regulation 137/15: General](#). The Act and regulations were most recently amended in 2024.

STAFF:CHILD RATIO AND GROUP SIZE

Ontario does not specify a maximum number of children permitted in a child care centre.

Staff:child ratio and maximum group size

<i>Age group</i>	<i>Staff:child ratio</i>	<i>Maximum group size</i>
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. See [Ratios of Employees to Children and Group Size](#) for more information.

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 for family-age grouping

<i>Age group</i>	<i>Staff:child ratio</i>
0 – <12 months	1:3
12 – <24 months	1:4
24 months – <13 years	1:8

Note: “Licensed family age group” permits a group of not more than 15 children, and no more than six children younger than 24 months.

STAFFING REQUIREMENTS FOR CENTRES

Qualification requirements for staffing a centre

In Ontario, staff qualification requirements are specified at the room or group level.

Employees who are registered early childhood educators (ECEs) in good standing with the College of Early Childhood Educators are considered qualified employees for any licensed age group under the *Child Care and Early Years Act (CCEYA)*.

In licensed junior school-age groups or licensed primary/junior school-age groups, an employee who has a diploma or degree in child and youth care or recreation and leisure services, or who is a member in good standing with the Ontario College of Teachers, is also considered a qualified employee.

Required proportions of qualified employees in each room/group

<i>Age group</i>	<i>Proportion of employees that must be qualified</i>
Infant (0 – <18 months)	1/3
Toddler (18 – 30 months)	1/3
Preschool-age (30 months – 6 years)	2/3
Kindergarten-age (44 months – <7 years)	1/2
Primary/junior school-age (68 months – <13 years)	1/2
Junior school-age (9 – <13 years)	1/1

There are no specified qualification requirements for staff not deemed to be qualified.

Qualification requirements for on-site centre directors/supervisors

A licensed centre must have a supervisor who is an RECE in good standing with the College of Early Childhood Educators and has at least two years of experience providing licensed child care.

Other requirements

Centre supervisors and all employees (qualified and unqualified) counted toward staff:child ratios must have standard first aid (including infant and child CPR) certification issued by the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board.

All staff, volunteers, and students must have a criminal reference check, including vulnerable sector screening, updated every five years. Staff may begin working before a vulnerable sector check is completed; in these cases, they must apply for it as soon as possible, and licensees must have additional protection measures in place until the staff member obtains their screening.

All staff, volunteers, and students must also have a health assessment and immunization prior to employment or educational placement.

There is no minimum age for centre staff or volunteers.

LICENSING AND MONITORING OF REGULATED CHILD CARE CENTRES

A child care centre licence may be approved for a period of between one and two years. Unannounced inspections are conducted at least once annually by Ministry of Education staff, who may also conduct additional monitoring inspections.

Centres that have been licensed for three years or more are assigned a tier under the tiered licensing system. The tiered approach is a risk-based system for inspections based on a centre's compliance history. The centre's tier determines the maximum length of the licence (up to two years), monitoring schedule, and type of inspection. See the

introduction of the [Child Care Centre Licensing Manual](#) for more information.

Regulated family child care

Family child care (termed licensed Home Child Care) is regulated under the [Child Care and Early Years Act](#) (CCEYA) and [Regulation 137/15: General](#).

Licensed Home Child Care is not required to be provided in a personal residence or a home setting, as long as the premises where child care is provided complies with the requirements of the CCEYA.

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 provide support and monitor premises overseen by the agency.

MAXIMUM CAPACITY

Under the CCEYA, up to six children under the age of 13 are allowed in a regulated child care home. Of those six, no more than three can be under two years old. The provider's own children are counted if those children are under four years old.

Home Child Care agencies may set out a maximum capacity that is lower than the CCEYA permits in the agreement with the provider. The Home Child Care agency is required to consider certain factors when determining how many children can be placed safely in a home (up to a maximum of six).

FAMILY CHILD CARE PROVIDER REQUIREMENTS

Home Child Care providers are not required to have specific training or educational qualifications.

