

CHILD CARE AND EARLY YEARS

10 YEAR PLAN 2022 TO 2032

BUILDING OUR COMMUNITY FROM THE KIDS UP





TABLE OF

CONTENTS

Opening Remarks	3
Executive Summary	4
Importance of child care and early years programs	5
Child Care and Early Years Act	6
Role of the CMSM	6
Consultations	8
Child Care and Early Years Plan: Key Priorities 2022-2032	9
Pathway to 2022	10
Accessibility	11
Affordability	25
Inclusivity	28
Quality	33
Accountability	36
Reporting and Conclusion	39
Contact information	40

Opening REMARKS



MESSAGE FROM MAYOR KEVIN DAVIS

Building Our Community from the Kids Up is an important tool that guides the planning and management of services for children and families in our community. Early childhood learning supports positive outcomes for children, and is an important contributor to our future economic growth and vibrancy. The City of Brantford remains committed to working with child care providers, families and other stakeholders to provide children opportunities to grow, learn and thrive.



MESSAGE FROM MAYOR DAVID BAILEY

Supporting the growth and development of children has a positive impact on the future of our community. Through recreation, early learning, child care and other programs, the County of Brant is committed to building up future generations. *Building Our Community from the Kids Up* is a pathway to increased accessible child care and early learning opportunities that will meet the needs of our growing communities, and I am excited to see the important work that the plan will inspire over the next ten years.



MESSAGE FROM GENERAL MANAGER MARLENE MIRANDA

I am excited to share the 10 Year Child Care and Early Years Plan: *Building Our Community from the Kids Up*. Access to affordable, high quality childcare and early learning opportunity is one of the most impactful ways we can shape the future of our community. We are grateful to the many stakeholders who shared their ideas, and provided valuable insight about how we can work together to navigate system changes and the impacts of COVID-19. As the Consolidated Municipal Service Manager (CMSM), we are excited to continue our journey towards a vibrant, high quality, inclusive services system of early year services and supports.

Executive

SUMMARY

The City of Brantford and County of Brant strive to enhance the quality of life for residents through the delivery of quality programs and services for residents, making Brantford and the County of Brant a great place to live, work and play. The two municipalities work in partnership to shape a community that is inclusive, innovative, progressive, and prosperous.

This vision for our community can only be achieved if we invest in future generations by creating environments and experiences that will give our children the best possible start in life. Research strongly demonstrates that early childhood experiences set the foundation for lifelong learning, behavior, and health. These early experiences shape the brain and the child's capacity to learn, to get along with others, and to respond to life stresses and challenges.¹ High quality child care and early learning experiences play a pivotal role in not only shaping children's development and future success, but also shaping the success of our community for generations to come.

The local child care and early learning sector has undergone a number of changes in the past four years including the CMSM oversight of EarlyON Child and Family Centres and funding for Indigenous led child care and EarlyON programs. Additionally, the sector has been significantly impacted by COVID-19 with centre closures, emergency child care, parental employment instability, the requirement for virtual EarlyON programming, increased health and safety measures and the departure of ECEs leaving an already stretched workforce.

In response to past changes and in anticipation of a provincial response to the National Child Care Strategy a number of community consultations have been undertaken, resulting in the development of a Child Care and Early Years Plan that will act as a visionary road map for the next ten years to guide the future of child care and early years programs in our community.

The plan outlines goals within five key areas: Accessibility, Affordability, Inclusivity, Quality and Accountability. Targets for child care and EarlyON programs have been set to meet the diverse needs of an increasing population, focusing on access to services, access to information, inclusion of all families and quality programming led by trained professionals, all managed by a CMSM that is future-oriented, responsive and accountable.

The Importance of

CHILD CARE AND EARLY YEARS PROGRAMS

Child care and early years programs not only play an important role in healthy development of young children but are essential for the well-being of children and families and the entire community. Accessible affordable child care is an economic driver, as seen during the COVID-19 pandemic, and will be the backbone to economic recovery.

1

ECONOMIC Benefits

- Allows more people, particularly women, to participate in the workforce or go to school.²
- Creates jobs.³
- Boosts the economy through increased tax revenue.⁴
- For every dollar spent on early childhood education, the broader economy receives between \$1.50 and \$2.80 in return.⁵

2

SOCIAL Benefits

- Reduces gender-based income and employment inequality.⁶
- Fosters to a sense of belonging and well-being.⁷
- For newcomer families, finding child care is often their first step to securing employment, improving English, or upgrading qualifications.⁸

3

BENEFITS to Families

- Allows parents/caregivers to participate in the workforce or attend school.⁹
- Increases household income.¹⁰
- Helps families build social networks.¹¹
- Provides families with tools and resources and connects with other community services.¹²
- EarlyONs and child cares located in schools help families form relationships with teaching staff administration and increases parent involvement in school.¹³

4

BENEFITS to Children

- Improves school readiness.¹⁴
- Makes the transition to kindergarten easier.¹⁵
- Improves language and cognitive development.¹⁶
- Promotes prosocial behaviour and improves communication skills.¹⁷
- Promotes higher academic achievement later in school.¹⁸

CHILD CARE AND EARLY YEARS ACT

In Ontario, the legislation governing child care systems was established as the Child Care and Early Years Act (CCEYA), 2014. The Act aims to ensure the health and safety of children and child care providers by applying the rules to regulate child care environments as well as setting out the responsibilities of all parties. The Act proclaims the funding and cost sharing requirements of the CMSM in regard to the child care and early learning system.¹⁹

ROLE OF THE CMSM

The City of Brantford is the Consolidated Municipal Service Manager (CMSM) responsible and accountable for managing a coordinated and responsive child care and early years system in the City of Brantford and County of Brant. Section 56 of the Child Care and Early Years Act (CCEYA) 2014 states that:

....a service system manager shall,

- (a) Develop and administer local policies respecting the operation of child care and early years programs and services;
- (b) Administer the delivery of financial assistance provided by the Minister under clause 54 (1) (b), in accordance with the regulations;
- (c) **Coordinate the planning and operation of child care and early years programs and services with the planning and provision of other human services delivered by the service system manager;**
- (d) Assess the economic viability of the child care and early years programs and services in the service area and, if necessary, make or facilitate changes to help make such programs and services economically viable; and
- (e) Perform such other duties as may be prescribed by the regulations.

The Child Care and Early Years Plan recognizes the visions of the Province of Ontario, the City of Brantford and the County of Brant and supports municipal strategic goals, council priorities, the City of Brantford Economic Recovery Action Plan 2020²⁰ and the County of Brant Economic Development Strategy and Action Plan 2019²¹ with a view to achieving the economic, societal, family and child benefits of early learning noted above.

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

Ontario's children and families are well supported by a system of responsive high quality, accessible and increasingly integrated early years programs and services that contribute to healthy child development and a stronger future tomorrow.

CITY OF BRANTFORD

Our vision is to be a contemporary community, thriving in a modern economy. The Brantford of tomorrow will be progressive and prosperous; a place that respects its past and embraces its future.

COUNTY OF BRANT

A charming, prosperous and inclusive community. A place to live, work and play.

City of Brantford Council Priorities, Oct 2020

- All neighbourhoods in the City are safe, vibrant, attractive, and inclusive.
- Social service support is provided to Brantford residents in need.
- There is high trust in the City through demonstrated progress in taxpayer affordability and value for money.

County of Brant Strategic Plan 2019

Economic Resilience

- Through the implementation of the Economic Development Strategy and Action Plan, create an environment where people can both live and work in the community.
- Healthy, Safe, and Engaged Citizens
- Create and sustain opportunities for residents to be actively engaged in recreational, social, and community activities.

CONSULTATIONS

A key responsibility of the CMSM is to set priorities that address the constantly evolving system needs. To fully understand these needs, the City benefits from ongoing collaboration with community partners and engages in regular stakeholder consultations. These connections ensure service system changes reflect the diverse experience of early years and child care partners across the community and provide expertise and insight on system needs, opportunities and challenges.

