



Region of Waterloo



Early Years and Child Care Profile 2022



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Introduction

The 2022 Early Years and Child Care (EYCC) Profile provides a snapshot of EYCC programs and services in Waterloo Region for 2022. EYCC includes the licensed child care system for ages 0 to 12 years and EarlyON Child and Family Centres for ages 0 to 6 years.

The EYCC Profile presents data and information organized around the four pillars needed for a strong EYCC system: access, affordability, equity and responsiveness, and quality. These four pillars are closely interconnected and coordinated action is needed across each pillar in order to create an equitable early years and child care system.



Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care program

98% of licensed child care centres and **100%** of licensed home child care agencies have opted-in to CWELCC in Waterloo Region.



In March 2022, Ontario reached a **\$13.2 billion** agreement with the federal government on funding the new [Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care](#) (CWELCC) program. The CWELCC program will lower child care costs to an average of **\$10 per day** by 2026.

CWELCC represents transformational change in the child care system and will support more families in Ontario to access high quality, affordable, flexible, and inclusive early learning and child care. The CWELCC agreement provides Ontario with the funding to support the creation of **86,000 new licensed child care spaces** (relative to 2019). The funding will predominantly support the creation of not-for-profit child care spaces by December 2026. Ontario's goal is that 37% of children ages 0 to 5 will have access to a CWELCC space.

As part of the implementation of the CWELCC system, Ontario is providing funding to the Region of Waterloo to add **3,725** new licensed child care spaces across Waterloo Region. **789** of the spaces will be located in schools and **2,936** of the spaces will be located in the community (i.e., at a location other than a publicly funded school, such as a stand-alone centre, place of worship, educational institution, caregiver home, etc.). New CWELCC spaces will be located in [priority areas](#) that need affordable child care the most.

Access

Increasing access to quality, licensed early years and child care (EYCC) programs continues to be a priority for Waterloo Region. Research shows that participation in quality EYCC programs positively impacts children’s development and family and child well-being¹. Benefits to children regularly participating in early childhood education programs include higher graduation rates,

improved work habits and grades, strong social skills, gains in reading and math, and making better decisions².

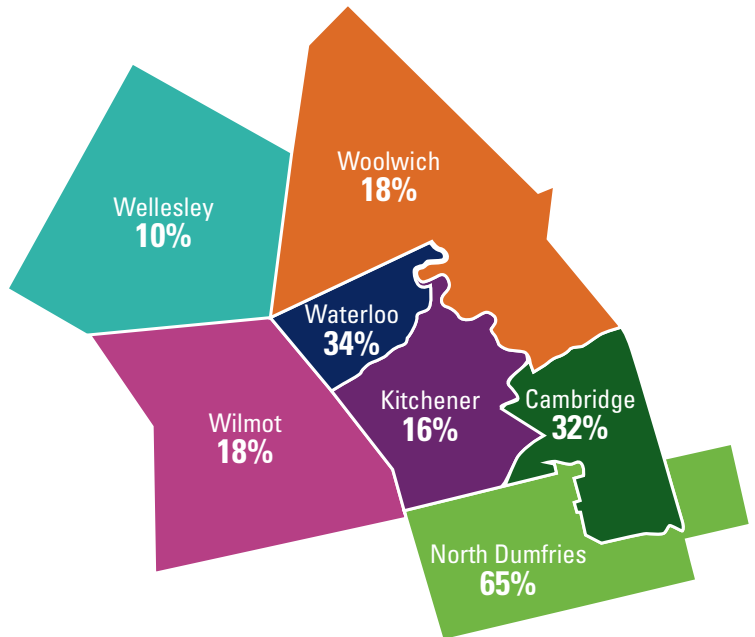
Despite growth in the EYCC system over the past five years, many families are unable to access licensed child care or EarlyON programs and services when and where they are needed.

Percent access to child care spaces

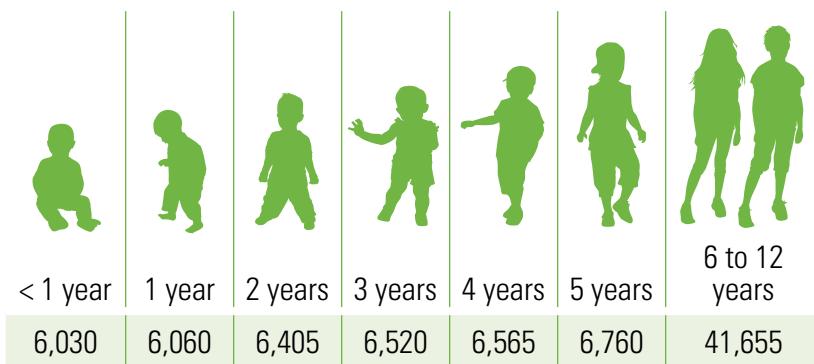
In 2022, about **25,015** children ages 0 to 4 years³ lived in Waterloo Region and there were about **7,040** licensed child care spaces⁴. This means that only **1 in 4 children (28%)** had access to a licensed child care space, either centre-based or home-based⁵. When considering access to only centre-based child care, about 24% of children have access. Ontario has set a goal that 37% of children ages 0 to 5 will have access to a CWELCC space by 2026.

From 2016 to 2021, the population of children in Waterloo Region ages 0 to 12 years grew by **3,805** children (**3.4%**).

Percentage of children (0 to 4 years of age) with access to a licensed centre-based space by municipality⁶



Number of children in Waterloo Region (birth to age 12)



At the time of the 2021 Census, there were **25,015 children 0-4 years** of age and **79,995 children 0 to 12 years** of age living in Waterloo Region⁷.

