

To:	Warden Milne and Members of Community Services Committee
Committee Date:	27 February 2023
Subject / Report No:	CSR-CS-05-23
Title:	CWELCC Notional Space Targets for Expansion Plan
Prepared by:	Tara Cockerill, Manager Early Learning & Child Care
Reviewed by:	Anne Marie Shaw, Director of Community Services
Lower Tier(s) Affected:	County-wide
Status:	Recommendation adopted by Committee as presented per Resolution CS03-23; Endorsed by County Council March 23, 2023, per Resolution CC24-23.

Recommendation

1. That report **CSR-CS-05-23, regarding the CWELCC Notional Space Targets for Expansion Plan, be received; and**
2. That **Grey County Council support the County's Expansion Plan for targeted notional space allocation from the Ministry of Education.**

Executive Summary

The Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care System supports families in accessing affordable, quality, and inclusive licensed child care across the province. As part of increasing access to quality licensed child care, the province has implemented a targeted expansion plan. To support this development, the ministry developed an access and inclusion framework for consultation. Each Consolidated Municipal Service Manager (CMSM) was given an allocation of targeted spaces based on available data and incorporated existing capacity, demographics, and socio-economic indicators.

In Grey County, a total of 504 spaces have been allocated for the targeted expansion plan from 2022 to 2026. This report outlines the proposed expansion plan that would increase the number of licensed spaces for Infants, Toddlers and Preschoolers to 633 by 2026.

Background and Discussion

There are currently three types of child care defined within Ontario:

- Licensed Child Care Centres
- Licensed Home Child Care
- Unlicensed Child Care

Licensed child care centres ensure staff members meet the qualification requirements set out under the *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014*. Centres must meet certain standards of care and have activities designed for children at different stages of development

The Ministry of Education inspects child care centres to ensure they meet specific provincial health, safety, and developmental standards.

Licensed Home Child Care

The Ministry of Education does not license individual home child care providers. They are contracted by home child care agencies licensed by the ministry. Currently, Grey County directly operates the only licensed home child care agency in the county.

An individual home child care provider that is overseen by a licensed agency can care for up to six children under the age of 13, which must include any of their own children under the age of four.

All licensed child care centres, home child care agencies, and child care providers that are overseen by a licensed home child care agency have a decal on display that says that they are licensed. Private residences that provide in-home services will not have a decal.

Unlicensed Child Care Providers

Unlicensed child care providers are not inspected by the Ministry of Education and are not required to meet most provincial standards. However, the Ministry of Education does investigate complaints from the public about child care providers who may be operating illegally.

Under the *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014*, unlicensed child care providers are not allowed to care for more than five children, which includes:

- the provider's own children under the age of four
- no more than three children under the age of two

This limit on the number of children applies regardless of how many adults are present at the home.

Unlicensed providers may not operate at multiple premises.

Expansion Plan

As part of increasing access to quality licensed child care, the province has implemented a targeted expansion plan. To support this development, the ministry developed an access and inclusion framework for consultation. Each Consolidated Municipal Service Manager (CMSM) was given an allocation of targeted spaces based on available data and incorporated existing capacity, demographics, and socio-economic indicators.

In Grey County, a total of 504 spaces have been allocated for the targeted expansion plan from 2022 to 2026.

In identifying priority areas for space creation, the Early Learning and Child Care division looked at areas of:

- Low-income families
- Vulnerable communities
- Diverse communities
- Children with special needs
- Francophone families
- Indigenous families
- Families needing flexible models of care

Additionally, staff looked at planned development and birth rate data across the county.

Municipality	Current 0 - 4 population (2021 Census Data)	Current Licensed Spaces (Infant, Toddler, Preschool)
Grey County HCC	-	300
Owen Sound	965	372
Southgate	745	61
West Grey	680	39
Grey Highlands	655	94
Meaford	450	96
Georgian Bluffs	440	0
Chatsworth	420	0
Hanover	350	88
Town of Blue Mountains	230	79

Comparing the 2021 population census data to the currently licensed spaces for the 0-4 age group, Grey County has approximately 4.3 children per licensed space. It is understood that families may choose to use care outside of their residential area.

It should be noted that licensed home child care operates throughout Grey County and supports both rural and more urban areas. These spaces are captured as a total in the chart above rather than by municipality.

In reviewing planned developments in the county, the Town of Blue Mountains, Southgate, and Grey Highlands will see significant growth in the coming years, with additional development throughout the county.

