

Toronto's Early Years and Child Care Service Plan 2025-2030

Economic and Community Development Committee

Toronto Children's Services

July 9, 2025



Presentation Purpose

- Provide an overview of Toronto's Early Years and Child Care Service Plan
- Review the policy context in which the Service Plan was developed
- Outline next steps in the implementation of the Service Plan



What is a Service Plan?

1

A *strategic document* that outlines sector priorities for the next five years.

2

A *way to communicate* TCS' values, role, and responsibilities to a variety of audiences.

3

Guided by *provincial legislation and regulation* (the Child Care and Early Years Act) but intended to *support local priorities*.

Policy Context: Introduction of CWELCC

The Ontario-CWELCC agreement was signed between the Government of Canada and the Province of Ontario in March 2022.

Objectives include:

- Lowering child care fees to \$10 a day on average by March 2026
- Increasing access to high-quality licensed child care spaces for children aged 0-5
- Addressing barriers to inclusive and flexible child care
- Better valuing the early childhood workforce



The 5 Pillars of Ontario-CWELCC Agreement

Roles of Government in CWELCC



In March 2022, the **Federal government** signed the CWELCC Agreement with the Province. CWELCC aims to lower child care fees, improve wages, and increase access to high quality child care programs by 2026.



The **Province** has overarching responsibility for child care and oversees the CWELCC system in Ontario. In line with its CWELCC Action Plan, the Province sets direction on the targets for child care expansion, auspice ratio, and funding guidelines.



Service System Managers are central to the planning, funding, administration, and operation of CWELCC and early years services locally, following guidelines from the Province.



*Financial
accountability
and reporting*



Guiding Principles

Our core values when developing and implementing the Service Plan

Values	Principles
Truth, Reconciliation & Justice:	Respect Indigenous communities' inherent right to self-determination and advance commitments to truth, reconciliation, and justice.
Inclusive:	Build safe and welcoming spaces for families, with attention to supporting Indigenous, Black, and equity-denied communities.
Family-centered:	Prioritize positive child and family outcomes.
Equitable:	Instill equity in the planning and delivery of all programs and services.
Responsible:	Act as responsible, accountable, and transparent stewards of public funds and resources.
Evidence-informed:	Embed evidence-informed and data-driven approaches to decision-making, monitoring, and evaluation.
Collaborative:	Foster partnerships and collaboration across the continuum of child care and early years services, working with cross-sectoral partners to advance shared outcomes.
Innovative	Strive for excellence in the early years and child care sector and respond to emerging needs.

Service Plan Development: Family, Operator, and Workforce Engagement

2,878 parents and caregivers with children under 12

Survey on their experiences with child care and EarlyON



200 child care supervisors

Workshops on child care access



594 child care operators

Survey on waitlists and workforce challenges

104 parents and caregivers

9 focus groups on the needs, barriers, and opportunities experienced by families with diverse backgrounds when accessing child care and early years services



220 early years and child care program staff

Survey on priorities for the sector



What We Learned: Key Challenges in Toronto's ELCC sector



Services for Indigenous children and families must be based in self-determination



Many families need financial support with child care costs



Precarious work and a changing labour market necessitate flexible service hours



Families have varying preferences, especially for culturally relevant services



Funding uncertainty creates unpredictability for operators



Recruitment, retention, and burn-out are challenges for the workforce



Quality of inclusion for children with extra support needs and disabilities requires improvement



CWELCC has led to instability in the school-age system

5-year Strategic Priorities

The following represent priorities for the sector over the next five years:

1. Advance self-determination with Indigenous organizations and families in the early years and child care sector.
2. Expand the early learning and child care system to meet the needs of children and their families.
3. Remove barriers to accessing child care and early years services.
4. Support a thriving early years and child care workforce.
5. Champion a high-quality, well-managed early learning and child care system.
6. Enhance inclusion in the child care and early years sector for children, families, and staff.
7. Connect children and their families with essential support services.

Monitoring Progress and Evaluation

The Service Plan introduces select indicators to track systems-level trends related to the strategic priorities and their outcomes.



Indicators monitor sector trends to support accountability, data-informed decision making, and early recognition and resolution of emerging issues.



Example indicators include:

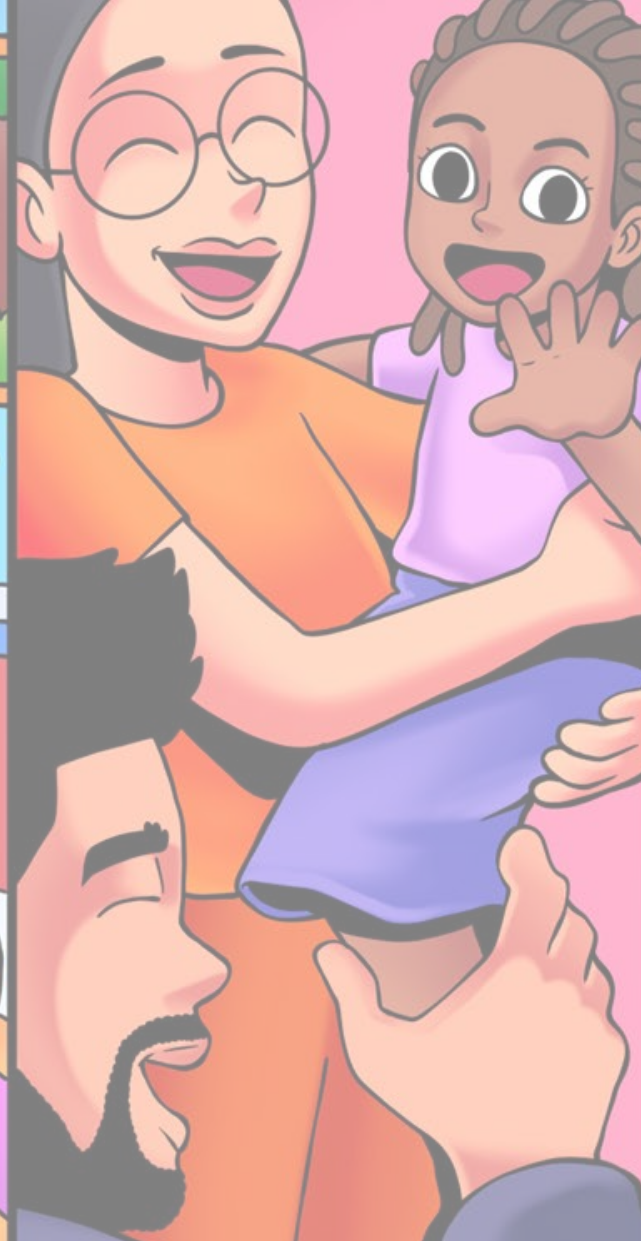
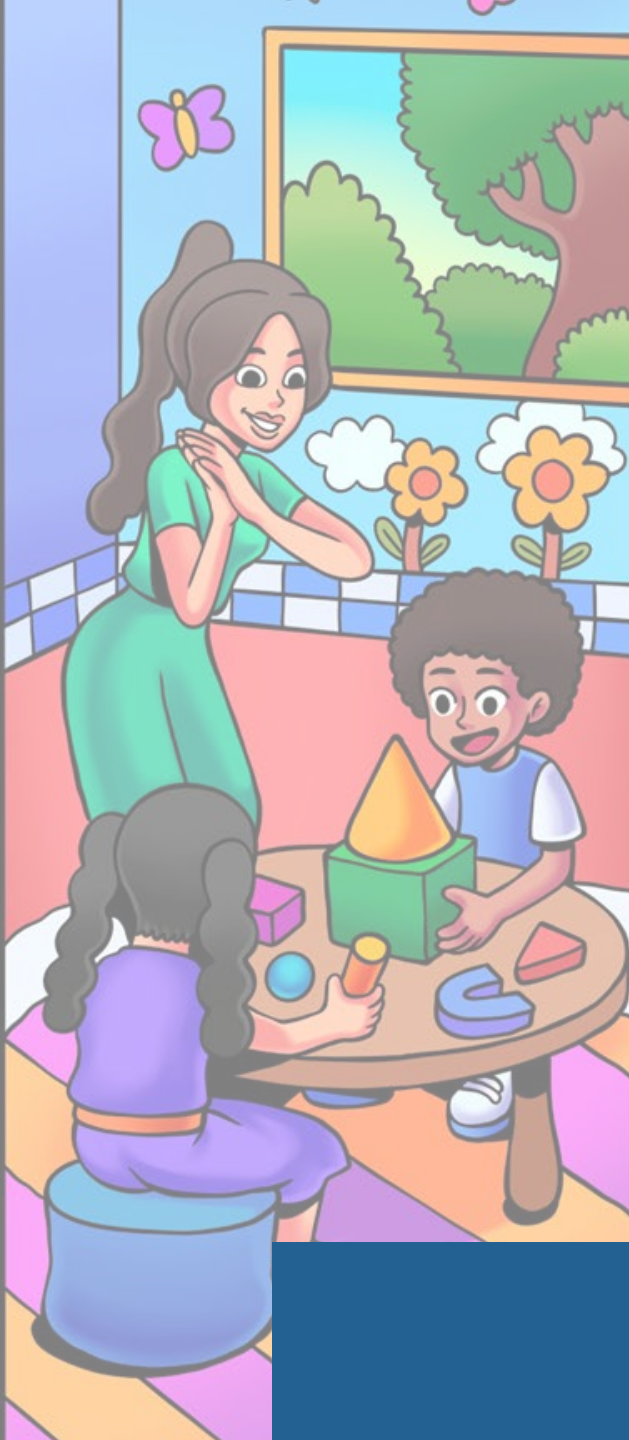
- Number of child care spaces (operating capacity) across the system
- Access rate (i.e., number of spaces compared to total child population)
- Number of children with fee subsidy



Children's Services will work with Indigenous partners to co-create indicators that reflect the priorities and outcomes of Indigenous children, families, and service providers in Toronto. This will be included in the Indigenous-led Service Plan.

Implementation and Next Steps

- Meet with Indigenous partners to co-develop Indigenous-led Service Plan
- Host roundtable in Fall 2025 with sector partners
- Work with the sector to develop implementation plan(s)
- Deliver Fall staff report to Council:
 - CWELCC growth and expansion
 - Fee subsidy expansion
 - Addressing system consistency and quality



Thank you