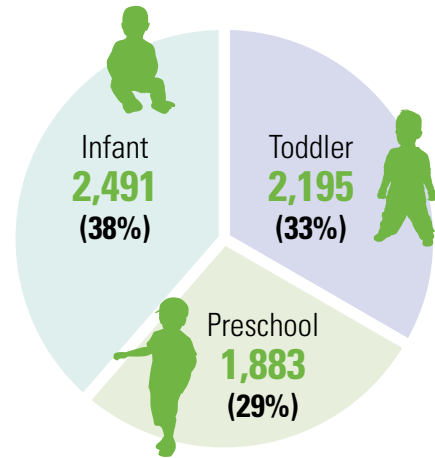
OneList Waterloo Region: child care application and waitlist

OneList is the single point of access and online service where all applications for licensed child care in Waterloo Region are submitted. Find out more at OneListWaterlooRegion.ca.

About **6,500** children ages 0 to 4 years were waiting for a child care space through OneList as of December 2022⁸.

As licensed child care becomes more affordable through CWELCC, the demand for child care is expected to increase significantly. From January to December 2022, the OneList waitlist increased by 1,214 children⁹.

Number of children ages 0 to 4 years waiting for a child care space on OneList



Centre-based EYCC programs

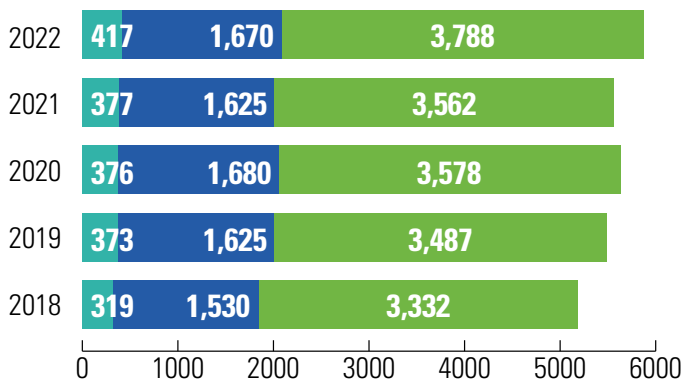
Centre-based EYCC Programs operate in a variety of locations including stand-alone buildings, workplaces, community centres, schools and places of worship. Centre-based EYCC is available for children up to 12 years of age.

Ages 0 to 4 years

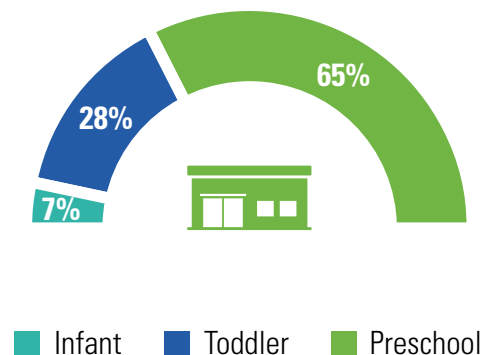
As of December 2022, there were **105 child care centres** with **5,875 licensed spaces** for children 0 to 4 years of age. Since 2018, centre-based child care has grown by **694 spaces** (13%).

58% of centre-based spaces were operated by not-for-profit organizations and 42% are operated by for-profit organizations. Waterloo Region has prioritized growth of not-for-profit child care spaces.

Centre-based child care spaces for children ages 0 to 4 years from 2018 to 2022¹⁰



Distribution of centre-based spaces for children ages 0 to 4 years¹¹



Kindergarten and school age children

As of December 2022, there were **eight child care centres** with **363 licensed spaces for 4 to 12 year old children** in centre-based child care¹². These spaces are in addition to before and after school spaces located in publicly-funded schools.

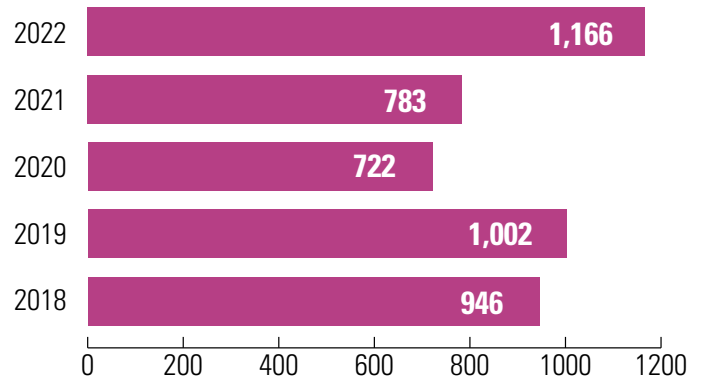
Home-based EYCC programs

Home-based EYCC Programs are provided in approved private homes by caregivers who have a contract with one of four licensed home child care agencies in Waterloo Region. Home-based EYCC is available for children up to 12 years old and may be available seven days a week, 24 hours a day.

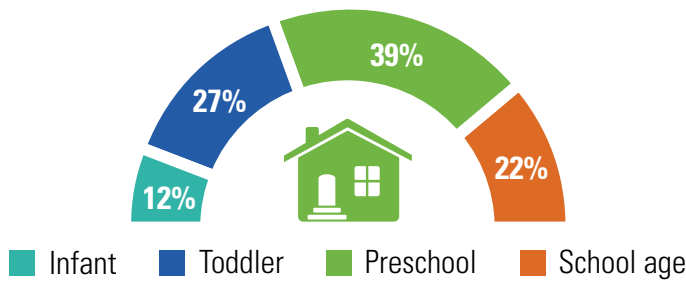
As of December 2022, there were approximately **326** home child care caregivers providing care to about **1,500** children ages 0 to 12 in Waterloo Region¹³. Since 2018, home child care has grown by about 220 children (or 23%).



