



Hamilton's Early Years Community Plan **2023 UPDATE**



1. INTRODUCTION & PURPOSE

Hamilton's Early Years Community Plan 2023 Update report continues to build on the foundational plan established in 2016 and updated in 2019. The strategic priorities outlined in the [2016-2020 Plan](#) have remained relevant over time. In response to a continually changing landscape as well as evolving community demographics and needs, subsequent plans have placed an emphasis on relevant priorities and emerging opportunities. The City of Hamilton will continue to focus on transformative, system-wide changes and impact that will enable Hamilton to be the best place to raise a child and age successfully.

The purpose of this update is to highlight the focus of Hamilton's Early Years System in the coming years. While there is uncertainty in the environment, such as the system currently anticipating the release of a new Ontario funding model for the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC) plan, we recognize our ability to work collectively with community partners across the Early Years System to tackle challenges and take opportunities head on. Our intention moving forward is to continually strengthen our ability to be flexible and responsive.

Hamilton's Early Years Community Plan 2023 Update and accompanying Environmental Scan provide a snapshot of Hamilton's children and families and the Early Years System.

We are proud of the collective efforts of all the staff, administrators, volunteers and community partners working across Hamilton's Early Years System. Their continued support and commitment will ensure the ongoing success of this plan and the system.

2. SUMMARY OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The following is a high-level summary of the work that have emerged since the release of the [EYCP 2016-2020 Progress Update](#) in the summer of 2019. While this is not an exhaustive list, it summarizes progress made in key areas, responding to changing needs and opportunities in Hamilton.

<p>2019 (2 years into the 2016-2020 plan)</p>	<p>BUILDING STRONG FOUNDATIONS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Established and refined the new organizing structure which embeds an equity and engagement advisory group/lens• Significant progress has been made in the following priority areas<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Child care system planning and stabilization▪ Family support programs (EarlyON Child and Family Centres)▪ Special needs resourcing and strategy▪ Hamilton Early Years Quality program• Strides in addressing new strategic priorities that emerged in response to community needs<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Infant and early years mental health▪ Early years work force
<p>2020 (COVID-19 Pandemic)</p>	<p>FOCUSING ON SYSTEM STABILIZATION AND SUSTAINABILITY:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Worked collaboratively with child care and early years operators to ensure that the child care system could operate safely and remain viable and responsive to family needs• Pivoted to virtual learning platforms to enable continued professional learning and support services• Continued to address the needs of diverse families in our community, ensuring access to programs and services• Implemented outdoor and virtual programming in EarlyON Child and Family Centres to continue offering services to families and caregivers• Recorded Embracing Inclusion podcasts for use by early years workforce

<p>2021 (coming out of the pandemic)</p>	<p>ADDRESSING EARLY YEARS HR WORKFORCE CHALLENGES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implemented policies, procedures and leveraged resources to support the Early Years System to ensure there were no service disruptions during the transition out of the pandemic with community partners • In response to critical challenges coming out of the pandemic, developed a Workforce Strategy with implementation planned for 2022/2023 • Continued to provide professional learning opportunities for early learning and child care professionals • Reconvened critical Early Years Community Plan organizing structure committees and advisory groups • Hosted an early years community virtual celebration and recognition session
<p>2022 (renewed commitment to foundational system-wide strategies)</p>	<p>ADOPTING A SYSTEM-WIDE APPROACH TO STRENGTHEN EQUITY, DIVERSITY, INCLUSION AND BELONGING (EDIB):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Placed increased emphasis on foundational work to embed EDIB across Hamilton’s Early Years System, and lead to transformative change strategies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Equity and Engagement Advisory Group developed an action planning framework ▪ City hired a Human Services Equity Specialist to advance and support EDIB work across the Children’s and Community Services Division • Investments were made to sustain, enhance, grow and attract the early years workforce, including workforce grants, professional development days, and covering cost of professional learning fees from the Affiliated Services for Children & Youth (ASCY) • Implemented the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Program
<p>2023 (moving forward as a system)</p>	<p>ADVANCING EQUITY, DIVERSITY, INCLUSION AND BELONGING (EDIB) ACROSS THE EARLY YEARS SYSTEM:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finalized a local EDIB framework for the system • Launched the Infant and Early Mental Health Care Pathway for 0-3.8-year-old children • Embedded EDIB into the Hamilton Early Years Quality Program • Provided training specific to special needs resources and inclusion • Initiated a new funding framework for local EarlyON Child and Family Centres • Continued to invest in activities to sustain, enhance, grow and attract the early years workforce • Developed Hamilton’s Access and Inclusion Framework to guide child care expansion for the next several years as a part of the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Program • Implemented an affordability grant to support families accessing before and after school care • Launched Hamilton’s Child & Youth Network, which brings together leaders across Early Years and Youth Systems to collectively plan and strengthen outcomes for children, youth and families

Refer to Hamilton's Early Years Community Plan Updates for additional information at [Early Years Community Partners Resources](#).

3. DEFINING THE LANDSCAPE

Demographic Snapshot of Hamilton’s Children and Families

Hamilton’s Population is Growing

In 2021, Hamilton’s population was 569,355. Between 2016 and 2021, the population of Hamilton grew by 32,435 individuals for a population growth of 6.0%, surpassing the provincial average of 5.8%.¹

Hamilton’s population is predicted to grow to approximately 809,660 individuals by 2046². This represents a population growth of approximately 38% over the next 25 years. This is in line with population growth projections for Ontario as a whole (38%).

Hamilton’s Child and Family Populations Continue to Grow

In 2021, Hamilton had 91,240 children aged 0 to 14 years of age. Reference Table 1 for age breakdowns.

Between 2016 and 2021, Hamilton’s child population growth varied across the city. Parts of Glanbrook, Upper Stoney Creek, and Flamborough East experienced relatively large gains in the number of children 0 to 6 years of age compared to other areas of the city (as identified in dark green areas in Figure 1) between 2016 and 2021.

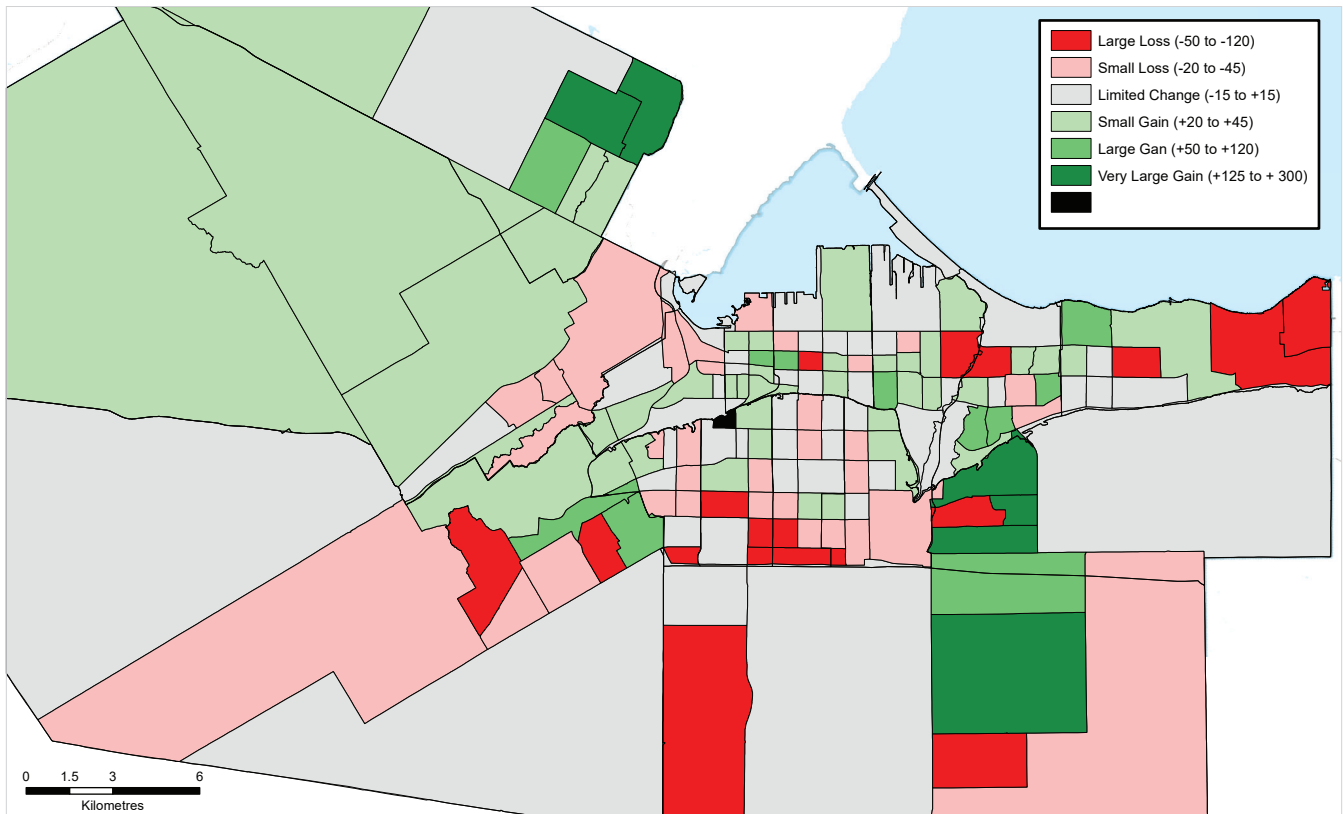
Table 1: Child Population by Age Group, City of Hamilton 2016 and 2021

Age Group (years)	2016	2021
0-4	28,275	29,100
5-9	29,355	30,695
10-14	29,485	31,445
TOTAL 0-14	87,115	91,240

Source: Statistics Canada Census data, 2016 and 2021 accessed through the City of Hamilton’s [City Dashboard](#).

1 Statistics Canada 2021 Census data derived from custom tabulations obtained by the City of Hamilton and accessed through the City of Hamilton’s [City Dashboard](#).
2 Ontario Ministry of Finance. [Ontario Population Projections Update, 2021-2046](#). Updated Summer 2022.

