

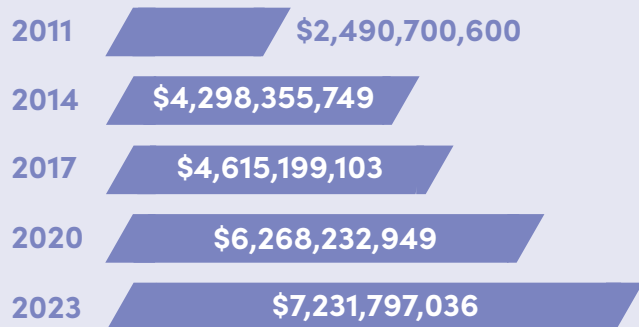
Early Childhood Education Report



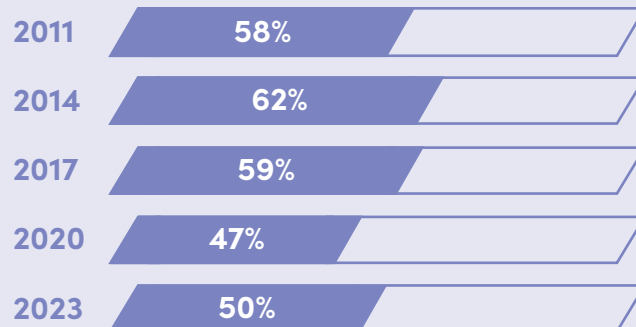
ONTARIO Profile 2023



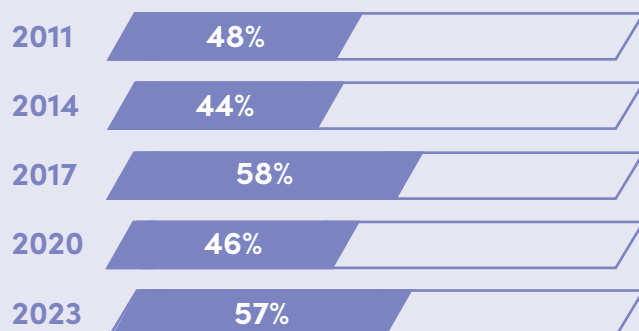
CHANGE IN ECEC SPENDING



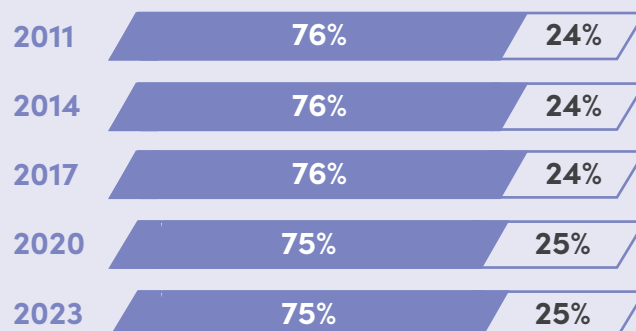
ECEC CAPACITY TO PERCENTAGE OF 2- TO 4-YEAR-OLD CHILDREN

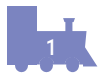


ECE WAGES AS A PERCENTAGE OF TEACHER WAGES



PERCENTAGE OF ECE FACILITIES (NON-PROFIT/PROFIT)





Early Childhood Education Report



ABOUT THE EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION REPORT BENCHMARKS

The Early Childhood Education Report (ECER) is produced by the Atkinson Centre for Society and Child Development at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education/University of Toronto and the Abilio—Childhood Knowledge Dissemination Centre, formerly the Centre of Excellence for Early Childhood Development, at the Université Laval and Université de Montréal. Twenty-one benchmarks are organized into five equally weighted categories, totalling a score of 15. The benchmarks evaluate governance structures, funding levels, access, quality in early learning environments, and the rigour of accountability mechanisms. Results are populated from detailed provincial and territorial profiles developed by the researchers and reviewed by provincial and territorial officials. For the federal overview, a detailed look at the benchmarks, the full methodology, and all provincial and territorial profiles, please visit [ECEReport.ca](https://ecereport.ca).

Please cite this publication as:

Akbari, E., McCuaig, K., & Mehta, S. (2024). *The Early Childhood Education Report 2023*. Ontario Institute for Studies in Education/University of Toronto.



NEW DEVELOPMENTS

This Ontario profile captures early learning and child care initiatives to March 31, 2023. The New Developments section highlights activities occurring after this date.

On January 23, 2024, the province announced changes to the Ontario Kindergarten curriculum. These changes include an emphasis on “back-to-basics” learning through the introduction of mandatory learning using clear and direct instruction in reading, writing, and math.¹

On November 16, 2023, the Minister of Education launched *Ontario’s Child Care Workforce Strategy*.² This strategy will deliver increased wages to Registered Early Childhood Educators (RECEs). As part of this plan, regulatory changes were made to O. Reg 137/15 under the *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014 (CCEYA)* to address recruiting and retaining staff by reducing the qualifications of those considered “qualified” under the Act. These clarifications include the following:

- A new provision clarifies regulations that staff who are employed while also enrolled in an educational program and completing their educational placement in their current place of work may continue to be counted as a staff member throughout the duration of their placement. Decisions regarding educational requirements will rest with the education program where the student is enrolled. This regulatory clarification will avoid misinterpretations that could lead to barriers to obtaining an ECE placement.
- Effective July 1, 2024, individuals with Child and Youth or Recreation and Leisure Diplomas, and individuals who are members in good standing with the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT), can be considered as qualified staff in both primary/junior school age groups and junior school age groups, regardless of the age of the children in the group. Licensees will no longer need to request director approval from the ministry to allow these professionals to work as qualified staff in a primary/junior school age group that includes children 6 to 9 years of age.

