

## Early Learning and Child Care Directed Growth and Expansion Plan

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Recommended by:	General Manager of Community Development

### Report Summary

This report provides a recommendation regarding the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC) expansion plan and an overview of the priority areas for child care growth for the City of Greater Sudbury.

### Resolution

THAT the City of Greater Sudbury approves Children Services to draw funds up to \$2,500,000 from the Children Services Obligatory Reserve Fund to offset any budgetary constraints for the Capital Projects identified in the growth and expansion plan, as outlined in the report entitled “Early Learning and Child Care Directed Growth and Expansion Plan” from the General Manager of Community Development presented at the Community Emergency Services Committee meeting on May 21, 2024.

### Relationship to the Strategic Plan, Health Impact Assessment and Climate Action Plans

This report refers to operational matters related to the legislated implementation of the CWELCC plan and the directed growth and expansion requirements for the City of Greater Sudbury’s early learning and child care sector.

### Financial Implications

The Children Services Obligatory Reserve Fund has a balance of \$6,300,000 million at December 31, 2023, and was funded from a one-time contribution from the Ministry of Education. The funds are to be used for early-learning and child care systems. If approved, a draw of up to \$2,500,000 will be made to cover the remaining costs as described in this report.

### Background

Child care is critical infrastructure that supports the healthy development and wellbeing of children, contributes to poverty reduction, and supports economic growth by increasing workforce participation, particularly for women. Quality child care experiences also provide lifelong benefits particularly for

communities who may be experiencing high inequities, promoting access for more children of all abilities and socioeconomic backgrounds to participate in child care actively and meaningfully.

As part of the implementation of the Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC) system, an additional 53,000 licensed child care spaces will be added in Ontario between late 2022 to 2026. The addition of these spaces will help each community progress towards the provincial target of 37% access to licensed child care spaces for children aged 0 to 5 by 2026. Achieving this target means there will be an equivalent of one affordable child care space available for every 2.7 children aged 0-5 years. The Ministry of Education (Ministry) has provided a notional space allocation target for Greater Sudbury and requires that each System Manager determine priority areas for new licensed child care spaces.

### Notional Space Allocation for the City of Greater Sudbury

As shown in Table 1, the notional space allocation for Greater Sudbury is **257** spaces for children aged 0 to 5 years from 2023-2026, with spaces designated for community-based and school-based locations. Of the 257 spaces, approximately 235 spaces are needed for already committed licensed center-based and school-based site expansions. This leaves a limited number of community-based spaces for additional licensed center-based growth.

Children Services has requested an additional **122** spaces to support Greater Sudbury in meeting the provincial access target for children ages 0 to 5 years. It is unknown how many, if any, of the requested additional spaces will be approved by the Ministry. Without Ministry approval of the additional requested spaces, there will be very few opportunities to approve further CWELCC community-based spaces and access to licensed child care in Greater Sudbury will remain below the provincial access target.

**Table 1: Number of Spaces Allocated & Requested for Greater Sudbury**

Notional Type of Spaces	Allocation	Additional Requested Spaces (Approval Status Unknown)	Total Potential New Spaces
School-based Spaces	91	102	193
Community-based Spaces	166	20	186
<b>Total Spaces</b>	<b>257</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>379</b>

### Community-based Growth

Community-based growth encompasses both home-based growth as well as center-based growth at existing sites and new sites located in priority areas across Greater Sudbury. Children Services collected data from center-based and home-based child care programs regarding their expansion and growth plans to support the development of growth projections. The actual number of spaces to be distributed across home-based and center-based sites was determined based on proposed expansion plans by operators; Ministry approval of additional requested spaces; and alignment with priorities that are identified in the Ministry's Access and Inclusion Framework.

### Priority Areas

As outlined in the Ministry's Access and Inclusion Framework, new CWELCC community-based spaces must be in areas that support families who need affordable child care the most, including low-income families, children with disabilities, Indigenous children, Black and other racialized children, and new immigrant children. Increasing flexible child care options for those who work non-traditional hours is also a priority. Licensed home child care is a critical part of the local child care system, offering parents flexible models of care and often serving the most vulnerable families.

To ensure that vulnerable and diverse families access new and existing spaces and to increase inclusion within the early years and child care system, Children Services aims to develop an in-depth Equity and Inclusion Plan for Greater Sudbury by the end of 2024. This plan will build on the Service System Plan and will be based on engagement with families and other key stakeholders. The plan will include concrete actions that address current system barriers and inequities across our Early Learning and Child Care system.

