



Directed Growth Plan

**Appendix 1 of the 2023 to 2027 Early Learning and Child Care Service Plan
Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC) Directed Growth Plan**

Updated: Data details as of June 2025

Directed Growth Plan – The Regional Municipality of Durham

This document is attached to and represents Appendix 1 of the Durham Region Children’s Services Early Learning and Child Care Service Plan 2023 to 2027. This Appendix will be updated annually as required to ensure the most current data is used for future planning and will replace previous versions.

This document provides up-to-date details that will inform planning and approvals of space expansion for The Regional Municipality of Durham that is eligible for Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC). The most up-to date version of this information will be available at durham.ca/ChildCareandEarlyYears.

Responsibility of child care business owners/licensees wishing to enrol in CWELCC

Current and prospective licensees as independent business owners are solely responsible for ensuring the most current directed growth plan data is used to inform expansion plans and business activities in connection with the creation of new spaces eligible for CWELCC. Approval or denial of CWELCC eligible child care spaces will be provided by the Region of Durham. Only new child care spaces licensed with prior approval by the Region of Durham are eligible to receive CWELCC funding, inclusive of funding to lower fees for families and to increase wages. Licensed child care spaces created by licensees who advised that they will not seek enrolment in CWELCC will not be eligible for CWELCC funding.



Ministry directives

In 2022, during Phase 1 of the implementation of CWELCC, the Ministry of Education focused on enrolling existing licensees into CWELCC. This focus shifted in 2023 to a directed approach for growth. Ontario's action plan for child care commits to creating 86,000 new child care spaces before December 2026 (relative to 2019 spaces). In 2025, the Province shifted CWELCC to a cost-based funding model with a recalibration of directed growth spaces resulting in an increase for Durham Region (see Ministry Targets).

A targeted growth approach will ensure that funding is available to support new spaces in communities most in need of access to high quality, affordable child care. To support this focus, current and prospective licensees interested in participating in the CWELCC system must demonstrate that their program aligns with Durham's directed growth plan for child care expansion.

In alignment with the provincial directives provided through the Access and Inclusion framework, Durham's Region's 2023 to 2027 Early Learning and Child Care Service Plan, and the CWELCC funding guidelines, this document will guide child care growth for our Region.



Directed growth planning

Ministry targets for annual growth and auspice requirements

The Ministry of Education has provided municipalities with space targets for CWELCC-funded growth. Durham Region received the mandate to expand the CWELCC system by 2,029 spaces in schools and community-based locations between 2022 to 2026. In 2025, the Ministry completed a recalibration exercise to position Ontario to achieve its space creation target of 86,000 net new CWELCC spaces by the end of 2026. This was accomplished with the Ministry providing more achievable targets and moving related operating funding to areas where the capacity to grow the CWELCC system was more acute. The recalibration was based on information provided to the Ministry in October 2024. As a result, the Region of Durham received an increase in space targets.





The table below reflects the Regional Municipality of Durham’s space targets prior to the recalibration exercise being completed.

Chart 1: Previous space targets by year and location

Provided by the Ministry of Education for The Regional Municipality of Durham

Total spaces	School-based spaces	Community-based spaces
Three-year total = 1,122	Three-year total = 527	Three-year total = 595
2024 = 511	2024 = 405	2024 = 106
2025 = 49	2025 = 49	2025 = 0
2026 = 562	2026 = 73	2026 = 489

The table below reflects the increase in space targets following the recalibration exercise in 2025.

Chart 2: Updated space targets by year and location

Provided by the Ministry of Education for The Regional Municipality of Durham

Total spaces	School-based spaces	Community-based spaces
Three-year total = 1,998	Three-year total = 1,111	Three-year total = 887
2024 = 1,241	2024 = 354	2024 = 887
2025 = 397	2025 = 397	2025 = 0
2026 = 360	2026 = 360	2026 = 0

Directed growth must be maintained at or above the existing ratio of non-profit to for-profit spaces of 70.5 per cent. In 2025, the criteria for calculating the auspice ratio was adjusted and now includes both CWELCC and non-CWELCC enrolled spaces. This change resulted in a Ministry mandated non-profit ratio for the additional spaces received through recalibration process (876 spaces) be maintained at 90 per cent.