CANADA—ONTARIO CANADA-WIDE EARLY LEARNING AND CHILD CARE AGREEMENT (CWELCC)

On March 28, 2022, Canada and Ontario signed a \$13.2 billion agreement³ to lower fees for families and deliver an average of \$10 per day child care by March 31, 2026.

Highlights of the agreement include:

- a federal investment of \$13.2 billion over six years with the province. The deal includes an additional year of funding of at least \$2.9 billion.
- a commitment to create 86,000 net new, high-quality child care spaces for children from birth to younger than 6 years of age, relative to 2019 levels.⁴

As of January 2024, starting wages for RECEs within the CWELCC system were raised to \$23.86 per hour from the planned \$20 per hour. RECE program staff making less than \$26 per hour are now also eligible for the existing annual increase of up to \$1 per hour.⁵

GOVERNANCE

TABLE 1.1 ONTARIO GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Lead Ministry/Department	Department of Education ^a
Related Ministry/Department	
ECE Supervisory Units	Early Years and Child Care Division ^a Student Achievement Division ^b
Policy Framework	<i>Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Guidelines</i> ^c <i>Ontario Child Care and EarlyON Child and Family Centres Service Management and Funding Guideline 2023</i> ^d <i>Ontario's Access and Inclusion Framework 2023</i> ^e
Legislation	<i>Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014</i> , S.O. 2014, c.11, Sched. 1 (updated October 19, 2021) ^f <i>O. Reg 137/15 (General)</i> ^g <i>O. Reg 138/15 (Funding, Cost Sharing and Financial Assistance)</i> ^h <i>Education Act</i> , R.S.O. 1990, C. E.2 (updated 2022) ⁱ <i>O. Reg 221/11 (current to March 9 2022) (Extended Day and Third Party Programs)</i> ^j <i>Reg. 224/10: Full-Day Junior Kindergarten (updated 2017)</i> ^k <i>Early Childhood Educators Act, 2007</i> , S.O. 2007, c. 7, Sched. 8 (updated 2022). <i>Reg 55/22</i> , <i>Reg 614/20</i> , <i>Reg 613/20</i> , <i>Reg 440/19</i> , <i>439/19</i> , <i>359/1</i> , <i>223/08</i> , <i>222/08</i> , <i>221/08</i> ^l
Related Legislation	
Local Service Delivery	47 Consolidated Municipal Service Managers (CMSMs) and District Social Services Administration Boards (DSSABs) manage child care and related early years services. ^{m,n} School boards: 31 English Public; 29 English Catholic; 4 French Public; 8 French Catholic 10 School Authorities consisting of 4 geographically isolated boards and 6 hospital-based school authorities; 1 Provincial Schools Authority; and 1 Consortium ^o 96 Ontario First Nations receive provincial funding for child care and/or child and family programs ^p The province funds early years leads within each school board to coordinate between child care and schools ^q
Community/Sector Oversight	n/a

^a Government of Ontario. Ministry of Education. Retrieved from: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/ministry-education>

^b Government of Ontario. Ministry of Education. *Student Success Initiatives*. Retrieved from: <https://www.auditor.on.ca/en/content/annualreports/arreports/en11/313en11.pdf>

^c Government of Ontario. Ministry of Education. *Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Guidelines*. Retrieved from: https://efis.fma.csc.gov.on.ca/faab/Child%20Care/Guidelines/CWELCC_Guideline%20Addendum_August_2022_EN.pdf

^d Government of Ontario. Ministry of Education. *Ontario Child Care and EarlyON Child and Family Centres Service Management and Funding Guideline 2023*. Retrieved from: https://efis.fma.csc.gov.on.ca/faab/Child%20Care/Guidelines/2023_Service_Management_and_Funding_Guideline_Nov_30_2022_EN.pdf

^e Government of Ontario. Ministry of Education. *Ontario's Access and Inclusion Framework 2023*. Retrieved from: <https://www.niagararegion.ca/living/childcare/pdfs/access-inclusion-framework.pdf>

^f Government of Ontario. Ministry of Education. *Child Care and Early Years Act*. Retrieved from: <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/14c11>

^g Government of Ontario. Ministry of Education. *Child Care and Early Years Act. O. Reg. 137/15: General*. Retrieved from: <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/150137>

^h Government of Ontario. Ministry of Education. *Child Care and Early Years Act. O. Reg. 138/15: Funding, Cost Sharing and Financial Assistance*. Retrieved from: <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/150138>

ⁱ Government of Ontario. *Education Act*. Retrieved from: <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/90e02>

^j Government of Ontario. *Education Act. O. Reg. 221/11: Extended Day and Third-Party Programs under Education Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. E.2 consolidated March 8, 2021*. Retrieved from: <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/110221>

^k Government of Ontario. *Education Act. O. Reg. 224/10: Full-Day Junior Kindergarten and Kindergarten under Education Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. E.2 consolidated June 30, 2017*. Retrieved from: <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/100224>

