



2022 – 2026
Canada Wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC)
Directed Growth Strategy
United Counties of Leeds and Grenville
Updated August 2025

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ONTARIO’S VISION 4

CWELCC DIRECTED GROWTH STRATEGY PRIORITY POPULATIONS 4

 Provincial CWELCC Child Care Space Allocation 4

 Auspice..... 5

COMMUNITY NEEDS ANALYSIS..... 5

 Regional Approach 5

LICENSED CHILD CARE SYSTEM IN LEEDS AND GRENVILLE 6

 Parent and Community Consultation 7

 Additional Community Data/Information 7

CHILD CARE OPERATOR SELECTION 7

 Expression of Interest 7

PROGRAM GUIDELINES..... 8

 Leeds and Grenville Child Care Early Years Service Plan..... 8

 Program Design and Decor 8

 Program Pedagogy..... 9

 Required Enrollment in CWELCC 9

 Parent Fee Requirements 9

FUNDING 9

 Ongoing Operational Funding 10

 Start-Up Grant Funding: Community Based Location (Centre Based) 10

 Start-Up Grant Funding: Community Based Location (Licensed Home)..... 10

 Infrastructure Funding for Non-Profit Operators 10

 Funding for Spaces in School Based Locations..... 11

STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION: PHASE 1 11

 Priority Communities 11

 Priority Age Groups 11

STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION: PHASE 2..... 12



Priority Communities	12
Priority Age Groups	13
POST CWELCC SPACE IMPLEMENTATION	13
Cumulative Number of CWELCC Spaces by Municipality.....	14
Additional Child Care Expansion Opportunities	15
QUESTIONS/INQUIRIES	15

ONTARIO'S VISION

Ontario's vision for the Canada Wide Early Learning Child Care (CWELCC) system is that more families in Ontario have access to high quality, affordable, flexible, and inclusive early learning and child care no matter where they live.

The province recognizes the critical role that Consolidated Municipal Service System Managers (SSMs) play in gathering and maintaining in-depth knowledge about their community's needs, planning and managing the child care and early years system, identifying and addressing service gaps, and supporting service coordination.

The United Counties of Leeds and Grenville (the Counties) is the designated SSM for the region, and as such, is responsible for identifying the communities that will be prioritized for CWELCC Directed Growth Strategy child care spaces and for approving CWELCC space Operators.

CWELCC DIRECTED GROWTH STRATEGY PRIORITY POPULATIONS

To ensure access to CWELCC Directed Growth Strategy child care spaces for equity deserving families, the province identified the following population criteria that SSMs were required to use to identify the designated communities where spaces will be located:

- Low-Income Families
- Families with Children with Special Needs
- Racial Minority Families
- Francophone Families
- Indigenous Families
- New Immigrant Families

Provincial CWELCC Child Care Space Allocation

While the Province of Ontario had originally allocated 397 new CWELCC Directed Growth Strategy licensed child care spaces to Leeds and Grenville, a provincial space recalibration exercise resulted in Leeds and Grenville receiving an additional 240 CWELCC Directed Growth Strategy spaces in March 2025.

This brings the total number of new CWELCC supported licensed child care spaces the Counties is required to create, to 637 spaces. While the number of spaces to be created has changed, the December 31, 2026 deadline for CWELCC Directed Growth Strategy spaces to be operational, remains and, all of the spaces continue to be subject to all priority population and child to space ratio access criteria, as was originally set-out by the Province when the initiative was announced.

Auspice

The Ministry of Education has established the required ratio of not-for-profit versus for-profit licensed child care spaces for children age 0 to 5 years, that must be created in each SSM region under the CWELCC Directed Growth Strategy. Of the total 637 CWELCC spaces being created across Leeds and Grenville and including all spaces already created under this initiative, at least 366 of these spaces must be operated by not-for-profit Operators.

COMMUNITY NEEDS ANALYSIS

Regional Approach

For the purpose of analysis and in order to plan for the Counties CWELCC Directed Growth Strategy, municipalities across Leeds and Grenville were grouped together into five (5) regions. These regions were chosen based on proximity, population size, population density, demographics, proximity, traffic patterning, employment patterns and geographic size.

