

COUNTY OF WELLINGTON

VALUE-FOR-MONEY AUDIT OF
DIRECTLY OPERATED CHILD
CARE CENTRES

MARCH 2025



Wellington
County

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Executive summary

Child care is an important part of the County of Wellington’s social infrastructure. It enables parents (particularly women) to participate in the labour market and supports children to develop key skills at an important stage in their life.

The County plays a dual role in child care services. It is designated as the Service System Manager for child care and early years programmes and services within the County of Wellington and City of Guelph¹ and is, itself a direct service delivery organization. As Service System Manager, the County is responsible for planning and oversight of the entire system of child care and early years services including 5,616 spaces within licensed centre-based and licensed home child care delivered through not-for-profit and for-profit operators. As a direct delivery organization it operates four licensed centres, providing spaces for 177 children.

This value-for-money audit reviews the efficiency and effectiveness of child care delivery at the County’s four directly operated programmes: Mount Forest, Palmerston, Wellington Place, and Willowdale.

Data was collected through a variety of qualitative and quantitative sources including key informant interviews, two online surveys, review of administrative data and child care operator financial information, and analysis of external data and literature on key issues and trends in child care. This is not a longitudinal study. It represents a ‘snap shot’ analysis of feedback from stakeholders and review of available programme data and information across several measures of performance. Further study and analysis is required to validate the following headline results. However, given the richness of the data collected, the analysis has produced a number of observations that can inform service delivery considerations.

Key findings

Directly operated centres provide a wide range of benefits. This includes the ability to attract and retain staff more effectively, which can in turn increase the quality of care provided to children and families. As the centres are part of the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC) system, it has significantly reduced the cost of child care at the centres, and many families are more able to afford child care without carrying the full cost burden. The centres are also fulfilling a need as they each operate in areas that have a child care access rate that is significantly below the provincially established level of 37% and all have extensive waiting lists.

¹ The service delivery area of the County of Wellington and City of Guelph is collectively referenced as Wellington-Guelph in this report.

Feedback from stakeholders indicated that the directly operated centres often provide more effective services than other child care operators. However, the financial analysis also highlights the higher costs associated with service delivery at the directly operated centres, primarily a result of higher staffing costs.

The findings, analysis and recommendations are intended to assist the County in responding to emerging issues in the administration and delivery of the directly operated child care programmes.

There are several potential ways that the County can strengthen directly operated centres. As the shortage in spaces can create accessibility challenges particularly for families that may not have the capacity and resources to navigate the system, the centres could explore ways to make their caseload more reflective of the population in the areas they are operating. For example, some stakeholders reported that higher income families from neighbourhoods outside the area being served by a centre are taking the places that could be used by lower income families within the local area.

There may also be opportunities to extend the hours to support families that are more vulnerable and / or working “non-standard” hours. By using the Quality Assessment Tool to benchmark performance across the system, the County can identify potential leading practices that could be scaled up more fully.

The centres can also explore opportunities to strengthen integration with other supports (e.g., parenting programs, health and social services, etc) by reviewing the approach to working with other community partners that form part of the integrated service network for children and families.

While opportunities for improvement exist, the most significant finding is the important impact that the directly operated child care programmes have in making child care accessible for Wellington-Guelph residents in need. The critical shortage of child care increases the importance of maintaining and supporting all types of child care that can be delivered within the framework of the CWELCC system.²

² The federal government has capped the provincial ratio of licensed child care operators based on auspice type that can qualify for CWELCC funding at 70 per cent non-profit spaces (which includes the directly operated programmes) and 30 per cent for-profit spaces. The framework is available at https://www.canada.ca/en/early-learning-child-care-agreement/agreements-provinces-territories/ontario-canada-wide-2021.html?utm_source=chatgpt.com

Introduction

The County of Wellington is designated by the Province of Ontario as the Service System Manager for child care and early years programmes and services for the County of Wellington and City of Guelph. This is a mid-sized delivery area in the southwest region of the province with both rural and urban geographic areas. It consists of the seven lower tier municipalities of the County of Wellington (Township of Centre Wellington, Town of Erin, Township of Guelph/ Eramosa, Town of Minto, Township of Mapleton, Township of Puslinch and the Township of Wellington North), and the single tier municipality of the City of Guelph.

The seven municipalities in the County have relatively larger land areas with a variable land use pattern that is more typical of rural areas. The primary land use is agriculture, but the manufacturing sector also plays a lead role in the economy. Each of the County municipalities also has a number of communities, often referred to as population centres, that show land-use patterns more typical of urban areas – they are dominated by service and tertiary industries.

The County is responsible for planning and administering licensed child care and early years programmes as the service system manager. It directly delivers licensed child care at four centres and there are an additional 89 licensed child care programmes delivered by community-based operators.

This value-for-money audit focuses on the quality and efficiency of the County's directly operated child care programmes.

The County's directly operated centres are in a service delivery area that has a child care access rate of 26% - less than the provincially established goal of 37%³ and include:

- Mount Forest Child Care and Learning Centre (32 spaces)
- Palmerston Child Care and Learning Centre (49 spaces)
- Wellington Place Child Care and Learning Centre (64 spaces)
- Willowdale Child Care and Learning Centre (32 spaces)

Each centre has spaces for infants (birth-18 months), toddlers (18-30 months) and preschoolers (30-48 months). All centres are enrolled in the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC) System. It has enhanced the affordability of child

³ The Province of Ontario's Access and Inclusion Framework 2023 establishes the number of licensed child care spaces available for children from birth up to age 5 as a proportion of the number of children who live in each area and is set at 37%. This is equivalent to one affordable child care space for every 2.7 children aged 0-5.

care for infants, toddlers and preschool spaces. For example, the reduction in the infant daily rate has dropped from \$61.30 to \$22 for full-day, five days/week care.⁴

Each centre is at capacity with a combined wait list of 6,538 unique children and a wait list timeline of between 10 months to 2 years.⁵

In 2023, the combined annual operating expenditure on these centres was approximately \$6.5m, with \$4.26m covered by provincial grants and subsidies and \$855,000 by user fees.