Number of children ages 0 to 4 years in licensed home-based child care from 2018 to 2022¹⁴



Distribution of children ages 0 to 12 years in licensed home-based child care



Before and after school programs

Before and after school programs are available for children 4 to 12 years of age. These programs are operated directly by school boards or licensed child care operators and are offered at all schools where there is sufficient parent demand.

For the 2022/23 school year, **98%** of publicly-funded elementary schools have before and after school programs on-site. The remaining **2%** of schools had insufficient demand to operate before and after school programs. Of the schools offering before and after school programs:

- **60%** only offer a school board operated program;
- **23%** only offer a child care operated program; and,
- **17%** offer both a school board operated and child care operated program at the school¹⁵.

In the 2022/23 school year, **5,802** children were registered in before and after school programs operated by school boards¹⁶.

EYCC community operators were licensed for up to **6,135** before and after school spaces, but the actual number of children registered was significantly less than the licensed capacity of these programs¹⁷.



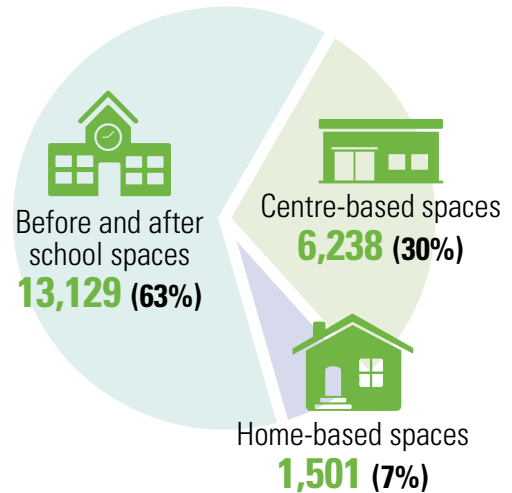
For the 2022/23 school year, **98%** of publicly-funded elementary schools **have before and after school programs on-site**. The remaining **2%** had **insufficient demand to operate** before and after school programs.

Total licensed capacity

Licensed capacity is the maximum number of spaces a program is approved to operate by the Ministry of Education. While a program may be licensed for a certain number of spaces, they may not operate their program at full licensed capacity. As of September 2022, child care centres for children ages 0 to 4 years were operating, on average, at about **85%** of their licensed capacity¹⁸.

There are **20,868** licensed child care spaces for children ages 0 to 12 years in Waterloo Region.

Licensed child care spaces by program type¹⁹



EarlyON Child and Family Centres

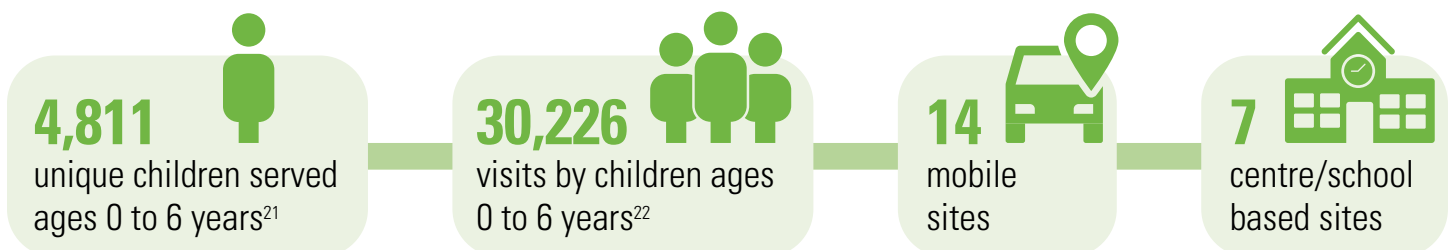


EarlyON Child and Family Centres offer free, play-based programs for children from birth to 6 years old, as well as supports and resources to their parents and caring adults.

In Waterloo Region, the YMCA of Three Rivers is the lead agency for the delivery of EarlyON Child and Family Centres and Anishnabeg Outreach operates an Indigenous-led and supported Child and Family Centre²⁰.

At the end of 2022, there were **21** EarlyON Child and Family Centre sites operating, including **seven** centre locations that are open at least five days per week and **14** mobile sites. Centres re-opened for indoor, in-person programming in 2022. In addition, some virtual programming continues to be available for families and children.

EarlyON continues to expand and transform, with a new EarlyON centre opening at Oak Creek Public School in 2022. Planning continues for a Francophone mobile site.



Affordability

In the past, high quality, licensed EYCC has come at a substantial financial cost to families. With the launch of the [Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care \(CWELCC\)](#) program in 2022, child care will become more affordable to families by lowering child care fees to an average of **\$10 per day** by the end of March 2026²³.

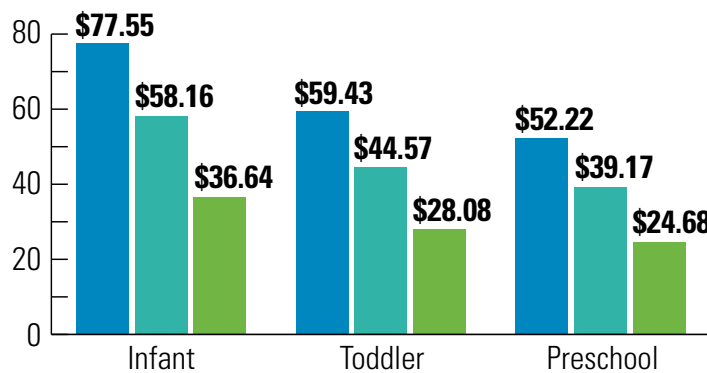
In addition to reduced fees through the CWELCC program, some families are also eligible for further help to pay for child care through the Child Care Fee Subsidy program.