Community analysis

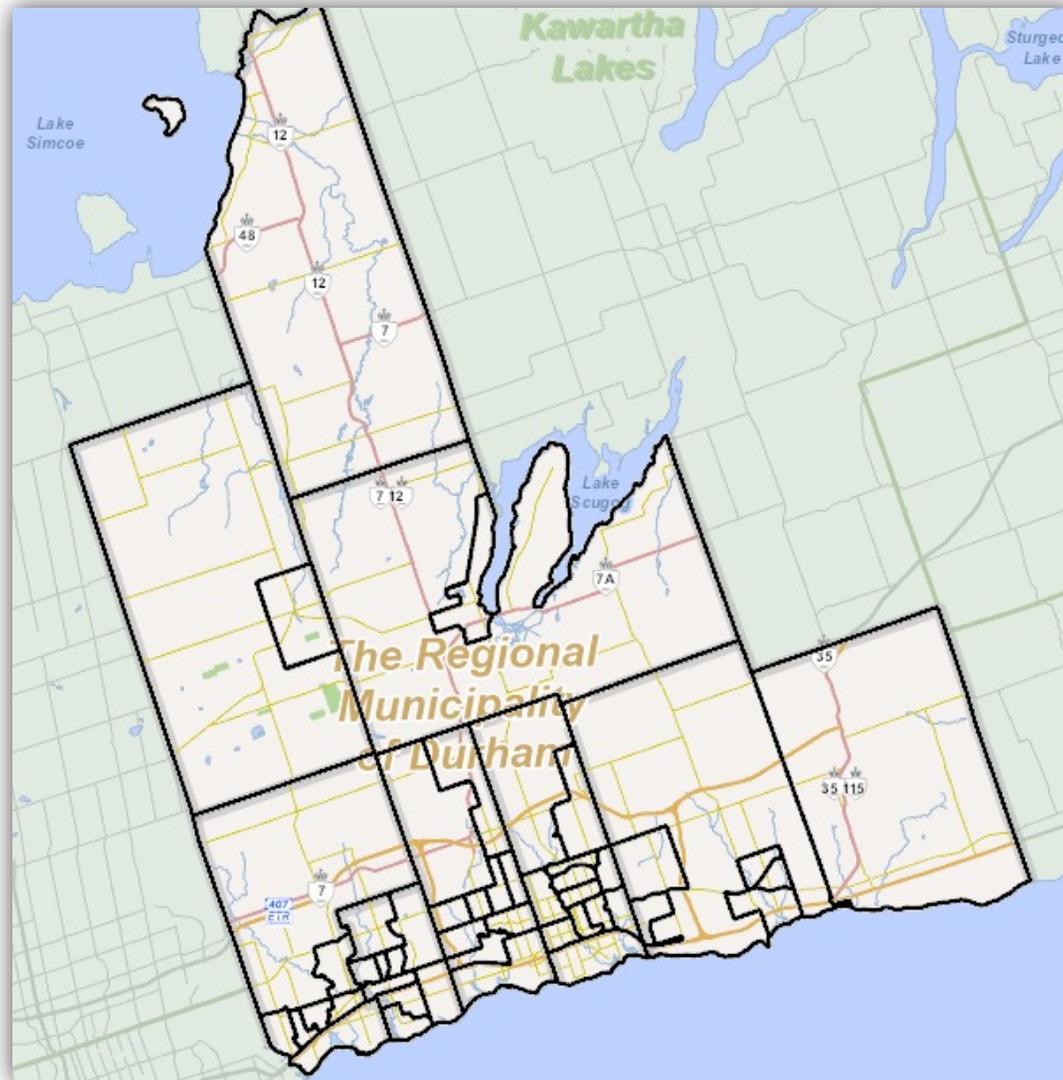
In 2019, the Child Care and Early Years Division began development of an in-depth and enhanced community analysis process, with the support of other divisions such as Geographical Information Systems (GIS), Planning and Information Technology Services. This community analysis is used by our division to make data-driven, evidence-based decisions on where expansion of child care is most needed. In the Region of Durham, data for planning programs and services is sorted and summarized by Health Neighbourhood and analyzed to determine priority neighbourhoods. Sociodemographic variables are defined by the Ministry of Education. Data gathered includes types as listed in Chart 3 below.

