

2024-2025 Child Care and Early Years Service System Plan Update

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Report Summary

This report provides an update on the 2024-2025 Child Care and Early Years Service System Plan, highlighting key initiatives in expanding licensed child care spaces, meeting measures under the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC) system, and increasing inclusion for vulnerable populations. It also focuses on workforce development and quality improvement for accessible, high-quality child care services in Greater Sudbury.

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

This report supports Council's Strategic Plan of Economic Capacity and Investment Readiness and Create a Healthier and More Vibrant Community.

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications associated with this report.

Background

As the Service System Manager for Greater Sudbury, the Ministry of Education requires municipalities to prepare a report outlining the early years and child care system. This report must include key data and measures related to child care and indicators from Ontario's bilateral federal-provincial early learning and child care agreements with the federal government. This current report replaces the previous Child Care and Early Years Services System Plan, which covered the years 2019 to 2024.

The 2024-2025 Child Care and Early Years Service System Plan was created to address the increasing demand for child care services in Greater Sudbury while ensuring alignment with the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC) system. CWELCC aims to reduce the cost of licensed child care to an average of \$10 per day by 2026. It also focuses on expanding access and improving the quality of services across Ontario. In this context, the City's plan outlines a framework for achieving these objectives at the local level.

The development of the 2024-2025 Child Care and Early Years Service System Plan was grounded in a comprehensive stakeholder engagement process. Children Services recognized the importance of community input and undertook extensive consultations with families, early childhood educators (ECEs), child care providers, and community organizations. These consultations aimed to ensure that the plan accurately reflects the challenges and needs of the community.

Feedback from these diverse groups informed every aspect of the plan, particularly its emphasis on improving access for vulnerable populations, including low-income families, Indigenous and Francophone communities, and children with special needs. The system plan, which is attached, provides a detailed roadmap outlining how the City intends to achieve these goals. Key objectives include creating 319 new licensed child care spaces, reducing child care fees, and maintaining a high standard of care across all service providers.

Alignment with Provincial Frameworks

The plan was influenced by important provincial frameworks that guide early childhood education and care in Ontario. The Ministry's Access and Inclusion Framework was particularly significant, ensuring that the plan promotes equitable access to services for all families, regardless of their socioeconomic or cultural background. Additionally, "How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years" played a crucial role in shaping the plan's commitment to delivering high-quality, inclusive, and responsive early learning environments. These frameworks provided a foundation that enabled the City to create a plan that is both compliant with provincial standards and responsive to local needs.

Tailored to Local Needs

The plan is a strategic approach tailored to meet the diverse needs of Greater Sudbury's communities. It aims to create 319 new licensed child care spaces by 2026 in areas with high demand, addressing historical access challenges. This initiative is designed to reduce waiting lists and support families in underserved neighborhoods seeking accessible child care.

The plan emphasizes geographic targeting alongside cultural and social inclusivity. It addresses the unique needs of Indigenous and Francophone communities, as well as families with children who have special needs.

Children Services will collaborate with Indigenous organizations to develop culturally relevant programs and will work with Francophone groups to enhance access to French-language child care. Resources will also be allocated for inclusive environments for children with special needs, ensuring that all children can thrive.

This approach shows the sector's commitment to an accessible and responsive child care system for Greater Sudbury. The plan details how community and provincial inputs were included in the plan to keep it adaptable to changing needs.

Key Focus Areas

The 2024-2025 Child Care and Early Years Service System Plan focuses on four key priorities: Access, Affordability, Quality, and Inclusion, along with Equity and Responsiveness. These priorities aim to ensure that child care services in Greater Sudbury are accessible, affordable, high-quality, and inclusive for all families, particularly those in vulnerable populations.

Access

The plan focuses on expanding access to licensed child care spaces in Greater Sudbury. By 2026, the City aims to create 319 new spaces, targeting areas with limited availability and high demand. This effort will prioritize neighborhoods with long waitlists to ensure families have access to quality, affordable childcare.

Table 2 identifies priority areas based on waiting list numbers, operating child care spaces relative to the

child population, and low-income household proportions. Downtown, West End, Flour Mill, and Donovan have high waiting lists and demand for additional child care. New Sudbury and South End also face significant demand, as there are not enough available spaces for local families. These insights guide strategies to expand licensed child care in underserved areas.

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, Donovan	1,755	41%	1,549	460	47%
South End	1,220	40%	1,306	115	37%
Valley, Capreol	1,565	37%	748	90	78%
Azilda, Chelmsford, Onaping	1,300	29%	559	110	68%
New Sudbury	1,205	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%

Note: Many families from other neighbourhoods use care in the Downtown, New Sudbury and South End due to work travel patterns, therefore a higher level of care is needed in these areas.

The plan aims to enhance access to child care by expanding both center-based and licensed home-based options. Home-based care benefits families with non-traditional work hours or those in rural areas. This dual approach ensures child care services are available to all families in Greater Sudbury, addressing their diverse needs.