The audit was conducted between September 2024 and February 2025 and considers both the financial and non-financial benefits of the Directly Operated Child Care and Learning Centres. It has the following objectives:

- Documenting the local context of licensed child care
- Analyzing financial performance, including consideration of comparators
- Reviewing the economic impacts for families, the local economy, and the licensed child care workforce
- Considering the effectiveness in relation to the Wellington Child Care and Early Years Service Plan, 2023-2026, and other guiding provincial documents

This report also provides analysis, observations and considerations to improve the performance of the directly operated programmes.

⁴ The details on the rates are available at <https://www.wellington.ca/programmes-services/child-care-early-years/child-care-locations-waitlist/directly-operated>

⁵ The numbers reported here are the range of the mean of the *average number of days to placement* for all age groups and is from the County's waitlist data. The number varies by centre and age group.

Methodology

The value-for-money audit framework covers key evaluation issues including quality, accessibility, financial sustainability, responsiveness, equity, and integration with other supports. Data was collected through a variety of qualitative and quantitative sources including key informant interviews, two online surveys, review of administrative data including the County's child care and early years plan and child care operator financial information, and analysis of external data and literature on key issues and trends in child care.

The online surveys for parents/caregivers and staff explored stakeholder experiences on a variety of dimensions, such as programme quality, accessibility, and service delivery. 269 parents and caregivers and 123 staff members completed each survey.

Thirteen interviews were conducted with key stakeholders using a semi-structured questionnaire. This includes County of Wellington child care and early years staff, supervisors of directly-operated child care centres, Wellington County Councillors and community delivery partners.

The use of multiple lines of evidence to address each evaluation topic allowed the research process to triangulate the data. This was used to improve the validity of the results including by eliminating alternative explanations for the findings. However, it is important to note that this study and its key findings are based on the qualitative and quantitative data that was accessible to the research team. Future research and analysis initiatives that may be able to access a broader set of data should build upon and validate these findings.

Economic Outcomes

Overview

Child care provides a wide range of important socioeconomic outcomes for the local economy, families, and children. This includes the economic impacts of labour force participation for community members and the social, health, and economic outcomes for children, as well as employment opportunities the staff that work in the child care centres. These benefits are interconnected in various ways and can be both direct and indirect. For example, the opportunity that child care provides for parents to enter and stay in the labour market can in turn result in higher incomes, creating greater opportunities for their children. Similarly, the opportunity that child care provides for social and cognitive development can lead to improved outcomes in later stages of life.

This section draws upon the extensive literature that documents the economic benefits of child care. During the stakeholder engagement process, interviewees highlighted the benefits that were reported in the literature are consistent with their experience in child care programmes that are directly operated by the County.

Benefits

High-quality child care programmes can have a positive impact on children's social and emotional development, school readiness and academic achievement. With an estimated 90 percent of brain growth and development occurring between birth and age five, this is an important opportunity to build connections that support children to become healthy, capable and successful adults.⁶

These safe child care environments can help children increase confidence and learn new skills. This includes language, cognition, numeracy, emotional regulation, social cooperation, and other social abilities, in ways that have a life-long impact.⁷

Improvements in cognitive abilities, mathematical skills, and literacy can lead to improved educational outcomes, reducing intergenerational poverty, and boosting their earnings in later life.

Access to child care provides an opportunity for parents with very young children to participate in the labour market. As child care responsibilities fall disproportionately on women, the provision of child care can also improve gender equity. Caregiving restricts women's access to the workforce, contributing to higher representation in precarious

⁶ Kolb, B., Whishaw, I. Q., & Teskey G. C. (2019). *An Introduction to Brain and Behavior* (6 ed.): Worth Publishers, in Honourable Margaret Norrie McCain (2020). *Early Years Study 4: Thriving Kids, Thriving Society*. Toronto: Margaret and Wallace McCain Family Foundation Inc., available at https://earlyyearsstudy.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/EYS4-Report_01_15_2020.pdf

⁷ Conference Board of Canada – Ready for Life, October 2017, available at <https://www.conferenceboard.ca/product/ready-for-life-a-socio-economic-analysis-of-early-childhood-education-and-care/>

contract, temporary or part-time employment. The groups most affected by precarious work are women newcomers to Canada, women with disabilities and Indigenous and racialized women.⁸

In addition to improving gender equity outcomes, access to child care can significantly reduce poverty for low-income families. A recent study by the Conference Board of Canada found that by encouraging more women to enter the labour force, the introduction of an expanded Early Childhood Education programme would result in about 23,000 families – many of them single-parent families – being lifted out of poverty.⁹

Child care that is affordable¹⁰ and flexible is particularly important for families who are more vulnerable, such as sole-support parents and those living in low income. Participating in the workforce can in turn increase household incomes and improve socio-economic wellbeing.

Child care can also contribute to the social well-being of the community by reducing poverty and gender inequalities and fostering a sense of belonging. Families facing various barriers, such as newcomers and sole-support parents, can be supported to access local resources. Inclusive programs can facilitate the integration of children with special needs or those with other unique backgrounds. These programs allow families to participate in social and economic life, which in turn enhances the well-being of the entire community.

Investing in child care also benefits the local economy. Quality child care and early years programs can lead to a more educated and skilled workforce in the future. A strong child care and early years system supports the local economy by enabling more parents to work and attracting skilled workers to the area, while creating jobs within the system itself. Research suggests that for every dollar invested in early childhood programs, there is a significant return on investment, with estimates suggesting returns as high as \$5.80 per dollar spent.¹¹

⁸ Honourable Margaret Norrie McCain (2020). Early Years Study 4: Thriving Kids, Thriving Society. Toronto: Margaret and Wallace McCain Family Foundation Inc., available at https://earlyyearsstudy.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/EYS4-Report_01_15_2020.pdf

⁹ Conference Board of Canada – Ready for Life, October 2017, available at <https://www.conferenceboard.ca/product/ready-for-life-a-socio-economic-analysis-of-early-childhood-education-and-care/>

¹⁰ As the centres are part of CWELCC, it has significantly reduced the cost of child care at the centres, allowing families to be able to afford child care without carrying the full cost burden. This has reduced the infant daily rate from \$61.30 to \$22 for full-day, 5 days/week care.