Chart 3 – Community analysis data to determine priority neighbourhoods.

- Licensed and operating capacities of existing child care centres
 - The existing spaces being actively used compared to the maximum number of spaces available by license. The unused available spaces are factored into the vacancy rate.
- Child care vacancy rates
 - The number of actively used spaces with no child enrolled, plus the number of spaces available but not active.
- Approved new spaces for future years (school and community-based)
 - New licensed child care spaces planned and approved to operate before 2027. Includes all spaces approved by the Region of Durham to receive CWELCC funding.
- Census data (current 2021)
 - Includes age and sociodemographic data such as: families with low income, francophone children, Indigenous children, Black children, other racialized children (other visible minorities) and new immigrants.
- Special needs resourcing (SNR) data
 - The number of children with disabilities and children needing enhanced or individual supports in child care.
- Early Development Instrument (EDI) data
 - Data indicating areas where at least 25 per cent of children are vulnerable in two or more EDI domains, indicating need for increased services to support children to be ready to learn by kindergarten.
- Approved housing development in progress
 - New housing construction projects as approved by local municipalities.

Health Neighbourhood map

Data for community analysis is gathered by Health Neighbourhoods as outlined in Map 1 below.



Map 1 – Map of all Durham Region Health Neighbourhoods
<https://geoapps.durham.ca/Viewer/index.html?viewer=HealthNeighbourhoods>

Directed growth in Durham, 2023

As the service system manager, the Region of Durham developed a five-year directed growth plan that aligned with provincial directives and space targets while meeting the needs of communities across the region. For 2022 and 2023, the approval of new CWELCC-funded expansion met targets for our Region.

In Durham Region, approval of CWELCC-eligible spaces was completed by using existing requests for expansion and leveraging current child care centres to expand in place, thereby maximizing licensed capacities within priority neighbourhoods.

To support directed growth that was efficient and best met community need, applications for expansion within existing child care centres were reviewed with a focus on increasing age-specific spaces in priority neighbourhoods. Applications for new full sites (offering spaces for all ages) were then reviewed to further meet community need within our space allocation targets.

The growth plan for 2023 was created using data available at the time of development and was built on our previous service plan for 2018 to 2022.

As the federal-provincial child care plan evolves, determination of priority neighbourhoods will be reviewed and updated annually to reflect current and new data. In addition to priority data, locations are also subject to availability of existing real estate that meets legislative requirements for a licensed child care facility.



Directed Growth Plan, 2024 to 2026

Growth for CWELCC-eligible child care spaces for 2024 to 2026 align with the Child Care and Early Years Division's 2023 to 2027 Early Learning and Child Care Service Plan and follow provincial guidelines. This plan is used to inform approvals of applications received from 2024 to 2026. Child care licensees are required to seek approval for CWELCC eligibility or notify the Region of Durham that they will not be applying for CWELCC. Approvals will be based on:

- The availability of requested child care spaces within Regional targets.
- Maintenance of the Regional auspice ratio.
- The age group to be served by the proposed new spaces (e.g., infant, toddler, preschool).
- Whether the location of the proposed new space(s) is in a priority neighbourhood, as determined by the Region's community analysis data.
- Alignment of the new space creation with all other Regional service plan and provincial directives and guidelines.

The application process for future CWELCC expansion spaces opened in early 2024. This application process included projects that could open through to the end of 2026. The online application process for new CWELCC enrolment and expansion is now closed and will only reopen if existing applications on file that align with our directed growth plan do not meet available space targets as assigned by the Ministry of Education for 2024 through 2026. Information about the application process is posted on durham.ca/ChildCareandEarlyYears. Current and prospective licensees are asked to monitor this page for updates.