^l Government of Ontario. *Early Childhood Educators Act, 2007, S.O. 2007, c. 7, Sched. 8 consolidated January 1, 2022*. Retrieved from: <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/07e07>

^m Government of Ontario. *Service System Managers for Child Care and Early Years Programs*. Retrieved from: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/service-system-managers-child-care-and-early-years-programs>

ⁿ The Government of Ontario introduced Bill 112 to dissolve the Regional Municipality of Peel into three stand-alone municipalities. The legislation passed on June 6, 2023, with plans to go into effect January 1, 2025. The plan was dissolved on December 13, 2023, by the Ontario government. Retrieved from: <https://www.peelregion.ca/transition/bill-112/>

^o Government of Ontario. Ministry of Education. *Facts about Elementary and Secondary Education*. Retrieved from: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/facts-about-elementary-and-secondary-education#:~:text=School%20boards%20are%20divided%20as,4%20French%20Public>

^p Government of Ontario. Ministry of Education. *Ontario's Early Years and Child Care Annual Report 2022*. Retrieved from: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/ontarios-early-years-and-child-care-annual-report-2022#:~:text=province%20was%20funding-,96,-First%20Nations%20to>

^q Personal communication Government of Ontario. Ministry of Education. Early Years and Child Care Division. February 14, 2024.

DEPARTMENT ORGANIZATION

The Early Years and Child Care Division within the Ministry of Education⁶ sets overall policy, legislation, licensing, and regulations for the child care and early years sector. It is also responsible for program implementation, under the authority of the *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014*,⁷ and licenses child care providers across the province. The ministry conducts inspections and investigates complaints about licensed and unlicensed child care. The ministry oversees and licenses two types of child care: 1) licensed child care centres; and 2) home child care agencies that contract with home child care providers.

The Student Achievement Division is responsible for the K–12 system.⁸ The Division is responsible for developing, implementing, and monitoring Ontario's Student Success Strategy, including Kindergarten children's academic achievement.⁹

The Strategic Policy and Planning Division in the Ministry of Education leads cross-cutting strategic policy and planning. This includes the development of a multi-year strategic policy framework to support the government's early years, child care, and education agenda.¹⁰

The provincial government provides funding to 47 local service system managers,¹¹ known as Consolidated Municipal Service Managers (CMSMs) and District Social Services Administration Boards (DSSABs), to support licensed child care and child and family programs. These service system managers have the authority to determine funding priorities within their local systems, provided they comply with provincial legislation, policies, and guidelines.

Each school board has a minimum 1.0 FTE (based on average daily enrolment) designated Early Years Lead at the supervisory officer level that liaises with CMSM/DSSABs to:

- Streamline early years programs and services
- Support transitions and supports for all children, including those having special needs
- Engage in collaborative system planning and implementation.¹²

POLICY FRAMEWORK

On March 27, 2022, the Governments of Canada and Ontario signed the new *Canada–Ontario Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement*.¹³ Ontario was the last of the provinces and territories to sign the agreement. The agreement provides \$13.2 billion in federal funding between 2021–26 to reduce licensed child care costs for families to an average of \$10 per day and expand access for children from birth to under 6 years of age.

There is currently no common policy framework.

SERVICE DESIGN

EDUCATION PROGRAMS

KINDERGARTEN:¹⁴ Kindergarten is a two-year, full-day, non-mandatory program offered by school boards to all children who turn 4 years old by December 31. Educator teams of certified teachers and registered (designated) early childhood educators lead the program when there are more than 16 children. Classroom sizes of 16 or fewer children are led by only an Ontario Certified Teacher.

BEFORE- AND AFTER-SCHOOL CARE:¹⁵ School boards are required to ensure the provision of before- and after-school programs for children ages 4 years to 12 years where there is sufficient demand and/or viability from parents and families. These programs can be offered by school boards or third-party providers, such as a licensed child care centre or an authorized recreational and skill-building program provider. School boards, working with community partners and families, can decide how they will provide before- and after-school programs.

Authorized recreational and skill-building programs can operate without a child care licence in accordance with the *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014* for up to three consecutive hours per day. Some authorized recreational and skill-building programs can apply to operate before- and after-school programs for more than three hours a day and on non-instructional days during the school year. A limited number of spaces are granted

permission to operate with enhanced hours.

Eligible providers include:¹⁶

- a member of YMCA Canada or Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada
- a local service system manager, a municipality, a school board, a First Nation, or the Métis Nation of Ontario
- a Friendship Centre that is a member of the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres
- an organization delivering Ontario's After-School Program funded by the Ministry of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries

REGULATED CHILD CARE

LICENSED CHILD CARE:¹⁷ The Ministry of Education licenses child care programs serving children from infancy up to and including 12 years of age. Care may be provided in child care centres (including nursery schools, full-day child care programs, and before- and after-school programs) or by home child care providers contracted by a licensed agency. An individual, First Nation, or for-profit or non-profit corporation can hold a licence, including CMSMs and DSSABs, school boards, post-secondary institutions, and parent cooperatives. Before- and after-school programs operated directly by school boards (called extended day programs) do not require a licence.

HOME CHILD CARE:¹⁸ The province licenses home child care agencies, which contract with individual child care providers. A home child care provider who is contracted with an agency may care for up to six children under the age of 13 years including their own children under the age of 4 years. No more than three children may be under the age of 2 years. Providers most often provide care in their own home.