To better understand the current and future needs of the child care and early learning system, City of Brantford conducted comprehensive community engagement processes reaching a wide range of stakeholders over the past few years, informing the development of this Plan. These include:

1. EarlyON Needs Assessment and Initial Plan – 2017
2. Indigenous Early Learning Needs Assessment and Feasibility Study -2017
3. Child Care and EarlyON Local System Priorities Plan – 2020
4. Brantford Brant Child Care Consultation – 2020
5. Child Care and Early Learning Educator Staff Engagement Survey – 2021

Through these engagement processes, it is clear that while the current system boasts much strength, there are opportunities for improvement. Families, educators, service providers, and community partners reinforced the need for a system that is **accessible, affordable, inclusive, high quality** and **accountable**.

The Child Care and Early Years Plan is ambitious and visionary. The child care and early learning sector has experienced industry challenges due to the pandemic, workforce shortages and the need for ongoing capital investments. Resources will be required from the Province of Ontario for full achievement of the Plan, maintaining a viable system that supports low income and all families with quality programs and parental choice.



CHILD CARE AND EARLY YEARS PLAN: KEY PRIORITIES 2022 - 2032

The Child Care and Early Years Plan sets out strategic goals informing current and future direction, aligned within key priority areas.



Accessibility

All children have the right to fully participate in a quality licensed early learning and care child program. Unfortunately, not all children have access for a variety of reasons including cost, availability, cultural barriers and/or special needs. As the CMSM for child care and early learning, City of Brantford strives to ensure that:

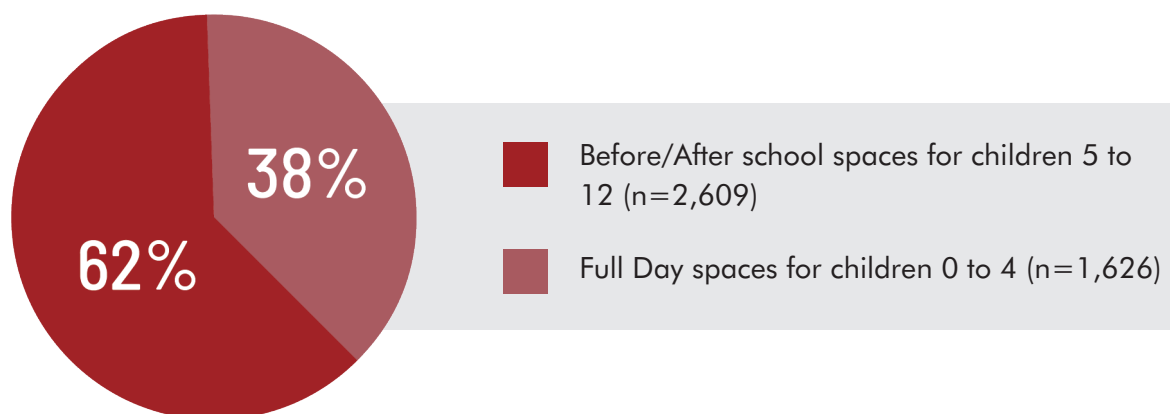
- Families know about available programs and how to access them
- Families have access to child care and early years programs that meet their specific needs
- Families can make informed decisions about early years and child care programs to meet their specific needs
- The Child Care and Early Years system is responsive to increased demands and the evolving needs of families

Licensed Child Care System

As of November 2021, there were 56 licensed centre-based child care sites in Brantford-Brant and 43 licensed home child care sites. Collectively these sites provide 4,235 licensed child care spaces in the community.

Table 1: Population vs. Licensed child care spaces, Brantford and Brant County, 2021

Municipality	Population (#)	Population (%)	Licensed spaces (#)	Licensed spaces (%)
City of Brantford	106,000	72%	3,084	73%
County of Brant	41,000	28%	1,151	27%
Total	147,000	100%	4,235	100%



Studies estimate that for every 1 licensed home child care provider there are 6.34 unlicensed child care providers



**Licensed
Home Child Care
Providers**



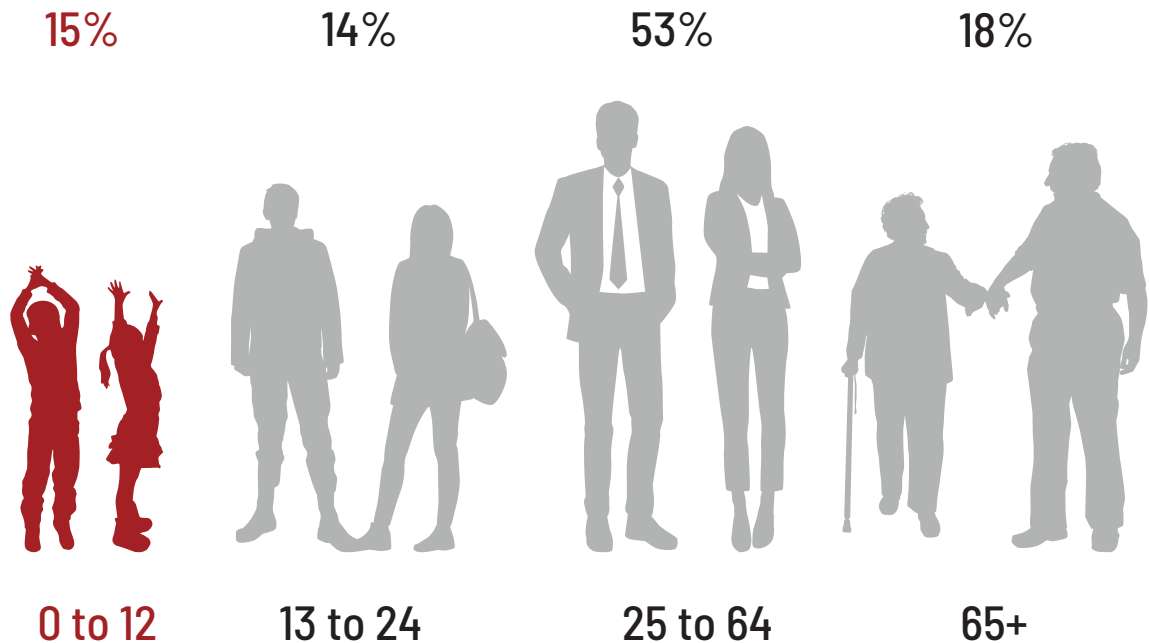
**Unlicensed Home Child
Care Providers**

Based on this data we can estimate that in addition to the licensed home child care providers, there are an additional 273 unlicensed child care providers in the community. ^{22,23}

Prior to the pandemic, the child care system was characterized by high demand and insufficient access to spaces. The pandemic caused a temporary reversal, where spaces and subsidies were available, and insufficient demand to fill them. Looking ahead, there continues to be a need to grow access to an affordable, high-quality system that supports all families and recognizes the importance of a strong workforce of child care professionals.

Population

Brantford and the County of Brant are home to an estimated 147,000 people. Approximately 72% of the population resides in the City of Brantford (n=106,000) and 28% reside in the County of Brant (n=41,000). Fifteen per cent of the population are children aged 0 to 12 (n=22,367).



By 2032, the population of Brantford and County of Brant is projected to grow to 173,600 people, 26,420 of which will be children aged 0 to 12.

