



Staff Report to Council - for Information

Title: Bruce County Child Care and Early Learning Directed Growth Plan

From: Tina Metcalfe, Director Human Services

Date: December 7, 2023

Report Purpose:

This report is for information.

Report Summary:

Bruce County has been allocated a notional target of 645 new child care spaces to be realized by the end of 2026. Licensees who are interested in opening or expanding child care services are encouraged to visit the newly launched [Early Learning and Child Care Expansion Toolkit | Bruce County](#) on the Bruce County website.

Background:

On March 27, 2022, the federal and provincial government reached a \$13.2 billion agreement on a Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC) system. The new system will lower child care costs and improve access, quality, and inclusion across Ontario's child care and early years sector.

Under the CWELCC system, Ontario has committed to support the creation of 86,000 new CWELCC licensed child care spaces by the end of 2026. The focus of this expansion is within communities with populations that need them the most. This directed growth approach will support space creation in underserved communities and parts of the province who have historically low rates of space availability.

CWELCC Targeted Child Care Expansion:

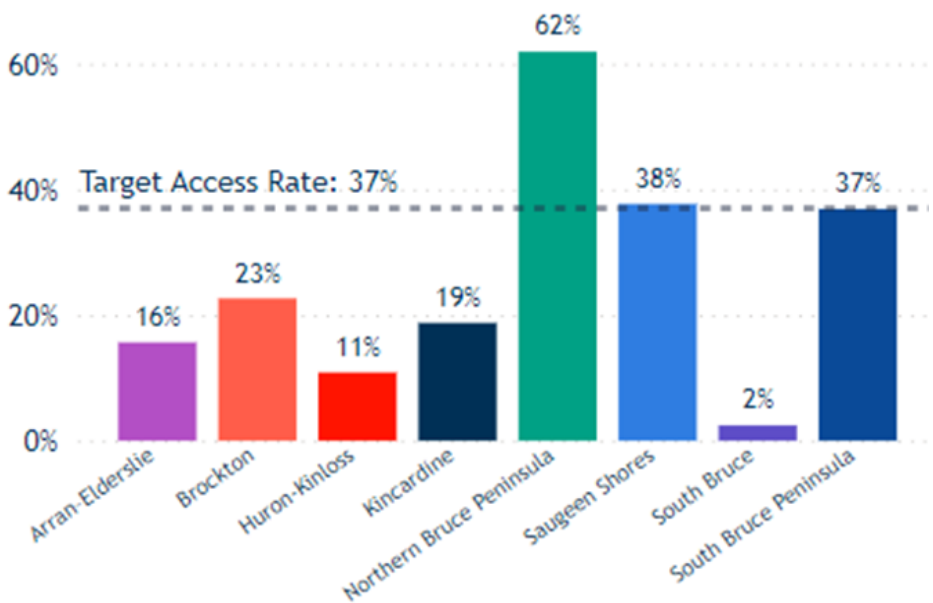
Bruce County has been allocated a notional target of 645 new child care spaces to be realized by the end of 2026. The table below outlines the space allocation by year.

Year	School-Based Allocation	Community Based Allocation	Total
2023	117	83	200
2024	0	180	180
2025	0	172	172
2026	0	93	93
Total	117	528	645

In alignment with Ontario’s Access and Inclusion Framework, Bruce County’s Directed Growth Plan will prioritize child care expansion projects that:

- 1. Support child care access for low-income children, vulnerable children, children from diverse communities, children with special needs, Francophone, and Indigenous children.
- 2. Increase access equity by supporting child care expansion in municipalities with an access rate lower than the provincial average of 37%.

The chart below provides a summary of child care access rates for children aged 0-4.*



*Child care access rates are calculated by dividing the number of available infant, toddler, and preschool child care spaces as of January 2023 by the 2021 0-4 population.

- 3. Maintain or improve the proportion of not-for profit licensed child care spaces at 70% or higher.

Provincial policy requires that Bruce County maintains or improves the proportion of not-for profit licensed child care spaces at 70% or higher. Currently 72% of CWELCC spaces are offered by not-for profit operators and 28% by for-profit operators. This means that of the 645 spaces allocated, 429 spaces must be utilized by not-for profit operators.

In addition to reviewing the factors identified above by the province, child care expansion projects will be evaluated and prioritized by reviewing county-wide growth forecasts and licensed child care waitlist data.

Implementation Challenges

1. Registered Early Childhood Educator Workforce Shortages

Child care providers continue to struggle to operate at full licensed capacity due to qualified staff shortages as well as recruitment and retention challenges. The expansion of child care and early years services in Bruce County is not possible without additional Registered Early Childhood Educators. The expansion of 645 spaces requires between 100-130 additional ECE's in the sector to accommodate child to staff ratios.

The recent [announcement](#) regarding Ontario's Child Care Workforce Strategy from the Ministry of Education is a positive step towards supporting licensees in address these challenges. Bruce County staff continue to work with community partners to implement innovative workforce strategies. For more information visit: [Be an Early Childhood Educator in Bruce County](#).

2. Child Care Demand Anticipated to Increase

As the CWELCC system improves child care affordability, we expect an increase in overall demand. Staff will continue to work with child care operators to increase operations to licensed capacity and will monitor system trends and adjust future prioritization of expansion projects as needed.

Implementation Opportunities

1. Bruce County Children's Services Now Accepting Expansion Applications

The application period for child care expansion has opened. Licensees who are interested in opening or expanding their licensed child care services are encouraged to visit the newly launched Early Learning and Child Care Expansion Toolkit on the Bruce County website ([Early Learning and Child Care Expansion Toolkit](#)). The toolkit provides a step-by-step guide with tools and resources to support expansion projects.

2. Start-Up Grants

Start-up Grant Funding in the amount of \$90.00/sq foot and up to \$350,000 may be available for eligible applicants to support initial costs required to expand or create spaces. Eligible expenses include equipment or leasehold improvements, such as retrofit, renovation or expansion projects. This funding cannot be used for capital costs or school-based expansions. Start-up Grant funding is available through the Early Learning and Child Care Expansion Application process.

Financial/Staffing/Legal/IT Considerations:

Total projected expenditures for licensed child care start-up funding are approximately 2.8 million dollars. CWELCC start-up funding and other child care expansion costs will be 100 per

cent funded by the Provincial/Federal Governments with no financial impact to the County of Bruce.

Interdepartmental Consultation:

Information Technology Services supported the development the online [Early Learning and Child Care Expansion Toolkit](#).

Link to Strategic Goals and Objectives:

Community and Partnerships - Build a strong and inclusive community

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Departmental Approval:

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