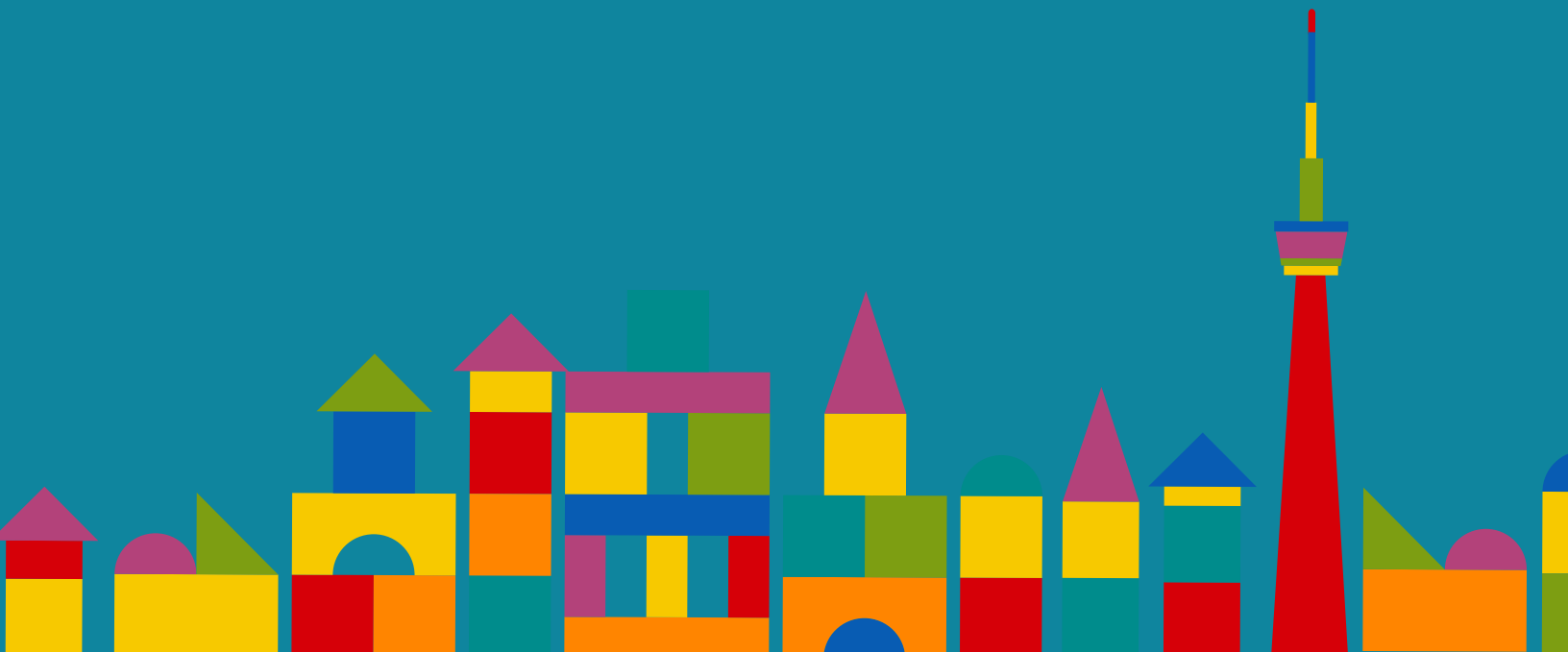


CHAIR'S REPORT

# CWELCC IMPLEMENTATION ROUNDTABLE

MARCH 27, 2024





Maintaining and growing our child care system in Toronto is a key priority, as outlined in our Licensed Child Care Growth Strategy. Since the introduction of the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement, Toronto Children's Services has been working with operators to implement the program despite the challenges created by the program's guidelines.

During the implementation of the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement, the childcare sector has faced a number of challenges. Operators have faced uncertainty on both operating and capital funding, while disparities in workers' wages have caused recruitment and retention challenges. Sector expansion is stalled due to inadequate investment, and a lack of clarity on the provincial funding formula has made it hard to plan for the future. It is clear that much more work is needed in order for our child care system to be accessible and inclusive for everyone.

The City of Toronto's Economy and Community Development Committee called for a roundtable of Toronto's child care sector to be convened to discuss these challenges, identify opportunities, and talk about how we can move forward together to build the best possible future for child care in Toronto. In this summary, you'll see the key themes identified through the roundtable's discussions and the collective wisdom of those who are on the frontlines.

Affordable and accessible child care helps us build a more fair city and grows our economy. The Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care agreement also needs to be implemented in a way that is fair, sustainable, and promotes growth. This isn't feasible without additional support from the provincial and federal governments.