¹¹ Conference Board of Canada – Ready for Life, October 2017, available at <https://www.conferenceboard.ca/product/ready-for-life-a-socio-economic-analysis-of-early-childhood-education-and-care/>.

Auspice type

The literature on the economic benefits of child care does not focus on auspice and there is very little evidence to suggest that the economic outcomes of directly operated programmes differ dramatically from community child care operators. This is because the studies typically measure the benefits (e.g., increased tax revenues, wage increases, impact on the use of public services, etc) and costs (e.g., staff salaries and benefits, etc) and typically do not isolate for the impact that the auspice type had on the outcome.

However, as identified elsewhere in this report, the directly operated programmes appear to provide higher quality services which can in turn increase the benefits associated with the investment.¹² On the other hand, as directly operated programmes typically operate at a higher cost¹³, this can reduce the net benefit. Given the focus of this value-for-money assessment, isolating the precise economic benefit and cost associated with directly operated programmes was not part of the study's scope. If the County is interested in pursuing this, it could undertake a longitudinal study that tracks the socioeconomic outcomes of children in different auspice settings over time, or could collect data from all of its licensed child care operators and apply the methodology used by one of the studies in Table 1 below and control for the auspice type.

¹² As outlined in the next section of this report.

¹³ As outlined in the next section of the report the expenditure on directly operated programmes (on a cost per space basis) is generally higher than for-profit or non-profit programmes.

Table 1: Studies conducted on the benefits and costs of child care

| Study ¹⁴ | Methodology | | Key findings on benefit cost ratio |
|---|--|--|------------------------------------|
| | Benefits covered | Costs covered | |
| <p>Prentice, S. (2007a). <i>Franco-Manitoban childcare: Childcare as economic, social, and language development in St. Pierre-Jolys</i>. Winnipeg, MB: Child Care Coalition of Manitoba.</p> <p>The report states that neither the province nor municipalities directly operate child care in Manitoba. Therefore the 1.6 ratio reflects only non-profit, for-profit and independent businesses family care homes (p.18).</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in direct and indirect GDP generated from expenditures | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff salaries and benefits • Programme costs (toys, books, etc.) • Office and building space • Administrative costs | 1.6 |
| <p>Fortin, P., Godbout, G., and St-Cerny, S. (2011). Economic Consequences of Quebec’s Educational Childcare Policy. www.oise.utoronto.ca/atkinson/UserFiles/File/Events/2011-06-22%20-%20</p> <p>No specifications on auspice type.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revenues from higher maternal labour force participation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial support for child care centres • Child care centre infrastructure • Pension benefits paid to employees working in child care | 1.7 |
| <p>Peters, R. DeV., Nelson, G., Petrunka, K., Pancer, S.M., Loomis, C., Hasford, J., Janzen, R., Armstrong, L., & Van Andel, A. (2010). <i>Investing in Our Future: Highlights of Better Beginnings, Better Futures Research Findings at Grade 12</i>. Kingston, ON: Better Beginnings, Better Futures Research Coordination Unit, Queen’s University.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact on the use of health, special education, social services, and the criminal justice system | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff salaries and benefits • Materials for educational and recreational activities | 2.0 |

¹⁴ This table is adapted from Early Learning and Childcare as Key Economic Infrastructure, April 2021, Deloitte

| Study ¹⁴ | Methodology | | Key findings on benefit cost ratio |
|--|--|--|------------------------------------|
| | Benefits covered | Costs covered | |
| No specification on auspice type. | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food for snacks and small meals | |
| <p>Cleveland, G., & Krashinsky, M. (1998). <i>Financing early learning and child care in Canada</i>. Toronto, ON: Childcare Resource and Research Unit, University of Toronto.</p> <p>The study cites a 1999 report that, when controlling for auspice type (profit and non-profit), found a positive influence of child care quality across all areas of children's outcomes.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implied child development benefits for young children • Increased labour force participation of mothers, including increase in wages for some | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff salaries and benefits | 2.0 |
| <p>Fairholm, R. (2012). Economic impact analysis of early learning and care for Ontario. The Centre for Spatial Economics.</p> <p>The report does not distinguish between auspice type. Its benefit cost ratios provided are calculated at the national (2.5), Ontario (2.4), and Toronto (2.2) levels.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long-term benefits to children, such as lower grade failures, less reliance on special education, and lower smoking rates • Increased hours worked by mothers and | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Input-output modelling of costs associated with care outside the home, costs include salaries and benefits to workers, expenditure on supplies, etc. | 2.5 |

| Study ¹⁴ | Methodology | | Key findings on benefit cost ratio |
|---|--|--|---|
| | Benefits covered | Costs covered | |
| | potential increased wages | | |
| <p>Conference Board of Canada. (2017). Ready for life: A socio-economic analysis of early childhood education and care. Ottawa, ON: Conference Board of Canada.</p> <p>https://www.conferenceboard.ca/wp-content/uploads/woocommerce_uploads/reports/9231_Ready-for-Life_RPT.pdf</p> <p>No specification on auspice type.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revenues from higher maternal labour force participation • Revenues from higher future wage earnings for ECE participants | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding for new ECE spaces, including instructor wages and school infrastructure | <p>Lower Bound = 1.67</p> <p>Upper bound = 5.83</p> |

As these studies show, the benefit return on investment ranges from approximately \$1.6 – \$5.8 and depends on the factors that are included.