Figure 1: Gain/Loss Counts of Children Aged 0 to 6 Years from 2016 to 2021 by Census Tract, City of Hamilton



Source: Statistics Canada. Census 2016 and 2021. Obtained through City of Hamilton, Children’s and Community Services Division.

Hamilton’s Population is Increasingly Diverse

- In 2021, 92% of people living in Hamilton spoke English only, 6% (or 32,630) speak both English and French, 0.1% (or 410) speak French only, and 2% (or 10,435) speak neither English nor French.
- In 2021, 28.2% (or 158,185) of Hamilton residents were born outside of Canada compared to 25.9% (or 136,590) in 2016.
- In 2021, Hamilton was home to 20,145 recent immigrants³ and 12,640 non-permanent residents.
- 25.1% (or approximately 141,000) of Hamilton’s population identified as belonging to a visible minority in 2021 compared to 19.0% (or approximately 100,100) in 2016.

TOP 5 NON-OFFICIAL LANGUAGES SPOKEN IN HAMILTON (2021)

1. Arabic 2. Italian 3. Spanish 4. Chinese Languages 5. Portuguese

To learn more about Hamilton’s population, you may reference Hamilton's Early Years Community Plan 2023 Environmental Scan.

³ Recent immigrant refers to a person who obtained a landed immigrant or permanent resident status up to five years prior to a given census year.

Health and Well-Being of Children and Families in Hamilton

Early Childhood Development

The [Early Development Instrument](#) (EDI) is a tool that is widely used around the world to monitor the state of early childhood development. The EDI questionnaire is completed by kindergarten teachers measuring children's ability to meet age-appropriate developmental expectations.

In 2018, the EDI was implemented in Hamilton schools representing 4,972 children in senior kindergarten.

- Almost 1 in 3 (30.3%) children in senior kindergarten in Hamilton were vulnerable in one or more areas of their development in 2018. This is a small decrease, or improvement, from 30.7% in 2015.
- Children in Hamilton scored slightly more vulnerable than the provincial average (30.3% vs 29.6%) in 2018.
- Vulnerability rates vary greatly from 16% to 52% across Hamilton's neighbourhoods. EDI vulnerability is highest (over 38%) in numerous neighbourhoods in the lower city (within Wards 2, 3 and 4 primarily) but also in pockets on Hamilton Mountain (north of the Lincoln M. Alexander Parkway).

Once available, data from the most recent implementation of the EDI in Hamilton -- completed at the end of the 2022-2023 school year -- will be analyzed, reviewed and shared in a timely manner with our early years community, system partners and residents, to help support planning and implementation of universal and targeted support and activities across the system to address vulnerability vulnerability.

What is the Early Development Index?

The EDI is a 103-item questionnaire completed by kindergarten teachers in the second half of the school year that measures children's ability to meet age-appropriate developmental expectations in five general domains:

Physical Health and Well-Being

Sample EDI question: Would you say that this child is well coordinated (moves without running into things or tripping over things)

Social Competence

Sample EDI question: Would you say that this child is able to follow one-step instructions

Emotional Maturity

Sample EDI question: Would you say that this child comforts a child who is crying or upset

Language and Cognitive Development

Sample EDI question: Would you say that this child is able to read simple words

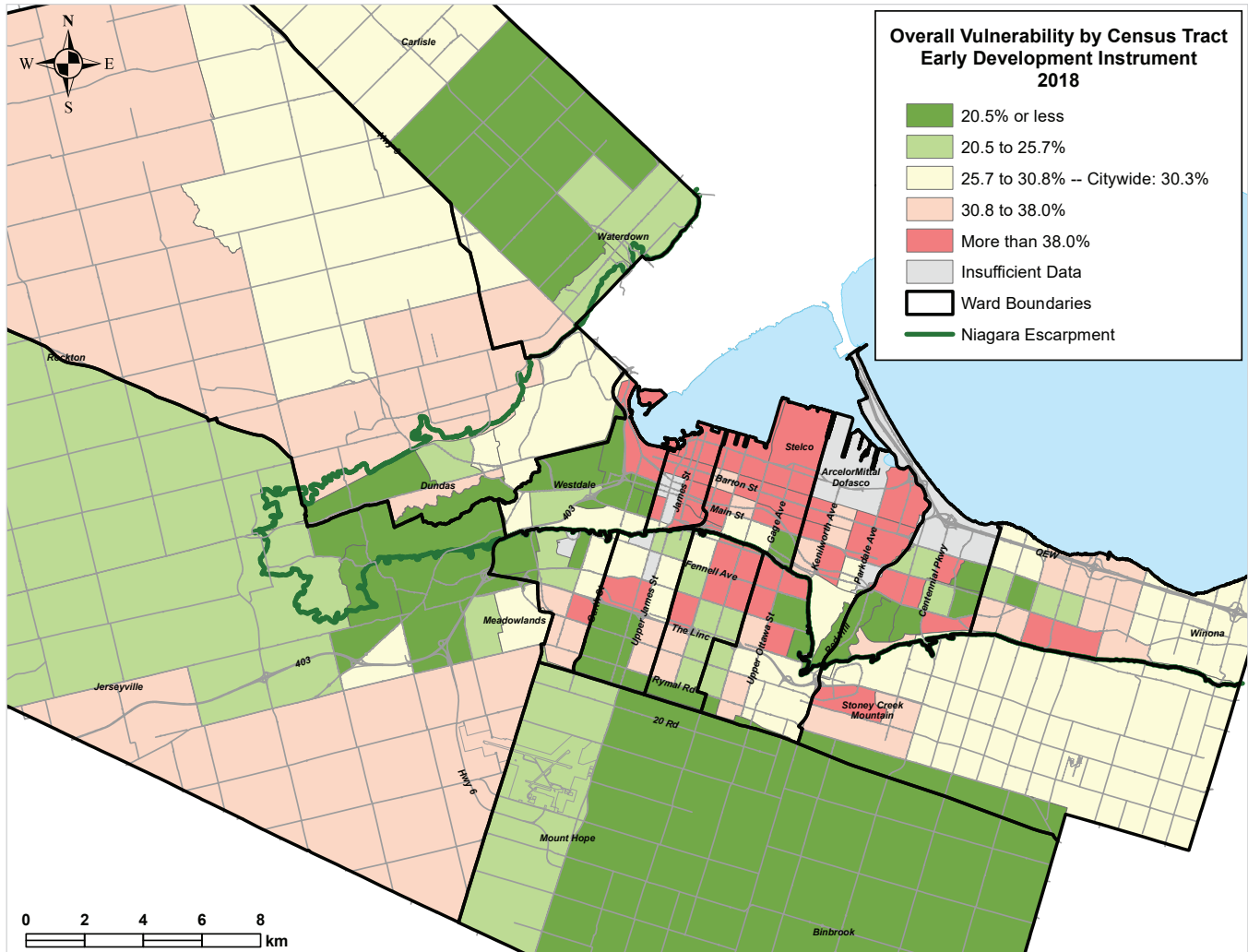
Communication Skills and General Knowledge

Sample EDI question: How would you rate this child's ability to tell a story

Vulnerability is identified in this case by the children who score below a standard score in any domain by the EDI. Higher vulnerability indicates a greater percentage of children are struggling. The vulnerability rate has been shown to be a strong predictor of future school success.

Offord Centre for Child Studies, (2019). [What is the EDI?](#)

Map 1: Overall Vulnerability by Census Tract, Early Development Instrument 2018.



Source: EDI 2018 obtained through City of Hamilton, Children’s and Community Services Division.

Highlights from Ontario Parent Survey (Hamilton-Specific Results)

The Ontario Parent Survey (OPS) aims to help understand how families and children have been affected by the lockdown due to COVID-19, and what services families and caregivers may need. Findings from the OPS Third Wave (2022) indicates COVID-19 has negatively impacted both parents’ and children’s mental health and well-being. For example, results indicated:

- 30% of parents reported a loss of income and 22% of families reported ‘moderate to major’ impact on their ability to meet financial obligations and essential needs
- 71% of parents reported significant depressive symptoms and 40% of parents reported needing help for mental health but did not seek help
- 39% sought professional care for child’s mental health
- 12% reported that their child needed help for mental health, but did not seek help
- 31% indicated that COVID-19 had ‘a lot’ to ‘a great deal’ of negative impact on their children’s mental and emotional health

Reference Hamilton’s Early Years Community Plan 2023 Environmental Scan, section 3, for more information on the health and well-being of children and families in Hamilton.

Hamilton's Early Years System

The City of Hamilton's Early Years System aims to make Hamilton the best place to raise a child and the best place to be a child. This involves ensuring that Hamilton families have access to high-quality, affordable, flexible and inclusive early years services and programs. This section provides a high-level overview of Hamilton's Early Years System. For details, refer to section 4 of Hamilton's Early Years Community Plan 2023 Environmental Scan.

Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC) System

In March 2022, Ontario reached a \$13.2 billion agreement with the federal government on funding for and the terms of the CWELCC system. The new system will lower child care costs and improve access, quality and inclusion across Ontario's child care and early years sector. In Hamilton, 96% (215) of eligible child care operators have opted in to CWELCC.

Early Years Funding and Budget

In 2022, Hamilton's Early Years System had a total operating budget of \$104.3 million. The majority of the budget was allocated towards:

- Funding to support child care wages (**\$23.4M**)
- Child care fee subsidy (**\$21.7M**)
- Child care fee reduction through CWELCC (**\$21.4M**)

The remaining operating budget (**\$37.8M**) was allocated to special needs resourcing, EarlyON Child and Family Centres, Early Years System priorities, administration, resource centres, and capacity and emergency supports.

Access to the Early Years System

Hamilton's Licensed Centre-Based Child Care by the Numbers (March 2023)



223 licensed child care centres offering
20,725 spaces for children 0-12.



This includes:

- **3** licensed French language licensed child care centres⁴ serving **280 spaces** (infant to school-age)
- **1** Indigenous-led child care centre⁵ serving **73 spaces** (infant to preschool)
- **59%** of licensed child care centres are located within a school
- **31%** of all spaces are for younger children (infants, toddlers and preschoolers) (Table 2)
- **11%** increase (1,975 spaces) in the number of licensed centre-based child care spaces between December 2019 and March 2023 (Table 2) with the infant and toddler age groups having the highest percent increase.