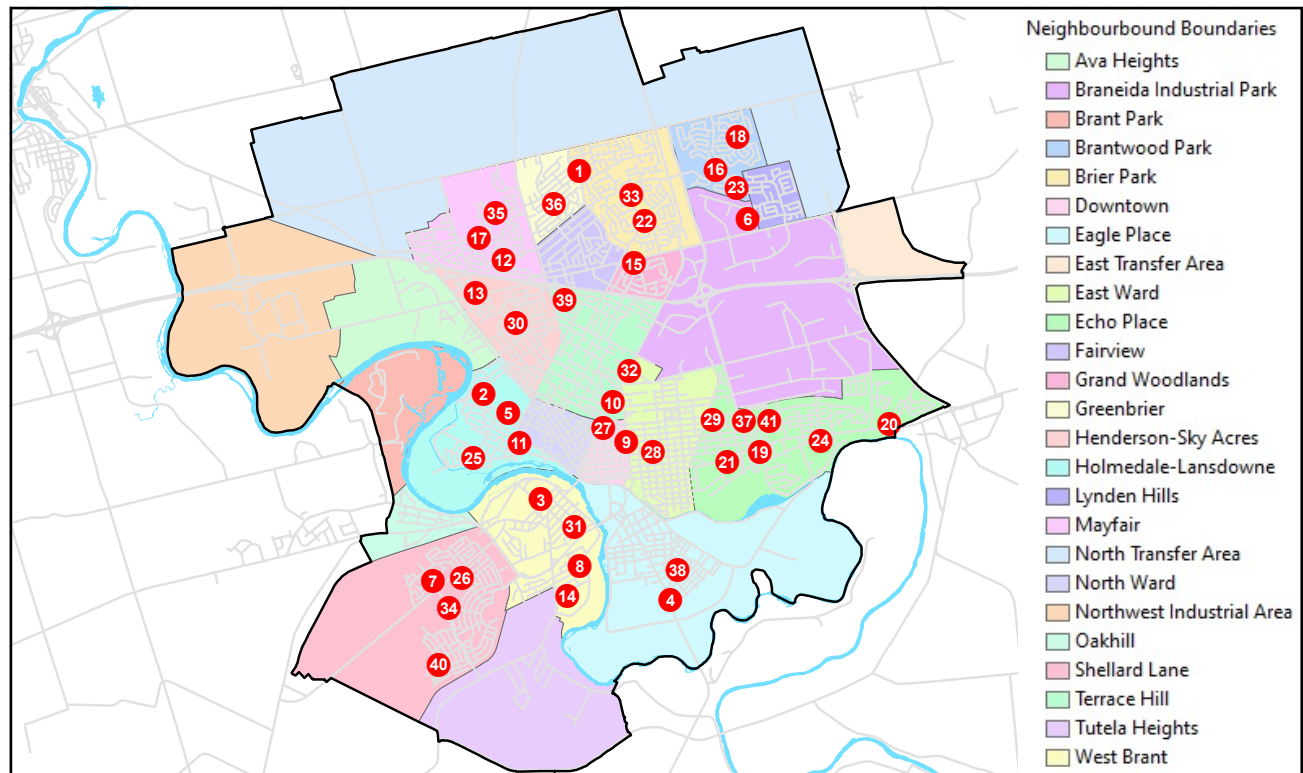


Based on 2016 census data, the areas of the CMSM with the highest child population are:

West Brant | East Ward | Paris | Brier Park | Banbury

City of Brantford

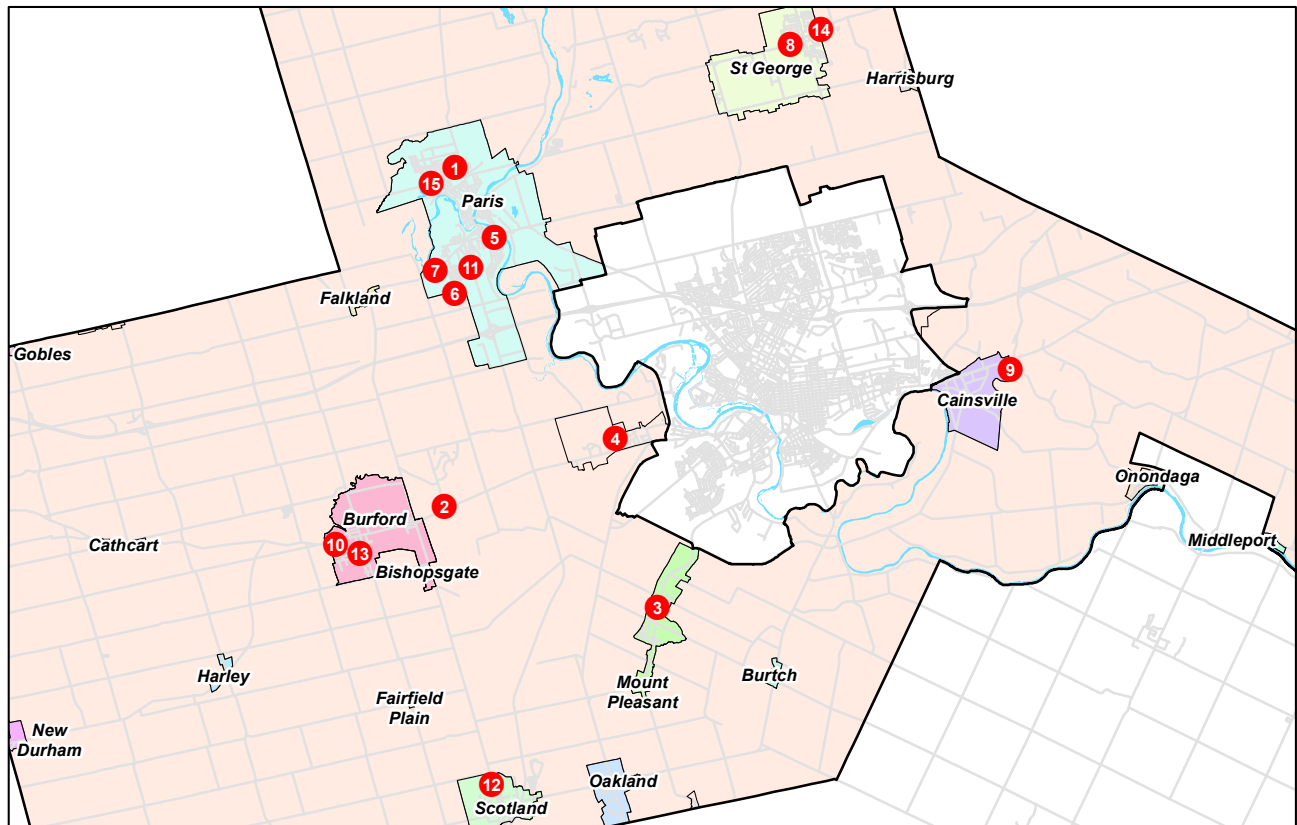
Licensed Centre-based Child Care Sites



- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. YMCA School Age Child Care - St. Leo's | 23. YMCA School Age Child Care - Branlyn/Notre Dame |
| 2. YMCA School Age Child Care - Lansdowne | 24. YMCA School Age Child Care - St. Peter |
| 3. Harmony Arts Daycare and Education Centre | 25. Child's Paradise Too |
| 4. YMCA School Age Child Care - Madonna Della Libera | 26. YMCA School Age Child Care - St. Gabriel |
| 5. YMCA School Age Child Care - Christ the King | 27. YMCA Child Care Centre |
| 6. A Child's Paradise | 28. Our Lady Queen of Peace Montessori School |
| 7. Ryerson Heights YMCA Child Care Centre | 29. YMCA School Age Child Care - Holy Cross |
| 8. Le Ballon Rouge Brantford | 30. YMCA School Age Child Care - James Hillier |
| 9. Montessori House of Children | 31. Creative Minds |
| 10. Clarence Street Child Care | 32. YES Kids Christian Childcare |
| 11. YMCA School Age Child Care - Dufferin | 33. YMCA School Age Child Care - Resurrection |
| 12. YMCA School Age Child Care - Russell Reid | 34. Noah's Ark YMCA Child Care Centre |
| 13. YMCA School Age Child Care - Confederation | 35. Our Lady of Providence YMCA Child Care Centre |
| 14. Kiddy Korner Day Care | 36. YMCA School Age Child Care - Greenbrier |
| 15. YMCA School Age Child Care - St. Patrick's | 37. St. Joseph YMCA Child Care Centre |
| 16. Three Bears YMCA Child Care Centre | 38. Bellview YMCA Child Care Centre |
| 17. Blueridge YMCA Child Care Centre | 39. YMCA School Age Child Care - St. Pius |
| 18. Banbury Child Care Centre | 40. YMCA School Age Child Care - St. Basil/Walter Gretzky |
| 19. YMCA School Age Child Care - Echo Place | 41. YMCA School Age Child Care - Woodman |
| 20. Stirling Montessori Academy | |
| 21. Brantford Little School Community Child Care Centre | |
| 22. YMCA School Age Child Care - Brier Park | |

