



Directed Growth Plan

**Appendix 2 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 July 2026

Directed Growth Plan – The Regional Municipality of Durham

This document is attached to and represents Appendix 2 of the Durham Region Child Care and Early Year Division's (CCEYD) 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. This occurred again in 2026, resulting in an increase for Durham Region (see Ministry Targets).

A targeted growth approach ensures 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 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 Durham Region.



Directed growth planning

Ministry targets for annual growth and auspice requirements

The CWELCC system was introduced in 2022 as part of a federal-provincial agreement to lower the cost of child care and expand the system by an additional 86,000 spaces by the end of 2026. This work continues, with the Ministry completing province-wide space recalibrations to ensure CWELCC system growth is allocated to where it is needed most. As a result of the recalibrations, the Region of Durham has received increases in yearly space targets with the possibility of additional recalibrations for 2026. The focus is now on ensuring the division meets Durham's space target mandate, maintaining the existing spaces and allocating new growth to be operational by the end of 2026.

In 2025, the Ministry of Education provided municipalities with an updated auspice calculation to confirm current for-profit and not-for-profit spaces by region. This update confirms Durham's mandate to maintain or exceed our current level of 64 per cent not-for-profit spaces.



Community analysis

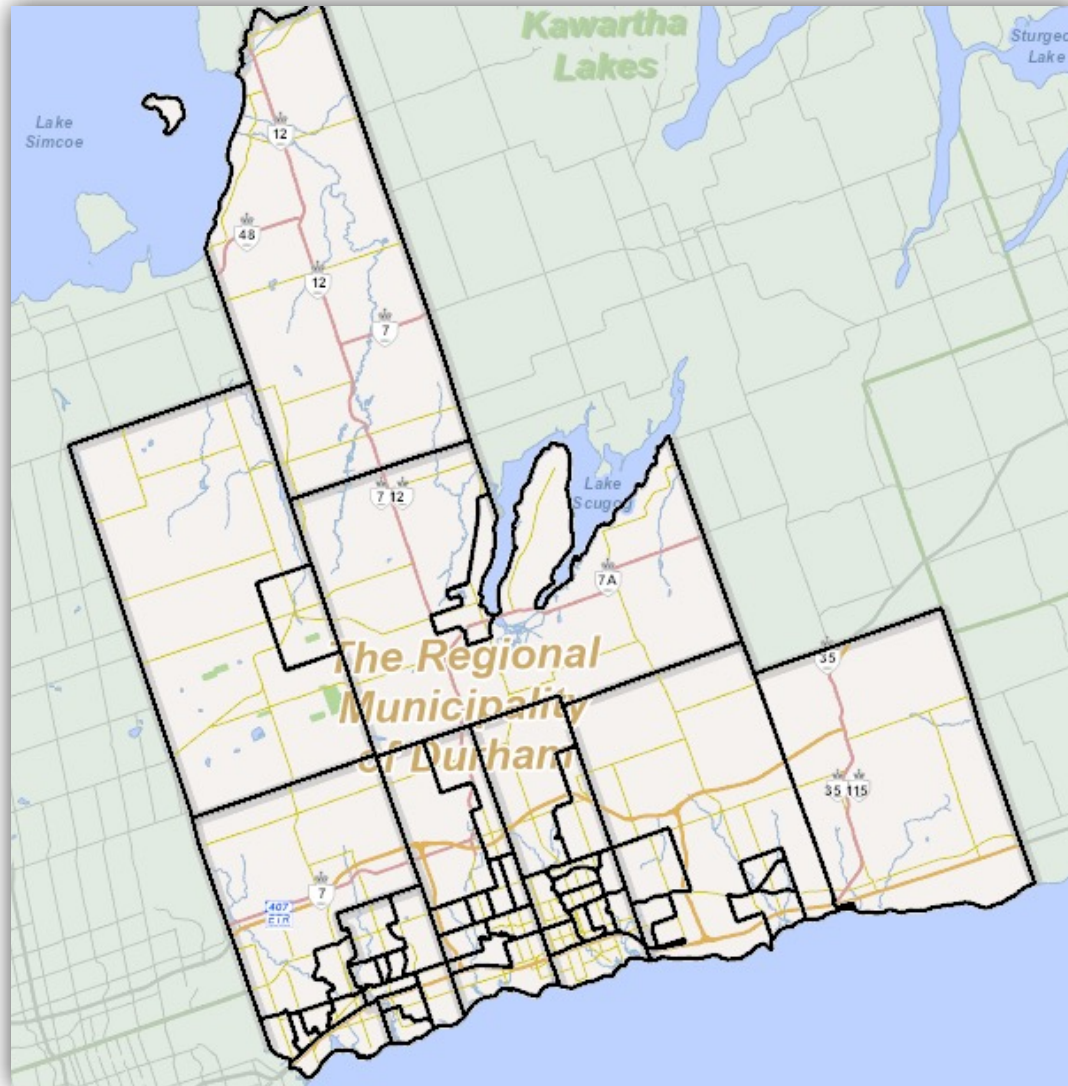
The CCEYD uses an in-depth process to analyze community need for child care in Durham. With support of regional Geographical Information Systems (GIS), Planning, and Information Technology Services, the process is used by the division to make data-driven, evidence-based decisions on where expansion of 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 1 below.