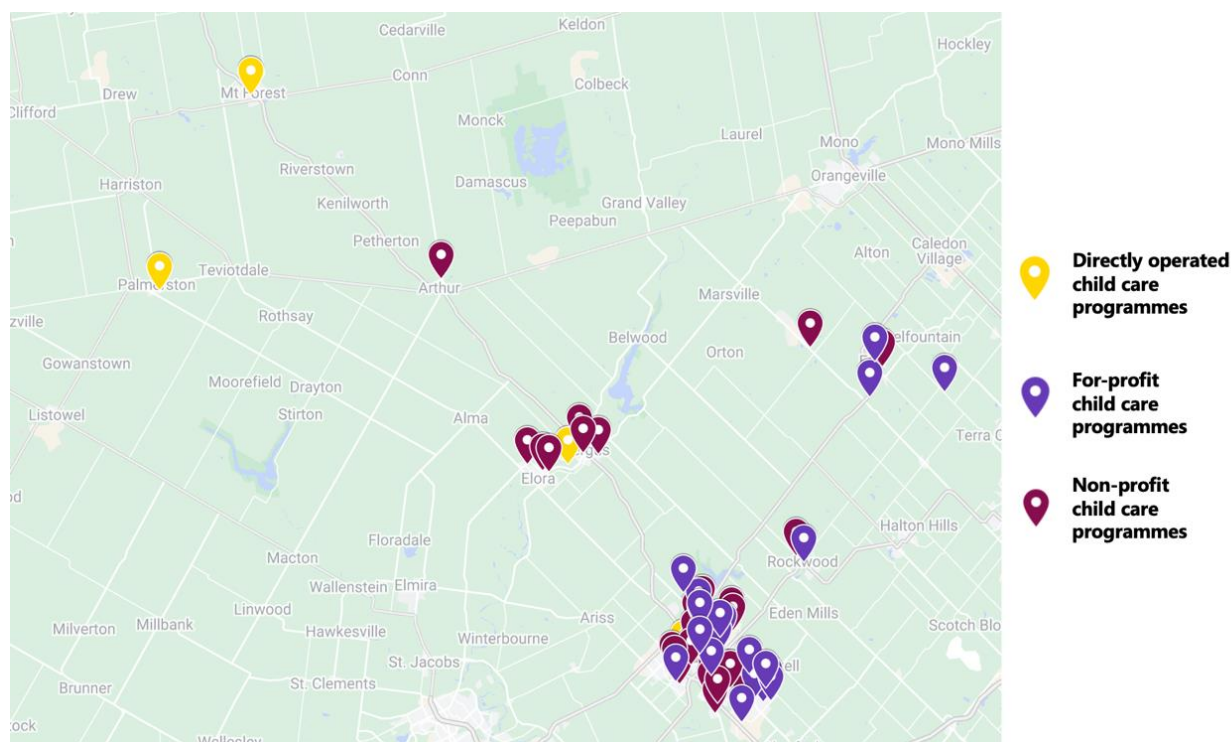
Comparative Analysis

This section compares the characteristics and service delivery features of the different types of licensed child care centres. It focuses on four key dimensions: quality, efficiency, affordability and staff conditions.

Child care delivery in Wellington-Guelph includes non-profit, for-profit, and public programmes. Figure 1 provides a map of child care centres operating in the County. It is important to highlight that the two directly operated centres in Mount Forest and Palmerston are the only child care centres in these areas.

Mount Forest is located in the Township of Wellington North, with a child care access rate of 9% and Palmerston is in the Town of Minto, with a child care access rate of 8% (less than ¼ of the provincially established access rate of 37%¹⁵).

Figure 1: Map of Child Care Centres in Wellington-Guelph



Directly operated child care programmes

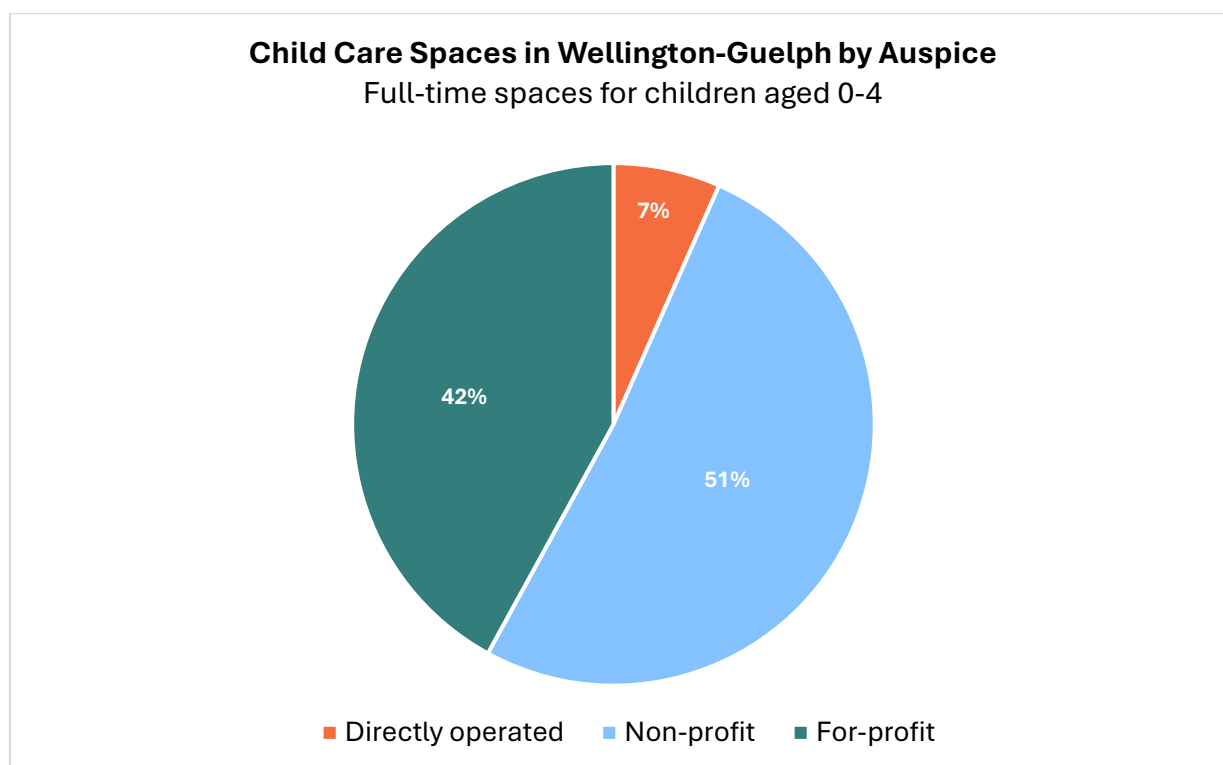
The four directly operated licensed child care programmes, listed below in Table 2, primarily serve children from birth to age four, with a total of 177 spaces. Directly operated centres provide 7% of all child care spaces, as shown in Figure 2.