⁴ Hamilton's three French language child care centres are: La Garderie Le Petit Navire, Le Ballon Rouge De Hamilton, and Pavillon de la Jeunesse avant et après l'école.

⁵ Niwasa Kendaaswin Teg is a multi-service, Indigenous non-profit that provides services and supports to all people across the life cycle.

Table 2: Number of Licensed Centre-Based Child Care Spaces by Age Group in Hamilton, December 2019 vs March 2023

Child Care Age Group	Number of child care spaces in Hamilton	
	December 2019	March 2023
Infant (0-18 months)	379	546
Toddler (18-30 months)	1,782	2,094
Preschool (30 months to 4 years)	3,990	4,409
Kindergarten (4-5 years)	5,155	5,547
School Age (6-12 years)	7,444	8,129
TOTAL	18,750	20,725

Source: City of Hamilton Children's and Community Services Division (2022).

Hamilton's Licensed Home-Based Child Care by the Numbers (March 2023)

- **3** home child care agencies ⁶
- **134** licensed home-based child care operators
- Approximately **804** licensed-home child care spaces⁷

Child Care Expansion for Children 0 to 5 years Through an Access and Inclusion Framework

Child care spaces are not equitably distributed across the City of Hamilton and few wards are meeting the provincial child care access target of 37%.⁸ This is especially the case in parts of the lower city (Wards 3 and 4), central and east mountain (Wards 6 and 7) and to some extent in Glanbrook (Ward 11) (Refer to Table 3).

Through the implementation of the CWELCC system, the City of Hamilton has been allocated 1,687 new child care spaces from Ontario's Ministry of Education between 2022 and 2026 consisting of a total 254 new school-based spaces and 1,433 new community-based spaces, based on an access and inclusion framework.

Guided by [Hamilton's Access and Inclusion Framework](#), the city's child care expansion will focus on children with special needs, families with low income, those who are most vulnerable, children from diverse communities, Francophone children, and Indigenous children. Early analysis by the City has demonstrated a need to prioritize child care expansion in the following four City wards:

- **Ward 6:** East Mountain
- **Ward 7:** Central Mountain
- **Ward 3:** Hamilton Centre
- **Ward 4:** East Lower Hamilton

See Appendix A for the City of Hamilton's Access and Inclusion Framework.

⁶ Today's Family, Wee Watch Galbraith and Wee Watch Golfwood are Hamilton's three home child care agencies.

⁷ This is an estimated number based on potential availability given each licensed-home child care operator can provide care for up to 6 children. Actual numbers will differ based on operator actuals.

⁸ This is equivalent to there being one affordable child care space available for every 2.7 children aged 0-5 years.

Table 3: Licensed Child Care Capacity by Child Care Age Group and City Ward, City of Hamilton, February 2023

Ward	Infant Access Rate (%)	Toddler Access Rate (%)	Pre-school Access Rate (%)
Ward 1	13	59	65
Ward 2	13	50	84
Ward 3	4	31	37
Ward 4	3	17	33
Ward 5	7	30	42
Ward 6	0	9	18
Ward 7	1	21	34
Ward 8	0	47	72
Ward 9	9	52	70
Ward 10	11	52	53
Ward 11	4	17	32
Ward 12	6	36	58
Ward 13	0	39	45
Ward 14	15	67	102
Ward 15	15	59	80

Source: City of Hamilton Children’s & Community Services Division.

EarlyON Child and Family Centres

EarlyON Child and Family Centres offer free, high-quality programs for children from prenatal to 6 years old and their families where they can learn, grow and connect, together. At EarlyON Centres, families can learn and play with their child(ren), meet people, and get advice from early childhood educators and other professionals. For further details refer to Hamilton’s EarlyON Centres at a glance chart on page 11.

In 2023, the City of Hamilton initiated a review of the current EarlyON Centres’ funding models to ensure the system is inclusive, equitable, and responsive to the unique needs of its participants. Engagement from Hamilton’s EarlyON Centre operators are important elements that were built into this process. We anticipate the funding review will be completed in early 2024. Changes to programs and services resulting from this review will be implemented in January 2025.

HAMILTON'S EARLYON CHILD AND FAMILY CENTRES AT A GLANCE

- **8** agencies offering programs at **35** locations
- This includes Niwasa Kendaaswin Teg, which offers an early learning environment that follows Indigenous teachings and knowledge as well as Centre de Sante Communautaire – Hamilton/Niagara, which offers French language programming and supports.
- **6,926** unique parents and/or caregivers **9,062** unique children (ages 0 to 6 years) visited Hamilton EarlyON programs for a total of **70,175** parent and **92,808** child visits between May 2022 and April 2023.
- **1 in 4** children ages 0-4 years living in Hamilton visited an EarlyON Centre at least once from May 2022 – April 2023.
- **80-90%** of 1000+ Hamilton families agreed they had positive experiences visiting an EarlyON Centre.

Source: City of Hamilton Children's & Community Services Division.

Affordability of the Early Years System

Quality licensed child care often comes at a significant financial cost to families. In 2022, the average full time, full day rate for child care for a child aged 0-6 in Hamilton was \$59.12. Child care daily rates are highest for infants and lowest for preschool age (Refer to Table 4).

Table 4: Average Daily Child Care Rates per Full Time, Full Day by Child Care Age Group, Hamilton 2022

Child Care Age Group	Pre-CWELCC Rate	Post-CWELCC Rate
Infant (0 to 18 months)	\$70.80	\$33.39
Toddler (18 to 30 months)	\$56.98	\$26.89
Preschool (30 months to 6 years)	\$49.59	\$23.41
Average (0 to 6 years)	\$59.12	\$27.90

Source: City of Hamilton, Children's & Community Services Division

Fee Reduction and Subsidy for Families

- Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care CWELCC System funding aimed to reduce the cost of child care resulted in an estimated annual savings of per child for eligible families of approximately \$3,600 in 2022 and \$9,100 in 2023.
- An average of 4,200 children each month receive child care fee subsidy, which supports low-income parents.
- There are no children waiting for a fee subsidy approval in Hamilton.

Quality of the Early Years System

High quality early years services and programs substantially influence children’s development and well-being. Evidence shows that high-quality early learning and child care programs support development and positively impact children.⁹

Hamilton Early Years Quality Program

The Hamilton Early Years Quality Program (HEYQP) cultivates high-quality, responsive and accountable relationships with the early years community at all levels of an organization for the benefit of children, educators and families. Quality directly impacts the services provided to families and children in the Early Years System and community. Participation in HEYQP is a fundamental foundation for all early learning and licensed child care operators that have funding agreements with the City of Hamilton. Hamilton’s early learning and child care community embraces, nurtures and commits to building meaningful, authentic opportunities for educators, families, children and communities for diverse, high-quality, inclusive learning, growth through continuous improvement.

HEYQP HIGHLIGHTS



2022 HEYQP Supports

- **73** City and Affiliated Services for Children and Youth (ASCY) quality visits were completed with licensed child care operators.
- **182** professional learning opportunities were offered including workshops, podcasts, Infant and Early Years Mental Health Symposium, etc.
- **10,300+** participated in professional learning opportunities.
- **45+** professionals participating in Side-by-Side mentorship.



2022 HEYQP Accomplishments

- **360+** early years program sites participated in HEYQP.
- **3%** of the Early Years System sites experienced intensive quality monitoring to support positive change. This has significantly decreased as these numbers were 23% in 2017 and 21% in 2018, which reflects the quality improvements that have occurred across the Early Years System.
- **99%** positive change was observed for those who experienced intensive monitoring for continuous improvement

Source: City of Hamilton Children’s & Community Services Division.

9 OECD. (2018). Early Learning Matters.

Early Years Workforce

A qualified, stable and well-compensated early years workforce is the foundation of high-quality early years services and programs. Historically, the Early Years System has experienced workforce challenges due to low compensation and working conditions. The cumulative impacts of responding to the COVID-19 pandemic have intensified these challenges.

- Currently, Registered Early Childhood Educators (RECEs) that work in the early years and child care sector earn an average of \$22.45/ hour in Hamilton, compared to RECEs that work for the school boards, which earn an average of \$27/hour.
- In 2022, 1,723 child care staff received a Wage Enhancement Grant (WEG). Two thirds of these recipients (66%) work in non-profit licensed child care centres and the remaining third (34%) work in for-profit licensed child care centres.
- Recent survey responses from a RECE professional learning event¹⁰ indicates the top factors for attracting and retaining a high quality, diverse workforce include:
 - Positive working conditions
 - Positive relationships with co-workers
 - Opportunities for career growth
 - Good wages

Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging

Early years services and programs play a critical role in supporting equity, diversity, inclusion and belonging (EDIB) in the early years and within the overall community. Hamilton's Early Years System has set a goal of strengthening EDIB in order to bring to life our vision that all children, families and members of the workforce experience a real, lived sense of belonging in the Early Years System.

For several years, the Equity and Engagement Advisory Group, of the Early Years Community Plan organizing structure, has focused its efforts on supporting Hamilton's Early Years System, resulting in the completion of an action planning framework to guide activities being undertaken across the system by ensuring the needs and perspectives of diverse children and families are continually considered. Priority activities within this framework include

- Implementing a survey to understand the composition of the local Early Years System workforce
- Prioritizing EDIB learning and capacity building for early years staff and system leaders
- Updating the Hamilton Early Years Quality Program System Priority Template with an increased focus on EDIB
- Developing an EDIB policy statement. (Refer to Appendix B - Draft EDIB Policy Statement)

¹⁰ It's Your Day! Embracing the Early Years Virtual Professional Learning Day on April 22

Special Needs Resourcing Program

The City of Hamilton is committed to delivering inclusive services where children with varying abilities are experiencing diverse, meaningful ways to participate and learn. Community partners work together with early learning and child care professionals to ensure families and children have access to and experience diverse, inclusive learning communities.¹¹ Special Needs Resourcing (SNR) funding supports the Early Years System with resources, equipment, supplies, professional development, such as Shelley Moore professional learning events, Tools for Life (TFL) for Early Years, and evidence-based pedagogical and inclusion practices to plan, inform and deliver high-quality, inclusive services for families with children who have varying abilities. Evidence demonstrates that diverse, inclusive learning environments where children experience a sense of belonging, provide developmentally beneficial learning, growth and belonging for all children¹¹.