Regulations require that each Home Child Care agency has written policies and procedures with respect to training for each provider.

Providers 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*, and cannot have been found guilty of professional misconduct and had a membership revoked under the *Early Childhood Educators Act*, *Ontario College of Teachers Act*, or *Social Work and Social Service Work Act*.

A provider must have a health assessment and public health-recommended immunizations, and hold valid certification in standard first aid, including infant and child CPR.

A Home Child Care provider must be at least 18 years old.

The provider and every person over 18 years old who is ordinarily a resident of or is regularly at the Home Child Care premises are required to have a vulnerable sector check, which must be updated every five years. An offence declaration is required in every calendar year where the person does not provide a vulnerable sector check.

LICENSING AND MONITORING OF REGULATED FAMILY CHILD CARE HOMES

Home Child Care providers are defined as independent contractors who enter into an agreement with a licensed Home Child Care agency to provide regulated child care under the agency's oversight.

The agency is required to have a home visitor conduct unannounced quarterly visits to every Home Child Care provider and complete the Ministry Inspection Checklist.

At least once per year, the Ministry of Education inspects each licensed Home Child Care agency and a sample of child care homes to ensure

the agency complies with the *CCEYA* and its regulations.

Tiered licensing does not apply to regulated Home Child Care agencies.

See the [Home Child Care Licensing Manual](#) for more information.

■ OF INTEREST

EarlyON Child and Family Centres

EarlyON Child and Family Centres offer free drop-in and registered programs for caregivers and children 0 – 6 years. The centres are open to all families in Ontario and offer a range of services, including:

- Play-based learning and development activities, such as reading, storytelling, games, and sing-alongs;
- Advice from professionals trained in early childhood development;
- Information about other family services in the community; and
- Opportunities to connect with other families with young children.

EarlyON Child and Family Centre programs and services are offered through a variety of service delivery methods to meet the unique needs of families in their communities, including mobile, virtual, and outdoor programs. As of June 28, 2024, there were 770 main EarlyON Child and Family Centre locations and 488 mobile/satellite locations. In addition, there were 108 locations offering virtual service supports to meet the needs of families across the province.

CHILD CARE DATA

■ REGULATED CHILD CARE SPACE STATISTICS

Number of spaces (2024, 2025)

	2024	2025
Full-day centre spaces		
Infant (<18 months)	16,142	16,753
Toddler (18 – <30 months)	56,314	59,405
Preschool-age (30 months – <6 years)	127,860	133,954
Total full-day centre spaces (children 0 – 5 years)	200,316	210,112
<i>Note: Full-day spaces include a relatively small number of part-day nursery school/preschool spaces.</i>		
Part-day centre spaces	2024	2025
Nursery school/preschool	Not applicable	Not applicable
Other centre spaces	2024	2025
Family-age (multi-age grouping 0 – 12 years)	1,012	1,001
Before- and after-school care centre spaces (licensed, regulated, approved, or authorized)	2024	2025
Kindergarten-age (44 months – <7 years)	125,118	127,942
Grades 1 – 6	190,009	193,470
Total before- and after-school care centre spaces	315,127	321,412
Total centre spaces (children 0 – 12 years)	516,455	532,525
Full-day family child care enrolment	2024	2025
Not yet in kindergarten or school	18,960	18,451
Part-day family child care enrolment	2024	2025
Attending kindergarten or school	2,406	4,581
Total family child care enrolment	21,366	23,032
TOTAL REGULATED SPACES (centre spaces and family child care enrolment)	537,821	555,557

Number of child care centres and family child care homes (2024)

Centre-based child care

Total number of centres	5,836
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Centre-based programs