¹⁵ See Ontario's Access and Inclusion Framework 2023, available at <https://files.ontario.ca/edu-access-and-inclusion-framework-en-2023-07-07.pdf>

Table 2: Directly Operated Child Care Programmes in Wellington-Guelph

| Child Care Centre | Location | Number of full-time spaces ¹⁶ | Total expenditure ¹⁷ |
|---|--|--|---------------------------------|
| Willowdale Child Care and Learning Centre | 95 Willow Road, City of Guelph | 32 | \$1,309,606 |
| Wellington Place Child Care and Learning Centre | 477 Charles Allen Way, Centre Wellington | 64 | \$2,228,902 |
| Mount Forest Child Care and Learning Centre | 311 Forest Street, Minto | 32 | \$1,310,705 |
| Palmerston Child Care and Learning Centre | 540 Prospect Street, Wellington North | 49 | \$1,691,491 |

Figure 2: Child Care Spaces in Wellington-Guelph by Auspice



¹⁶ Full-time spaces are child care spaces that are available full day (i.e., excluding half day programmes such as nursery) and full year. When data for birth up to 4 is presented, it considers only children under 1, 1, 2, and 3 years old, and considers only infant, toddler, and preschool spaces. The values used are children who are 4 years old and have the option to attend Full Day Kindergarten.

¹⁷ Total expenditure is based on the Directly Operated Centre Financial Statements - Year End 2023

Non-profit child care programmes

Non-profit child care programmes can be run by non-profit, co-operative, or charitable organizations. They may operate a single centre or at multiple locations and are managed by volunteer boards. Any surplus funds are reinvested into the programme(s) delivered by the non-profit.

There are 52 non-profit programmes in Wellington-Guelph. A total of 1,370 full time spaces for children aged 0-4 are provided by non-profit programmes – 51% of all comparable spaces in Wellington-Guelph, as shown in Figure 2.¹⁸ A complete list of non-profit child care programmes in Wellington-Guelph can be found in the appendix.

For-profit child care programmes

For-profit child care programmes are owned by individuals, partnerships, or corporations. The surplus funds are treated as profit and can be distributed to owners or shareholders.

There are 37 for-profit programmes in Wellington-Guelph.¹⁹ A total of 1,121 full time spaces for children aged 0-4 are provided by for-profit programmes, or 42% of all comparable spaces in Wellington-Guelph, as shown in Figure 2.²⁰ A complete list of for-profit child care centres can be found in the appendix.

Efficiency

Efficiency involves maximizing outputs such as the volume of child care services provided and / or minimizing inputs such as the amount of resources or capital required to produce the services. Efficiency can be measured by how much it costs to deliver a programme compared to previous years or compared to peer organizations, or the outcome that the County achieves from a given level of expenditure.

To evaluate the level of efficiency, this report considers four key metrics: expenditure per child, employment costs as a percentage of total expenditure, employment costs per child, and total supplies, materials and equipment as a percentage of total expenditure.

Expenditure per child

Expenditure per child is a metric that shows the total costs of providing child care services divided by the number of available full-time child care spots. The total expenditure includes salaries, wages, benefits, supplies, materials, equipment,

¹⁸ Note that there are 3,234 non-profit spaces provided in the County of Wellington across all age groups.

¹⁹ The CWELCC agreement requires the province to have a maximum of 30% of CWELCC spaces operated by for-profit operators. Currently, all for-profit CWELCC spaces in the County of Wellington have been allocated.

²⁰ Note that there are 2,175 for-profit spaces provided in the County of Wellington across all age groups.

maintenance, purchased services, insurance, and other costs. This helps to evaluate which type of child care centre provides cost-effective services.

Employment costs as a percentage of total expenditure

This metric measures the proportion of expenditure on staff salaries, wages, and benefits. Employment costs are typically one of the largest cost drivers.

Employment cost per child

This metric combines staffing expenses with available full-time spaces to show the employment cost per child. This measure helps assess whether centres are optimizing their staffing expenditures relative to the number of child care spaces.