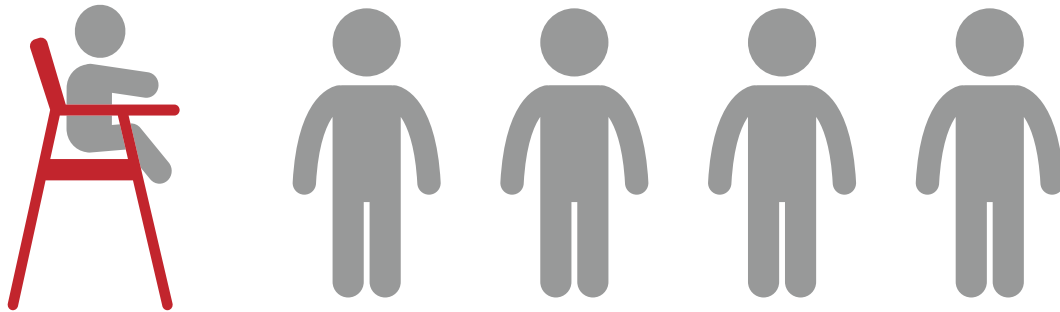
County of Brant

Licensed Centre-based Child Care Sites



1. Holy Family Child Care
2. Burford Co-op Preschool & Children's Centre
3. YMCA School Age Child Care - Mount Pleasant
4. YMCA School Age Child Care - St. Theresa
5. Montessori Children's Academy
6. Sacred Heart Child Care
7. Cobblestone School Age Program
8. St. George Children's Centre
9. YMCA School Age Child Care - Onondaga Brant
10. Blessed Sacrament Before and After School Program
11. Cobblestone Child Care Centre
12. Just for Moms and Kids Children's Centre
13. Burford Co-op Before and After School Program
14. St. George Co-op Preschool
15. North Ward School Age Program

As of October 2021, there are centre based and licensed home child care spaces for approximately 19% of children aged 0 to 12. This is consistent with comparator and neighbouring CMSMs. ²⁴

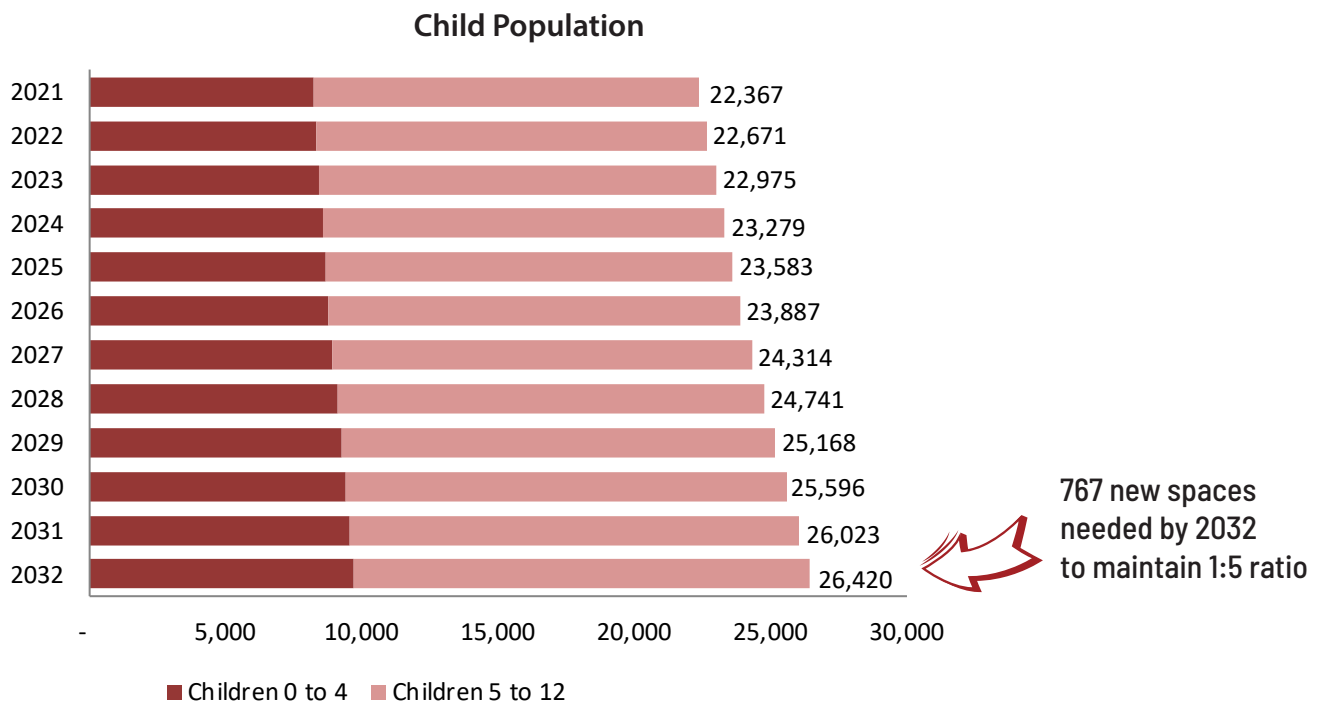


Our current licensed child care system has...

..... **1 licensed space for every 5 children**

- 20% of children aged 0 to 4 (n=1,626 spaces for 8,123 children)
- 18% of children aged 5 to 12 (n=2,609 spaces for 14,154 children)

To maintain this ratio while meeting the needs of the growing population, 767 additional spaces are required by 2032.



EarlyON Child and Family Centres

EarlyON Child and Family Centres offer free, high-quality programs for families and children from birth to 6 years old. They provide opportunities for children to participate in play and inquiry-based programs with other children. Families and caregivers can get advice and support from professionals trained in early childhood development, as well as make connections with other families with young children.



The City of Brantford contracts three organizations to provide EarlyON programming in Brantford-Brant: Brant Family and Children’s Services, Community Living Brant and Six Nations of the Grand River.

As of October 2021, there were **32** EarlyON sites across

Brantford and the County of Brant

Bell Lane	Bellview Public School	Boys and Girls Club	Branlyn-Notre Dame School	Christ the King School	Eastdale Gardens	Brantford Public Library
Family Resource Centre	George Resource Centre	Harmony Square	John Noble Home	King George School	Madonna Della Libera School	Major Ballachey School
Margots Place	Northland Gardens	Prince Charles School	Princess Elizabeth School	Riverside Gardens	Slovak Village	St Gabriel School
Tollgate Technological Skills Centre	Woodman Community Centre	Burford Co-op Preschool	Burford Public Library	Holy Trinity Anglican Church	Mount Pleasant Optimist Club	North Ward School
Paris Public Library	Scotland Community Centre	St George Public Library	St James Anglican Church			

Located in the City of Brantford

Located in the County of Brant

In a typical year, approximately 4,500 unique children and 4,000 unique adults are served by EarlyON programs across Brantford and the County of Brant. Collectively, the children account for nearly 28,000 visits and the adults account for approximately 20,000 visits to EarlyON programs.²⁵ In 2019, over 10,000 hours of programming was offered at EarlyON sites in the City of Brantford and the County of Brant.

