

Child care and early learning updates e-newsletter

April 28, 2025

Welcome to The Regional Municipality of Durham's child care and early learning updates e-newsletter. These e-newsletters provide licensed child care operators in Durham Region with updated information related to child care.

This edition includes the following topics:

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- Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC) system update on directed growth space allocations, priority neighbourhoods, and 2025 funding changes
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- CWELCC Professional Learning Funding
- Notice regarding potential bus strike impact on Fee Subsidy
- 2025 to 2026 Francophone Community Grants Program
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Children's Services Division (CSD) 2024 Service Plan update

The [2024 CSD Service Plan update](#) is now available. This annual report outlines initiatives and accomplishments to meet the 2023 to 2027 Service Plan priorities and shares the continued commitment to supporting Durham Region children and families. The CSD will demonstrate annual progress and communicate achievements, initiatives and milestones of the division throughout the duration of the Service Plan through these updates.

Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC) system update on directed growth space allocations, priority neighbourhoods, and 2025 funding changes

Directed growth priority neighbourhoods: As part of the multi-year directed growth plan for CWELCC spaces, a full review of the assessment data has been completed, ensuring the most current information is used to update priority neighbourhoods for 2025. As before, the demand for child care across the Region is high. To determine which neighbourhoods are the most in need, the CSD considered variables such as

existing and future approved child care licensed capacity, percentage of vulnerable children, new housing developments and neighbourhoods with the lowest percentage of children served based on census data for the eligible population. In Durham, there continue to be neighbourhoods with no infants, toddlers, and pre-school-aged children served. These combined variables are used to rank neighbourhoods with a priority of low, moderate, or high. An updated directed growth plan, including priority neighbourhood listing for 2025 will be posted on Durham.ca.

Revised child care space allocations: On March 31, the ministry released updates to the 2025 Ontario Child Care and Early Years Funding Allocations and Guideline. This memo outlined the results of the provincial child care space recalibration exercise. The CSD is happy to report that the Region of Durham received an increased and adjusted allocation of spaces for 2024, 2025, and 2026, resulting in a much-needed increase of 876 community-based spaces and additional school-based spaces to align with approved school-board capital expansion projects.

Regional Municipality of Durham - Directed Growth Update								as of March 31, 2025			
Total spaces				School-based spaces				Community-based spaces			
3-year total	2024	2025	2026	3-year total	2024	2025	2026	3-year total	2024	2025	2026
1,998	1,241	397	360	1,111	354	397	360	887	887	0	0

To support this recalibration, the ministry announced changes to municipalities' CWELCC cost-based funding, start-up grants, and administration funding and provided updated guidelines to reflect these and other changes. The announcement also introduced a new early learning and child care (ELCC) infrastructure guideline and associated funding. The new ELCC infrastructure funding supports not-for-profit licensed child care centres and is intended to complement the current start-up grant program by supporting additional infrastructure costs, including planning and design stage expenditures, as well as the purchase of land or buildings.

Information on accessing this funding will be shared when council approval is obtained, and an application process is established.

Revised auspice ratio for directed growth: As part of the recalibration exercise, municipalities receiving additional spaces have also seen their non-profit/for-profit auspice ratio adjusted to align with the federal agreement requirements. Directed growth allocations for Durham originally provided that the non-profit auspice target for CWELCC-eligible child care spaces in the Region of Durham be maintained at a minimum of 70.5 per cent, with for-profit spaces not to exceed 29.5 per cent. In the March 31 memo, Durham's updated target for the 1,998 directed growth spaces allocated for 2024 to 2026 (as listed in the chart above) has been updated to a minimum

90 per cent non-profit target. This means that at least 1,795 of the 1,998 spaces should be provided to not-for-profit licensees.

Directed growth space allocations: Licensees that submitted an application for CWELCC-directed growth spaces will maintain their position in the queue. CSD staff are currently assessing the impacts of the additional spaces and auspice ratio adjustments on current applications and will communicate the results of the application review in the coming weeks.

CWELCC funding agreements: All licensees currently participating in CWELCC have had their cost-based funding allocations communicated for 2025. With the recent funding guideline updates, a review of the newly updated child care service agreement is now in progress to ensure recent updates are captured prior to distribution. Existing funding agreements remain in full force and effect until terminated or replaced.

School-age and kindergarten review: While the CSD continues to review and prioritize the local priorities funding, the Region will be temporarily pausing the approval for all Child Care Licensing System (CCLS) revision requests to school-age spaces, effective immediately. This does not impact existing approvals. This pause is temporary to ensure the CSD maximizes existing allocations in alignment with Regional priorities.

The CSD staff are committed to engaging with the community as this work unfolds. Consultations will occur in May, including engagement with licensees who provide before and after-school child care. The CSD is committed to keeping the community updated as this work progresses.

The CSD will be updating Durham.ca to reflect changes. For any CWELCC-related inquiries, please contact Lisa Bruce at lisa.bruce@durham.ca or Stacey Stevenson at stacey.stevenson@durham.ca. For any directed growth inquiries, please contact Emily Witlarge at emily.witlarge@durham.ca or Cathy Tedford cathy.tedford@durham.ca.

Thank you for your ongoing commitment to supporting families and children, as we work together to implement the CWELCC agreement in Durham Region.