Total supplies, materials and equipment as % of expenditure

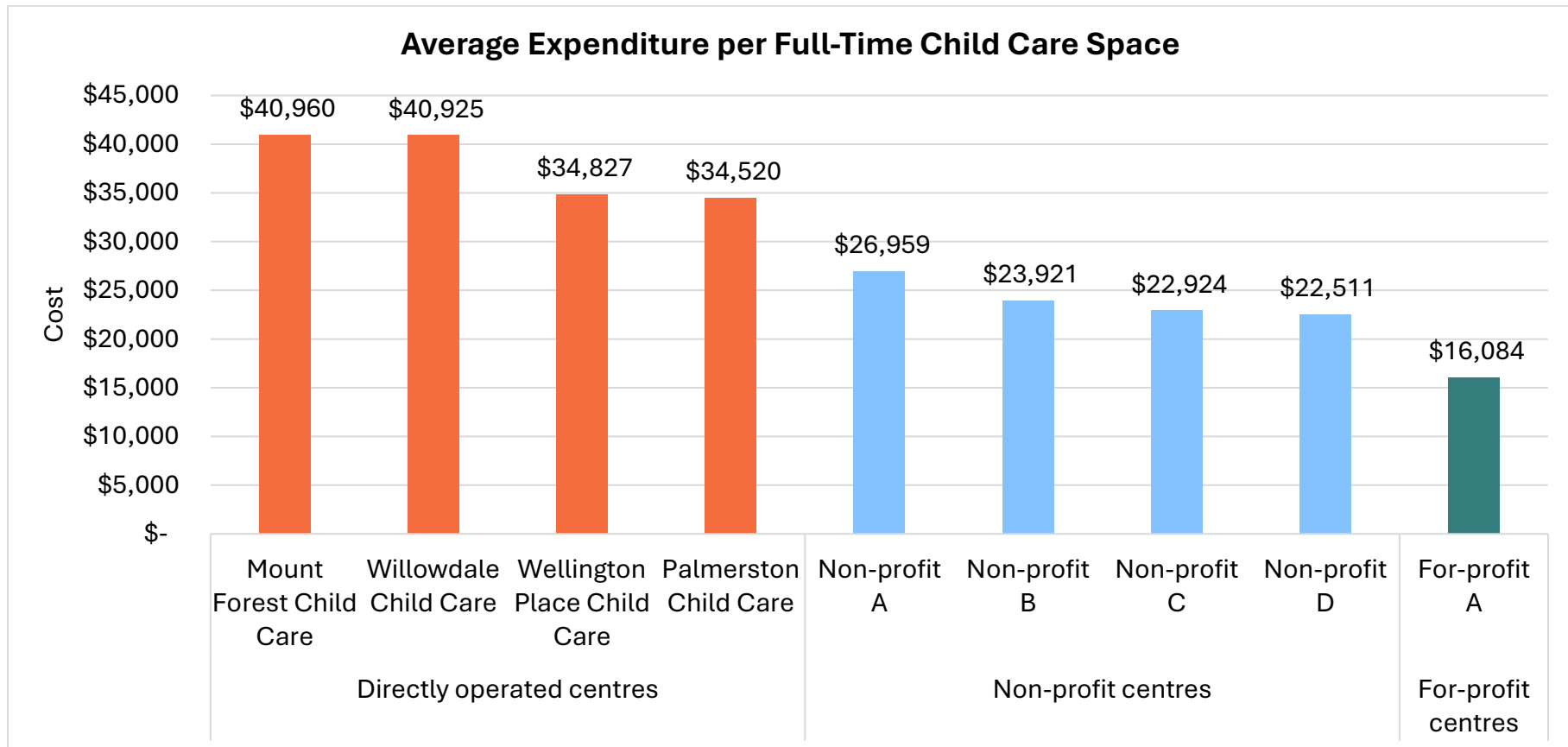
Supplies, materials, and equipment as a percentage of expenditure measures how much of the budget is allocated to key resources required for service delivery. This can include food and kitchen supplies, programme and office supplies, and requirements for janitorial, plumbing, and cleaning purposes, etc.

Measurement considerations

It is important to acknowledge that child care costs vary based on the age groups served. For example, infant spaces are considerably more expensive than toddler or preschool spaces due to higher staff-to-child ratios and other resources that are required. Additionally, some costs incurred by the centres may not directly translate into child care spaces (e.g., administrative overhead, facility maintenance, etc). These nuances should be considered when interpreting cost efficiency findings.

Due to data availability, only one for-profit centre was included in the comparison. The names of the non-profit and for-profit centres have not been disclosed in this report to maintain confidentiality of the child care operators that willingly shared their financial information. A breakdown of the cost comparison can be found in the Appendix.

Figure 3: Average Expenditure per Child Care Space



All four directly operated centres have a higher average expenditure per child care space than the non-profit and for-profit centres included in this comparison. It is important to note that the directly operated centres have a unionized workforce, and that all four operate infant spaces, which are typically more costly to provide. The average cost per space for directly operated centres ranges from \$34,520 at Palmerston Child Care to \$40,960 at Mount Forest Child Care. The cost per space of non-profit centres ranges from

\$22,511 to \$26,959.²¹ The single for-profit centre in the comparison shows the lowest cost per space at \$16,084, significantly below both directly operated centres and non-profit centres.²²