yearly EarlyON Participation

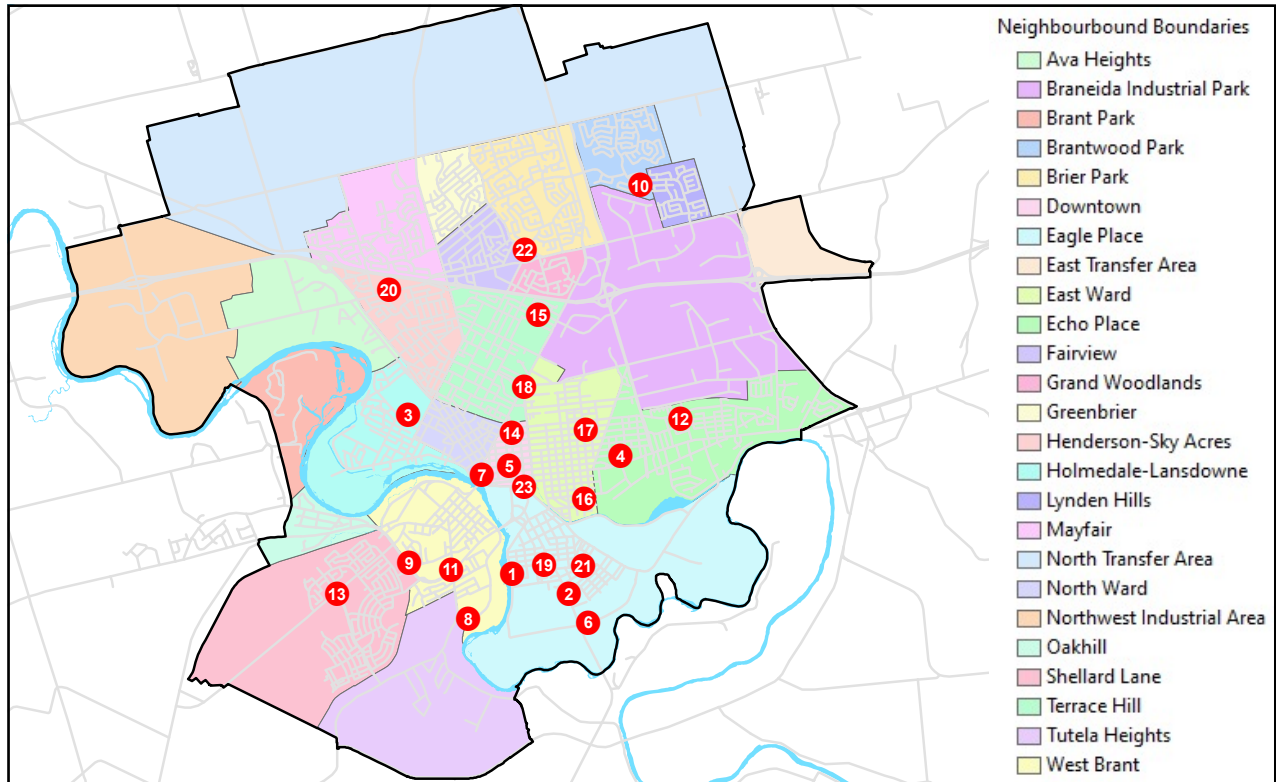
- ✓ **4,500** unique children served
- ✓ **4,000** unique parents/caregivers
- ✓ **28,000** visits from children
- ✓ **20,000** visits from parents/caregivers

In *2019* local EarlyONs served approximately *39%* of children aged 0 to 6 living in Brantford and County of Brant



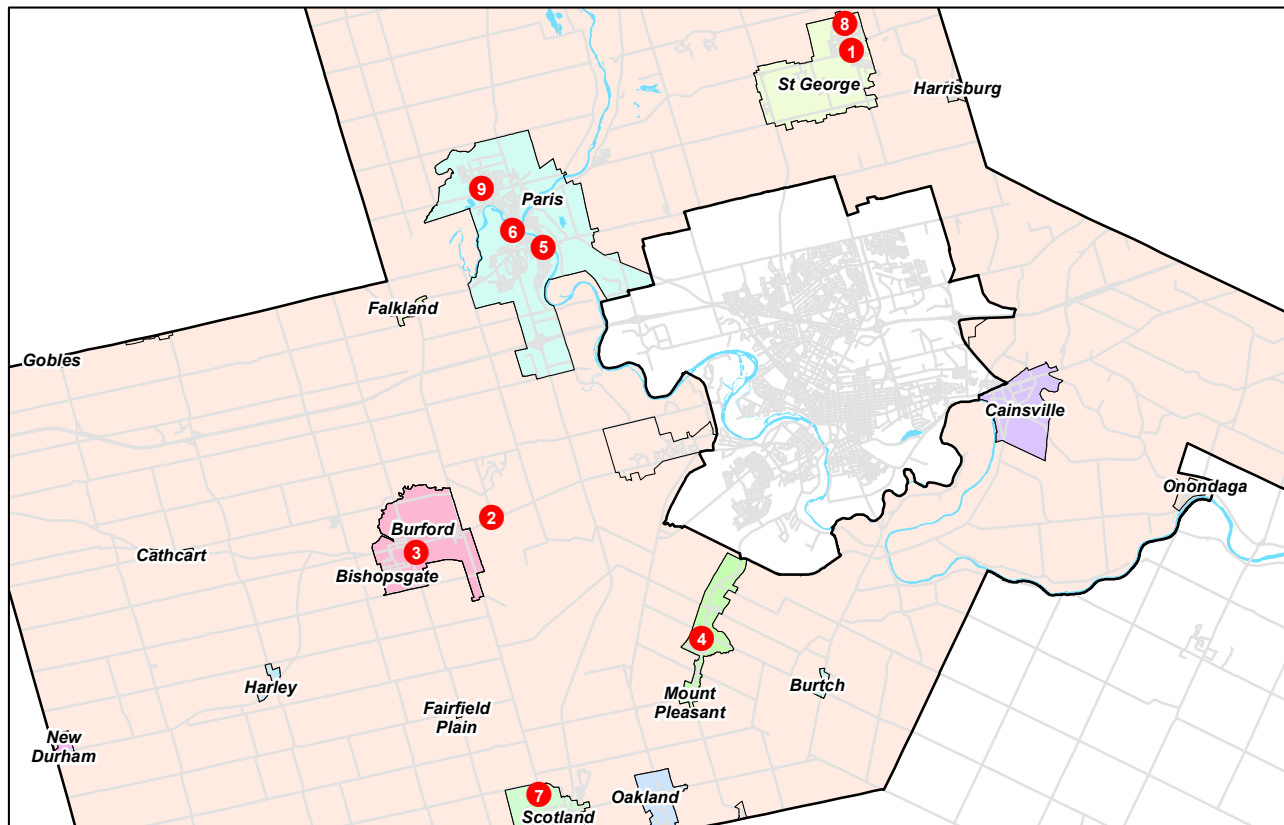
City of Brantford

EarlyON Sites



- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. Riverside Gardens - Stepping Stones Resource Centre | 14. George Resource Centre |
| 2. Madonna Dell Libera Catholic Elementary School | 15. Prince Charles Public School |
| 3. Christ the King Catholic Elementary School | 16. Major Ballachey Public School |
| 4. Eastdale Gardens - New Beginnings Resource Centre | 17. King George Public School |
| 5. Margot's Place | 18. Family Resource Centre |
| 6. Slovak Village | 19. Princess Elizabeth Public School |
| 7. Harmony Square | 20. Tollgate Technological Skills Centre |
| 8. Boys and Girls Club | 21. Bellview Public School |
| 9. EarlyON Brantford-Brant | 22. Northland Gardens Resource Centre |
| 10. Branlyn-Notre Dame School | 23. Brantford Public Library |
| 11. John Noble Home | |
| 12. Woodman Community Centre | |
| 13. St. Gabriel Catholic Elementary School | |