Reporting changes to operating capacity for CWELCC-enrolled licensees

There is now a link to report changes in operating capacity for CWELCC-enrolled licensees receiving cost-based funding on the Child Care Operator Portal. It is requested that licensees complete and submit this form only if the operating capacity of programs differs from the anticipated capacity reported for 2025 in the funding allocation data tool.

CWELCC Professional Learning Funding

The ministry has provided funding to support professional learning to improve recruitment and retention of the Registered Early Childhood Educator (RECE) workforce and other program staff, and to support the implementation of the CWELCC system agreement.

This funding will support professional learning opportunities that build and strengthen the skills and abilities of those working in the early years and child care sector. Providing opportunities for employees to learn and grow can boost their engagement, help them develop professionally, recognize their achievements, improve their job performance, and increase their overall job satisfaction.

In accordance with ministry guidelines, licensees are encouraged to incorporate some or all of the following priority areas into the development of their professional learning strategies.

- Mental health and resilience training for staff
- Early years and child care pedagogical practices aligned with How Does Learning Happen?
- Anti-racism, diversity, equity and inclusion practices
- Incorporating Indigenous perspectives and pedagogies
- Supporting educators in building capacity to support children with special needs through inclusive practices
- Equity-based Communities of Practices (for Francophone and Indigenous communities)
- Strengthening management/administration skills for those in director/supervisory roles as well as those considering moving into these roles (i.e., staff supervision, financial management, communication strategies).

To access professional learning funding, licensees are required to complete the [Professional Learning Funding Application](#) on Durham.ca. The application will express your interest in obtaining funding and provide a summary of its intended use to support professional learning in 2025. Applications will be reviewed, and licensees will be informed of funding approvals. Requests for funding should be made before September 30, and be used within the current year. If you have questions, please reach out to stacee.stevenson@durham.ca.

Notice regarding potential bus strike impact on Fee Subsidy

The First Student bus company has announced a potential strike affecting some school bus routes in Bowmanville and Ajax. The extent of the impact on children receiving Fee Subsidy is currently unclear. If a school-age child requires full-day child care due to the bus strike, Fee Subsidy will not cover the full cost of the full-day care. Parents will be billed the difference between the regular Fee Subsidy rate and the full-day rate, in addition to their usual parent contribution for the service provider if full-day care is utilized.

If children do not use any before or after school care due to the bus strike, an absent day will be deducted from the child's allotment. The parent will be charged their parent rate, and Fee Subsidy will cover the remainder of the cost of care at the regular enrolled rate.

Service providers should clearly communicate to families opting for full-day care the additional costs involved. This decision is based on our current policy and funding constraints.

2025 to 2026 Francophone Community Grants Program

The Ontario government is continuing to support the Francophone community with the launch of the 2025 to 2026 [Francophone Community Grants Program](#) (FCGP). This program supports projects that promote the development of Francophone communities. The FCGP provides funding initiatives that improve frontline services and promote the French language and culture. The application period for the FCGP is now open. Community organizations and businesses have until May 26 to submit their proposals for consideration. For more information or to join virtual information sessions on the program, visit the [Francophone Community Grants Program](#) funding page.

Updates from the Quality and Contract Compliance Advisor (QA) team

When is it appropriate to contact your QA? The short answer is anytime. Anytime you have a question about quality, inquiries on the Durham Region Operating Criteria (DROC), require resources, to obtain support at a staff meeting, or leadership questions, contact your QA by phone or email.

Evictions: If possible, please notify your QA of potential evictions in advance to ensure an appropriate and inclusive response. The CSD will respond suitably if we are

contacted by the family and will support the centre to ensure that all possible options have been considered.

Serious occurrences: All serious occurrences must be reported to the ministry of Education. All serious occurrences or incidents that may result in media attention or require emergency services response must be reported directly to the Regional Municipality of Durham, Children's Services Division. Please contact your QA or follow the after-hours process in the attached serious occurrence document, if applicable.

Emergency or professional development closures: If a centre is not operational for any reason, please notify your QA. The CSD will ensure messaging is shared with the billings team and request permissions for emergency closure payments.

Change in supervisor: To ensure records are up to date, kindly inform of changes to supervisors.

Questions, clarifications, resources and building capacity: QAs are available to answer questions, schedule time for team meetings (during the day and evenings), support understanding of the DROC criteria and the intent of the sub-items, and build resources that are specific to your needs. Please keep your QA and the CSD informed as to support you and your organization.

Community Social Investment Program (CSIP) application

The Region of Durham's Community Social Investment Program (CSIP) is now accepting funding applications through the Thriving Communities Fund. This fund supports local non-profit organizations that are helping to prevent and/or reduce poverty for Durham Region residents.

The Thriving Communities Fund supports non-profit organizations with operational and/or capacity-building activities that strengthen their ability to deliver programs and services. The maximum amount to be awarded is \$50,000 per approved application. The deadline for non-profit organizations to apply is noon on May 19. For more information on the Thriving Communities Fund and how to submit an application, visit the [CSIP page](#) on Durham.ca. If you have any questions, please contact the Strategic Partnerships and Priorities Team at funding@durham.ca.

Fee Subsidy age groupings and billings

Fee Subsidy children are placed in age groups according to their date of birth, which determines the corresponding per diem code and rate. Service providers are paid based on the child's date of birth, regardless of the licensed room the child is in.

Children eligible to attend kindergarten are paid at kindergarten rates. A senior kindergarten child enrolled in a program in June will be paid kindergarten rates until September, when the school-age rate will apply.