I extend my sincere thanks to all those who joined us for the roundtable, and to everyone else who has reached out to speak up for child care in Toronto.

Alejandra Bravo  
Chair, Economic & Community Development Committee  
City Councillor, Ward 9 (Davenport)

# BACKGROUND

Ontario's 2024 Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care Guidelines For Consolidated Municipal Service Managers and District Social Services Administration Boards were released in November 2023, and later updated in March 2024.

In December 2023, the Economic and Community Development Committee received the report "Growth and Expansion in Toronto's Licensed Child Care Sector: Update", which included updates on the implementation of Toronto's Licensed Child Care Growth Strategy and progress of Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care expansion.

During the consideration of that report, City Council requested the General Manager, Children's Services, in consultation with the Chair, Economic and Community Development Committee, to convene a roundtable meeting of City and School Board staff, families, educators, supervisors, unions, experts, and other community stakeholders for the purpose of enhancing information sharing and community advocacy in support of successful implementation of the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care program in Toronto.

On March 27, 2024, Toronto Children's Services, Councillor Alejandra Bravo and child care sector partners from across Toronto held a roundtable meeting at Toronto City Hall to discuss the implementation of the Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care agreement in Toronto.





# SUMMARY

Toronto Children's Services delivered three presentations to roundtable participants, sharing information and providing background for the discussions. Presentations included Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care: Roles & Responsibilities, Changing Sector Landscape, and Successful Implementation of CWELCC: Emerging Challenges.

Several questions were discussed by participants throughout the roundtable meeting. Here's a summary of key themes which emerged during those discussions:

## **Is there anything about the roles of each level of government that is unclear, challenging, or an opportunity for the sector?**

*Quotation marks denote a direct quote from a roundtable participant*

### **There are fundamental challenges with the Canada – Ontario Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement**

- “Federal [...] agreement lacks a strong foundation. Not rooted in the reality facing the sector.”
- The conditions for CWELCC's success were not created before implementation, with challenges related to workforce, service delivery, and system capacity still outstanding
- The implementation strategy has focused heavily on affordability, but also needs to consider long-term sustainability of the sector.
- “Federal and municipal roles seem clear [in implementation], but the province doesn't understand its role, and is passing the buck”

### **Clarity on program implementation and funding formula is needed**

- Operating funding needs to be improved to ensure long-term financial viability of child care centres—many are currently facing closure or leaving the CWELCC agreement right now
- A lack of clarity and information is having an impact on operators' ability to plan and run programs effectively
- Communication from the province has been unclear and not transparent



- A lack of clear policy from the province has created inconsistencies in implementation across the province, and posed challenges for cross-jurisdictional agencies
- The federal government has not been holding the provincial government accountable to the overarching goals of the program
- “Funding formula is necessary for planning and providing services. We can’t talk of expansion before we can properly fund the current system”

### **Public expansion supports equity and is wanted by community**

- “Public child care is the provider most serving marginalized families.”
- Provincial guidelines currently restrict Toronto Children’s Services from expanding directly operated programs

### **To maintain and expand child care in Toronto, capital funding is urgently needed**

- Toronto continues to make progress on growth targets, but there remains inadequate funding from higher levels of government for expansion
- Almost 2000 previously-approved new spaces in TDSB and TCDSB schools have been delayed because of a lack of sustainable funding from the provincial government
- “Ontario is not providing full funding for capital builds, causing delays and cancellations and resulting in inequitable access to child care in the city”