Region	Municipality	Communities
1	Rideau Lakes and Westport	Portland, Elgin, Westport, Newboro, Delta, Crosby, Chantry, Lombardy, Chaffey’s Locks, Morton, Rideau Ferry.
2	North Grenville and Merrickville Wolford	Kemptville, Heckston, Bishop Mills, Burritts Rapids, Heckston, Peltons Corners, Oxford Mills, Oxford Station, Merrickville, Jasper, Eastons Corners.
3	Edwardsburgh Cardinal, Prescott and Augusta	Spencerville, Ventnor, Hyndman, Pittston, Shanly, Cardinal, Johnstown, Prescott, North Augusta, Domville, Algonquin, Roebuck, Maitland, Maynard.
4	Brockville and Elizabethtown Kitley	Brockville, Tincap, Lyn, Toledo, New Dublin, Addison, Greenbush, Frankville, Spring Valley.
5	Leeds and the Thousand Islands, Gananoque, Front of Yonge and Athens	Lansdowne, Mallorytown, Charleston, Gananoque, Seeley’s Bay, Lyndhurst, Outlet, Rockport, Athens.

LICENSED CHILD CARE SYSTEM IN LEEDS AND GRENVILLE

Prior to the implementation of the CWELCC Directed Growth Strategy, the licensed child care system in Leeds and Grenville was comprised of a combination of centre-based, school-based, and licensed home child care spaces that were predominately located in the two (2) most populated areas of our region, North Grenville (Region 2) and Brockville (Region 4).

PRE-CWELCC LICENSED CENTRE BASED CHILD CARE SPACES		
Region	Infant, Toddler, Preschool or Family Grouping Spaces	Kindergarten, Primary/Junior or Junior School-Age Spaces
1	76	73
2	400	785
3	109	282
4	294	777
5	86	112
TOTAL	965	2,029

PRE-CWELCC LICENCED HOME CHILD CARE SPACES		
Region	No. of Licensed Child Care Home Providers	Licensed Spaces Infant, Toddler, Preschool, Kindergarten, School Age
1	0	0
*2	*1	*6
3	2	12
4	8	48
5	1	6
TOTAL	12	72

*Note: Additional Licensed Home Child Care Providers exist in this community that do not currently hold a Service Agreement with the United Counties of Leeds and Grenville.

Of the 2,994 centre-based licensed child care spaces existing in the community, sixty-eight percent (68%) of these licensed spaces served solely kindergarten/school-age children.

Parent and Community Consultation

The Counties is committed to ensuring that the child care spaces created under the CWELCC Directed Growth Strategy are responsive to the needs of priority families and communities. As such, a broad parent and community consultation was undertaken in late winter/early spring 2023 to collect information and feedback from these important stakeholders, to inform our Strategy. This consultation included the distribution of a comprehensive parent survey as well as community consultation booths located at all EarlyON Child and Family Centres and six (6) library locations across the Counties. A total of 755 parent surveys/feedback forms, representing all regions in Leeds and Grenville, were received and used to inform the Counties' CWELCC Directed Growth Strategy.

Additional and updated information regarding child care waitlist data and child care needs were collected from parents during the summer of 2025 to inform Phase 2 of the Leeds and Grenville Directed Growth Strategy implementation plan.

Additional Community Data/Information

In addition to community consultations and a parent survey, several data sets including the 2021 Census, Ontario Works caseload and the Early Development Instrument (EDI) as well as information and mapping of major employer locations and infrastructure, were used to inform decisions regarding the Counties 2022-2026 CWELCC Directed Growth Strategy.

Updated Ontario Works caseload information was reviewed in 2025 along with StatsCan population projection data, to further inform Phase 2 of this Strategy.

CHILD CARE OPERATOR SELECTION

Expression of Interest

To ensure a fair and transparent process for awarding contracts to child care Operators (Operator) for the creation and operation of the 637 CWELCC Directed Growth Strategy child care spaces, the Counties implemented a public Expression of Interest process with both non-profit and for-profit Operators eligible to submit. A review of all submissions was/will be undertaken by a team of staff and approvals based on alignment with the Leeds and Grenville Directed Growth Strategy, the Operator's ability to undertake the project within the set timelines and the availability of funding.