Special Needs Resourcing Snapshot (2022)

- Each month, an average of **656** children ages 0 to 6 years and an average of **115** children ages 6 to 12 years receive special needs supports
- **1,237** unique children, ages 0 to 12 years, received special needs supports in 2022
- **331** licensed child care programs were supported through the Special Needs Resourcing Program¹²
- Hamilton had **54** Resource Consultants, and Inclusion Facilitators and **48.40** full-time staff resources for SNR
- Addition of a new Francophone Resource Consultant
- **200+** early years professionals attended Let's Talk Moore about Inclusion event
- Most educators in 2019/2020 were trained in TFL and more resources will be available in 2023/2024
- In 2022, the City of Hamilton spent **\$5.48M** to support the inclusion of 1,237 children in 331 licensed child care programs

Source: City of Hamilton Children's & Community Services Division.

Early Years Mental Health System and Services

Through its [Infant and Early Years Mental Health System Support](#) Committee¹³, the City of Hamilton aims to facilitate an evidence-based, integrated and coordinated approach to cross-sector planning for infant and early years mental health services in Hamilton. This committee's work focuses on:

- Building awareness of infant and early years mental health in the community
- Increasing professional capacity and opportunities for continuous learning
- Identifying and developing appropriate care referral pathways and wait list strategies for children ages 0-6 and their families
- Improving coordination of services and support across the City of Hamilton

11 Underwood, K. (2013). Everyone is Welcome: Inclusive Early Childhood Education and Care. Think, Feel, Act.

12 This number represents duplicates due to the integrated special needs resourcing delivery model with one or more partners providing supports to the system.

13 For a complete list of Committee membership see: Infant and Early Years Mental Health System Support

In Fall 2022, an informal environmental scan¹⁴ was completed by the Infant and Early Years Mental Health System Support Committee members regarding emerging system trends and capacity identified anecdotal reports of:

- Increased number of referrals received across member agencies
- Increasingly acute, multi-layered and complex mental health cases encountered among children and youth, post-COVID
- Human resource shortages, which impact services and community supports
- Increased need to support families while waiting for assessment or entry to services
- Needed support to ensure children get the right level of care, at the right time

IEYMH COMMITTEE AT A GLANCE (2022-2023)

- **18** agency partners engaged as active members
- **170** participants from the early years community attended the April 2023 Symposium focused on early years mental health and staff wellbeing
- **0-3.8 year old** Infant and Early Mental Health Care Pathway launched in January 2023
- **3.9-6.0 year old** Infant and Early Mental Health Care Pathway currently under development

Source: City of Hamilton Children's & Community Services Division.

Newcomer Mental Health Needs

Children and families recently arriving to Canada, especially those who arrive as refugees, experience a range of stressors that place them at risk of poor mental health. A recent Hamilton study¹⁵ out of the Offord Centre for Child Studies at McMaster University examined newcomer mental health needs, barriers to care, and opportunities for improving mental health supports.

The study lays out seven recommendations¹⁶ for improving mental health supports for newcomer children and families. The following are instructive for Hamilton's Early Years System:

- **Newcomer Engagement:** Amplify and listen to newcomer voices at all stages of policy and program design and implementation.
- **Cultural Responsiveness:** Understand how culture and migration experiences shape mental health and work with newcomer families to develop culturally responsive interventions.
- **Workforce Diversity and Development:** Hire and support a more racially and culturally diverse workforce that better reflects newcomer communities.

14 City of Hamilton CCSD. IEYMH System Summary. January to March 2023

15 Sims, A. (2023). Thriving Together: Service provider and family perspectives on newcomer child and youth mental health and access to care. Offord Centre for Child Studies. McMaster University)

16 To learn more see: <http://cyrrc.org/2022/03/4j>

4. COMMUNITY CONSULTATIONS AND EMERGING INSIGHTS AND STRATEGIES

On April 25 and 26, 2023, the City of Hamilton's Children's and Community Services Division hosted three community engagement sessions to assist with the update of its Early Years Community Plan. A total of 217 community partners participated in and contributed to the important discussion which was focused on mobilizing equity, diversity, inclusion and belonging (EDIB) in Hamilton's Early Years System. Participants included a variety of licensed home-based, centre-based and co-op child care operators, EarlyON providers, City representatives and other Early Years System partners.

During these sessions, City staff provided an overview of the EDIB Policy, developed by the Early Years Community Plan's Equity and Engagement Advisory Group, and Hamilton's Access and Inclusion Framework. Through structured table discussions, participants were invited to provide input on the following:

EDBI Policy

- What challenges do you see when implementing this policy?
- How can you/your organization contribute to implement this policy/work?
- Do you have any feedback on the policy?

Access and Inclusion Framework

- What elements of the framework are you most excited about and why?
- Are there any gaps or opportunities that we should address/include?

The community engagement and rich discussion that took place during the facilitated table discussions were essential to support the finalization of these documents and updates to the Early Years Community Plan. Several strategic insights emerged that will inform the work moving forward:

A FOCUS ON INCLUSION AND BELONGING - The language and shared experience of 'belonging' resonated with community partners. Groups identified opportunities to build capacity and enhance policies and practices to support inclusion, particularly with equity-deserving groups. One group discussion highlighted the following insight – *'If we can meet the unique needs of families, we can all grow, learn and better ourselves, putting biases aside to see every child/family as a human being (who is yearning to be seen, heard and understood) regardless of background/experience.'*

SHIFTING MINDSETS - The work ahead around EDIB and the Access and Inclusion Framework requires shifting mindsets by providing a clear rationale as to why this work is important and offering continuous learning opportunities to build capacity by challenging unconscious biases, sharing promising practices, and telling compelling change stories.

BALANCING CONSISTENCY AND FLEXIBILITY - There is a tension between the need for consistency (i.e., ensuring community standards and expectations across the system), and the desire for flexibility (i.e., opportunities to respond to local need and build on work already underway). Changes to the EDIB Policy and Access and Inclusion Framework and corresponding processes will work to strike this balance.

IMPLEMENTATION SUPPORTS - Dedicated resources are needed to enable progress and ensure success. Community Partners emphasized the need for clear and transparent system-wide expectations (i.e., priorities and timelines), investments in workforce training and capacity building (e.g., communities of practice and a collaborative community response), data collection and accountability (to monitor progress and outcomes), and ongoing engagement of families and staff.

In subsequent discussions with City staff and, based on specific feedback the community provided regarding future opportunities to mobilize EDIB in Hamilton, it became clear that intentional and aligned strategies at the individual, community and systems level are required to shift mindsets and enable meaningful and transformative change. In the first phase, this work requires investing in champions, establishing mechanisms to build capacity at multiple levels across the system, and fueling the exchange of knowledge and promising practices. Refer to Appendix B - Draft EDIB Policy Statement for further details.

Figure 2: SHIFTING MINDSETS AND ENABLING TRANSFORMATIVE CHANGE: Investing in Champions, Capacity Building and Knowledge Sharing



ENABLERS (Continued from Figure 2 on page 17):

- Acknowledge that this is a change management process that will require time and effort, and not everyone is at the same starting place
- Align and coordinate efforts (both activities that are underway and new)
- Leverage what's already working
- Clarify roles and responsibilities to ensure mutual accountability (City, Affiliated Services for Children and Youth (ASCY) , Communities of Practice, Individual Champions, Organizational Champions)

It is important to acknowledge that Affiliated Services for Children and Youth (ASCY) has a broad professional learning lead role within the Early Years System. With respect to Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging (EDIB) organizational champions will bring specific expertise, credibility and relationships with priority populations/sectors, while ASCY contributes a system coordinating role (i.e. communicating with and convening community partners through system-wide training events to share promising practices and tell compelling change stories).

Early Years Organizing Structure and Ongoing Engagement Mechanisms

Feedback gathered in a survey distributed after the community partner consultation events on April 25 and 26, 2023 suggested that while the current organizing structure is still relevant, it needs to continue to evolve in order to respond to changing community needs and system opportunities. Refer to Appendix C: Hamilton's Early Years Organizing Structure for additional details.

Recently, a focus on the "middle years" (children 7-14 years old and their families), was identified as an emergent need, to help ensure supports, resources and opportunities are available and a systems approach taken to help this age group grow, develop and succeed, based on our current early years approach.

Building on the [2022-2027 City of Hamilton's Youth Strategy](#), the Child and Youth Network will broaden to include youth partners. The focus will be on facilitating an improved alignment of priorities, continuity of care, enabling seamless transitions from birth to young adulthood, and by adapting to have a system-wide planning lens.

In addition, it will be important to provide timely communication and updates to the early years community regarding the organizing structure and membership to ensure they can see themselves reflected in and contributing to the local Early Years System.

Ongoing mechanisms for community engagement/feedback are achieved through the organizing structure and its respective committees/advisories whose terms of reference commit to 'regular updates and opportunities to provide feedback on emerging issues/priorities'. Committees and advisory table members will also participate in an annual assessment/evaluation of their performance and effectiveness.

5. STRATEGIC AIM, ENABLING STRATEGIES, AND STRATEGIC PRIORITIES/ACTIONS

STRATEGIC AIM:

Moving from: Stabilization and sustainability of the Early Years System

Moving towards: System integration, transformation and seamless transitions for children, youth and families (from birth to young adulthood)




ENABLING STRATEGIES:



There are a number of cross-cutting supports/structures/programs that will enable our system's success with respect to the identified strategic priorities.

- **Quality:** Continue our current Hamilton Early Years Quality Program efforts and embed system wide EDIB expectations.
- **Continuous learning and improvement:** Continue to strengthen the system's commitment to generating and sharing data, research findings and promising practices to support evidence-informed planning decisions.
- **Ongoing communication and engagement:** Provide accessible and relevant information and opportunities for diverse stakeholders to identify their needs and experiences.
- **High-level system-wide investments:** Investing in resources and supports that will mobilize and coordinate community partners who will undertake key strategies/efforts.