UNREGULATED CHILD CARE

The Ministry of Education does not regularly inspect unlicensed child care providers and they are not required to meet most provincial standards. An unlicensed child care provider may care for a maximum of five children under the age of 13 years including the provider's own children under 4 years of age. No more than three children may be under the age of 2 years. Providers must inform parents in writing that the child care is not licensed.¹⁹

The Ministry of Education follows up on all complaints from the public about child care providers who may be operating illegally.

A licence is also not required in certain circumstances that are considered exempt under the Act. For example, the following programs/services do not require a child care licence:

- nannies or babysitters that provide care to children from one family in the children's home
- relatives that provide care for children
- camps that only care for children 4 years of age and older
- programs with a primary purpose of academic study or skill-based recreation
- private schools that only care for children 4 years of age and older

CHILD/FAMILY SERVICES

EARLYON CHILD AND FAMILY CENTRES²⁰ offer free child and family programs for families/caregivers and children from birth to 6 years of age. A registered early childhood educator oversees these programs. *EarlyON centres* must offer supports for three mandatory core services related to:

- supporting early learning and development
- engaging parents and caregivers
- making connections for families to provide information about programs and services for the whole family beyond the early years

EarlyON programs and services are offered through a variety of service delivery methods to support the diverse needs of families, including in-person, virtual, and mobile (offered outside of centres such as weekly programs in libraries). EarlyON centres are intended to be community-based (including schools, community buildings/spaces, and common areas within residential areas). CMSMs and DSSABs are responsible for the local planning, delivery, and oversight of EarlyON centres as part of their responsibility for the service management of child care and other human services. EarlyON centres are required to develop programming guided by *How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years, 2014 (HDLH)*.

The Ministry of Education also provides funding to First Nations for child and family programs on reserve.

LOCAL SERVICE DELIVERY

School boards deliver Kindergarten and special needs interventions and ensure the provision of before- and after-school program(s) on instructional days.²¹

The 47 CMSMs and DSSABs are responsible for planning early years services, administering parent fee subsidies, and providing operating funding for child care programs, child care special needs services, and EarlyON centres. Some CMSMs and DSSABs directly deliver child care and related early years programs. Some have also developed their own quality assurance systems and child care registries.²²

First Nations oversee child care and child and family programs on reserves. The Ministry of Education licenses First Nations programs and they are required to adhere to provincial regulations and standards for child care services. Provincial funding for First Nations includes educator wage subsidies, special needs resourcing, transformation, health and safety, supervisor network capacity building, and child and family programs. The federal government reimburses Ontario for federally approved child care costs (i.e., fee subsidies). The exact percentage varies from year to year as it is recalculated annually based on a population-based formula.²³

COMMUNITY/SECTOR OVERSIGHT

The Early Years and Child Care Division convenes stakeholder tables, but there is no legislated or policy requirement for advisory bodies. CMSMs and DSSABs may sponsor local stakeholder tables as part of their service management and planning functions.

The *Education Act* requires parent councils in every school. School boards with large Indigenous student populations generally have Indigenous advisory committees.²⁴

FUNDING

TABLE 2.1 ONTARIO EXPENDITURES FOR REGULATED CHILD CARE TO MARCH 31, 2023

Capital funding (including school board capital funding) ^{a,b}	\$76,838,438
Ontario Child Care Tax Credit ^a	\$386,231,800
Child Care Operating funding ^{a,c}	\$944,847,457
Child care fee subsidies ^{d,e}	\$674,339,877
EarlyON ^d	\$166,170,903
CWELCC ^d	\$1,301,267,402
Child Care and Early Years Workforce ^d	\$74,944,154
First Nations Operating Funding ^d	\$48,306,973
CMSM/DSSAB cost shared funding ^{d,f}	\$206,683,086
Total regulated child care	\$3,879,630,090

^a Government of Ontario. *Public Accounts of Ontario—Ministry Statements and Schedules 2022–2023*. Retrieved from: <https://files.ontario.ca/tbs-public-accounts-2022-23-ministry-statements-and-schedules-en-2023-09-25.pdf>

^b Includes capital transfer payment funding related to child care and early years under line 1004 (\$1,975,567) and school board capital funding for child care under line 1002 (\$74,862,871).

^c Line 1004–1.

^d Personal communication. Ministry of Education. Department of Early Years and Child Care. February 14, 2024.

^e Includes funding to CMSMs/DSSABs and First Nations. For CMSMs/DSSABs, child care fee subsidies equal 2021 actual fee subsidy expenses. There is no separate allocation for fee subsidy; the prior year actual expenses are used as a proxy. 2022 fee subsidy expenses are unavailable; 2021 has been used in its place. For First Nations, child care fee subsidies are based on the 2022–23 fee subsidy allocations.

^f Ontario requires CMSMs/DSSABs to cost share child care services. Estimate based on the 2022 and 2023 child care allocations.

TABLE 2.2 ONTARIO EXPENDITURES FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION/CHILD CARE TO MARCH 31, 2023

Kindergarten, junior Kindergarten ^a	\$3,352,166,946
Total regulated child care ^b	\$3,879,630,090
Total ECEC spending ^{c,d}	\$7,231,797,036
Total provincial budget ^e	\$202,600,000,000
ECE as a % of provincial budget	3.6%

^a Estimate based on 2022–23 enrolment of 256,694 (junior and senior Kindergarten, as reported by schools through the Ontario School Information System—preliminary as of November 3, 2023, with all schools that met identified criteria with signed off submissions) @ \$13,059 per pupil spending in 2022–23. Numbers include both English and French-language schools. \$13,059 per pupil spending. Government of Ontario. *2022–23 Grants for Student Needs Funding*. Retrieved from: https://efis.fma.csc.gov.on.ca/faab/Memos/B2022/B03_EN.pdf

^b From Table 2.1.