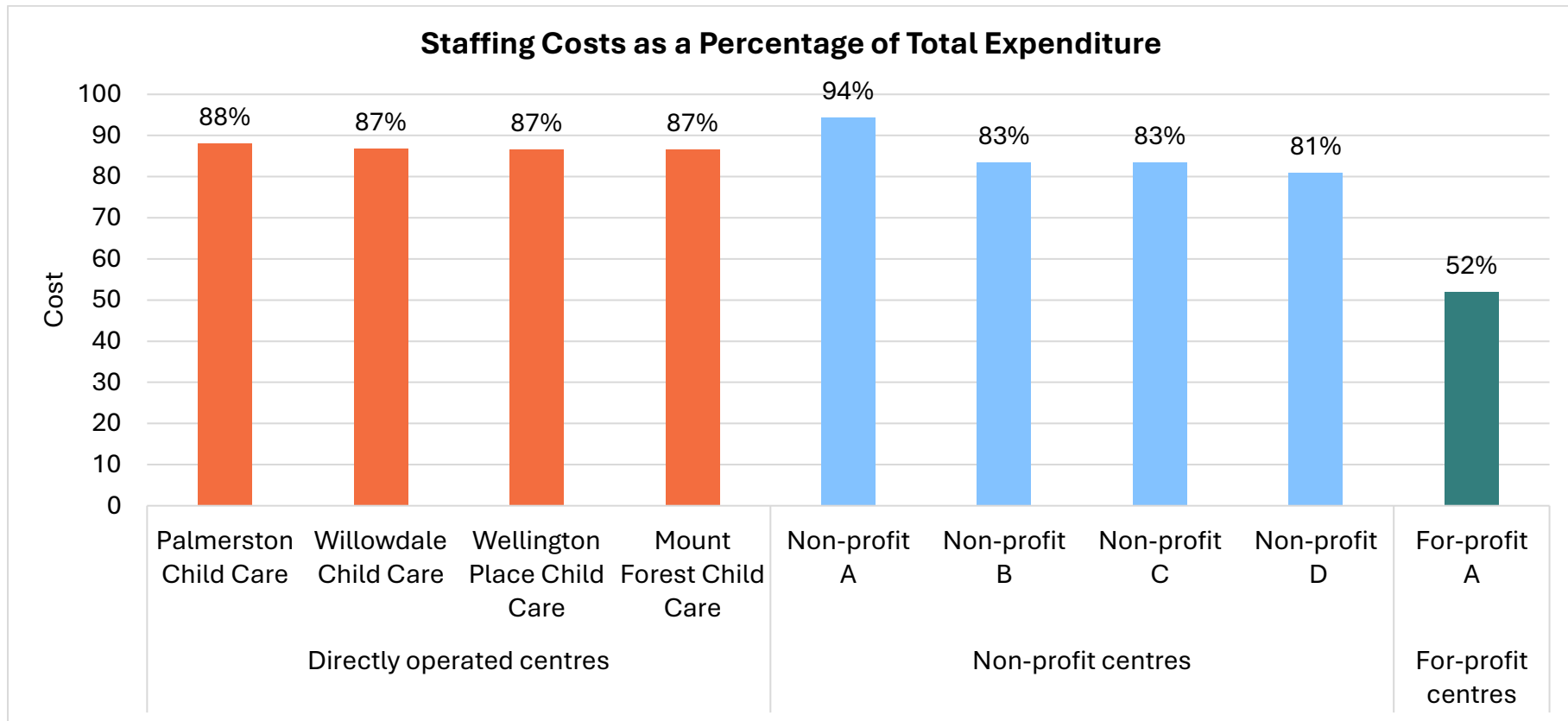
This is consistent with other studies that document the higher average cost per child of municipally run centres. For example, in the City of Toronto, these costs were \$26,360 compared to costs of between \$9,340 - \$16,957 (depending on the type of centre).²³ The average cost of Toronto's municipally run centres was 1.6 times more than the non-profit similar centres. This was largely driven by the increased staffing costs (\$161,182 per staff member at Toronto's municipally run centres compared to \$103,248 at the similar non-profit centres in Toronto).

²¹ Note that Non-profit A does not operate infant spaces, which are typically more costly. This may have contributed to a lower average expenditure per space. Non-profits B, C, and D do provide infant spaces.

²² Note that For-profit A does not operate infant spaces, which are typically more costly. This may have contributed to a lower average expenditure per space.

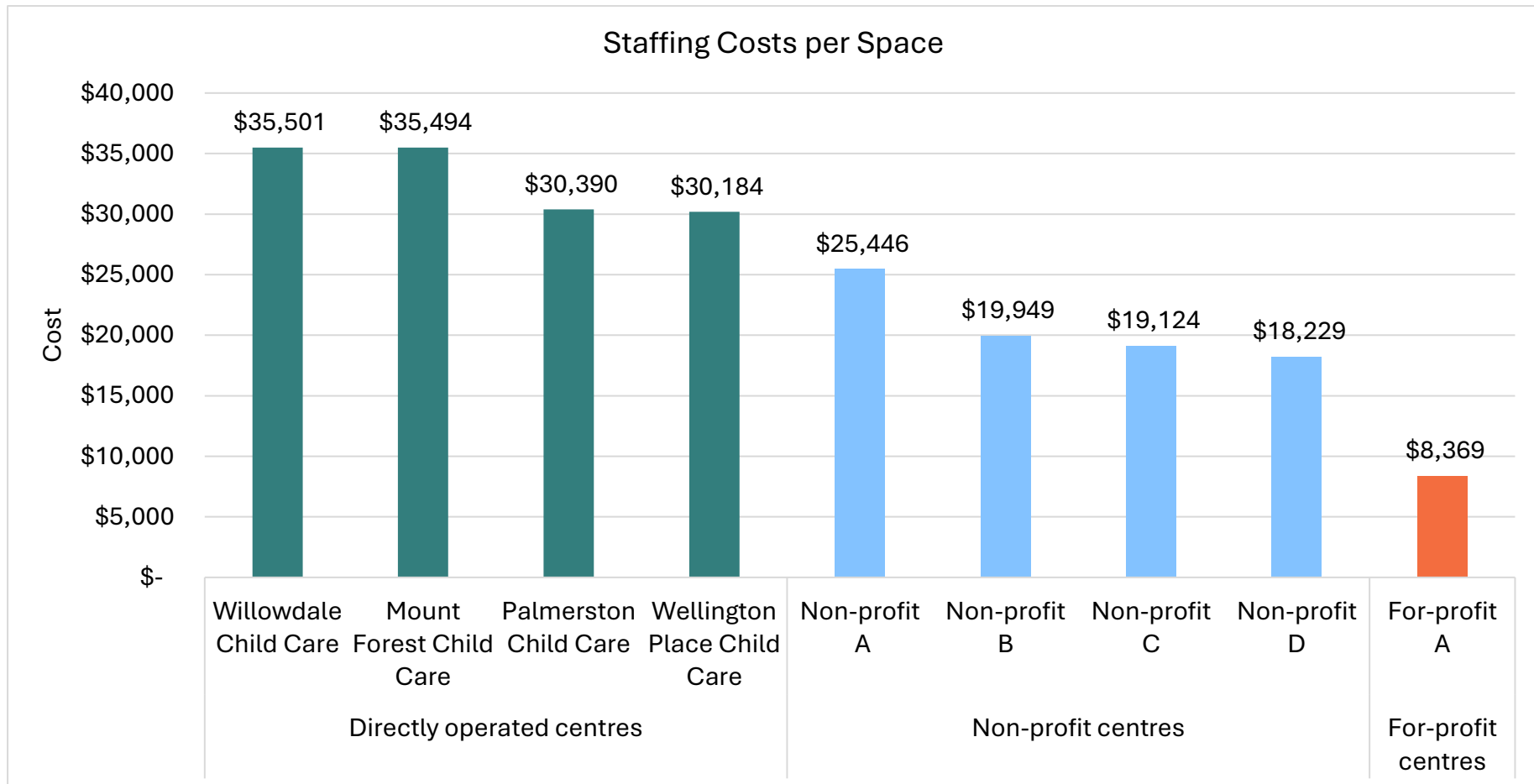
²³ See table 4.1 of Review of Toronto Early Learning and Child Care Services. March 2021. Available at <https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2021/ec/bgrd/backgroundfile-164908.pdf>