By 2026, parent fees for CWELCC programs will be reduced to **\$10 a day** on average

CWELCC reduction to parent fees

Average daily parent costs of child care before CWELCC reductions and after CWELCC reduction by age group



CWELCC fee reductions are applicable for children ages 0 to 5 years attending a CWELCC enrolled program. 98% of programs in Waterloo Region opted in to CWELCC. The first CWELCC fee reductions of 25% were effective as of April 1, 2022. Further CWELCC fee reductions of 52.75% came into effect on December 31, 2022.

With the CWELCC fee reduction of 52.75%, parents will experience, on average, yearly savings of **\$10,677** for a full-time infant space, **\$8,182** for a toddler space, and **\$7,190** for a preschool space.

■ Before CWELCC ■ After CWELCC 25% reduction ■ After CWELCC 52.75% reduction

Cost to attend licensed child care



\$4,754 to \$9,874

for a 3 year old to attend a CWELCC centre-based program for a full year²⁴



\$5,624 to \$7,366

for a 3 year old to attend a CWELCC home-based program for a full year



\$1,416 to \$2,967

for a 4 to 5 year old to attend a CWELCC before and after school program for a full school year²⁵



\$2,685 to \$5,626

for a 6 to 12 year old to attend a before and after school program for a full school year*

*CWELCC is only available for children ages 0 to 5 years

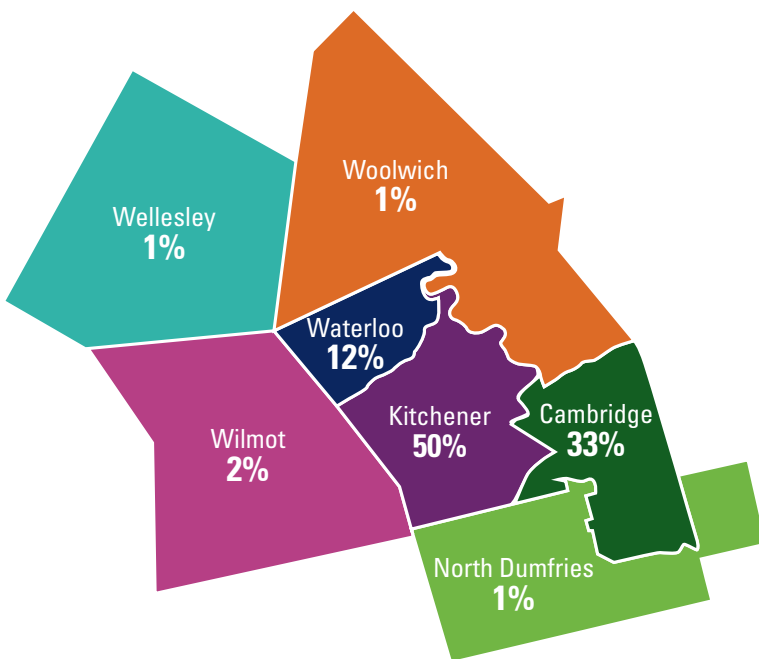
Child Care Fee Subsidy

In addition to reduced fees through CWELCC, some families are also eligible for further financial support through Child Care Fee Subsidy to help pay for child care. The amount of fee subsidy is based on the family's income and the number of children in licensed child care. For parents eligible for partial fee subsidy, CWELCC also reduces the portion of fees they pay for eligible children by 25% as of April 1, 2022 and 50% as of December 31, 2022.

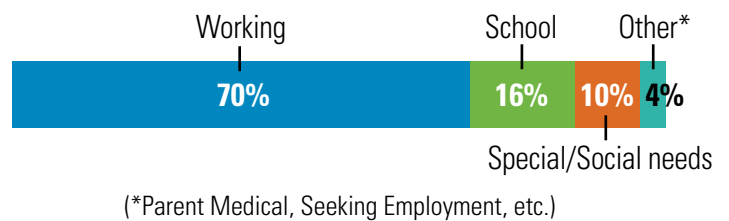
Income distribution of families on the Child Care Fee Subsidy caseload²⁶



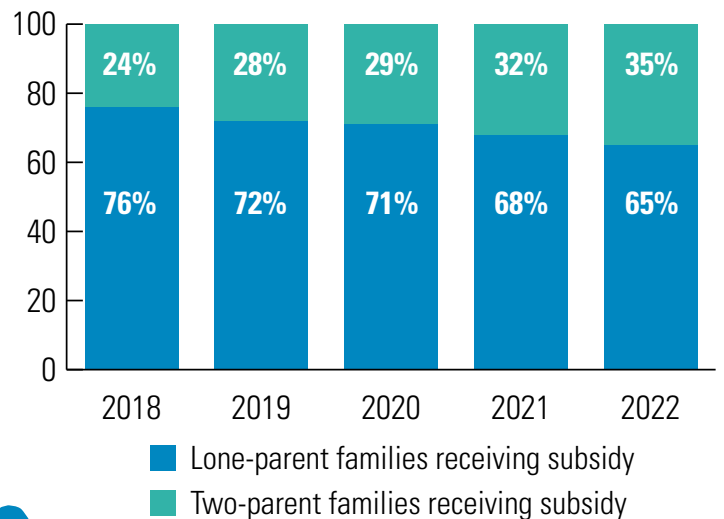
Distribution of the Child Care Fee Subsidy caseload by municipality²⁸