County of Brant EarlyON Sites

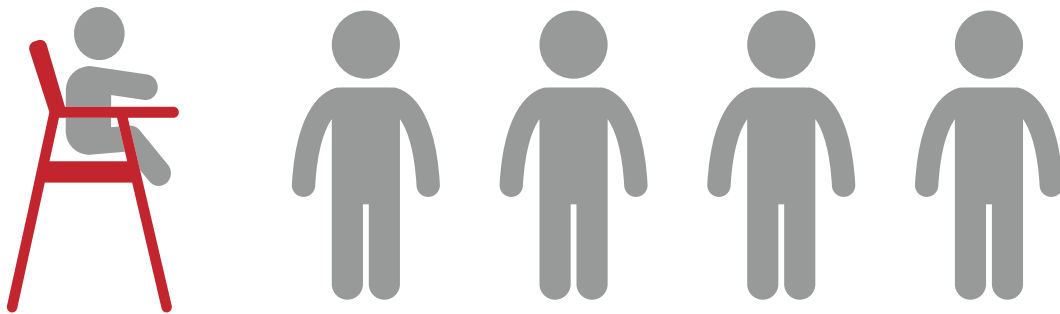


1. Holy Trinity Anglican Church
2. Burford Co-op and Preschool and Child Care
3. Burford Public Library
4. Mount Pleasant Optimist Club
5. St. James Anglican Church
6. Paris Public Library
7. Scotland Community Centre
8. St. George Public Library
9. North Ward Public School

Accessibility Actions

- 1.1** Provide the opportunity for all licensed child care providers, including those without a Purchase of Service (POS) agreement with the City, to be included in the OneList waitlist management system without cost to the child care operator by 2024.
- 1.2** Licensed child cares using OneList will continue to offer child care spaces on first-come-first-served basis.
- 1.3** In partnership with municipal recreation, provide seamless access to Child Care Fee Subsidy and City of Brantford and County of Brant summer camps.
- 1.4** Support growth of the licensed child care system to meet the growing population with licensed child care spaces for 1 in 5 children through to 2032.²⁶

1 licensed child care space for every 5 children



Current Status

2021 1,626 0 to 4 spaces
 2,609 5 to 12 spaces

 4,235 spaces in total

18.94% of children can be accommodated within the existing licensed child care system

10 year Goal

2032 1,921 0 to 4 spaces
 3,081 5 to 12 spaces

 5,003 spaces in total

767 new child care spaces needed to meet the needs of growing child populations while maintaining the 1:5 ratio of children licensed child care spaces

- 1.5** Support school board partners in their applications for capital funding to build child cares at existing schools and all new school builds, with the expectation of 200+ new school based child care spaces by 2025.
 - 1.6** Collaborate with local school boards, agencies, and municipalities regarding the use of authorized recreation programs for after school care, supporting the current County of Brant pilot and recommending it be made ongoing.
 - 1.7** Leverage opportunities for capital funding through all levels of government to support the creation of additional child care spaces.
 - 1.8** Participate in the City of Brantford Capital Plan to build child care(s) attached to municipal community centres utilizing development charges.²⁷
 - 1.9** Support increased number of licensed home child care providers by 18% by 2027.²⁸
 - 1.10** Prioritize and incentivize growth to child care spaces (a) in the 5 identified high growth population areas (b) in under serviced locations (c) offering non-traditional hours such as evenings or weekends (d) for age groups in most need (e) meeting other demand (i.e. French language or indigenous) by 2027.
-

A recent study found that 58% of low-income families with young children work at least some hours outside of 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. on weekdays, which is the range of hours during which most child care centres operate.

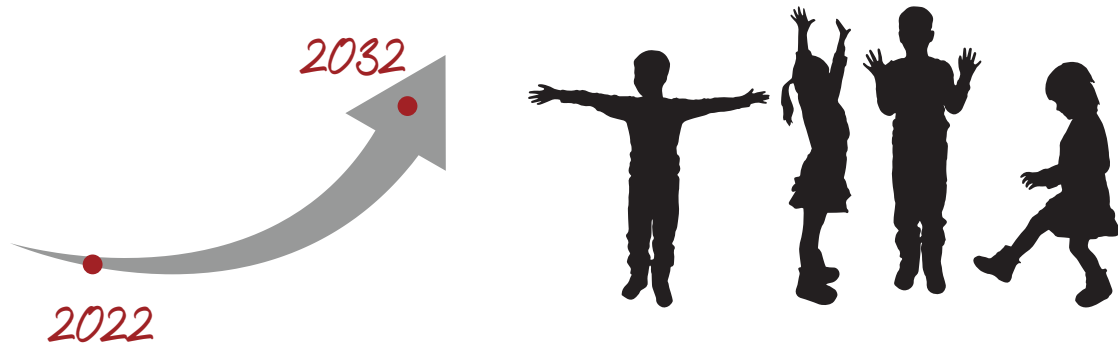
About 15% work the majority of their hours outside this traditional window.

Parents who mostly work non-traditional hours are much less likely to be able to use centre care and more likely to rely on home-based care, or informal care from relatives and nonrelatives.²⁹

Families have access to a range of early years' programs that meet their needs

- 1.11** EarlyON Child and Family Centres to continue to offer flexible programming that meet the needs of families (e.g., time, type, location). 5400 children will be accessing EarlyONs annually by 2032.

5,400 children served annually by EarlyON in 2032



- 1.12** Align EarlyON Child and Family Centres with City of Brantford and County of Brant community centres.

- 1.13** County of Brant to source space for a dedicated Paris EarlyON location.

Families have access to information regarding early learning and child care

- 1.14** Optimize technology to ensure up-to-date information is accessible through the City of Brantford as a “one-stop” website for resources related to child care, child care fee subsidy, child care operator information, and EarlyON Child and Family Centre programming.
- 1.15** Further utilize the “Your Guide”, and social media such as Facebook pages, “EarlyON Brantford-Brant” and “Your-Guide Family Resources for Brantford and Brant” to promote EarlyON programming to families.



Affordability

Attending a high quality licensed child care program comes at a significant financial cost to families. The City of Brantford administers funding to local licensed child care operators to help offset the costs of operating a child care site and reduce daily fees. Financial assistance through the Child Care Fee Subsidy program is available to eligible families to cover part or all of the cost of attending child care.

Average annual cost of child care in the City of Brantford and the County of Brant, 2021

\$11,601.41

Child aged 0 to 4
enrolled in a full day
program

\$3,881.04

Child aged 5 to 12
enrolled in a Before
and After School
Program

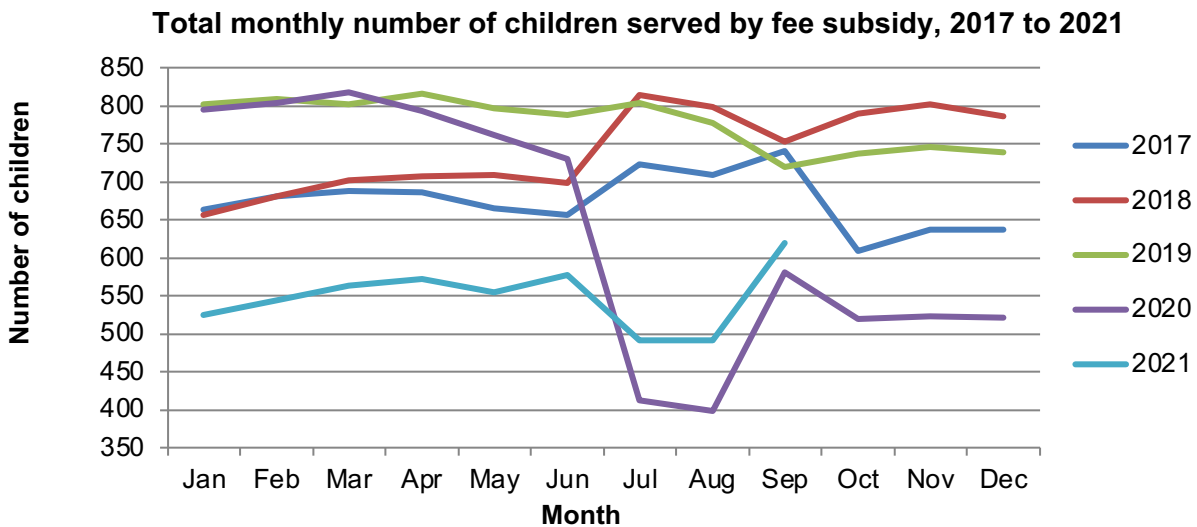
\$1,764.41

Child aged 5 to 12
enrolled in summer
camp for 9 weeks

Locally, lone parent families account for 18% of families, with an average income of \$51,642. Couple families account for 82% with an average income of \$102,459.