EMERGING PRIORITIES AND ACTIONS:

Emerging Priorities have intentionally been identified as high-level priorities, with the ability to refine them on an as needed basis. The existing Early Years Community Plan organizing structures and mechanisms will be used to engage the early years community to determine how best to implement the plan over time. The emerging priorities and actions are intended to capture and reflect all components of Hamilton's Early Years System including: EarlyON Child and Families Centres, licensed centre-based child care, and licensed home-based child care, and system partners (e.g. organizations representing community health, housing, children's development, recreation, education, literacy, social services, research, employment and training, etc.).

Emerging Priorities	What is it? Why is it important?	High Level Activities
 <p>1. Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging (EDIB) and Access and Inclusion</p>	<p>System reflects the children and families we serve</p> <p>Focus on implementation, measurement, and follow-up</p> <p>This includes Access & Inclusion work, Special Needs Resourcing and mental health</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EDIB system-wide policy/ framework • Organizational policies and procedures • Increase in new child care spaces/new funding agreements with licensees • Training, capacity building and resources for early years staff and system leaders • Evaluation/measurement • Strengthening existing and establishing new partnerships • Review of EarlyON Centre funding model
 <p>2. HR workforce</p>	<p>Continue to grow, attract, retain and enhance a high-quality, diverse early years workforce in Hamilton</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruitment and retention to build on efforts to retain high-quality early childhood educators • Mentorship opportunities at all levels (i.e., students, educators, and leaders) • Ongoing professional development and system-wide professional learning days • Advocacy to address wage disparities and full-time work hours • Provision of workforce grants • Continued focus on workforce mental health and well-being • Expanded partnerships
 <p>3. Child care accessibility, affordability and expansion</p>	<p>Implementation of the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC) agreement in Hamilton, including the Access and Inclusion Framework</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • System stabilization • Affordability • Child care expansion with a focus on priority populations • Implement the new provincial funding model

Emerging Priorities	What is it? Why is it important?	High Level Activities
 <p>4. Middle years system and supports</p>	<p>Explore how best to support the middle years and improve coordination across sectors (age 7 to 14 years is currently a gap in the system)</p> <p>Support successful, seamless transitions from birth to young adulthood</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bringing partners together to expand partnerships for this age group • Address before and after school program affordability and accessibility • Intentional/strategic coordination and collaboration with other community initiatives (i.e., The City of Hamilton's Community Safety and Well-Being Plan; youth prevention work through various collaborative networks; The Hamilton Drug Strategy) • Implementation and utilization of the Middle Years Development Instrument (MDI) • Alignment with Hamilton's Early Years Community Plan and the Hamilton's Youth Strategy
 <p>5. System-wide coordination and partnerships</p>	<p>Working together differently – more coordination and collaboration to ensure seamless service experiences for children and families</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structures and enhanced processes to increase coordination and collaboration with key system partners • Investments in training and capacity building in the area of Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging • Launch of Hamilton's Child and Youth Network • Refreshed focus on early literacy • Ongoing HR workforce activities • Continued focus on infant and early years mental health activities

6. CONCLUDING REMARKS

We look forward to continuing to work collectively with our early years community and system partners to mobilize transformative, system-wide change and impact. This includes ensuring that the needs of all children and their families are met, and a sense of belonging is experienced by all those engaged in the Early Years System, and our city is the best place to raise a child and age successfully. The identified strategic aim, emerging priorities and actions outlined within this update will guide our work together moving forward. Through ongoing community partner engagement and involvement, the early years community will contribute to refining and implementing the updated Early Years Community Plan.



Appendix A

Hamilton’s Access and Inclusion Framework

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Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC) Overview

On March 28, 2022, the federal and provincial governments signed the [Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care \(CWELCC\) agreement](#) aimed at making child care more affordable for families and increasing the compensation for eligible child care staff.

Ontario's Ministry of Education's goals under the CWELCC agreement are similar to the [priorities for the Early Years System in Hamilton](#) — affordability, accessibility, inclusion and quality.

The Ministry of Education and City of Hamilton's CWELCC goals align with a focus on:

1. **Quality:** ensuring the delivery of high-quality child care, as defined in the [Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014 \(CCEYA\)](#).
2. **Child and family focused:** increasing affordability for parents/guardians.
3. **Protection of child care spaces:** protection of for-profit and not-for-profit child care spaces in the province.
4. **Efficient administration:** accomplished through an efficient administrative plan, collecting necessary information from licensees to support a timely enrolment and implementation of the CWELCC plan.

The CWELCC plan is designed to provide high-quality, affordable, accessible and inclusive licensed child care programs to support Ontario's children, families, employers, early years professionals and the child care sector. The CWELCC agreement will provide funding to reduce child care fees for families with children 0 to 6 years of age to an average of \$12/day by March 2026.

In 2022, the City of Hamilton successfully implemented the first phase of the CWELCC plan which included:

- Enrolling 214 of 223 of Hamilton's licensed child care programs into CWELCC.
- Lowering child care fees for participating providers by 52.75% from March 2022 rates.
- Lowering child care contributions for families receiving financial support (subsidy) by 50%.
- Issuing rebates of 25% of the costs of child care to eligible families, backdated to April 1, 2022.
- Providing funding to child care providers to ensure Registered Early Childhood Educators (RECEs) receiving less than the wage floor, met the minimum standards under the agreement.

Both 2022 and 2023 are considered transitional years in the implementation of CWELCC, while the Ministry of Education works to create a new funding formula that will be used across the province. CWELCC funding is designed to fully offset a licensee's potential reduction in revenue as a result of a reduced base fee and cost escalation.

Child Care Space Allocations

The Ministry of Education approved the following allocations for new child care spaces for the City of Hamilton. These spaces support the Ministry of Education’s directed growth plan under CWELCC, and we are pleased to note that we received an additional 170 spaces to meet the child care needs in Hamilton. These allocations are as follows:

Total Space Allocation*					
Allocation	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
Total Spaces	195	488	314	388	302
School-based	49	107	49	49	0
Community-based	146	381	265	339	302

* All numbers are subject to change based on Ministry of Education Approval

Under the new CWELCC funding guidelines, municipalities are required to maintain the Ministry of Education’s threshold for child care spaces which is currently 80% not-for-profit and 20% for-profit in the City of Hamilton.

Phase 1: Access, Socio-economic and Demographic Analysis

Hamilton’s Approach to Access and Inclusion

Ontario’s provincial target access rate (the ratio of child care spaces to children) is 37% by 2026. This is equivalent to one affordable child care space for every 2.7 children aged 0-5. Currently, the City of Hamilton has an access rate of 31% across full-day (infant, toddler and preschool) programs. With the current space allocation, city-wide the City of Hamilton is on track to exceed the 37% provincial target access.

The City of Hamilton is committed to ongoing engagement with families, child care providers, and other members of the community to ensure access and inclusion plans meet the needs of the community it’s intended to serve. Further analysis and engagement with key community partners in Hamilton will be required to ensure that neighbourhoods are precisely prioritized as the composition of wards vary greatly from one neighbourhood to another.

Access and inclusion considerations are as follows:

Access Equity: Provide comparable access to child care spaces across the City of Hamilton for the 0-3.8 age group by allocating spaces where the need is greatest.

Directed Spaces for Priority Population (in no particular order): As determined by the Ministry of Education, the City of Hamilton will ensure that child care spaces are allocated based on socio-economic factors to support child care needs in priority populations, including:

- Children living in low-income families
- Children of newcomers to Canada
- Official language minorities (Francophone)¹
- Children with special needs and children needing enhanced or individual supports
- Indigenous children, Black and other racialized children

¹ A principal of access & inclusion to maintain or grow French language spaces for ages 0-5.

Accessibility: Providing a wide range of opportunities for learning, play and inquiry in physical and teaching environments across diverse, flexible settings and contexts.

Participation and Belonging: The intentional and instructional approach that enables children to actively engage in purposeful ways in all parts of the day including play, learning activities and social interactions.

Equity: Making sure everyone has what they need to succeed by removing barriers that disadvantage some groups over others. Children should have equitable access to early learning opportunities that support them in purposeful participation as engaged learners that are competent, capable of complex thinking, curious, and rich in potential.

Special Needs Resourcing (SNR): Ensuring that licensed child care programs across the City of Hamilton can deliver the appropriate level of service for children with special needs, including staff, adaptive equipment and resources. The City of Hamilton is committed to delivering responsive, high-quality, accessible and increasingly inclusive early-learning opportunities for children and their families.

Fee Subsidy: Child care fee subsidy helps families with the cost of licensed child care programs. It is an essential support for many parents and caregivers that helps to balance the demands of a career and family, enabling them to participate in the workforce or pursue education or training.

Workforce: The early years and child care sector continues to experience recruitment and retention challenges with Registered Early Childhood Educators (RECEs). A high-quality early years and child care system requires a comprehensive human resources workforce strategy, including fair compensation for RECEs.

The following guiding principles and foundational documents are embedded into all Children's and Community Services:

- Hamilton Early Years Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging Action Plan (In Development)
- [Hamilton Parent's Charter of Rights](#)
- [Charter of Rights for Children and Youth](#)
- [How Does Learning Happen: Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years](#)
- [Hamilton's Early Years Quality Program](#)

Priority Wards

In January 2023, the City of Hamilton determined priority wards based on identified socio-economic and demographic indicators, as well as the current licensed child care access rates for the 0-3.8 age group in each ward. All wards across Hamilton have been identified as needing child care spaces under the expansion plan. Expansion will be prioritized based on priority populations in identified wards.