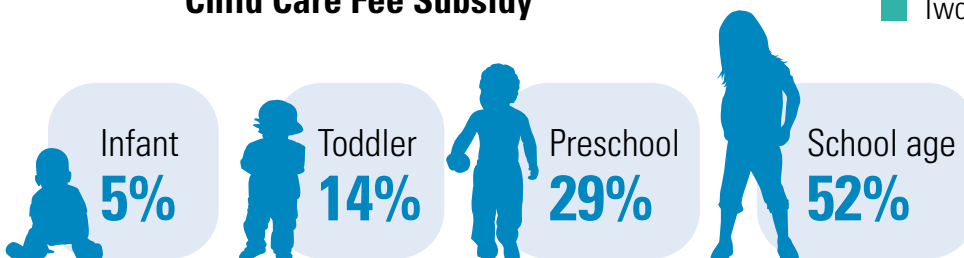
Reasons families receiving Child Care Fee Subsidy are using child care²⁷



Percent of families receiving subsidy that are lone-parent families and two-parent families from 2018 to 2022²⁹



Age distribution of children receiving Child Care Fee Subsidy



Equity and responsiveness

EYCC programs and services play a vital role in supporting equity, inclusion, and diversity in the early years and in the broader community. Currently, existing policies, programs and structures in the EYCC system unintentionally disadvantage certain children and families, including Indigenous, Black and racialized families, 2SLGBTQ+ and

families living in lower income, families with a child with special needs, and French language minorities. Across the EYCC system, Early Years professionals and community stakeholders are working to identify and remove barriers so that every child can fully participate and benefit from high-quality EYCC programs and services.

In an equitable EYCC system:

- Systemic barriers are identified and removed.
- All children and families can fully participate in high quality, affordable child care in their preferred location.
- All children and families are viewed as capable, competent, curious, and rich in potential.
- Families' social, cultural, and linguistic perspectives are valued and reflected in programming.
- Supports are provided to families who face barriers to accessing the EYCC system.

Indigenous EYCC

In 2019, Anishnabeg Outreach opened the first Indigenous-led Child and Family Centre in Waterloo Region. Covid-19 greatly impacted the Indigenous-led Child and Family Centre causing the program to shift to a virtual model of service delivery throughout the pandemic. The summer of 2022 saw the return to in-person programming, both indoors and outdoors. The Child and Family Centre is open to Indigenous and non-Indigenous families and children.

The Indigenous-led Child and Family Centre served **380** children, with **1,950** visits in their regular programming. In addition, they have targeted programs that specifically support Indigenous families, such as their Spirit Bundle program and the School to School Back Pack program.



Francophone EYCC

Availability of culturally inclusive programming is a priority in Waterloo Region. As the community changes, the EYCC system is changing to reflect the evolving and varied needs of children and families.

From 2020 to 2022, there was an increase of **65** child care spaces in French language spaces in Waterloo Region for a total of **260** spaces.

There was a **33%** increase in French Language child care spaces in Waterloo Region from 2020 to 2022.



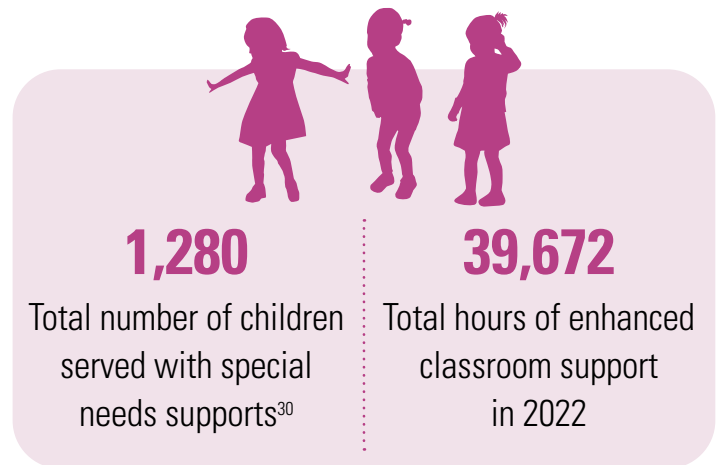
Supports for children with special needs



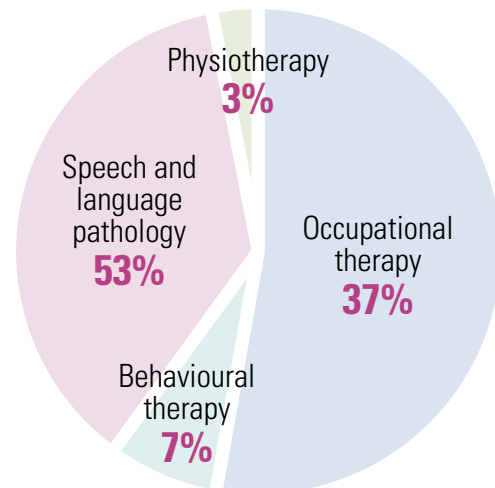
The Special Needs Resourcing Collaborative partners with child care programs to support all children to fully participate in licensed child care. Services are provided by resource consultants, speech and language pathologists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, kinesiologists and behaviour therapists. Supports may be focused on the whole classroom and/or caregiver home, a small group of children, or one child to promote inclusion, including:

- Capacity building and training for staff;
- Individual assessments and plans to support child development;
- Information and support to families; and
- Additional staffing for child care programs.

In 2022, as Covid-19 restrictions loosened, Special Needs Resourcing transitioned back to regular in-person visits. Special Needs Resourcing also saw an increase in referrals for support, impacted by the pandemic, as children returned to programs



Distribution of therapeutic supports for children with special needs



Equity and responsiveness

Equity-focused initiatives

A number of new initiatives are currently underway to support a more equitable and inclusive child care system. Funding for these initiatives is provided through the Region of Waterloo's Reconciliation and Equity Investments Fund.