Affordability

A primary goal of the plan is to make child care more affordable for families. In alignment with the CWELCC system, child care fees will be reduced to an average of \$10 per day by 2025. By 2024, fees have already been cut by 53%, marking a significant step toward greater affordability. The plan also ensures that child care providers receive financial support to maintain their operations while keeping fees low. Striking a balance between affordability for families and financial stability for providers is crucial for sustaining a high-quality child care system.

The table below indicates the percentage of active clients in Fee Subsidy and their corresponding fee reduction amount.

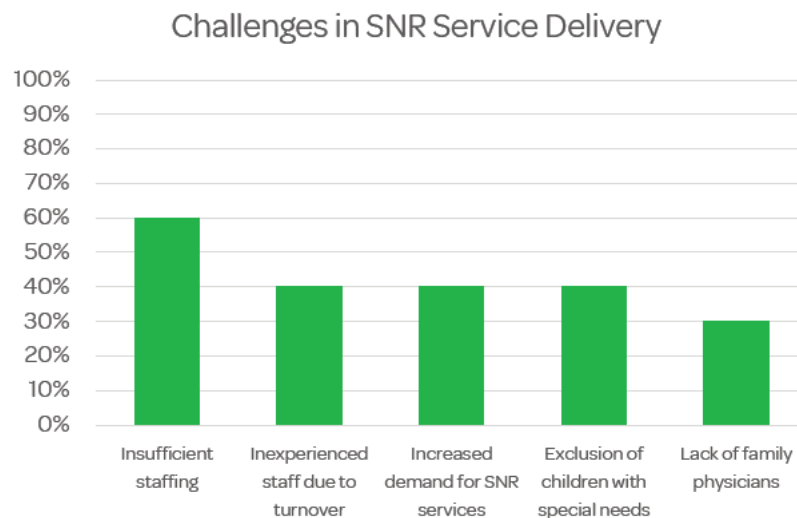
Approximate monthly CWELCC fee reductions for families with a family contribution	
No fee reduction	32%
up to \$49.99	21%
\$50.00- \$99.99	15%
\$100.00-\$199.99	15%
\$200.00- \$499.99	13%
\$500.00+	4%

Quality and Inclusion

The plan highlights the importance of maintaining and improving the quality of child care services through ongoing professional development for Early Childhood Educators (ECEs). This training includes topics such as inclusion, diversity, and best practices in early learning. The goal is to ensure that educators are well-equipped to provide consistent, high-quality care across all child care settings.

Inclusion is a key focus of the plan, which provides additional resources to support providers in assisting children with special needs and those from marginalized communities. By fostering an inclusive environment, the City promotes the vision that every child can thrive, regardless of their background or abilities.

The accompanying chart highlights the challenges in Special Needs Resourcing (SNR) service delivery, including insufficient staffing, increased demand for SNR services, and the exclusion of children with special needs. To address these challenges, the plan proposes investing in professional development for educators, enabling them to better support children with diverse needs. Additionally, it calls for allocating more resources to ensure that special needs services are more widely available.



Equity and Responsiveness

The final priority emphasizes the importance of ensuring that child care services are equitable and responsive to the diverse needs of families. This plan aligns with the Ministry's Access and Inclusion Framework, which advocates for fair access for vulnerable populations, including low-income families, Indigenous communities, Francophone families, and children with special needs.

A key priority of our efforts is to enhance cultural responsiveness in child care services. Children Services collaborates closely with Indigenous and Francophone organizations to ensure that these services respect

cultural traditions and provide care in the appropriate languages.

In planning for Greater Sudbury, two important characteristics stand out. Of the 2,417 available child care spaces, 35 percent are allocated to Francophone, center-based licensed child care. Additionally, the Indigenous population in Greater Sudbury is significantly higher than the provincial average, representing 11 percent of the total population, compared to 2.9 percent in Ontario.

Our early years plan will focus on ensuring that Francophone and Indigenous families have timely access to culturally relevant programs and services.

Workforce Development

The success of the child care system depends on the quality of early childhood educators (ECEs). Unfortunately, recruiting and retaining qualified staff has become challenging, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic.

This plan emphasizes workforce development, highlighting the need for professional development opportunities. These programs will equip educators with skills for inclusive and culturally responsive care, focusing on diversity, inclusion, and best practices to address the diverse needs of children in the community.

A key aspect of the plan is to enhance the recruitment and retention of Early Childhood Educators (ECEs) through wage enhancement programs, which aim to boost compensation and make the profession more competitive. It also focuses on improving working conditions to retain experienced staff.

The plan includes initiatives to expand training programs and target recruitment. By partnering with educational institutions and promoting scholarships, Children Services aims to attract new educators and ensure childcare centers can meet the growing demand for quality services. Additionally, Children Services will work with local and provincial initiatives to address current staffing shortages while building a foundation for sustained improvement in the quality of care.

Next Steps

Following the release of the full System Plan, a report to committee will follow in each quarter of 2025 which will include status on the expansion of childcare spaces; identification of any recalibrated space allocations for expansion that will be report in early 2025 by the Ministry of Education; System Plan implementation outcomes; and workforce recruitment and retention initiatives.

Resources Cited

[City of Greater Sudbury Child Care and Early Years Service System Plan 2024-2025](#)