Approved School Based Capital Projects

Prior to the implementation of the CWELCC system, the Ministry of Education had allocated the following spaces to school-based spaces that are included in the designated allocation:

Municipality	Number of Net New Spaces (Infant, Toddler & Preschool)	Projected Opening Date
West Grey	9	2022 (open)
Grey Highlands	3	2025
Southgate	9	2023
Owen Sound	78	2026
Owen Sound	78	2026
Owen Sound	10	2023

Total Net School Based Spaces: 187

Proposed Community Based Projects

Staff consulted with individual operators currently enrolled in the CWELCC system to determine interest and capacity to expand existing programs.

Municipality	Number of Net New Spaces (Infant, Toddler & Preschool)	Projected Opening Date
West Grey	31	2023
Throughout Grey County	300 Home Child Care Spaces (50 homes)	Starting with licensing in 2023
Town of Blue Mountains	26	2026
Grey Highlands	24	2025
Southgate	39	2026
Grey Highlands	26	2026

Total Proposed Community Based Spaces: 446

Grey County’s Proposed Expansion Plan

Municipality	Current Licensed Spaces (Infant, Toddler, Preschool)	Proposed Licensed Spaces (Infant, Toddler, Preschool)	Proposed Total Spaces by 2026
Grey County HCC	300	0	300
New HCC Agency	-	300	300
Owen Sound	372	166	538
Southgate	61	48	109

West Grey	39	9	48
Grey Highlands	94	53	147
Meaford	96	0	96
Georgian Bluffs	0	0	0
Chatsworth	0	0	0
Hanover	88	31	119
Town of Blue Mountains	79	26	105

These proposed spaces would increase the number of licensed spaces for Infants, Toddlers, and Preschoolers to 602 by 2026, bringing the number of children 0 – 4 years per licensed space to 2.8.

Access Equity

The rural nature of Grey County creates a challenge in equitable space distribution to support all families. It is hoped the creation of additional licensed home child care spaces will support access to quality care for families in areas without existing licensed centre based care, as well as supporting those who need flexible and/or extended hours of care.

The distribution of both school-based and community spaces will support families with various socio-economic variables.

Special Needs Resourcing

Special Needs Resourcing agencies identified that areas with fewer options for licensed child care are conversely receiving a lower amount out support for children with identified needs. As the expansion plan evolves, it is anticipated the demand for Special Needs Resourcing Supports will increase.

As the expansion plan proceeds, staff will continue to consult with Special Needs Resource agencies to determine areas of need to support the increase of children in licensed child care and support operator’s inclusion practices.

Child Care Fee Subsidy

The CWELCC system will bring the average daily fee to \$12.00/day by 2025. It is recognized that this may still present a barrier to access for some low income families and child care fee subsidy will be available for those who qualify.

Challenges

The CWELCC participating operators who have indicated they are interested in expansion have all flagged the ongoing staffing constraints as a barrier to operating at licensed capacity.

Rising costs of operation, including rent, utilities, supplies (including rising food costs) are a concern of operators and operating funding from the Ministry of Education will need to be confirmed before operators will proceed with community based expansion.

Operators have recognized the benefits to families to operating licensed child care programs in school based locations. There is interest from existing operators to expand school based

licensed child care if there are future school based capital builds in Dundalk and Hanover. At the time of this report there has been no announcement regarding future school based expansion.

Ontario's Action Plan has several commitments that impact the workforce including a provincial wage floor for RECEs and an annual Increase for RECEs with a cap of \$25.00/hour. Grey County continues to work with partners to develop innovative ways to recruit and retain Early Childhood Educators, including ongoing advocacy to EDU for higher wages, working with colleges (insert micro credentials if it comes through)?

Opportunities

Start up Grants

Start-up grants of up to \$90.00/sq foot up to \$350,000.00 per operator may be available to support initial costs required to expand or create spaces (such as equipment and leasehold improvements). This funding cannot be used for capital costs. Should Grey County proceed with an expansion plan above the EDU set target, there would be a shortfall in start up grant funding.

Note: Staff are waiting for clarification from EDU as to how start-up grant funding would be allocated to Home Child Care Agencies.

As this is a targeted provincial expansion plan, new operators, or existing operators who expand within their existing license outside would not be eligible for additional funding from the province. Funding availability from the CMSM in the form of other operating grants would be dependent on approved budget allocations and may not be available.

Legal and Legislated Requirements

None

Financial and Resource Implications

All efforts outlined within the report continue to be managed through the approved departmental operating budget.

Relevant Consultation

- Internal
 - Social Services
 - Planning
 - Finance
- External (list)
 - CWELLC Enrolled Service Providers

Appendices and Attachments

n/a