PROGRAM GUIDELINES

Leeds and Grenville Child Care Early Years Service Plan

The Leeds and Grenville Child Care and Early Years Service Plan 2024-2028 (Service Plan) outlines the Counties' vision for licensed child care and early years programs and services for children age 0-12 years, and their families, in Leeds and Grenville. The plan is reflective of needs identified by families, children, child care operators and various community stakeholders. While the vision of this Service Plan is system-wide, the outcomes are focused on the well-being of children and families across Leeds and Grenville.

Operators that are approved for Leeds and Grenville CWELCC Directed Growth Strategy spaces and/or programs are expected to ensure ongoing alignment with the foundations and principles of the Leeds and Grenville Service Plan.

For a copy of the plan, please visit the Counties' website or contact our office for a copy via childrenservices@uclg.on.ca.

Program Design and Decor

Leeds and Grenville is rich in local assets including expansive waterways, abundant forestry lands, the Canadian Shield, a growing arts community, robust agricultural operations and manufacturing excellence. As such, programs and spaces created under the CWELCC Directed Growth Strategy should reflect these assets in both design and operation, while also honouring the indigenous people who first lived on the lands that encompass the communities of Leeds and Grenville.

Building design requirements for licensed child care centres are outlined in the Provincial Child Care and Early Years Act (CCEYA) and are subject to the approval of the Ministry of Education Child Care Quality Assurance and Licensing Branch, municipal by-law requirements, Leeds, Grenville and Lanark Public Health requirements as well as current building and fire codes.

Operators approved to operate CWELCC Directed Growth Strategy spaces are expected to ensure that the program reflects the natural assets of our region and aligns to all building requirements.

Program Pedagogy

How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years, serves as the foundational document for the CCEY System in Ontario. This document, produced by the Ontario Government, sets out a view of children, parents, caregivers and educators as competent, capable, curious and rich in potential and experience.

The Counties is committed to ensuring that the licensed child care system in our community is designed, built and operated with an inclusive, diverse, accessible and equitable lens. This means that child care spaces and programming are intentionally created to ensure that children with special needs, as well as children living in underservice communities and vulnerable populations, are welcomed and feel valued as well a sense of belonging in the program.

Operators selected to operate spaces created under the Counties' CWELCC Directed Growth Strategy are expected to align the program practices with this pedagogy and philosophy.

Required Enrollment in CWELCC

Operators selected to operate spaces as outlined in this CWELCC Directed Growth Strategy are required to either currently hold or enter into a Service Agreement with the Counties and are required to maintain their enrollment in CWELCC as per Ministry of Education requirements/legislation.

Parent Fee Requirements

The Government of Ontario introduced legislation in 2022 that sets out the maximum allowable daily fee that may be charged to families for all new licensed child care programs participating in CWELCC. Operators, including new home providers, selected under the Counties CWELCC Directed Growth Strategy are required to abide by this legislation, as well as all rules/requirements associated with enrollment in CWELCC.

FUNDING

While the CWELCC Directed Growth Strategy does not prohibit Operators from opening new licensed infant, toddler, preschool, and/or kindergarten child care spaces in Leeds and Grenville moving forward, only the 637 CWELCC Directed Growth Strategy licensed spaces as approved by the Counties will be supported with ongoing public funding.

Ongoing Operational Funding

Operators selected to operate CWELCC Directed Growth Strategy spaces under this initiative will receive ongoing Cost Based Funding and Workforce Compensation Funding to offset reduced parent fees, address increasing inflationary and operational expenses and support the recruitment and retention of Registered Early Childhood Educators (RECE) staff. The amount of the funding allocation will be calculated based on number of operational spaces, age group, number of annual operating days and the program's annual operating expenses.

Start-Up Grant Funding: Community Based Location (Centre Based)

Funding is available from the Counties to assist both non-profit and for-profit Operators with community-based location start-up expenses associated with the new program/site. This includes funding for, but not limited to:

- Minor capital renovation (i.e. plumbing, painting, minor construction, etc.)
- Play-Based Toys and Equipment, Office Furniture, Appliances, Technology

Start-Up Grant Funding: Community Based Location (Licensed Home)

Funding is available from the Counties to assist existing Licensed Home Child Care Program Operators with start-up expenses associated with opening new provider homes. This includes funding for, but not limited to expenses such as:

- Play-Based Toys and Equipment (For loan to Home Providers)

Where an Operator is new to the operation of licensed home child care, additional start-up funding to assist with the creation of office space for the Home Visitor as well as for storage of toys, equipment, etc. to be loaned to home providers, may be available.