Community analysis, 2024 and 2025

In early 2023, a community analysis was completed that informed child care expansion for that year. In late 2023, updated data – including the most recent census data (2021), current child care licensed capacities and new housing development data – was used to update the analysis and to inform this plan.

This plan was used for approvals of child care expansion applications received in 2024.

In early 2025, a community analysis was once again completed to inform 2025 child care expansion in Durham Region. While the same variables outlined in Chart 3 were used as in previous community analyses, the threshold for the number of children served in a Health Neighbourhood to determine the priority level for growth was increased to 15 per cent, from eight per cent.

The Ministry of Education has set a future goal of reaching a provincial CWELCC average of 37 per cent population served for children up to six years of age (CWELCC-eligible). In Durham, the community analysis indicates areas of need across the region. With the number of Ministry mandated expansion space targets in mind, the following neighbourhoods have been noted as priority, as they have demonstrated low or no availability of licensed spaces and align with the other variables outlined in Chart 3 of this report.



Based on this data, the following areas in Durham are considered highest priority in accordance with the factors listed in this document. Please reference the program locator to see details of existing child care and Health Neighbourhoods at maps.durham.ca/ChildCarePrograms/.

Ajax

- Ajax Waterfront (A1).
- Carruthers (A3).
- Riverside-Hermitage (A5).
- Westney Heights (A6).
- Ajax Northwest (A8).

Brock

- Brock (B1).

Clarington – areas in Bowmanville, Newcastle and Courtice, including neighbourhoods of:

- Courtice South (C1).
- Courtice North (C2).
- Bowmanville South (C3)
- Bowmanville Central (C4).
- Bowmanville North (C5).
- Clarke (C7).

Oshawa – central Oshawa, including the neighbourhoods of:

- Central Park (O4).
- Grandview South (O5).
- Stevenson North (O6).
- Hillsdale (O7).
- Beatrice South (O8).
- Grandview North (O9).
- Beatrice North (O10).

Pickering

- Frenchman's Bay (P1).

Scugog

- Rural Scugog (S2).

Whitby – central/north Whitby, including the neighbourhoods of:

- Whitby South (W1).
- Cochrane South (W3).
- Williamsburg (W5).
- Whitby Brock North (W6).
- Dryden East (W8).



Current expansion needs in the communities below have been met at this time and will be reviewed and updated as needed in future years.

Uxbridge: The Township of Uxbridge is demonstrating as well-served, with an average of 52 per cent of the population of children (ages 0 to six years) served. Approvals of new licensed home child care agencies serving Uxbridge have been approved to provide choice for families and to serve more families living in rural Uxbridge.

The data listed above is not to be interpreted as a guarantee of approval. The priority neighbourhoods listed are to be used as a starting point for new and existing licensees when considering a location for child care expansion. Only those projects that fall within the thresholds outlined in this document will be approved.

Additional resources for licensees

Applications for CWELCC expansion must be completed by the licensee. To support licensees in gathering the data needed to complete an application, the following links to relevant information can be referenced. The below links can all be found at Durham.ca/ChildCareandEarlyYears.

- [Information for operators](#)
 - Information about operating a child care program in Durham can be found through this link.
- [Children's Program Locator, including Health Neighbourhood map](#)
 - A detailed map, including Health Neighbourhood boundaries and the location of existing child care spaces, can be found through this link.
- [Fee Subsidy information](#)
 - Licensees wishing to offer fee subsidies for eligible families must apply to the Child Care and Early Years Division to be considered for a Fee Subsidy agreement.
- [Quality Child Care](#)
 - To be eligible for a Fee Subsidy agreement as noted above, licensees must meet the expectations for quality as set through the Durham Assessment for Quality Improvement.
- [Opening a Child Care Centre and Ministry of Education licensing](#)
 - The Ministry of Education is responsible for licensing and regulatory oversight of child care centres and home child care agencies. The link provides additional details and Ministry of Education information on operating a child care program.



Next steps

The Child Care and Early Years Division will continue to work with the Ministry of Education and child care licensees to expand licensed child care, and increase access to high-quality early learning programs for families across Durham Region.



If you require this information in an accessible format, please contact 905-668-7711 extension 2681.