^c Does not include federal funding to Indigenous communities through Inuit, Métis, and First Nations agreements.

^d Funding for First Nations child care programs is cost shared between the federal and provincial governments through fiscal agreements with First Nations. Retrieved from: <https://www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1582215017700/1582215088300#ontario>

^e Government of Ontario. *Building a Strong Ontario: 2023 Ontario Budget*. Retrieved from: <https://budget.ontario.ca/2023/pdf/2023-ontario-budget-en.pdf>

Through the *Capital Priorities Grant Program*, the ministry's Capital and Business Support Division provides annual funding for major school capital construction projects. This includes child care spaces in schools for children from birth to 3.8 years of age.²⁵

In 2019, the province introduced the *Ontario Child Care Tax Credit*. Eligible families can claim up to 75 per cent of their eligible child care expenses, including services provided by child care centres, homes, and camps. Announced in 2021, the government provided an automatic top-up of 20 per cent of the credit entitlement for the 2021 taxation year.²⁶

Transformation funding supports program viability and facilitates child care transformation. Wherever possible, CMSMs and DSSABs are encouraged to work collaboratively with school boards and licensees to align the use of transformation funding with investments under the *Schools-First Child Care Capital Retrofit Policy* and provincial investment for construction of new child care spaces in schools. Funding is intended to cover one-time costs for licensees, including licensed child care centres and home child care agencies that are involved in business transformation activities and/or require business transformation support.²⁷



ACCESS

TABLE 3.1 ONTARIO CHILD POPULATION 0 TO <6 YEARS (2022)

Child population 0 to <6 years	865,107
0 to <24 months	279,233
24 months to <5 years	435,417
5 years	150,457
Total population of Ontario	15,109,416
Children 0 to <6 years as % of total population	5.7%

Source: Statistics Canada. Table 17-10-0005-01 population estimates on July 1, 2022, by age and sex (accessed on January 10, 2023).

TABLE 3.2 ONTARIO LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION OF MOTHERS BY AGE OF YOUNGEST CHILD (2022)

	Number of mothers in labour force by age of youngest child	Labour force participation rate of mothers by age of youngest child
0 to <24 months	175,000	73%
24 months to <5 years	213,400	76%
5 years	58,600	77%
Total mothers in labour force with child 0 to <6 years	447,000	
Average labour force participation of mothers with youngest child 0 to <6 years		75%

Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey. 0620_13 Table 3—Labour Force Survey (LFS) estimates of mothers by age of youngest child, Canada, provinces, territories, annual average, 2022.

TABLE 3.3 ONTARIO ECE SCHOOL PROGRAMS (2022–23)

Children attending 4-year-old Junior Kindergarten ^a	123,895
4-year-old child population ^b	148,144
% of 4-year-old children attending junior Kindergarten	83.6%
Children attending 5-year-old Senior Kindergarten ^a	132,799
5-year-old child population ^b	150,457
% of 5-year-old children attending senior Kindergarten	88.3%

^a Personal communication. Ministry of Education. Department of Early Years and Child Care. February 14, 2023. Estimate based on 2022–23 enrolment as reported by schools through the Ontario School Information System—preliminary as of November 3, 2023, with all schools that met identified criteria with signed off submissions. Not all First Nations schools report their enrolment numbers to provincial authorities. Number includes both English and French-language schools.

^b Statistics Canada. Table 17-10-0005-01 Population estimates on July 1, 2022, by age and sex (accessed on January 10, 2023).

TABLE 3.4 ONTARIO REGULATED CHILD CARE TO MARCH 31, 2023

Spaces by age group in centre-based programs

Infant (0 to <18 months)	15,715
Toddler (18 to <30 months)	53,894
Preschool (30 months to <6 years)	123,731
Kindergarten (44 months to <7 years)	123,014
School age (68 months to <13 years)	187,689
Family age (0 to <13 years)	1,012

Total capacity regulated child care centres	505,055
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Number of home child care agencies	148
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Number of approved homes	9,863
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Facilities by auspice

Non-profit	4,328
For-profit	1,448

Source: Personal communication. Ministry of Education. Department of Early Years and Child Care. February 14, 2024. Data source: Child Care Licensing System (CCLS)

TABLE 3.5 ONTARIO ECE CAPACITY TO PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN BY AGE GROUP TO MARCH 31, 2023

Child Ages	Number of Children ^a	Licensed Child Care Spaces ^{b,c}	School-Based Junior/Senior Kindergarten Enrolment ^d	Other ECE Programs ^d	Capacity to % of Children
0 to <24 months	279,233	42,662			15.3%
24 months to <5 years	435,417	92,427	123,895 ^e		50%
5 years	150,457		132,799 ^f		88.3%

^a Statistics Canada. Table 17-10-0005-01 population estimates on July 1, 2022, by age and sex (accessed on January 10, 2023).