Infrastructure Funding for Non-Profit Operators

In Spring 2025, the Provincial government introduced new Infrastructure funding that is available via the Counties, to support non-profit operators with expenses associated with the creation of CWELCC Directed Growth Strategy spaces in community-based locations including:

- Purchase of land (Non-Profit Only)
- Purchase of building (Non-Profit Only)
- Major capital renovation (Non-Profit Only)

Funding for Spaces in School Based Locations

Due to provincial restrictions, no funding is available from the Counties for renovation or capital expenses associated with the creation of CWELCC Directed Growth Strategy spaces located in school board owned property, including surplus/vacant space within a school facility.

STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION: PHASE 1

Priority Communities

Based on the Provincial CWELCC Directed Growth Strategy criteria, feedback from families, community demographic data and a comprehensive review of child care space gaps pre-CWELCC Directed Growth Strategy expansion, the following ten (10) communities were designated under Phase 1 of this Strategy, as priority areas for the new CWELCC Directed Growth Strategy spaces.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Athens • Brockville • Cardinal • Gananoque 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lansdowne • Lombardy • Portland 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prescott • Seeley’s Bay • Spencerville
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Priority Age Groups

Given the disproportionate number of licensed child care spaces for infant, toddler and preschool children, that existed in our community, in comparison to spaces for kindergarten and school-age children, the Counties’ CWELCC Directed Growth Strategy - Phase 1, focused on increasing the number of net new infant, toddler, preschool and family age grouping spaces in the system

As of June 2025, the Counties had successfully opened 222 new CWELCC Directed Growth Strategy child care spaces. In addition to these child care spaces, an additional 206 CWELCC child care spaces have received Counties’ approval for a 2025 or 2026 opening, and are in various stages of design, development and construction.

STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION: PHASE 2

As of June 2025, the Counties had successfully opened 222 new CWELCC Directed Growth Strategy child care spaces. In addition to these child care spaces, an additional 206 CWELCC Directed Growth Strategy child care spaces have received Counties’ approval for a 2025 or 2026 opening, and are in various stages of design, development and construction.

Recognizing that 428 of the total 637 CWELCC Directed Growth Strategy child care spaces have been created and/or approved to date, a total of 209 spaces remain to be approved by December 31, 2026 under Phase 2 of this Strategy, to achieve the provincial Leeds and Grenville target of creating 637 new CWELCC Directed Growth Strategy child care spaces.

Priority Communities

Of these 209 spaces, 154 spaces are to be prioritized for regions 1, 3 and 5 to achieve the prescribed 1:3 child-to-child care space ratio as set out by the Government of Ontario.

To ensure full implementation of all 637 child care spaces, the remaining 55 spaces of the 209, are to be prioritized for Region 2 - North Grenville and Merrickville-Wolford. While Region 2 is not an area within Leeds and Grenville that hosts a significant number of priority population, as defined by the Government of Ontario, due to the geographic location of the region within Leeds and Grenville, it is expected that equity deserving families living in and around periphery of Region 2, will have access to the CWELCC Directed Growth Strategy spaces created in this region.

Region	Municipality	No. of Spaces Still Needed to Reach 1:3 Ratio	Child to Space Ratio Achievement
1	Rideau Lakes, Westport	63	1:3
2	North Grenville, Merrickville-Wolford	55	1:2
3	Prescott, Edwardsburgh-Cardinal, Augusta	52	1:3
4	Brockville, Elizabethtown-Kitley	0	1:3
5	Gananoque, Front of Yonge, Leeds and Thousand Islands, Athens	39	1:3
Total New CWELCC Spaces Created		209	

While every effort will be made to ensure the creation of CWELCC Directed Growth Strategy child care spaces as outlined, the Counties reserves the right at any time to reassign CWELCC Directed Growth Strategy child care spaces to another community.