Centres providing a full-day program	3,575
Centres providing a part-day (nursery or preschool) program	753
Centres providing a licensed before- and after-school program for children attending kindergarten or school (approximately 4 - 12 years)	3,943
School-operated Extended Day programs for kindergarten-age children	187
Centres providing before- and after-school programs that are approved or recognized, not licensed	183
Centres providing infant care (<18 months)	1,521
Centres providing toddler care (18 - <30 months)	3,018
Centres providing preschool-age care (30 months - <6 years)	3,753
Centres providing a Francophone child care program	426
Centres providing non-standard hours care (as defined by the province)	552
Centres in publicly delivered and funded schools (K - Grade 12)	3,200

Regulated family child care

Individual family child care homes (active)	4,426
Family child care agencies	151

Participation in CWELCC

Centres providing a full-day program	3,147
Centres providing a part-day (nursery or preschool) program	564
Centres providing a before- and after-school program for children attending kindergarten or school (approximately 4 - 12 years)	3,774
Total number of child care centres receiving CWELCC funding	5,281
Total number of family child care agencies receiving CWELCC funding	139

Auspice (2024)

Centres by auspice

<i>Auspice</i>	<i>Number of centres</i>
For-profit	1,495
Non-profit	3,900
Public	441

Centre spaces by auspice

<i>Auspice</i>	<i>Full-day¹</i>	<i>BASC²</i>	<i>Total</i>
For-profit	88,122	23,430	111,552
Non-profit	103,889	261,291	365,180
Public	9,317	30,406	39,723

¹ Includes a relatively small number of part-day nursery school/preschool spaces.

² Before- and after-school care (children 4 – 12 years).

Family child care agencies by auspice

<i>Auspice</i>	<i>Number of agencies</i>
For-profit	36
Non-profit	99
Public	16

Auspice (2025)

Centre spaces by auspice

<i>Auspice</i>	<i>Full-day¹</i>	<i>BASC²</i>	<i>Total</i>
For-profit	93,863	24,221	118,084
Non-profit	107,757	263,691	371,448
Public	9,493	33,500	42,993

¹ Includes a relatively small number of part-day nursery school/preschool spaces.

² Before- and after-school care (children 4 – 12 years).

Publicly operated child care (2024)

Publicly operated child care

<i>Entity type</i>	<i>Licence holders</i>	<i>Centres</i>	<i>Full-day spaces</i>	<i>BASC spaces¹</i>	<i>Total spaces</i>
Service System Managers	14	111	4,299	2,104	6,403
Other municipalities	22	65	2,193	4,401	6,594
School authority	6	191	175	23,221	23,396
Indigenous governing body	58	74	2,650	680	3,330
Total	100	441	9,317	30,406	39,723

¹ Before- and after-school care (children 4 – 12 years).

Fee subsidies (2024)

Number of children receiving fee subsidies

Full subsidy	42,133
Partial subsidy	37,081
Total children receiving fee subsidies	79,214

Disability support (2023)

Number of children receiving disability support

Children in licensed child care receiving disability/special needs support funding	44,092
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Note: The latest available data for the number of children served through Special Needs Resourcing is for 2023.

■ REGULATED CHILD CARE ENROLMENT STATISTICS

Number of children enrolled (2024)

Full-day centre enrolment

Infant (<18 months)	12,730
Toddler (18 – <30 months)	49,162
Preschool-age (30 months – <6 years)	93,806
Total full-day centre enrolment (children 0 – 5 years)	155,698

Part-day centre enrolment

Infant (<18 months)	66
Toddler (18 – <30 months)	1,040
Preschool-age (30 months – <6 years)	10,072

Other centre enrolment

Family-age (multi-age grouping 0 – 12 years)	614
Total centre enrolment (children 0 – 5 years)	167,490

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

Kindergarten (44 months – <7 years)	65,446
Grades 1 – 6	99,443
Total before- and after-school care enrolment	164,889
Total centre enrolment (children 0 – 12 years)	332,379

Full-day family child care enrolment

Not attending kindergarten or school	18,960
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Part-day family child care enrolment

Attending kindergarten or school	2,406
Total family child care enrolment (children 0 – 12 years)	21,366

TOTAL REGULATED ENROLMENT (centre and family child care enrolment)	353,745
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CHILD CARE FUNDING

The types of funding available for child care services in Ontario include operational funding, one-time funding, fee subsidies, and other ELCC funding programs. See [Child Care and Early Years Funding Guidelines](#) for more information.