^b Personal communication. Government of Ontario. Ministry of Education. February 14, 2024. Numbers are calculated estimates. Age groupings in report do not match age groupings collected by the province. Percent of 4-year-olds attending junior Kindergarten removed from total to avoid double counting.

^c Includes Aboriginal Head Start. There are 14 Aboriginal Head Start Programs in Ontario. Each may be licensed for up to 25 children. Retrieved from: <https://oahsa.ca/ahs-sites/>

^d Personal communication. Ministry of Education. Department of Early Years and Child Care. February 14, 2023. Estimate based on 2022–23 enrolment as reported by schools through the Ontario School Information System— preliminary as of November 3, 2023, with all schools that met identified criteria with signed off submissions. Not all First Nations schools report their enrolment numbers to provincial authorities. Number includes both English and French-language schools.

^e Children attending junior Kindergarten.

^f Children attending senior Kindergarten. Child care figures are not reported to avoid double counting.

On March 4, 2022, the Ontario government announced it is providing \$1 million²⁸ through the *Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation (NOHFC)*²⁹ to Ontario Aboriginal Housing Services and the Waabinong Head Start Family Resource Centre. The funding will be used to build a child care facility providing educational programs for Indigenous preschoolers and their families that promote the Anishinaabek culture and language in Sault Ste. Marie.

Under the CWELCC agreement, Ontario committed to creating 86,000 net new child care spaces relative to 2019. In May 2023, the province allocated more than 72,500 spaces.³⁰

AFFORDABILITY

TABLE 3.6 ONTARIO PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN IN LICENSED CHILD CARE CENTRES RECEIVING A FULL OR PARTIAL SUBSIDY (2022)

Subsidy Type	Full Subsidy	Partial Subsidy
All ages	12.4%	12.1%
Family age group	19.7%	9.8%
Infant	13.2%	17.5%
Toddler	10.5%	13.5%
Preschool	11.8%	12.0%
Kindergarten	11.9%	11.2%
School age	14.2%	11.2%

Source: Personal communication. Government of Ontario. Ministry of Education. Early Years Child Care Division, Licensed Child Care Survey, 2023. February 14, 2024.

FEE SUBSIDIES: Child care subsidies for parents/guardians are determined by an income test.³¹ Full subsidies are available.³²

To track child care costs, Ontario collects parent fee data through the annual child care operations survey.

INCLUSION

SPECIAL NEEDS SUPPORT IN KINDERGARTEN:³³ School boards must develop an Individual Education Plan (IEP) for every student identified with special needs from Kindergarten up to and including Grade 12. School boards also have the discretion to develop an IEP for students who have not been formally identified as exceptional but who are receiving special education programs and/or special education services.

SPECIAL NEEDS SUPPORT IN CHILD CARE:³⁴ Special needs resourcing funding supports the inclusion of children with special needs in child care and early years settings (e.g., licensed child care centres and licensed home child care, before- and after-school programs, authorized recreation and skill-building programs, EarlyON centres, and Indigenous-led child and family programs) at no additional cost to parents/guardians.

CMSMs/DSSABs are required to spend at least 4.1 per cent of their total child care funding allocation on special needs resourcing.

The province funds the *Ontario Autism Program (OAP)*³⁵ to support the families of children and youth on the autism spectrum. One of its components is the *Entry to School Program*,³⁶ a six-month, group-based, skill-building program to help young children (aged 3 to 6 years) prepare to enter Kindergarten or Grade 1 for the first time, followed by transition supports after school entry. School boards are key partners in the delivery of the Entry to School Program.





LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

TABLE 4.1 ONTARIO CURRICULUM FRAMEWORKS

Program	Framework Documents
Kindergarten	<i>The Kindergarten Program</i> (2016) ^a is mandated for use in 4-year-old and 5-year-old Kindergarten. The <i>2019 Addendum to the Kindergarten Program</i> ^b updates two specific expectations—expectation 6.4 and expectation 24.1—to include new learning on concussions and online safety.
Child Care	<i>How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years</i> (2014) ^{c,d}

^a. Government of Ontario, Ministry of Education. *The Ontario Curriculum: Elementary*. Retrieved from: <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/curriculum/elementary/kindergarten.html>

^b. Government of Ontario. *The 2019 Addendum to the Kindergarten Program*. Retrieved from: <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/curriculum/elementary/addendum-to-kindergarten-program.pdf>

^c. Government of Ontario. *How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years*. Retrieved from: <https://files.ontario.ca/edu-how-does-learning-happen-en-2021-03-23.pdf>

^d. EarlyON Child and Family Centre programs and services are expected to use *How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years* (2014) to guide the development and delivery of local programs.