Child Care Fee Subsidy

Between 2017 and 2021, the average monthly number of children served by child care fee subsidy was 676. This figure climbed steadily from 2013 to 2019 dropping in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The month with the highest number ever of children served by fee subsidy was March 2020 when 817 children were served in a single month, immediately before the onset of the pandemic. Data from 2021 suggests that the fee subsidy caseload is beginning to climb again as pandemic workplace closures ease, families return to more normal work schedules and enrollment in childcare resumes. From January 2021 to September 2021, the number of children served monthly by fee subsidy increased by 18% or 95 children monthly.



On average in **2019**
778 children were served
 by fee subsidy each month



Affordability Actions

Public funds are used to improve the affordability of licensed child care

- 2.1 Continue to provide timely Child Care Fee Subsidy for eligible families.
- 2.2 Leverage funding from all levels of government to keep fees affordable.



Inclusivity

Special Needs Resourcing

Children with social or special needs must be welcome and included in child care and early learning programs. Inclusion supports healthy child development and positive self-esteem, facilitates the development of positive social skills, and supports the families of children with special needs. Research shows that all children benefit from inclusive child care, as it promotes respect and celebration of diversity.³⁰

Special Needs Resourcing funding promotes and supports the inclusion of children with special needs in licensed child care settings at no additional cost to parents/caregivers. This includes centre-based child care, home-based child care and Before and After school programs.



The City of Brantford contracts with Lansdowne Children's Centre to provide Special Needs Resourcing Services in the City of Brantford and the County of Brant. The funding supports the provision of Resource Consultants, Enhanced Staffing, and special toys and equipment. Resource Consultants and Enhanced Staff assist children and child care staff by:

- Assessing a child's strengths and needs.
- Creating individual program plans.
- Modeling and coaching around classroom routines and daily activities and inclusion.
- Supporting Educators and parents to utilize consistent strategies across environments.
- Supporting individual classrooms to ensure that all children are able to participate in all activities.
- Enhancing the child care provider's skills and strengthening the primary relationship between family and child care program.
- Providing training opportunities to child care providers and parents to support inclusion.

Each year, approximately 350 children are served by Special Needs Resourcing funding.³¹ Resource Coordinators and Enhanced Staff from Lansdowne Children's Centre provide on-site support to child care centres and their staff.

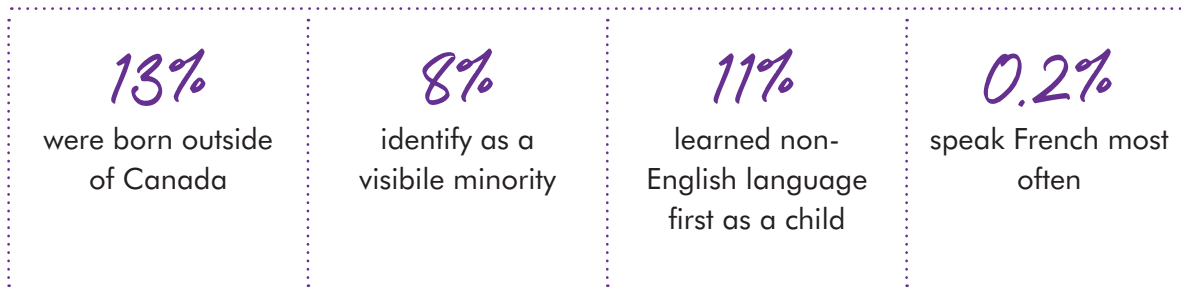


The provision of special needs supports to children in camps was piloted in 2018 in the Every Kid Camps program. While being deemed a success by both parents and camp providers, it was not repeated due to lack of funding.

Diversity

Brantford and the County of Brant are located next to the Six Nation of the Grand River, which has the largest population of all First Nations in Canada. Approximately 12,000 people live on Six Nations territory and 5 percent of people living in Brantford and the County of Brant identify as Indigenous. This is higher than the provincial average of 3%. Early learning and child care programs strive to be places where children see themselves and their culture.

Of the people living in the City of Brantford and the County of Brant...



Indigenous Led Early Learning

The City of Brantford, through the Ministry of Education Indigenous Early Learning funding, contracts with Six Nations of the Grand River to deliver indigenous led EarlyON programs, providing access to culturally relevant early years programming for children and families and fostering opportunities for all children to learn about Indigenous culture and language from an early age.

In the City of Brantford and the County of Brant, Gahwajiya:de' Detenatgwa'ta' - Family Gatherings are EarlyON Child and Family programs based on cultural needs providing parents/caregivers and children with programming that reflect the Haudenosaunee culture and incorporate Mohawk and Cayuga languages. Family Gatherings are respectful and nurturing environments for children, families and caregivers to interact with opportunities to build positive relationships through belonging, well-being, and engagement and incorporating Haudenosaunee culture, languages and awareness. Family Gatherings are located beside Harmony Square and rotate through other EarlyON Child and Family Centres.



Indigenous Led Child Care

In February 2020 the first indigenous led child care centre in our community was opened at 220 Clarence Street. This centre is operated by Six Nations of the Grand River Social Services and is licensed for 10 toddlers and 16 preschoolers. Brantford and County of Brant families who self-identify as indigenous are prioritized for service while the centre serves all Brantford and the County of Brant families as well as indigenous families working in our community.

Clarence Street child care has partnered with Conestoga College to provide an engaging learning opportunity and teaching lab for post-secondary students who are preparing to become registered early childhood professionals. The partnership between Six Nations and Conestoga College is an investment for many areas from early learning and childcare, to enhancing cultural awareness, workforce development and increasing child care spaces all with the best interest and wellbeing for the children as the focus.



Inclusivity Actions

Child care and early years programs are welcoming to and inclusive of all children and families

- 3.1** Work with Lansdowne Children’s Centre to seek and implement additional opportunities to support children with special needs in licensed child care with a focus to reinstating the Every Kids Camps program by 2027.
- 3.2** Make access to funded special needs resources available to all licensed child care, including those without a purchase of service agreement with the City of Brantford by 2025.
- 3.3** Provide the opportunity to licensed child care to embed indigenous culture and teachings in programming, supported by indigenous cultural facilitators.
- 3.4** EarlyON Child and Family Centres to work with the Brantford Immigration Partnership to promote EarlyON supports to populations of diverse culture and EarlyON to increase targeted outreach activities to the immigrant/newcomer population by 2023.
- 3.5** Support the expansion of French language child care, increasing by 50 % by 2024.
- 3.6** Work with the Brantford Immigration Partnership to promote and market the RECE profession as a career option available to the immigrant / newcomer population.
- 3.7** Further embed Indigenous programming into EarlyON programming at all sites.
- 3.8** Consider geographic areas of family risk / vulnerability in any review of EarlyON programming and location.

Quality

A strong child care and early years system is comprised of high-quality programs that provide environments and experiences allowing children to safely explore and learn through play and inquiry. Educators are trained professionals who have experience in early child development and participate in ongoing professional development. High quality programs use materials and teaching styles that are age-appropriate, evidence-based and respectful of children’s cultural background. Moreover, high-quality programs continuously look for ways to improve through quality improvement and capacity building initiatives.

How does Learning Happen?

Ontario’s *How Does Learning Happen?* Pedagogy for the Early Years is the foundation for early learning and child care. The pedagogy identifies the child at the centre of learning and development through meaningful connections such as relationships between children, families, and educators.