■ ELIGIBILITY FOR CWELCC FUNDING

The CWELCC plan provides federal funds to provinces and territories for early learning and child care operational and one-time funding and fee subsidies for licensed child care for children aged 0 – 5. Funded new child care expansion is to be public and non-profit unless otherwise specified in the jurisdiction’s agreement. Provinces and territories contribute their own funds and design their own policies and provision within this framework.

In Ontario, the following are eligible for operational funding under CWELCC:

- Licensed full-day centres;
- Licensed part-day centres (preschools/nursery schools);
- Licensed before- and after-school centres that enrol children under age six; and
- Licensed/approved family child care.

New or expanded for-profit centres may be eligible for operational funding. Net new CWELCC spaces must align with each Service System Manager’s (SSM’s) Directed Growth Plan and guidance on auspice ratios and meet the requirements outlined in the Child Care and Early Years Funding Guidelines, [Part 1 of Chapter 2, Division 1: CWELCC Participation Guideline](#).

In Ontario, the following are eligible for capital funding under CWELCC:

- Licensed full-day centres;
- Licensed part-day centres (preschools/nursery schools);
- Licensed before- and after-school centres that enrol children under age six; and
- Licensed/approved family child care.

New or expanded for-profit centres are eligible for capital funding. New CWELCC spaces must align with each SSM’s Directed Growth Plan and guidance on auspice ratios.

■ CHILD CARE SERVICES’ ELIGIBILITY FOR FUNDING

All licensed non-profit, public, and for-profit child care services may be eligible for all available funding, including capital funding. See the [Child Care and Early Years Funding Guidelines](#) for more information.

Municipal roles in child care funding

Before CWELCC, the legacy funding formula for allocations to SSMs was 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, Francophone populations, and measures related to rural and remote communities.

From 2022 to 2024, the funding allocations to SSMs also supported CWELCC-related commitments, such as parent fee reductions, compensation increases for qualified workers, operational costs for

net new child care spaces, and adjustments for cost escalation. These funding allocations had two parts:

- Routine allocation, based on the legacy child care funding formula; and
- CWELCC allocation, based on a revenue replacement approach (whereby government funding paid for the base fee reductions) and funding to support commitments related to wage increases, building operational capacity of child care centres, and contingencies for emerging issues.

Since January 1, 2025, operating funding to support CWELCC-enrolled centres/agencies is provided through cost-based funding.

Funding to support operating costs outside of cost-based funding is now provided to SSMs through Local Priorities funding and reflects the previous legacy funding apportioned to children 6 – 12 years (based on data from recent years such as survey data and licensed spaces by age group).

Local SSMs are required to contribute a share of the spending in cost-based funding, Local Priorities, and administration funding that is consistent with previous years' contributions of the cost. [Provincial guidelines](#), amendments, and regular updates outline the funding, program, and accountability requirements of local SSMs.

See Ontario's "[Administration](#)" section for more information about SSMs.

■ TYPES OF FUNDING

Operational funding

Operational funding in Ontario is shared out to the Service System Managers (SSMs) that are mandated to administer and maintain licensed child care. 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 the base operating funding the province transfers to SSMs.

Through 2024, the provincial general child care allocation for each SSM was based on a funding formula introduced in 2013. This formula was based on data such as the low-income cut-off, population of Ontario, level of education attainment, and knowledge of either official language.

In August 2024, Ontario introduced a cost-based funding model to replace the previous revenue replacement model administered by SSMs to take effect January 1, 2025. This approach provides financial support to eligible licensed child care centres and agencies based on the typical (representative) costs of providing child care in Ontario, rather than on estimated revenue losses. The new model incorporates funding for program costs and wage enhancements under Ontario's Child Care Workforce Strategy.