In January 2024, the Ontario government announced changes to the Kindergarten curriculum with an emphasis on back-to-basics direct instruction in reading, writing, and math. This will be combined with current hands-on and play-based learning. Changes will be in place starting September 25, 2025.³⁷

WORK ENVIRONMENT

TABLE 4.2 ONTARIO GROUP SIZE AND STAFF/CHILD RATIO IN REGULATED CHILD CARE CENTRES

Age	Staff:Child Ratios	Maximum Group Size
Regulated Child Care Centres (Schedule 1)^a		
Infant (0 to <18 months)	3:10	10
Toddler (18 to <30 months)	1:5	15
Pre-school (30 months to <6 years)	1:8	24
Kindergarten (44 months to <7 years)	1:13	26
Primary/junior school age (68 months to <13 years)	1:15	30
Junior school age (9 years to <13 years)	1:20	20
Ratio for child with special needs (Schedule 2: O. REG. 51/18, S. 30 and Schedule 3: O. REG. 174/21, S. 43 have been revoked) ^a		
Family Age Groups (Schedule 4)^{a,b}		
<12 months	1:3	15
12 to <24 months	1:4	15
24 months to <13 years	1:8	15

^a. Government of Ontario. *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014, S.O. 2014, c. 11, Sched. 1 consolidated September 1, 2020. O. Reg. 137/15: General*. Retrieved from: <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/150137>

^b. The “family age grouping” (Schedule 4) for children 0–12 years allows children of different ages, whether or not from the same family, to be in the same group in the same play activity room. The family age group can have up to a maximum of 15 children and no more than 6 children under 2 years of age.

KINDERGARTEN CLASS SIZE:³⁸ The class size for Kindergarten is capped at 29 with two educators. The average size of Kindergarten classes across a board cannot be more than 26. Schools may have only one Kindergarten class with a teacher and no designated early childhood educator if there are fewer than 16 pupils enrolled; dual track French immersion schools may have one such class per language track.

CHILD CARE: A child care operator may hold an unlimited number of licences for child care centres and home child care agencies, but each individual centre and home agency is individually licensed. Limits on licensed capacity are set out in each licence.

EDUCATORS

TABLE 4.3 ONTARIO EDUCATOR QUALIFICATIONS

Kindergarten Teachers	Teachers must hold a minimum three-year post-secondary undergraduate degree and complete a four-semester teacher education program. ^a Proficiency in English or French is required. ^b Catholic boards often require proof of religious practice. ^c
Early Childhood Educators	ECEs must hold a Diploma in Early Childhood Education from an Ontario College of Applied Arts and Technology (OCAAT) or a diploma/degree from a program listed on the College of Early Childhood Educators' <i>Approved Post-Secondary Programs List</i> . ^d

^a Ontario College of Teachers. *Requirements*. Retrieved from: <https://www.oct.ca/becoming-a-teacher/requirements>

^b Ontario College of Teachers. *Language Requirements*. Retrieved from: <https://www.oct.ca/becoming-a-teacher/internationally-educated-teachers/proficiency>

^c See, for example, University of Toronto. *Teaching in Ontario's Catholic Schools*. Retrieved from: https://cpl.oise.utoronto.ca/program_certificate/teaching-in-ontarios-catholic-schools/

^d College of Early Childhood Educators. Current list of College-approved education programs. Retrieved from: <https://help.college-ece.ca/hc/en-ca/articles/20397265143195-What-education-programs-are-accepted-by-the-College>

TABLE 4.4 ONTARIO PROFESSIONAL RECOGNITION AND DEVELOPMENT

	Teachers	Early Childhood Educators
Professional Recognition	Ontario Teacher's Certificate from the Ontario College of Teachers. ^a	Certificate of Registration with the College of Early Childhood Educators (CECE) of Ontario. ^b
Professional Development	Professional development is offered through school boards. ^c	Registered Early Childhood Educators must annually fulfill the requirements of the Continuous Professional Learning Program through the College of Early Childhood Educators. ^d

^a Ontario College of Teachers. *Requirements*. Retrieved from: <https://www.oct.ca/becoming-a-teacher/requirements>

^b College of Early Childhood Educators. *Who is Required to be a Member?* Retrieved from: <https://www.college-ece.ca/about-us/>

^c Ontario College of Teachers. *Professional Learning Framework for the Teaching Profession*. Retrieved from: https://www.oct.ca/-/media/PDF/Professional%20Learning%20Framework/framework_e.pdf

^d College of Early Childhood Educators. *Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice: For Registered Early Childhood Educators in Ontario*. (June 2017). Retrieved from: https://www.college-ece.ca/en/Documents/Code_and_Standards_2017.pdf

TABLE 4.5 ONTARIO DENSITY OF QUALIFIED STAFF IN CHILD CARE CENTRES^a

Age Categories	Proportion of Employees that Must be Qualified ^{b,c}
Infant	1:3
Toddler	1:3
Preschool	2:3 for groups of 24; 1:2 for groups of 16
Kindergarten	1:2
Primary/junior school age	1:2
Junior school age	1:1

^a Government of Ontario. *O. Reg. 137/15: General under Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014, S.O. 2014, c. 11, Sched. 1 consolidated January 1, 2023*. Retrieved from: <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/150137#BK65>

^b Effective July 1, 2024, individuals with a Child and Youth Diploma or a Recreation and Leisure Diploma, and individuals who are members in good standing with the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT), can be considered as qualified staff in both primary/junior school age groups and junior school age groups, regardless of the age of the children in the group. Licensees will no longer need to request director approval from the ministry to allow these child care professionals to work as qualified staff in a primary/junior school age group that includes children aged 6 to 9 years.