In the event that it is determined that any of the approved 637 CWELCC Directed Growth Strategy spaces will not be operational by the deadline of December 31, 2026, these spaces will be reassigned for implementation in either Region 2 - North Grenville, Merrickville-Wolford for the before-mentioned rationale and/or to Region 4 - Brockville, Elizabethtown-Kitley, as Region 4 remains the community with most significant concentration of equity deserving families in Leeds and Grenville, as well as a key employment center for many parents in the Leeds and Grenville community.

Priority Age Groups

While continued expansion of infant, toddler and preschool spaces remains a priority, finite construction timelines and limited start-up/capital funding will impact the number of younger age group spaces that can reasonably be created by the Provincial deadline; therefore, requests for CWELCC kindergarten spaces will be considered for approval under Phase 2 implementation.

POST CWELCC SPACE IMPLEMENTATION

Assuming full implementation of spaces by December 31, 2026, as articulated in this Strategy, the resulting dispersion of the 637 CWELCC Directed Growth Strategy child care spaces created across the five (5) regions will be as follows:

Region	Municipality	Total No. of New CWELCC Directed Growth Strategy Spaces Created
1	Rideau Lakes, Westport	86
2	North Grenville, Merrickville-Wolford	133
3	Prescott, Edwardsburgh-Cardinal, Augusta	123
4	Brockville, Elizabethtown-Kitley	141
5	Gananoque, Front of Yonge, Leeds and Thousand Islands, Athens	154
Total New CWELCC Spaces Created		637

Cumulative Number of CWELCC Spaces by Municipality

Considering both Phase 1 and Phase 2 of this CWELCC Directed Growth Strategy as well as all pre-existing CWELCC spaces, a total of 1,602 CWELCC centre-based licensed child care spaces along with several new home child care providers offering CWELCC Directed Growth Strategy spaces, will exist by the end of 2026 across the five (5) regions of our community.

NO. OF CWELCC CENTRE-BASED CHILD CARE SPACES POST CWELCC DIRECTED GROWTH STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION		
Region	Municipality	No. of CWELCC Spaces in the Community Infant, Toddler, Preschool, Kindergarten
1	Rideau Lakes, Westport	162
2	North Grenville, Merrickville-Wolford	533
3	Prescott, Edwardsburgh-Cardinal, Augusta	232
4	Brockville, Elizabethtown-Kitley	435
5	Gananoque, Front of Yonge, Leeds and Thousand Islands, Athens	240
Total CWELCC Spaces in the Region		1,602

NO. OF LICENSED HOME CHILD CARE SPACES POST CWELCC DIRECTED GROWTH STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION			
Region	Municipality	No. of Licensed Child Care Home Providers	No. of Licensed Spaces Infant, Toddler, Preschool, Kindergarten and School Age
1	Rideau Lakes, Westport	0	0
*2	North Grenville, Merrickville-Wolford	*1	*6
3	Prescott, Edwardsburgh-Cardinal, Augusta	3	18
4	Brockville, Elizabethtown-Kitley	8	48
5	Gananoque, Front of Yonge, Leeds and Thousand Islands, Athens	2	12
TOTAL		14	84

*Note: Additional Licensed Home Child Care Providers exist in this community that do not hold a Service Agreement with the United Counties of Leeds and Grenville and are not reflected in the number of spaces identified in the community, in this report.

Additional Child Care Expansion Opportunities

The Counties acknowledges that the 2022-2026 CWELCC Directed Growth Strategy does not fully address all licensed child care needs of families in our community, including high growth communities where priority populations are not significantly represented. As such, the Counties remains committed to seeking every opportunity to increase the net new number of high-quality affordable licensed child care spaces operating across our region, including opportunities for expansion outside of the CWELCC Directed Growth Strategy initiative.

Based on Expression of Interest submissions to date, from Operators from across the region, in the event that additional CWELCC Directed Growth Strategy spaces and start-up funding were to become available, the Counties remains confident in its ability to open more spaces in 2027 and beyond.

QUESTIONS/INQUIRIES

For more information on the Counties 2022-2026 CWELCC Directed Growth Strategy, please contact:

Children's Service Department
Community and Social Services Department
United Counties of Leeds and Grenville
childrensservices@uclg.on.ca