The following child care space allocations are the results of the preliminary evaluation of child care space needs per ward. Further analysis of neighbourhoods within each ward will occur until 2026. It is important to note that there may be modifications to ward allocations as the analysis continues. Preliminary expansion plans** were submitted to the Ministry of Education and City Council, identifying child care space priorities across the city:

Name of priority neighbourhoods/areas	Community-based spaces 2023-2023 Allocations	Current Access rates
Ward 6 East Mountain	127	9.0%
Ward 7 Central Mountain	123	19.0%
Ward 3 Hamilton Centre	123	24.0%
Ward 4 East Lower Hamilton	112	17.0%
Ward 11 Glanbrook	101	19.0%
Ward 5 Redhill	101	25.0%
Ward 13 Dundas	96	27.0%
Ward 2 Downtown	80	39.0%
Ward 8 West-Central Mountain	75	39.0%
Ward 12 Ancaster - Flamborough West	75	36.0%
Ward 9 Upper Stoney Creek	69	32.0%
Ward 1 Chedoke-Cootes	64	43.0%
Ward 10 Lower Stoney Creek	59	50.0%
Ward 14 Far West Mountain	56	61.0%
Ward 15 Flamborough East-Waterdown	27	48.0%

**[Information Report](#), [Appendix A](#), [Appendix B](#)

Identifying Priority Neighbourhoods

The City of Hamilton’s goal is to ensure that each neighbourhood has a voice and their child care needs are met.

In order to identify priority neighbourhoods, City staff are identifying key services and resources in the neighbourhoods, such as community organizations, institutions, and associations. We completed this mapping for the top four priority wards (6, 7, 3, 4) identified in 2023.

After identifying priority neighbourhoods, City staff will be working directly with key community partners in these neighbourhoods through a community engagement process, expanded further in Phase 2: Community Engagement.

Phase 2: Community Engagement

Approach to Community Engagement

City staff have reached out to community partners that have existing relationships and connections with diverse communities to request they assist the city in gathering input from the families they serve. The goal is to better understand child care needs and identify barriers that may exist for these families. This community engagement process will help inform the application process inviting all child care licensees to submit their interest in operating new child care spaces at various locations. The application process will be opened up in mid-October 2023 with the goal of opening new community-based child care spaces by the end of 2023. It will also inform future city-wide directed growth through to 2026.

The City of Hamilton circulated the document found in Appendix A, to community partners to invite them to participate in the Community Engagement Partnership Opportunity. Currently, these engagements are being completed in the community with City staff awaiting the outcomes of the engagements.

This approach to community engagement is an integral part of implementing Hamilton's Access and Inclusion Framework at a local level, as it will assist with:

- Including the voices of the community and families to determine how child care services can meet their needs.
- Cultivating meaningful engagement experiences to authentically hear from the community and families.
- Focusing on the voices of diverse and underserved populations who were identified as priority populations.
- Collaborating efforts, which include engagement through multiple community-based organizations that have existing relationships with identified priority populations to provide authentic and meaningful engagement experiences.

Feedback gained from community engagement and families is valued and will inform child care expansion plans throughout the CWELCC implementation, as well as help to identify and address barriers to accessing child care.

Early Years Sector

The City of Hamilton commits to ongoing community engagement to ensure results and outcomes are consistent with child care expectations. This community engagement process will help inform responsible decision-making by inviting a range of perspectives, experiences and knowledge to support the creation of sustainable solutions.

Key Community Partners

The early years sector plays a key role in expansion. In phase one of the Access and Inclusion Framework, City staff consulted the following groups:

City of Hamilton

- Equity and Engagement Advisory Committee
- Consolidated Municipal Service Manager Advisory Committee
- Special Needs Resource Committee

Community Partners

- Hamilton School Boards
- Francophone Service Providers
- Indigenous Service Providers

Phase 3: CWELCC Application and Evaluation Process

The application and evaluation processes will enable CWELCC directed growth for new licensees to open new child care programs, or to expand current child care programs with existing licensees. The application and evaluation process are currently under development and will be shared when finalized. The application process will also include a section on start-up grants which are detailed in the next section.

The application will be made available mid-October 2023.

The application framework will entail the following details:

Inclusion policies:

- Do you have an inclusion policy?
- How will your program ensure that the needs of the priority populations are being met?
- How do you ensure hiring practices are inclusive and equitable?

Access policies:

- Proximity to transportation routes
- What types of resources does your organization have to support instructional and facility accessibility (i.e., barrier-free access)?
- How will you ensure your locations are accessible to priority populations? What are your strategies for barrier-free access to child care?

Budget information:

- Is your program financially viable?
- Do your base and non-base fees meet the Ministry of Education's [capped rates](#) as outlined in the Child Care Early Years Act?
- Staff salaries

Program information:

- How will the number of spaces and age groups you are offering meet the needs of the community and priority populations?
- Do you provide flexibility to families as it relates the days and hours offered for care?
- What are your plans to communicate, drive awareness and promote the child care program?

Quality:

- Do you have a quality framework?
- What is your strategy for integration? What community partners do you work with for resources and supports?
- What is your program statement? (vision/mission, values)
- How are you aligned with the principals of equity, diversity, inclusion and belonging?
- What are your staff recruitment and retention strategies?

Start Up Grants

Start up grants will support directed growth for the creation of new child care spaces based on the priority populations' needs.

Approved licensees participating in CWELCC are eligible to apply for start up grants as a part of their application. This will be an equitable and transparent process for licensees to apply.

Start up grants must fund projects required for child care facilities to be created, retrofitted, renovated, and/or expanded to accommodate a maximum group size for each age grouping for children under the age of six.

City of Hamilton may enter into service agreements with licensees to flow start-up grant funding, regardless of head office location.

Eligible centre-based applicants will be able to receive a grant of up to \$90 per square foot of a new licensed space with a cap of \$350,000 for every 50 child care spaces created. Home-based child care licensee applicants will be able to receive grants of up to \$1,000 per CWELCC space created, to a maximum of \$6,000 per provider.

Accountability

In the application, the prospective licensee must include an estimated date for the new licensed full day spaces. This date should be within two years of the date of the application.

When approving applications for start up grants, the City will consider:

- cost effectiveness
- available operating funding
- capacity of program to access funds through other means
- program budget and financial history
- child care licensing history
- current licensed and operational capacity
- age groups
- long-term viability
- investment in quality programming

Upon Approval of Start Up Grant

City staff will work with the prospective licensees to provide funding. Once licensed, the licensee must enter into a funding agreement with the City of Hamilton.

To access funding for start up grants, the of City of Hamilton will require a commitment from the licensee to:

- Participate in CWELCC for the remainder of the current CWELCC agreement (March 31, 2026)
- Spend the start up grant within two years from the date of the application
- Prioritize the creation of, and access to, new licensed full day spaces for children 0-4 years for our priority populations as outlined in the City's Access and Inclusion Framework

The City of Hamilton will receive progressive updates on the use of these funds as intended within the two-year timeframe of the date of application.

If the applicant withdraws from CWELCC or ceases their operations, the City of Hamilton will recover the start up grant funding and return to the Ministry of Education as part of regular financial reporting processes.

Licensed Home-Based Child Care

Home child care licensees must receive written confirmation from the City of Hamilton that the proposed child care homes are aligned with the directed growth approach and eligible for CWELCC funding.

Funding agreements for start up grants for home child care licensees must include a commitment from the licensee to maintain the number of approved child care spaces in the service area for the duration of the CWELCC agreement, even if the licensed capacity of the licensee changes prior to March 31, 2026.

Per Regulation Update 138/15, “Any unused capacity (i.e., inactive homes) will be designated as “unassigned capacity” and HCCAs² will not be permitted to open homes using their unassigned capacity. If licensees wish to open these homes, and they are enrolled in CWELCC, they will be required to demonstrate that a service system manager³ has advised that these homes will be eligible for CWELCC before they are assigned to a service system area.”

Phase 4: Space Creation and Evaluation

Phase 4 of the City of Hamilton Access and Inclusion Framework is not a stand-alone phase. It is an ongoing part of our Access and Inclusion Framework where we evaluate and monitor our framework.

The City of Hamilton is committed to ensuring the entirety of the allocated spaces to the City be utilized in the community.

Evaluation and Monitoring of the Framework

A research-based accountability (RBA) framework will be used to evaluate and monitor City of Hamilton’s Access and Inclusion Framework⁴. RBA provides a simple and action-based approach to community-based initiatives. In addition to mandated Ministry of Education data elements (i.e., counts and impact), the RBA framework outlined in the table below identifies how Hamilton will evaluate and monitor the access and inclusion goals during the implementation of CWELCC.

2 Home Child Care Agencies

3 City of Hamilton

4 Friedman, Mark (2005). Trying hard is not good enough. Victoria, BC: Trafford Pub.

What impact will Hamilton's CWELCC Access and Inclusion Framework have?		
Population Indicator	Ratio of spaces to children 0-3.8 years of age in Hamilton	
Effort	Quantity	Quality
	<p>How much was completed?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> # of new child care spaces and directed-growth spaces for priority groups in priority neighbourhoods # of new licensees joining Hamilton's system # of licensees providing diverse, flexible and/or inclusive services # of families participating in CWELCC and # receiving special needs resourcing and fee subsidy # of children on waitlists for child care # of engagement activities with priority groups to inform expansion # of ECEs and non-ECE professionals in workforce and RECE salary ranges # of new community partnerships to cultivate diverse, flexible and inclusive child care 	<p>How well was it completed?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> % change in ratio of spaces to children 0-3.8 years of age in Hamilton by type of care % change of new spaces based on priority neighbourhood targets by type of care % of Hamilton families with children 0-3.8 years participating in CWELCC including special needs resourcing and fee subsidy % change in children waiting for child care % of staff pressures in the system (operating capacity/licensee engagement) % of newly licensed operators participating in Hamilton's Quality Program % change in ECE and non-ECE professionals in workforce and average RECE salary change % of third-party child care partnerships in the system that cultivate diverse, flexible and inclusive child care

How are Hamilton’s families, children, educators and Early Years System better off?

Effect	<p>37% access rate (i.e., one affordable child care space for every 2.7 children ages 0-5 years)</p> <p>% of new spaces based on Ministry of Education priority neighbourhood targets by type of care</p> <p>% of priority populations access rates in priority neighbourhoods</p> <p>% of Francophone spaces in proportion to population is maintained or increased for ages 0-5</p> <p>Cost: Benefit for families in Hamilton participating in CWELCC including SNR and fee subsidy</p> <p>% of child care at full operating and/or licensed capacity in the system</p> <p>% of for-profit vs. not-for-profit enrolled in CWELCC</p> <p>Increase and retention in ECE and non-ECE workforce⁵ and % of RECE change in average salary over time.</p> <p>Diversity of workforce as indicated from Knowing Our Numbers⁶</p>
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5 Early Years Community HR Workforce Committee. RBA population indicators. City of Hamilton: n.p.