Children Services has identified priority areas across Greater Sudbury for new CWELCC community-based spaces. As low-income families face significant barriers to accessing affordable child care outside of their neighbourhood, it is vitally important to ensure new CWELCC spaces are implemented in areas where they are accessible to children and families with low-income. These areas were identified reviewing the following data:

- Early Development Instrument (EDI), Cycle 5 2017-2018/Cycle 6 2022-2023 (future data)
- Statistics Canada, Census 2016 & Census 2021
- Special Needs Resourcing (SNR) Referrals
- City of Greater Sudbury Child Care Mapping (Child Care, Schools, EarlyON Child and Family Centers)
- City of Greater Sudbury Child Care Waitlist, Placement and Subsidy and EarlyON Report

The identification of priority areas was also guided by the data reviewed in **Table 2** below which includes descriptive statistics used in the review:

**Table 2: Priority Areas**

Neighbourhood	Children Aged 0-5 (2021)	Operating Spaces as a % of Child Population	Children on Waiting Lists 0-5 (2024)	Children Living in Low Income 0-5 (2024)	Operating Spaces as a % of Children Waiting
Downtown, West End, Flour Mill, Downtown	1755	41%	1549	460	47%
South End	1220	40%	1306	115	37%
Valley, Capreol	1565	37%	748	90	78%
Azilda, Chelmsford, Onaping	1300	29%	559	110	68%
New Sudbury	1205	49%	541	180	109%
Garson, Coniston	740	40%	687	55	43%
Minnow Lake	700	20%	702	120	20%
Lively, Copper Cliff, Whitefish	780	34%	412	20	65%

### School-based Growth

The school-based spaces allocated for Greater Sudbury will be managed through a separate planning process known as the Schools First Capital program. Children Services will work with school boards for child care spaces in schools located within pre-identified priority areas.

### Expansion Requirements and Capital Funding

The reduced cost of child care is anticipated to result in a significant increase in demand up to the full implementation of CWELCC in 2026. To ensure families in Greater Sudbury have access to affordable licensed child care through the CWELCC funding when they require it, Children Services is working with

child care operators to expand in school and community-based settings, as well as in licensed home child care. It is important to note that although CWELCC is targeted towards expansion for children 0-5 years of age, Greater Sudbury has a significant waitlist for School Age Children (SAC) requiring care in their school setting. This places significant importance on expansion for all families in Greater Sudbury with children 0-12 years of age.

As part of the expansion plan, the following projects were identified:

**Table 3: Approved Expansion Projects (2024)**

<b>Projects</b>	<b># of New CWELCC Spaces</b>	<b># of New SAC Spaces</b>
New Sudbury	62	30
South End	36	0
South End	0	42
Downtown Area (relocation)	0	42
<b>Total Spaces</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>114</b>

In working with Architect and Engineering firms, recommended project budgets totaling \$5,816,000 have been provided. To fund these projects, Children Services has advanced \$2,500,000 and allocated an additional \$816,000 from 2023 and 2024 operating budgets. The outstanding unfunded balance of \$2,500,000 falls outside the 2024 operating budget and is requested to be funded by the Children Services Obligatory Reserve Fund.

The Children Services Obligatory Reserve Fund is to be used within Children Services to offset changes in annual funding from the Ministry of Education resulting from the 2013 funding formula change. The Children Services Obligatory Reserve Fund is intended to support the development of sustainable childcare through investments in the City of Greater Sudbury as described by the Ministry of Education.

### **Alternatives Reviewed**

Children Services continues to maximize opportunities to support the creation of new high quality, affordable, child care spaces by collaborating with school boards and existing community-based partners for expansion within existing sites, including low-cost renovation opportunities that support with space creation; and maximizing start-up grants available for operators to assist with equipment costs.

Children Services is also continuing its advocacy to the province for sustainable multi-year operating and capital funding to achieve the vision laid out in the Growth Strategy, increasing access to affordable child care programs, improving workforce compensation and to support affordability for families.

In addition, any incremental operational funding to support child care expansion in school and community-based spaces under the Province’s Access and Inclusion Framework will be allocated as more targets are approved, with no further required financial contribution from the City.

Should the proposed approval to access \$2,500,000 from the Children Services Obligatory Reserve Fund for the capital projects in 2024 not be approved, the expansion of spaces will not proceed resulting in a reduction of expanded CWELCC spaces and SAC grouping child care spaces in our community.

### **Next Steps**

Upon approval, Children Services will allocate the funds outlined in this report based on tendering outcomes to complete expansion projects.

### **Resources Cited**

[Access and Inclusion Framework](#)

[CWELCC Space Allocation](#)

[Capital Start-up Grants: Parameters, Eligible and Ineligible Expenses, and Reporting Requirements](#)