Funding for operating costs outside cost-based funding is provided through Local Priorities funding, and reflects those expenses apportioned to children 6 – 12 years, based on SSM data from recent years (financial statements, survey data, licensed spaces by age group, etc.).

SPECIAL NEEDS RESOURCING

Support through Special Needs Resourcing enables Ontario children with "special needs" to participate in licensed child care programs with their peers. See Ontario's "[Children with disabilities](#)" section for more information.

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, and maintenance of water treatment equipment including replacement

ultraviolet bulbs and training. Costs related to the purchase and installation of systems and equipment are not eligible. SSMs with child care centres that have historically received Small Water Works funding are provided with a notional allocation. There is no maximum amount indicated as part of the Transfer Payment Agreement with SSMs.

TERRITORY WITHOUT MUNICIPAL ORGANIZATION

Territory Without Municipal Organization (TWOMO) funding for child care helps support the costs for eligible child care services provided in a territory without municipal organization, specifically for SSMs outside any municipality or First Nation. The funding calculation involves four stages:

- Stage 1: Calculate the municipal levy based on the total approved budget minus other revenue sources;
- Stage 2: Determine the TWOMO share of the municipal levy using a municipal attribution percentage;
- Stage 3: Subtract non-Ministry funding from the municipal levy to find the child care program allocation from the Ministry; and
- Stage 4: Calculate the province's portion of the TWOMO levy based on the percentage of the municipal levy represented by the child care program allocation.

One-time funding

CAPITAL FUNDING FOR SCHOOL-BASED CHILD CARE

As part of the 2024 – 2025 Capital Priorities Program for infrastructure projects, Ontario allocated \$1.3 billion in January 2025 to support the construction of new schools, the expansion of existing ones, and renovations throughout the

province. This project aims to create over 25,000 new student spaces and more than 1,600 additional licensed child care spaces across 23 school boards.

CAPITAL FUNDING FOR CHILD CARE IN FRENCH LANGUAGE SCHOOLS

Capital funding for child care in French language schools supports construction and expansion of child care facilities in French language educational institutions, ensuring that Francophone children have access to culturally and linguistically appropriate early childhood education.

EARLY LEARNING AND CHILD CARE INFRASTRUCTURE FUND

The Canada-Ontario Early Learning and Child Care Infrastructure Fund was implemented in 2025 to support infrastructure projects with a goal of increasing inclusion in child care for underserved communities through the creation of new, licensed child care spaces. The funding supports not-for-profit licensed child care centres in alignment with Ontario's Access and Inclusion Framework. The funds are dispersed by local SSMs under provincial criteria.

CANADA-ONTARIO EARLY CHILDHOOD WORKFORCE AGREEMENT

During the 2021 – 2022 fiscal year, Ontario received \$149.9 million in federal funding to support the recruitment and retention of the early childhood workforce. This one-time funding was to strengthen the workforce by providing financial incentives, enhancing access to professional training, and helping retain qualified ECEs and staff in licensed child care settings. As per the terms of the agreement, Ontario was allowed to carry forward to 2022 – 2023 up to 50% of any unspent federal funds. Ontario spent \$75 million in Early Childhood Workforce funding in 2021 – 2022 and the remaining \$75 million in 2022 – 2023. The funds were distributed through municipal

SSMs. Licensed child care operators and ECEs working in child care centres and Home Child Care agencies were eligible for funding.

Fee subsidies

Parent fee subsidies are available to cover all or part of the child care fee paid by eligible parents of children younger than 13 years old. Local SSMs administer the subsidy program. See Ontario’s “[Parent fees](#)” section for more information.

Other ELCC funding

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

The Ministry of Education provides funding for professional learning to support early years programs in accordance with the *How Does Learning Happen?* curriculum framework. Eligible licensed child care providers and EarlyON Child and Family Centres may enter into service agreements with SSMs to receive this funding. The funding prioritizes program staff and supervisors at licensed child care centres and EarlyON Child and Family Centres, as well as home visitors and providers in Home Child Care agencies, with a particular focus on those serving children 6 – 12 years.