There are four foundations to ensure optimal learning for children³²

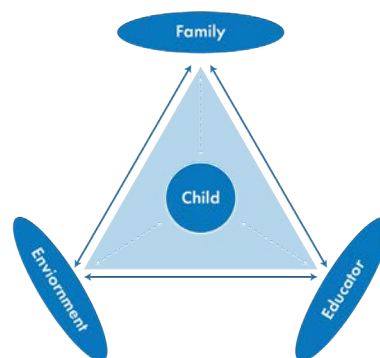
Belonging *Creating a sense of belonging through fostering relationships and connections.*

Wellbeing *Supporting children’s sense of self, health, and wellbeing.*

Engagement *Creating environments and experiences to engage children through play and inquiry.*

Expression *Supporting positive self-expression and communication in all forms.*

Within the pedagogy children are viewed as **competent, capable, curious**, and rich in potential and experience. Moreover, parents and caregivers are co-learners and leaders in influencing positive child, family and community experiences and outcomes.



Local licensed child care providers complete annual self-assessments utilizing quality assurance tools and a local community of practice.

Capacity building funding is provided to licensed child care to support professional learning and development opportunities for child care licensees, supervisors, staff and caregivers, in areas such as governance, finance, operations and service planning.

Staff Engagement Survey

Having a skilled, engaged and professional early childhood workforce is critical to positive life trajectory for children, as well as broader economic and social productivity. Research demonstrates that staff turnover is more frequent in child care centres than in any other teaching setting.

This turnover has been associated with lower-quality service and compromised development of children. Moreover, high turnover puts enormous strain on child care programs that must continually search and retrain new staff.³³

The Best Start Network's Retention and Recruitment Taskforce aims to design and implement collective strategies to recruit and retain Early Childhood Educators (ECEs).

Their four main objectives are to:

- 1 Increase the number of new ECEs working in the profession;
- 2 Retain ECEs working in the profession;
- 3 Attract quality ECEs back to the profession; and
- 4 Increase pride in/value of the profession for ECEs and the public.

In 2021, a Staff Engagement Survey was facilitated to explore factors which are positively and negatively influencing ECE job satisfaction and retention in the Child Care and Early Learning sector. Results are being used to develop a workforce strategy and work plan to increase job satisfaction and reduce staff turnover.

Poor mental health and wellbeing among teachers contributes to high turnover in child care and early education

Quality Actions

Safe and reliable programs are built on positive, responsive relationships, engaging environments and meaningful experiences for children and families, delivered by educated and supported staff

- 4.1** Make access to funded professional learning and communities of practice available to all licensed child care, including those without a purchase of service agreement with the City of Brantford by 2023.
- 4.2** Support the Best Start Network (BSN) focused efforts on the recruitment and retention of Registered Early Childhood Educators (RECEs).
- 4.3** Create mentorship opportunities for local ECE students and graduates.
- 4.4** Continue to provide support to collaborative early learning workshops with the local Boards of Education, the Haldimand Norfolk CMSM and capacity building agencies in Brantford and the Counties of Brant, Haldimand and Norfolk.
- 4.5** Develop and implement a local workforce strategy by 2023.
- 4.6** Investigate opportunities to work with local resources (e.g. WFPBGE) to recruit qualified Early Childhood Educators to Brantford and the County of Brant by 2023.³⁴
- 4.7** Work with the local child care and early learning community to enhance local utilization of the ECE Qualification Upgrade Program.
- 4.8** Work with EarlyON Child and Family Centre providers to develop and implement an Quality Assurance model by 2024.

Accountability

Early years and child care system management must be future-oriented, responsive and accountable. The CMSM is financially responsible in the distribution of funding to local operators.

Local service agreements are enacted with licensed child care operators to support families in receipt of child care fee subsidy. City oversight includes the receipt and analysis of financial and service data and subsequent Ministry reporting.

Operating funding is provided to support the costs of operating licensed child care programs, such as rent, utilities, food, supplies and maintenance. By supporting the sustainability of child care operations, wait times and fees for services are able to be reduced, improving access to high quality affordable early learning and child care services for children and their families.

Child care operators understand that Ministry funding is subject to change, but many rely on the general operating funds provided in order to maintain affordable parent costs. Licensed Home Child Care 'base funding' supports the provision of stable, predictable funding to assist licensed home child care providers with forecasting, planning, and actively recruiting more providers. Base funding is determined by the Ministry of Education based on a per-home formula.

Special purpose funding supports specific costs related to business transformation activities, small water systems testing and maintenance, purchasing or replacing play-based material and equipment and repairs and maintenance to ensure compliance with licensing requirements under the Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014.

Wage enhancement funds are used to close the wage gap between Registered Early Childhood Educators ("RECEs") working in the publicly funded education system and those in the licensed child care sector. Two dollars per hour is provided to each educator earning less than the Ministry determined benchmark of \$28.31 (2021).

Accountability Actions

Systems management is future oriented, responsive and accountable

- 5.1** Align children's services program design, data collection and analysis and grant writing functions to ensure a cohesive approach.
- 5.2** Grow funded child care spaces through support of school built child cares and through a competitive process open to both current and potential operators, prioritizing those applicants whose proposal meet community need such as:
- 5 identified high growth population areas
 - In under serviced locations
 - Offering non-traditional hours such as evenings or weekends
 - For age groups in most need
 - Meeting other demand (i.e. French language or indigenous).
- 5.3** Update general operating fund practices by 2023 to ensure:
- The funding calculation is equitably applied to all eligible child care operators
 - The funding calculation is transparent and easy to understand
 - Funding is pro-rated for sites operating at capacity lower than a pre-determined threshold.
 - The funding calculation includes all age groups
 - Funding is pro-rated dependent upon hours and days of operation.
- 5.4** Optimize the use of technology to ensure operators have access to updated resources by 2023.³⁵
- 5.5** Look for opportunities to target, leverage, and work with other municipal services in the City of Brantford and the County of Brant (i.e. municipal recreation departments, libraries, etc.)
- 5.6** Fully utilize online Fee Subsidy application system allowing for electronic submission of documents by 2023.³⁶
- 5.7** Maximize EarlyON resources through the use of consistent hours and locations.
- 5.8** Provide all Fee Subsidy services online or by telephone.^{37,38}

Service providers are held to a high level of accountability for public funds with reduced administrative barriers

- 5.9 Amend service agreements to allow for an attestation regarding required policies, decreasing submission requirements in 2022.
- 5.10 Implement the use of electronic/online signing and submission of service agreements by 2023.
- 5.11 Investigate the feasibility of multi-year service agreement with an annual budget schedule by 2024.





CHILD CARE AND EARLY YEARS PLAN: REPORTING AND CONCLUSION

Annual reviews of the Child Care and Early Years Plan will include ongoing consultation with stakeholders to monitor the impact of changes made and to ensure that the Plan is adaptive to emerging issues. Accomplishments and updates to the Plan will be provided as part of an annual Children’s Services and Early Years Programs update to Social Services Committee.

It is anticipated that the next 10 years in the Child Care and Early Learning sector will be one of significant change. System recovery from the COVID- 19 pandemic will be a required driver for local economic recovery. Achievement of these key priorities will require a shared commitment from all partners.

The City of Brantford and County of Brant Early Years and Child Care system is built on strong community partnerships that promote comprehensive, coordinated, and integrated programs and services for our families. By engaging in collaborative and sustaining partnerships, we are supported to ensure families have access to quality programs that are responsive to the community’s changing needs.



**FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE
CHILD CARE AND EARLY YEARS 10 YEAR PLAN**

Contact

Aaron Wallace

Director, Community Programs and Social Development

Corporation of the City of Brantford
Community Services and Social Development

58 Dalhousie Street, Brantford, ON N3T 2J2

Email: AWallace@brantford.ca

Website: www.brantford.ca

Contact childcareadmin@brantford.ca for alternate formats of this information.

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