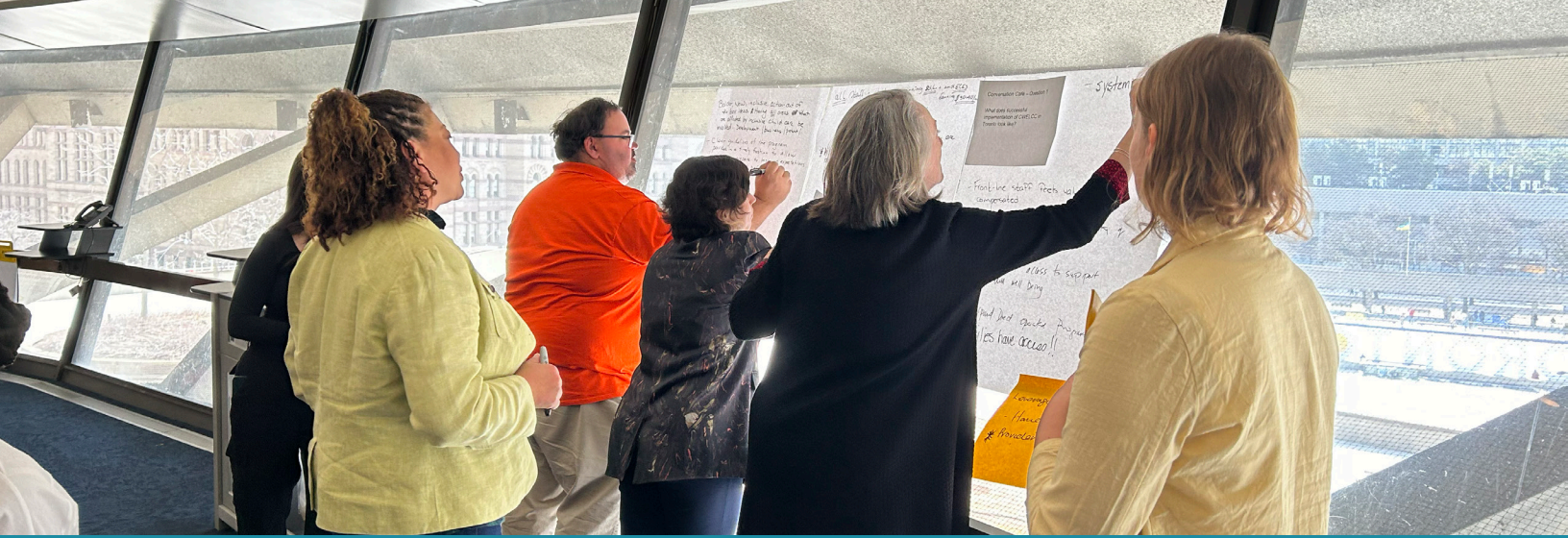
### **To maintain and expand child care in Toronto, workforce and employment equity issues need to be resolved**

- Despite centres all being in the same public funding system (CWELCC), there is wage disparity between workers. There has been no funding for the wages of workers at not-for-profit and private child care centres to reach parity with public workers.
- Incentivizing people to enter the sector as workers is needed–this can be done through training, wages, and other supports for new child care workers.
- The federal government could take an enhanced role in improving wages.

### **Access and inclusion should be better prioritized**

- More intention should be placed on understanding how families feel and their actual situations.
- Integration with other systems, especially for children living in care, refugee children, children living with a disability, and many others, would help increase access and help families.
- More clarity is needed on the program’s support for underserved children–much of the responsibility to provide an equitable experience is currently being met by individual operators and workers.





## Given provincial funding changes and cuts, what are your service delivery priorities?

*Quotation marks denote a direct quote from a roundtable participant*

- Strengthen the workforce with adequate wages, stronger recognition, improved professional development opportunities, and improved retention
- Ensure workers are well prepared for arising challenges and to advance inclusion
- Training and funds are needed to fulfil the goals in the provincial Access and Inclusion Framework
- We must build infrastructure to continue expanding child care in Toronto—the current capacity doesn't meet the need
- The City should do more to advocate for changes to provincial guidelines and program design
- Attract new talent to the sector, in partnership with colleges and universities, given the recent drop in post-secondary application to Early Childhood Educator programs
- Fixing the Provincial Wage Enhancement, which currently targets the lowest-paying centres, to ensure that the incentivization of better working conditions is seen in all CWELCC centres
- An equitable base funding approach is needed to be able to support children with disabilities and extra support needs
- Toronto should be creative with expansion opportunities, including inside of housing developments on City land and during the land-use planning process
- Access to fee subsidies should be expanded, including for children whose parents do not have status



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to all of the organizations, operators, and individuals who participated in the CWELCC Implementation Roundtable:

Association of Early Childhood Educators Ontario	Native Child and Family Services Toronto
Atkinson Centre	Network Childcare
Bayview Gardens Day Care Centre	Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care
Black Moms Connection	Ontario Institute for Studies in Education
Building Blocks to Child Care	PLASP Child Care Services
CUPE Local 2484	Plains Road Child Care
CUPE Local 4400	South Asian Women's and Immigrant's Services
CUPE Local 79	The 519
Child Care Resource and Research Unit	The Candy Factory Day Care
Child Development Institute	Toronto Advocates for Child Care
Children's Circle of St. Barnabas	Toronto Catholic District School Board
College Boreal	Toronto Community for Better Child Care
Collège La Cité	Toronto District School Board
Conseil scolaire Viamonde	Toronto Metropolitan University
Conseil scolaire catholique MonAvenir	Toronto Pflag
Early Childhood Development Initiative	Tree Top Children's Centre
FCJ Refugee Centre	Tropicana Community Services
Family Day Innovation Centre	Woodgreen Community Services
George Brown College	YMCA Toronto
Home Child Care Association of Ontario	YWCA Toronto
Knowing our Numbers	
La Petite Ecole	
Learning Enrichment Foundation	
Les Etoiles Brillante	
Macaulay Centres for Children	
N.Y.A.D.	

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