Language and Mentorship Program

In 2022, the Region of Waterloo's directly operated licensed home child care program expanded their pilot of the Language and Mentorship Program (LAMP). The LAMP program supports a small number of caregivers with limited English skills to deliver licensed home child care to families from the same language background. Caregivers receive support with interpreters, translation services, and other educational supports to ensure all licensing requirements are met and families are well supported.

In 2022, the program supported **11 caregivers**, and **23 children** were able to access care. The program is poised for continued growth as interest in the program continues to expand.

Equity training

Children's Services is partnering with the Early Childhood Professional Resource Centre (ECPRC) at Conestoga College to provide Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) capacity building supports to the Early Years sector.

The ECPRC created a video, called [Indigenous EDI in ECE](#), which focuses on awareness building of Indigeneity in the early years' sector. In addition, packages of 10 children's books written by Indigenous authors were given to every licensed child care centre, EarlyON program, and home child care agency in Waterloo Region. Both resources focus on raising awareness of Indigenous ways of knowing and being.

11 professional learning events with EDI focus were held in 2022, with **786** early years professionals attending the events.



Early Learning and Child Care Navigators

In the fall of 2022, the Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) Navigator positions were created to increase access to the early years and child care system for Indigenous, Black and other racialized families with children under age six. Children's Services partnered with the YMCA of Three Rivers, through the EarlyON Child and Family Centres, to develop these four new positions.

More information about the ELCC Navigators can be found at [EarlyON Child and Family Centre - ELCC Navigators](#).

ELCC Navigators support families by:

- Sharing information about child care options available
- Creating OneList Accounts and applying to programs
- Providing information on child care subsidy and helping them apply for subsidy
- Connecting to EarlyONs and other early learning programs
- Helping access other resources in the community, including and not limited to special needs supports, Public Health, and other community services

Quality



Responsibility for ensuring quality EYCC programs is shared across the sector. Locally, the Region of Waterloo, as Consolidated Municipal Service Manager (CMSM), and the Early Childhood Professional Resource Centre located at Conestoga College partner to support quality in early years and child care programs.

Continuous quality improvement

Continuous learning and growth for early years child care professionals is essential for high quality child care.

[Early Years Engage](#) is the Region of Waterloo’s continuous quality improvement program that supports and works together with EYCC partners on their continuous quality improvement journey. In 2021/2022, the supports offered through the Region of Waterloo and Conestoga College were expanded to include Early Years Analysts and Pedagogical Consultants.

- Early Years Analysts support the Early Years Engage continuous quality improvement journey in Waterloo Region. This role supports the engagement of the early years community through providing information, education and guidance. The role also monitors compliance with the Region of Waterloo’s service agreement. Beginning in the fall of 2022, Early Years Analysts supported quality improvement through 89 site visits.
- Pedagogical Consultants at Conestoga College Professional Resource Centre provide educational support and professional learning opportunities to early years professionals.

In 2021, the development of a quality measurement framework began and Early Years Engage shifted to have a more intentional focus on Ontario’s pedagogy for the early years, called *How Does Learning Happen?*, and its six pedagogical approaches. Development of the quality framework resumed in the fall of 2022, with stakeholder engagement and development continuing into 2023, and implementation planned for 2024.

Six Pedagogical Approaches in *How Does Learning Happen?*

1. Establishing positive, responsive adult-child relationships
2. Providing inclusive learning environments and experiences that encourage exploration, play, and inquiry
3. Engaging as co-learners with children, families/caregivers, and others
4. Planning and creating environments as a “third teacher”
5. Using pedagogical documentation as a means to value, discuss, and make learning visible
6. Participating in ongoing reflective practice and collaborative inquiry with others

Professional learning opportunities

- In 2022, there were two full-day professional learning events; 1,559 early years professionals attended a virtual event called “Heartwork and so much more” (a collaborative effort across 10 municipalities) and 1,255 early years professionals attended an in-person event called, “Roots and Wings”.
- 1,855 early years professionals attended 48 Professional Resource Centre trainings and events³¹.

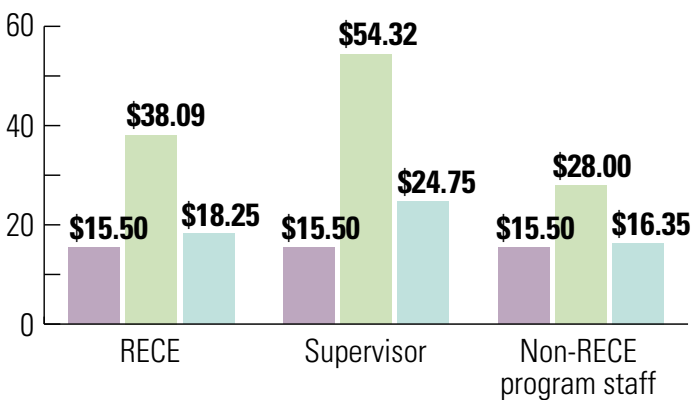


Wages of Registered Early Childhood Educators

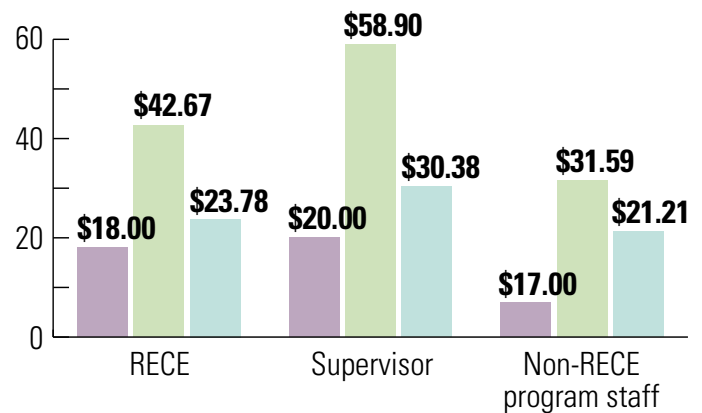
The federal and provincial governments, along with the Region of Waterloo identified that qualified, experienced educators are key to providing high-quality child care³². However, factors such as low compensation, difficult working conditions, and lack of professional learning and recognition contribute to challenges in recruiting and retaining educators in the sector.