6 Akbari & McCuaig (2023). Knowing our numbers: a community approach to understanding the ECE workforce. University of Toronto: n.p.

Community Engagement Partnership Opportunity

As part of the local implementation of the [Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care \(CWELCC\)](#) plan, the City of Hamilton's Children's and Community Services Division is seeking your assistance in reaching the community your organization serves to better support their child care needs. The CWELCC plan seeks to increase child care access and create new targeted child care spaces for identified priority populations. This work is guided through [Hamilton's Access and Inclusion Framework](#).

Through this collaborative effort, we would like to honour the relationship your organization has with these identified populations by inviting your organization to take the lead on this community engagement.

This will be a compensated opportunity to ensure your organization's efforts are acknowledged and respected.

Guidelines for Community Engagement

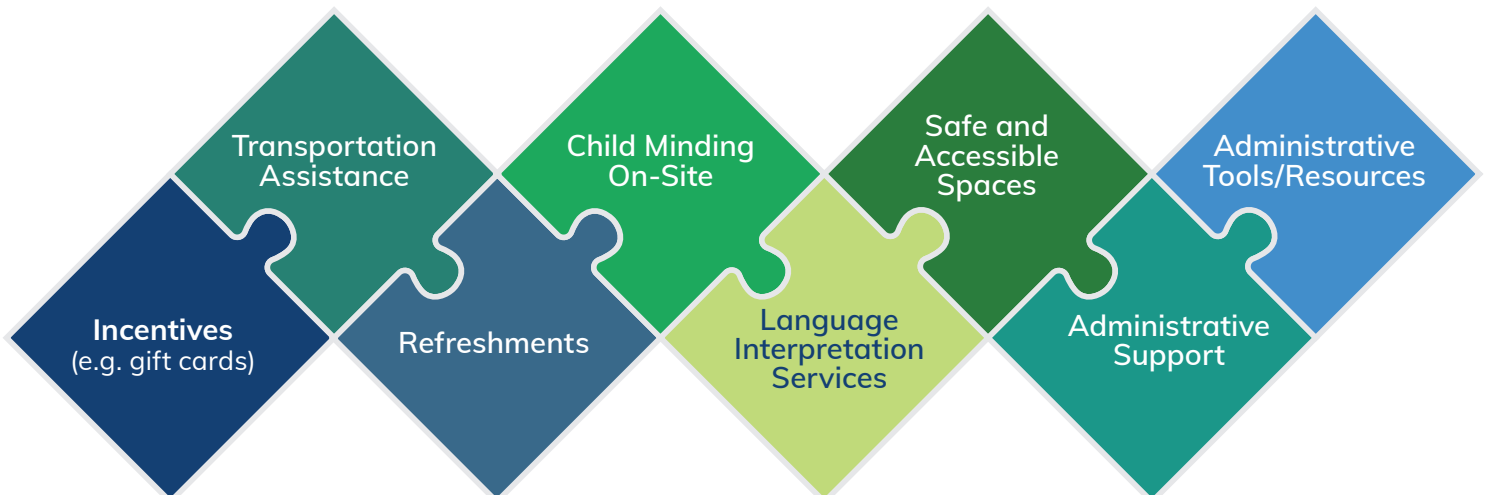
- Intended for families from priority populations serving children **below 6 years of age**.
- Engagement can be completed in any manner to best suit your organization's needs and the community you serve.
- Engagement must be completed using **informed consent** (e.g. written, verbal, or as relevant to the community you serve).
- In a collective commitment to **transparency**, the City of Hamilton and the partnering organization agree to share the outcome of this engagement and how it will be used.
- Engagement must be completed in a **safe and accessible** space.

The City of Hamilton is seeking the following information:

- Understanding child care needs (full or part-time, age of care, type of care)
- Types of child care preferences (home or centre-based)
- Resources that would better support finding or learning about child care options
- Previous attempts or challenges accessing quality child care
- Sense of belonging experienced in child care programs
- Culturally responsive programming
- Inclusion of children with differing abilities

City of Hamilton's Community Engagement Support

With your organization's guidance, we will make every effort to remove any possible barriers to community engagement based on your previous experiences with families, including:



After community engagement is completed, the City of Hamilton will:

- Accept and review the results of your engagement.
- Provide a report back to your organization and the families involved.
- Use the information to inform current and future child care expansion plans.

Organizational Considerations

- Do you have the willingness and capacity to take on this community engagement?
- Can you incorporate this engagement with an existing community event or initiative that is already scheduled to take place?
- What would you need from the City of Hamilton to make this a meaningful engagement opportunity for the population you serve?
- Can your organization commit to the timeline set out by the City of Hamilton?

Timeline

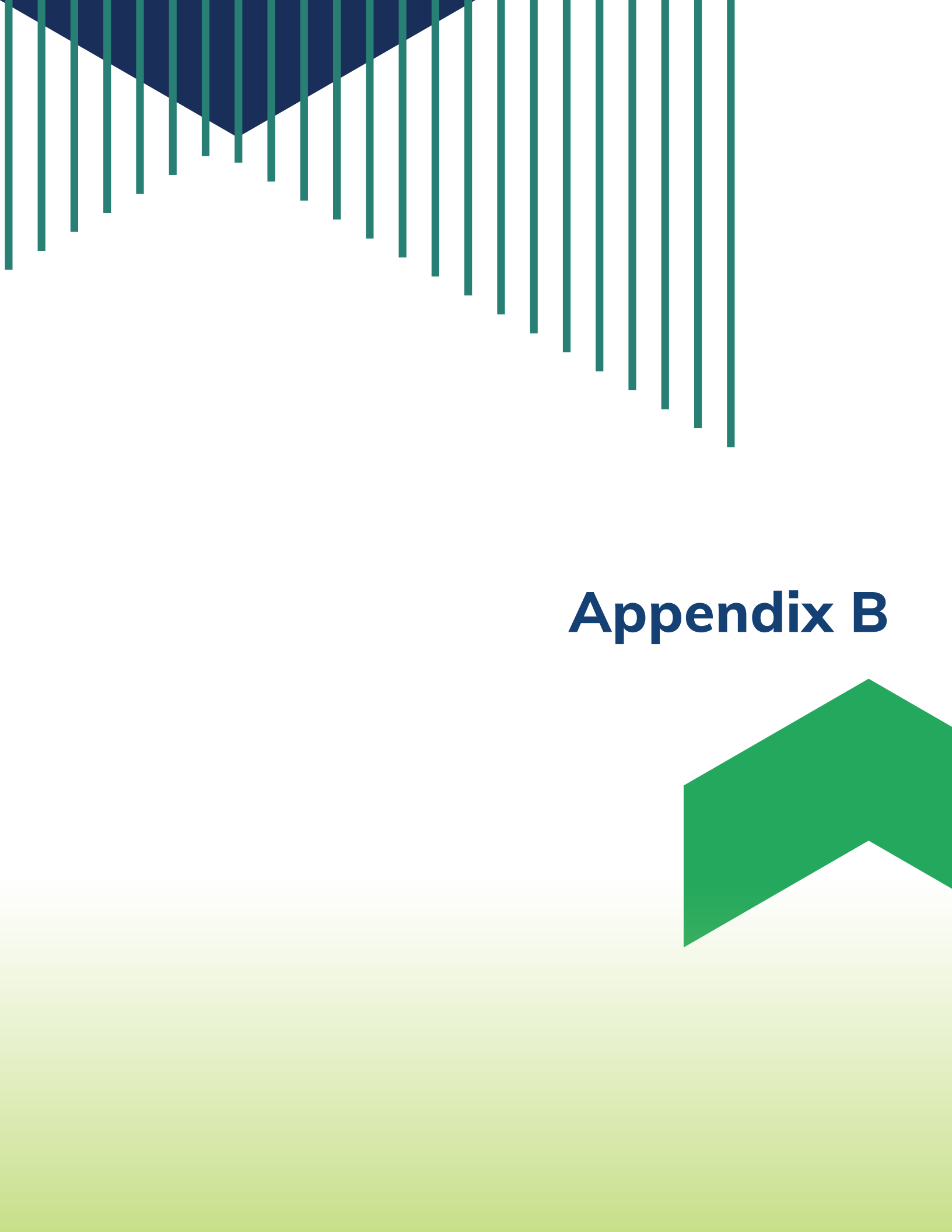
Our goal is to complete all community engagement by **October 2023**.

Next Steps

To move forward with this community engagement opportunity with us, please email cwelcc@hamilton.ca by end of day on **Monday, July 31, 2023**.

If you have additional questions or require further information please reach out to Kornelia Banach at Kornelia.Banach@hamilton.ca 905-546-2424 x 4881 or Brenda Bax at Brenda.Bax@hamilton.ca 905-546-2424 x 4120.

Thank you in advance for your consideration. We look forward to hearing from you.



Appendix B

DRAFT COPY AS OF AUGUST 2023

The City of Hamilton's Early Years System Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging Policy

Policy Statement

The City of Hamilton's Early Years System believes that equity, diversity, inclusion and belonging is about creating a culture that embraces the uniqueness of individuals and is representative of Hamilton's population. We are committed to creating an inclusive environment that respects and honours the diversity in our community that includes but is not limited to citizenship, race, place of origin, ethnic origin, colour, ancestry, disability, age, creed, sex/pregnancy, family status, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression. We acknowledge the history of colonialism, systemic racism and discrimination in Canada and will work to create an Early Years System where everyone can experience a sense of belonging.

Why is Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging Important?

By supporting equity, diversity, inclusion and belonging in the Early Years System, we will be able to bring to life our vision of having all children, families and members of the workforce (including front line staff and management) experience a real, lived and ongoing sense of belonging. Furthermore, we will be able to support and develop a positive organizational culture in which individual differences and the contributions of all team members are recognized and valued.