Chart 1 – 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: low-income families, 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 the 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://durhamregion.maps.arcgis.com/apps/instant/portfolio/index.html?appid=9e243811acfc4efe89550b29cc0efd1e>

Directed growth in Durham, 2023

As the service system manager, the Region of Durham was mandated to develop a Directed Growth Plan that aligned with provincial directives and space targets while meeting the needs of communities across the region. To ensure the most current needs are met, the CCEYD committed to updating this plan annually, or as new data becomes available.

The Directed Growth Plan is built and updated using the community analysis results and the most current data available at the time of development. This 2023 Directed Growth Plan was used inform approvals of growth spaces in 2023 and 2024 and built in alignment with the previous Early Learning and Child Care Service Plan for 2018 to 2022.



Directed Growth Plan, 2024 to 2026

Growth for CWELCC-eligible child care spaces for 2024 to 2026 align with the division's 2023 to 2027 Early Learning and Child Care Service Plan and follows provincial guidelines.

In 2025 and again in 2026, Durham's Directed Growth Plan was updated using relevant community analysis data. This plan continued to inform child care expansion in Durham Region. While the same variables outlined in Chart 1 were used 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 37 per cent, up from 15 per cent.

This change aligns with 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 identified using priority levels of highest, high-moderate and moderate for consideration. 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 1 of this report.

Based on the most recent data, Chart 2 lists the priority level across all neighbourhoods in Durham in accordance with the factors listed in this document. **Note:** Priority ranking will be used as a factor in order of highest to lowest when approving applications for growth spaces.

Please reference the program locator to see details of existing child care and Health Neighbourhoods at maps.durham.ca/ChildCarePrograms/.



Chart 2: 2026 Priority neighbourhoods.

Municipality	Priority level	Health Neighbourhood
Ajax	Moderate	Ajax Northeast
Ajax	Moderate	Ajax Northwest
Ajax	High	Ajax Waterfront
Ajax	Moderate	Applecroft
Ajax	Moderate	Carruthers
Ajax	Moderate	Central Ajax
Ajax	Low priority- Meets Ministry of Education Threshold	Downtown Ajax
Ajax	Moderate	Riverside-Hermitage
Ajax	High	Westney Heights
Brock	Moderate	Brock
Clarington	High	Bowmanville Central
Clarington	Moderate	Bowmanville North
Clarington	Moderate	Bowmanville South
Clarington	High	Clarke
Clarington	Moderate	Courtice North
Clarington	Moderate	Courtice South
Clarington	High	Darlington
Oshawa	High	Beatrice North
Oshawa	High	Beatrice South
Oshawa	High	Central Park
Oshawa	High	Downtown Oshawa
Oshawa	Moderate	Gibb West

Oshawa	High	Grandview North
Oshawa	High	Grandview South
Oshawa	High	Hillsdale
Oshawa	Moderate	Lakeview
Oshawa	Moderate	Oshawa Northeast
Oshawa	High	Oshawa Northwest
Oshawa	Moderate	Stevenson North
Pickering	Low priority- Meets Ministry of Education Threshold	Amberlee
Pickering	High	Brock Ridge Pickering
Pickering	High	Dunbarton
Pickering	Moderate	Frenchman's Bay
Pickering	Highest	Pickering City Centre
Pickering	Moderate	Pickering North
Pickering	Moderate	West Rouge
Scugog	Low priority- Meets Ministry of Education Threshold	Port Perry
Scugog	High	Rural Scugog
Uxbridge	High	Rural Uxbridge
Uxbridge	Moderate	Urban Uxbridge
Whitby	Moderate	Brooklin East
Whitby	High	Brooklin West
Whitby	High	Cochrane South
Whitby	Moderate	Downtown Whitby

Whitby	Moderate	Dryden East
Whitby	Moderate	Dryden-Anderson
Whitby	Moderate	Manning
Whitby	High	Whitby Brock North
Whitby	High	Whitby South
Whitby	Moderate	Williamsburg

Expansion needs in all neighbourhoods will be reviewed and updated as needed in future years.

The data listed in Chart 2 is not to be interpreted as a guarantee of approval. The priority neighbourhoods listed are a reference point for new and existing licensees when considering location for child care expansion. Only those projects that meet the criteria outlined in this document may be approved.



Approval and application process for licensees

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 the Regional targets.
- Maintenance of the Regional auspice ratio.
- The age group to be served by the proposed new spaces (e.g., infant, toddler, preschool) in alignment with neighbourhood need.
- 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 most recent application period for CWELCC expansion spaces closed in the fall of 2025, and applications for projects that could open in 2026 are being reviewed. The online application process for new CWELCC enrolment will reopen if existing applications on file that align with the Directed Growth Plan do not meet available space targets as assigned by the Ministry of Education.

Information about the application process is posted on durham.ca/ChildCareandEarlyYears. current and prospective licensees are asked to monitor this page for updates.



Next steps

The CCEYD 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 alternate accessible format, please contact the CCEYD at 905-668-4113 extension 2681.