In Waterloo Region, about **65%** of child care teachers and **94%** of supervisors in licensed centre-based child care programs are Registered Early Childhood Educators (RECEs). From December 2021 to December 2022, RECE hourly wages have increased, on average, by about **\$1** (from \$23.09 to \$24.24)³³.

Base hourly wages for Licensed Child Care Centre staff (before wage grants and operating funding)³⁴



Actual hourly wages for Licensed Child Care Centre staff (after wage grants and operating funding)³⁵



■ Lowest ■ Highest ■ Median

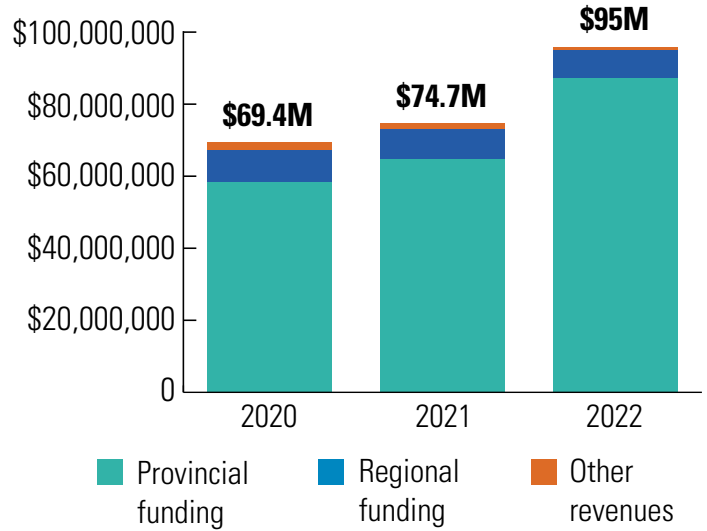
Funding

As the Consolidated Municipal Service Manager (CMSM), the Region of Waterloo, Children's Services has the responsibility for service and system management for licensed EYCC for children from birth to 12 years of age.

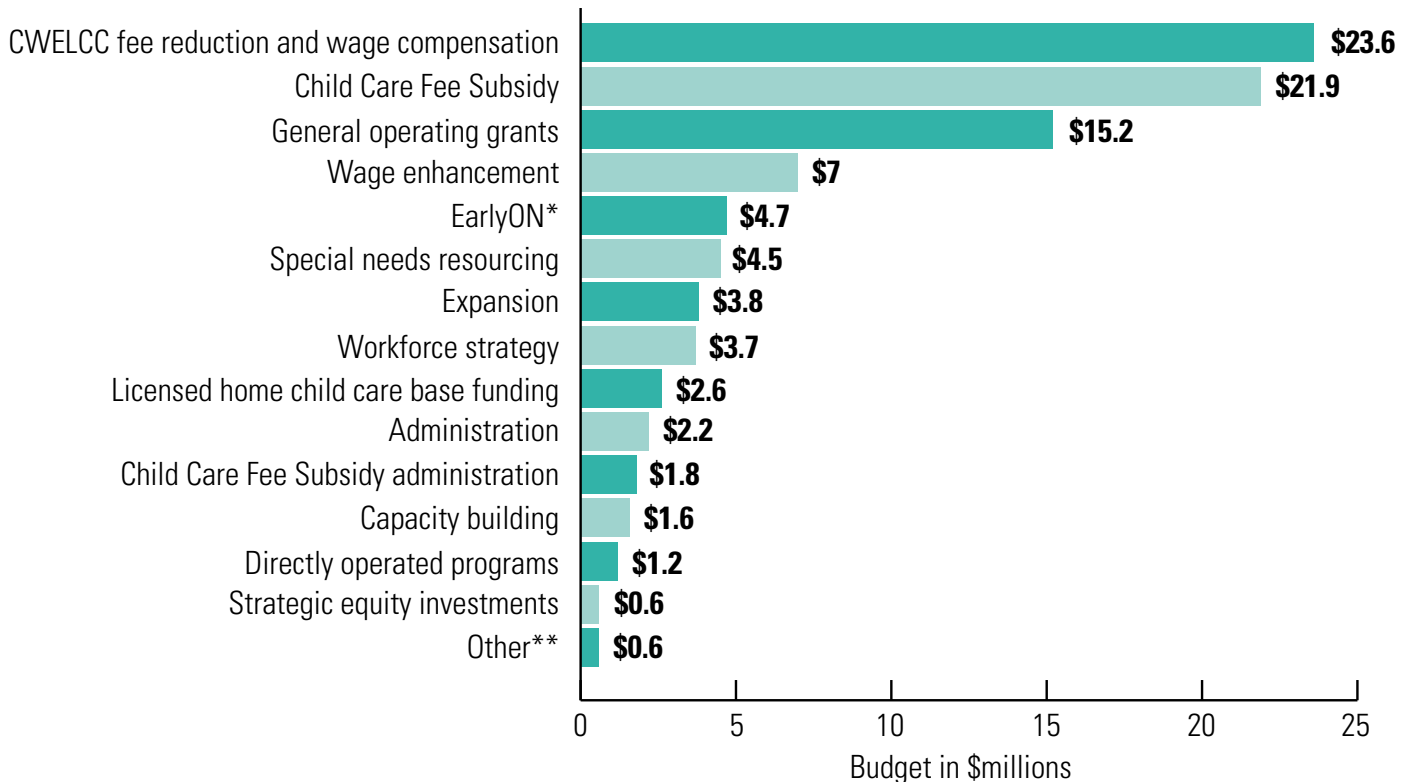
The Region of Waterloo, Children's Services total budget was \$95 million in 2022. This represented a budget increase of 27% (\$23.6 million) from 2021, primarily due to new Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC) funding.