^c Government of Ontario. News Release. November 16, 2023. *Ontario Announces Comprehensive Strategy to Child Care Workforce and Protect Children*. Retrieved from: <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/1003833/ontario-announces-comprehensive-strategy-to-boost-child-care-workforce-and-protect-children>

TABLE 4.6 ONTARIO ECE ANNUAL WAGE AS A PERCENTAGE OF TEACHER WAGE (2022)

Teachers ^a	Early Childhood Educators ^b	ECE Wage as a Percentage of Teacher Wage
\$78,538	\$44,512	57%

^a Collective agreements from ETFO were reviewed across the province and salaries of Durham District School Board were selected as a mid-point salary scale in the province. ETFO is currently in negotiations and salaries reflect those that were effective September 1, 2021. For detailed selection criteria, see Methodology. Retrieved from: [https://ws.lrlabour.gov.on.ca/CA/doc/611-20291-22%20\(801-0300\)?library=Education%20and%20Related%20Services](https://ws.lrlabour.gov.on.ca/CA/doc/611-20291-22%20(801-0300)?library=Education%20and%20Related%20Services)

^b Full-time ECE with post-secondary training. Annual salary calculated by median hourly wage × 40 hours × 52 weeks. 0523_03 Table 1—Employees in occupation 42202—Early childhood educators and assistants, National Occupational Classification (NOC) 2021, by educational attainment and wages, Canada, provinces and regions, annual averages, 2022.

In 2022 and 2023, through the *Early Childhood Workforce Funding Agreement*, many DSSABs and CMSMs provided full or partial tuition bursaries to those wanting to pursue a career in early childhood education. Other regional governments provided conditional or limited full or partial tuition bursaries (e.g., conditional on staying in the sector for a defined period, or available only to those already in the sector).³⁹

The province provides wage enhancement grants (WEG) of up to \$2 per hour for those working in licensed child care centres, home child care agencies, or child care centres managed by First Nations. To be eligible for the full WEG, the base hourly wage for a child care staff must be less than or equal to \$28.59 per hour. For partial WEG eligibility, the base hourly wage for a child care

staff must be between \$28.60 per hour and \$30.58 per hour. The intent of the partial WEG is to increase the wage of the qualifying position up to the \$30.59 per hour Provincial Wage Enhancement threshold. The government established the WEG in 2015.⁴⁰

As of January 2024, starting wages for RECEs within the CWELCC system were raised to \$23.86 per hour from the planned \$20 per hour. This increase applies to eligible new hires and current employees. RECE supervisors and RECE home child care visitors also saw an increase to the wage floor from the planned \$22 per hour to \$24.86 per hour. Starting wages will increase by \$1 per hour each year through to 2026. RECE program staff making less than the wage eligibility ceiling of \$26 per hour in 2024 are also eligible for an annual increase of up to \$1 per hour.

In 2025, the wage eligibility ceiling will be expanded to include RECE program staff earning less than \$27 per hour, and in 2026 for those earning less than \$28 per hour. RECE supervisors and home child care visitors earning less than \$29 per hour in 2024, less than \$30 per hour in 2025, and less than \$31 per hour in 2026 will also be eligible for the annual \$1 per hour increase in those years.⁴¹

A *Home Child Care Enhancement Grant (HCCEG)*⁴² of up to \$20 per day is available for eligible home child care providers contracted with licensed home child care agencies. A maximum daily income of less than \$305.90 is required for a full HCCEG and \$183.54 for a partial HCCEG.

On November 16, 2023, the Minister of Education announced *Ontario's Child Care Workforce Strategy*.⁴³ This strategy will deliver increased wages to RECEs. Changes include the following:

- increasing the starting wage for RECEs employed by child care operators enrolled in the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC) system to \$23.86 per hour in 2024 from the planned \$20 per hour
- extending the eligibility ceiling for a \$1 per hour increase
- supporting entry into the profession and career development
- launching a promotional campaign to bolster awareness and the value of the child care profession

This wage enhancement builds on actions taken by the province through the introduction in 2022 of a new wage floor for RECEs working in settings

participating in the CWELCC system, which included annual \$1 per hour wage increases beginning in 2023.

Benefits of 17.5 per cent support operators in meeting their statutory benefit requirements. Operators whose mandatory benefits are less than 17.5 per cent may use the remaining amount toward salaries or to fund additional benefit expenses, such as additional vacation/statutory holidays.⁴⁴

The government provides \$150 per funded full-time equivalent (FTE) staff member to cover shortfalls in Provincial Wage Enhancement salaries (may cover additional days worked, sick days, and training hours) and benefits. Funded FTE is calculated based on 7.25 hours per standard workday in the application, as per provincial direction.⁴⁵

In January 2021, Ontario announced⁴⁶ it would invest \$150,000 to create two new positions at the provincial advocacy group l'Association francophone à l'éducation des services à l'enfance de l'Ontario (AFÉSEO). These positions promote the recruitment, retention, and professional development of French-language early childhood educator staff while supporting the provision of high-quality French-language services in child care and early years programs.

In December 2020,⁴⁷ the Ontario government invested \$1.2 million in a skills training project through Skills Advance Ontario, in partnership with Carrefour communautaire francophone de London, to prepare 130 job seekers for careers in the French- and English-language early childhood education sector.

ACCOUNTABILITY

PROGRESS REPORTS: The most recent publicly available report is *Ontario's Early Years and Child Care Annual Report 2023*.⁴⁸

PROGRAM STANDARDS: Standards are in place for licensed child care. Program standards for Kindergarten for new builds and renovations include regulations for bathrooms and room size.

POPULATION MONITORING: The Early Development Instrument (EDI) is collected in three-year cycles. The most recent EDI data collection took place in 2022–23.⁴⁹



ENDNOTES

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