Beginning in 2024, Ontario began supporting a dedicated professional development day for all staff working in licensed centres, licensed home-based care, and EarlyON Child and Family Centres to improve recruitment and retention. This funding can be used to implement new professional learning strategies, build on existing approaches, and/or provide mental health and resilience training. Funding support is also available for other staff members, including non-program personnel and management, within the approved allocations for professional learning.

QUALIFICATIONS UPGRADE PROGRAM

The Early Childhood Educator (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, registered early childhood educators (RECEs) designated to leadership positions and/or responsibilities, and RECEs aspiring to leadership roles for post-secondary courses that will build their leadership capacity. The program prioritizes funding for Francophone, First Nations, Métis, and Inuit applicants. Funding is provided through education grants, training allowances, travel grants, and book allowances.

■ FUNDING FOR REGULATED CHILD CARE (FISCAL YEAR 2023 – 2024)

The funding figures in each category represent provincial spending, which may include both provincial funds and federal funds transferred under bilateral agreements, CWELCC agreements, or other federal programs used for early learning and child care.

Operational funding

Program	Amount
Operating funds	\$775,982,802
Wage Enhancement Grant and Home Child Care Enhancement Grant	\$206,151,621
Special Needs Resourcing	\$138,675,299
Small Water Works	\$231,533
Territory Without Municipal Organization	\$1,258,428
CWELCC (fee reduction, workforce compensation, and professional learning)	\$1,957,320,079
Total operational funding	\$3,079,619,762

Note: Operational funding includes regularly paid public funding that contributes to the ongoing operation of the child care service. It may include operating grants or formula-based funding, family child care agency operating funds, wage grants/enhancement, disability funding, and other grants/funding paid on a recurring basis.

One-time funding – capital (major and minor)

Program	Amount
Capital for communities (includes CWELCC Start-up Grant)	\$109,250,671
Capital funding for school-based child care	\$94,430,731
Capital funding for child care in French language schools	\$11,036,617

One-time funding – other

Program	Amount
Transitional grants	\$64,125,002
CWELCC (Emerging Issues)	\$35,898,055
Total one-time funding	\$314,741,076

Note: One-time funding is paid occasionally or just once to a child care service and is not part of the regular operating budget. It may include major capital, minor capital, start-up, one-time equipment, or repair funding.

Fee subsidies

Program	Amount
Child care fee subsidies	\$513,087,219

Note: These are fee subsidies in licensed, regulated, or approved child care. The subsidies are associated with an individual child and family. There are provincial eligibility criteria. Fee subsidies are sent directly to service providers.

Municipal contribution

Program	Amount
Funds contributed by Service System Managers to regulated child care	\$213,194,889

TOTAL SPENDING FOR REGULATED CHILD CARE (operational funding, one-time funding, fee subsidies, and municipal contribution)

Other ELCC funding

Program	Amount
Ontario Childcare Access and Relief from Expense Tax Credit	\$345,602,453
EarlyON Child and Family Centre funding	\$174,718,422
Qualifications Upgrade Program	\$9,500,000
Funding for child care associations and research	\$3,614,021
Total other ELCC funding	\$533,434,896

Federal transfers to Ontario

<i>Federal transfer</i>	<i>Amount</i>
Multilateral Early Learning and Child Care Framework – Early Learning and Child Care Bilateral Agreements	\$212,139,963
Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care	\$2,078,596,741
Early Learning and Child Care Infrastructure Fund	\$20,178,131

Note: The federal transfers above represent the funds allocated to Ontario for fiscal year 2023 – 2024. These funds may be slightly different from those included in the original agreements, as they are updated annually in line with population estimates. They do not represent funds carried over from the previous fiscal year or carried into the next fiscal year.

Source: Early Learning and Child Care Secretariat, Employment and Social Development Canada (2025).