Children's Services funding from 2020 to 2022



Children's Services budget, 2022 (in \$millions)



*EarlyON includes Indigenous-led EarlyON.

**Other includes Pay Equity, Repairs and Maintenance, Debt Charges, and Covid-19 Response.

Footnotes

- ¹ Philpott, D., Young, G., Maich, K., Penny S., & Butler E. (2019) The Preemptive nature of quality early childhood education on special educational needs in children. Retrieved from: <https://research.library.mun.ca/13571/1/The%20Preemptive%20Nature%20of%20ECE%2C%20Feb%2012.pdf>
- ² Government of Canada. Toward \$10-a-Day: Early Learning and Child Care. Available at: <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/campaigns/child-care.html>
- ³ Statistics Canada Census 2021. Note that 0-4 years and 0-12 years refers to children up to, but not including, their fourth birthday and twelfth birthday respectively.
- ⁴ Licensed spaces are the maximum number of spaces a program is approved to operate by the Ministry of Education. Sometimes programs do not operate at their full licensed capacity (In 2022, overall programs operated at about 85% of their licensed capacity).
- ⁵ The percentage of children with access to licensed child care spaces uses 2021 Statistics Canada Census data and all licensed spaces (centre and home-based) as of December 2022.
- ⁶ Access to a licensed centre-based child care space includes only centre-based licensed spaces (not home-based licensed spaces). Access to centre-based child care for ages 0-4 years is 24%.
- ⁷ 2021 Statistics Canada Census data.
- ⁸ OneList Waitlist Report as of December 2022, OneHSN.
- ⁹ OneList Waitlist Reports January 2022 and December 2022, OneHSN.
- ¹⁰ Child Care Licensing System reports December 2018 to December 2022.
- ¹¹ Child Care Licensing System report as of December 2022.
- ¹² These spaces include kindergarten and school-aged spaces in licensed child care centres as well as summer care licensed through the Child Care and Early Years Act. This does not include before and after school program spaces located in publicly-funded schools or other summer camp programs operated by entities that are not licensed early learning and child care programs.
- ¹³ OCCMS report as of December 2022.
- ¹⁴ OCCMS reports December 2018 to December 2022.
- ¹⁵ Number of schools offering extended day are from [WRDSB](#) and [WCDSB](#) websites and the Child Care Licensing System as of December 2022.
- ¹⁶ OneList School Board Registration report for September to December 2022, OneHSN.
- ¹⁷ The number of registered children in before and after school program operated by licensed child care centres is not available for 2022.
- ¹⁸ OCCMS report as of December 2022. Operating capacity is reported for infant, toddler, and preschool spaces in child care centres.
- ¹⁹ Total licensed capacity includes all centre-based child care, home-based child care, and all licensed before and after school licensed spaces (does not include WCDSB before and after school programs which are not yet licensed, but plan to be licensed by September 2023).
- ²⁰ Visit <http://www.earlyyearsinfo.ca/> for EarlyON information and <https://aocan.org/about-earlyon-centre.html> for Anishnabeg Outreach Early Years and Family Centre.
- ²¹ KeyON report as of December 2022.
- ²² KeyON report as of December 2022.
- ²³ Government of Canada. Toward \$10-a-Day: Early Learning and Child Care. Available at: <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/campaigns/child-care.html>
- ²⁴ Full year based on 261 paid days (365 days less 104 weekend days).
- ²⁵ School year based on 194 school days, the minimum number of required school days by regulation.
- ²⁶ OCCMS report as of December 2022.
- ²⁷ OCCMS report as of December 2022.
- ²⁸ Distribution of child care fee subsidy caseload as of December 2022.
- ²⁹ OCCMS reports from December 2018 to December 2022.
- ³⁰ This total includes children receiving Tier 2 and Tier 3 supports with KidsAbility and KW Habilitation. This total is not unique children and duplicates children receiving supports from KidsAbility and KW Habilitation.
- ³¹ Total of Professional Resource Centre events does not include repetitive occurrences of events in Communities of Practice or learning series.
- ³² Growing Together: Ontario's Early Years and Child Care Workforce Strategy, 2018. <https://childcarecanada.org/sites/default/files/Growing%20Together-%20Ontario%27s%20Early%20Years%20and%20Child%20Care%20Workforce%20Strategy.pdf>
- ³³ Hourly wages include all eligible funding grants, such as general operating funding and wage enhancement grant in 2021, and general operating funding, wage enhancement grant, and wage floor grant in 2022.
- ³⁴ December 2022 wages include staff at all centre-based programs, including full-day and half-day programs. Base hourly wages reported do not include general operating funding, wage enhancement grant, or wage floor grant.
- ³⁵ December 2022 wages include staff at all centre-based programs, including full-day and half-day programs. Actual hourly wages reported includes all eligible funding grants, including general operating funding, wage enhancement grant, and wage floor grant.



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