Purpose

An equity, diversity, inclusion and belonging policy is intended to promote equity, diversity, inclusion and belonging throughout the Early Years System. The City of Hamilton is committed to equity, diversity, inclusion and belonging by implementing these principles through our policies, procedures, and practices to ensure that all people who participate or have a purposeful role in the Early Years System experience a real, lived and ongoing sense of belonging.

Scope

This policy applies to all members of Hamilton's Early Years System including the City of Hamilton's Children's Community Services Division, EarlyON Child and Family Centres and child care licensees, staff, caregivers/families, system leaders, organizations working within the Early Years System and persons participating in the Early Years System (e.g. volunteer, visitor, service provider, contractor).

Guiding Principles

- Every person who participates or has a purposeful role in Hamilton's Early Years System will be treated with dignity and respect.
- Every individual's identity, strengths, needs and abilities will be honoured and appreciated.
- Any form of discrimination will not be tolerated.
- The principles of equity, diversity and inclusion will be embedded in Hamilton's Early Years System to ensure that every person can experience a real, lived and ongoing sense of belonging.

Expectations Hamilton's Early Years System

- Any person who participates or has a purposeful role in the Early Years System must be accepted and respected for their entire identity.
- Any form of discrimination including those on the following will not be tolerated: citizenship, race, place of origin, ethnic origin, colour, ancestry, disability, age, creed, sex/pregnancy, family status, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression.

Responsibilities

All members of Hamilton's Early Years System will share the responsibility for creating an equitable, diverse, inclusive and belonging environment.

The City of Hamilton is committed to:

- Creating opportunities for professional learning on equity, diversity, inclusion, belonging and accessibility topics for all employees.
- Developing inclusive policies, procedures and practices.
- Ongoing communication and dialogue with the community to help inform our work.
- Using data-driven information to make evidence-informed decisions.
- Working to identify and remove systemic barriers for the workforce and families.

Hamilton's Early Years System community partner organizations are committed to:

- Developing inclusive policies, procedures and practices.
- Embedding culturally responsive pedagogy into programming.
- Establishing an inclusive environment that is free of discrimination and harassment.
- Fostering a positive workplace culture where everyone can experience a real, lived and ongoing sense of belonging.
- Inclusion of all children regardless of ability, needs, gender, race, ethnicity, creed, and socioeconomic status.
- Ongoing communication and dialogue with families to create an inclusive and belonging environment.
- Participating in professional learning opportunities on equity, diversity, inclusion, belonging and accessibility topics.

Definitions

- **Accessibility:** Inclusive practice of ensuring everyone along the continuum of human ability and experience can acquire the same information, engage in the same interactions, and enjoy the same services in an equally effective and integrated manner with substantially equivalent ease of use.
- **Belonging:** When each individual is supported, respected, and valued for their identity and unique traits that make them different from each other.¹ Belonging is usually the result of the level of inclusion an individual feels in their environment.²

- **Colonialism:** The historical practice of European expansion into territories already inhabited by Indigenous peoples for the purposes of acquiring new lands and resources. This expansion is rooted in the violent suppression of Indigenous peoples' governance, legal, social and cultural structures. Colonialism attempts to force Indigenous peoples to accept and integrate into institutions that are designed to force them to conform with the structures of the colonial state. "Colonialism remains an ongoing process, shaping both the structure and the quality of the relationship between settlers and Indigenous peoples." (TRC Final Report, 2016 What We Have Learned: Principles of Truth and Reconciliation)
- **Discrimination:** Discrimination is an action or a decision that treats a person or a group badly for reasons such as their race, age or disability. These reasons, also called grounds, are protected under the Canadian Human Rights Act. ³
- **Diversity:** The presence of a wide range of human qualities and attributes within a group, organization or society. The dimensions of diversity include, but are not limited to, ancestry, culture, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, language, physical and intellectual ability, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, and socio-economic status.⁴
- **Ethnic origin:** Refers to the ethnic or cultural origins of the person's ancestors. An ancestor is usually more distant than a grandparent.⁵
- **Equity:** A condition or state of fair, inclusive, and respectful treatment of all people. Equity does not mean treating people the same without regard for individual differences. (Source: City of Hamilton corporate NEO)
- **Gender expression:** How a person publicly presents or expresses their gender. This can include behaviour and outward appearance such as dress, hair, make-up, body language and voice. A person's chosen name and pronoun are also common ways people express their gender. Others perceive a person's gender through these attributes.⁶
- **Gender identity:** is each person's internal and individual experience of gender. It is a person's sense of being a woman, a man, both, neither, or anywhere along the gender spectrum. A person's gender identity may be the same as or different from their birth-assigned sex.⁶
- **Inclusion:** is a collective term about creating a culture that strives for equity and embraces, respects, accepts and values difference.⁷
- **Systemic racism:** Systemic racism consists of organizational culture, policies, directives, practices or procedures that exclude, displace or marginalize some racialized groups or create unfair barriers for them to access valuable benefits and opportunities. This is often the result of institutional biases in organizational culture, policies, directives, practices, and procedures that may appear neutral but have the effect of privileging some groups and disadvantaging others.⁸
- **Systemic barriers:** Obstacles that exclude groups or communities of people from full participation and benefits in social, economic and political life. They may be hidden or unintentional but built into the way society works. Our assumptions and stereotypes, along with policies, practices and procedures, reinforce them. (City of Ottawa, Equity & Inclusion Lens Handbook, 2018)

Related supporting documents:

- City of Hamilton Early Years System Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging Action Plan (in progress)

Complementary policies and procedures

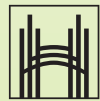
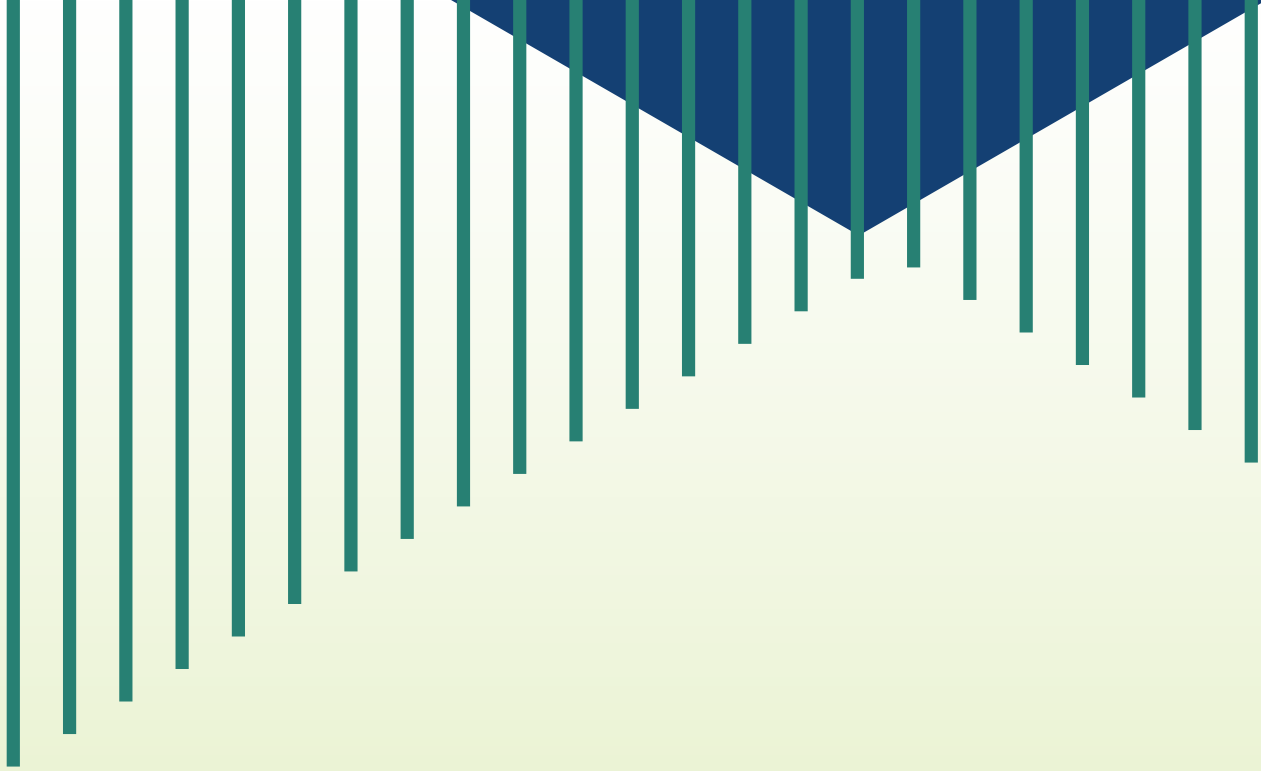
- Inclusive Hiring Policy (to be developed)
- Anti-Discrimination and Anti-Harassment Policy (to be developed)
- Inclusion Policy (to be developed)

Relevant Legislation

- [Charter of Human Rights](#)
- [Ontario Human Rights Code](#)
- [Accessibility for Ontarians with Disability Act](#)
- City of Hamilton's Equity and Inclusion Policy
- [Charter of Rights of Children & Youth](#)
- [Ensuring Equity for All Children and Families: An Equity and Engagement Framework](#)
- [City of Hamilton 2016 – 2025 Strategic Plan](#)
- [The Hamilton Early Years Community Plan 2016 – 2020](#)

REFERENCES

1. <https://policies.usask.ca/policies/health-safety-and-environment/fieldwork-and-associated-travel-safety.php#Purpose>
2. <https://peopleelement.com/overview-of-workplace-diversity-inclusion-and-belonging/>
3. <https://www.chrc-ccdp.gc.ca/en/about-human-rights/what-discrimination>
4. <https://www.ontario.ca/document/development-proposed-kindergarten-grade-12-k-12-education-standards-2022-final-recommendations/glossary-terms-and-definitions#foot-2>
5. <https://www23.statcan.gc.ca/imdb/p3Var.pl?Function=DEC&Id=103475>
6. <https://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/policy-preventing-discrimination-because-gender-identity-and-gender-expression/appendix-b-glossary-understanding-gender-identity-and-expression>
7. <https://ccdi.ca/our-story/diversity-defined/>
8. <https://www.ontario.ca/document/data-standards-identification-and-monitoring-systemic-racism/glossary>



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