Figure 4: Staffing Costs as a Percentage of Total Expenditure



Directly operated centres spend the majority of their budget on salaries, benefits, and wages – with staffing costs consistently at 87-88% of total expenditure across all four centres. This pattern closely aligns with most non-profit centres, which operate at similar levels between 81-94%, suggesting comparable staffing and compensation approaches between these two auspices. In contrast, the for-profit centre allocates only 52% of expenditure to employment costs, representing a significant difference of approximately 35 percentage points between the for-profit centre and the directly operated centres.

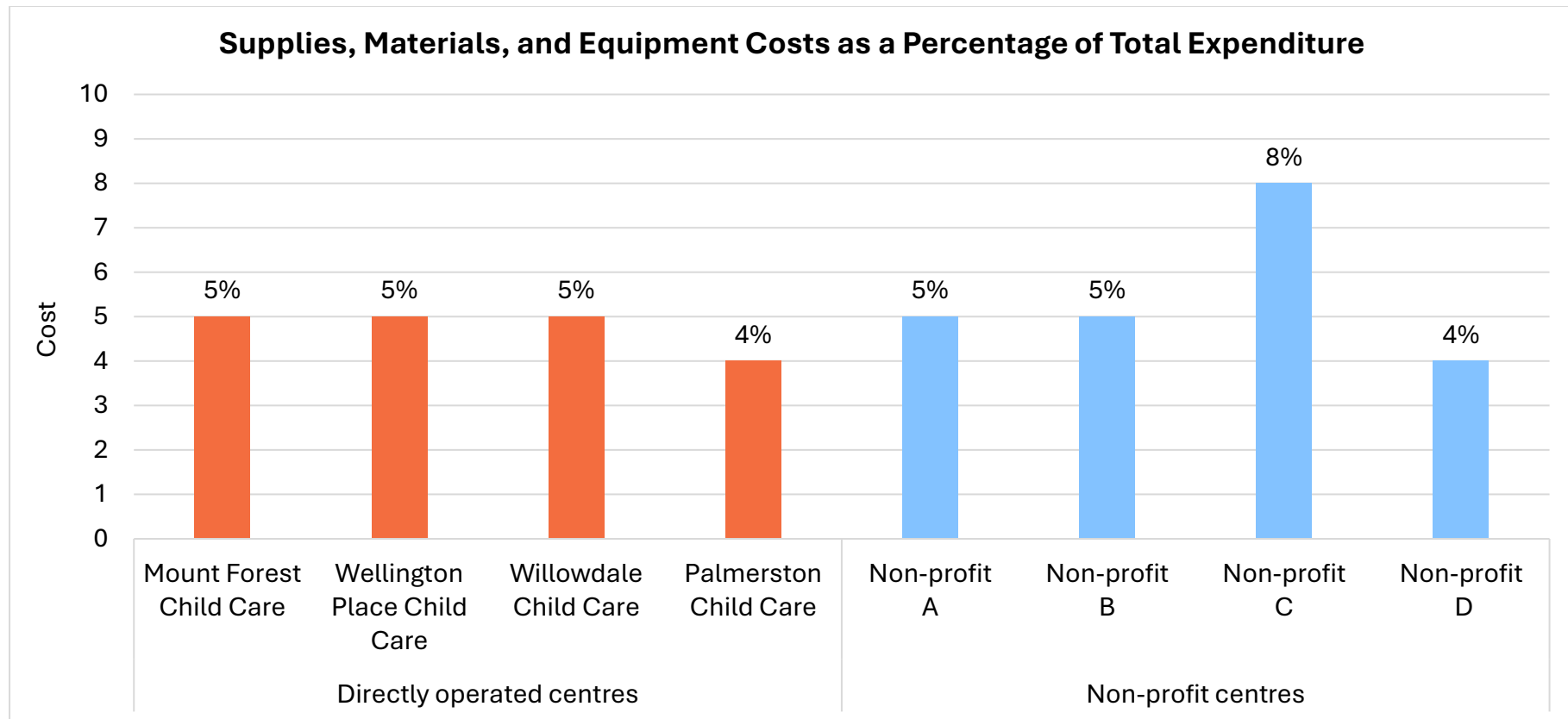
Figure 5: Staffing Costs per Space



On average, directly operated centres have higher staffing costs per space, ranging from \$30,184 at Wellington Place Child Care Centre to \$35,501 at Willowdale Child Care. The non-profit centres costs range from approximately \$18,000 to \$25,500. The for-

profit centre stands out with markedly lower staffing costs per child at \$8,369, less than half of the lowest cost among directly operated or non-profit centres.

Figure 6: Supplies, Materials, and Equipment Costs as a Percentage of Total Expenditure



Directly operated centres allocate a small portion of their budget to supplies, materials, and equipment, with three centres at 5% and one at 4% of total expenditure. The non-profit centres have slightly more variation, ranging from 4% to 8% of total expenditure,

but generally align with the spending patterns seen in directly operated centres. The for-profit centre was not included as the financial reporting provided did not itemize supply costs.

Quality

A key aspect of the assessment considers how well the child care services meet the needs and expectations of residents and users. In this report, quality is assessed using the responses provided by parents/caregivers who completed the survey, and by input shared during stakeholder interviews. Data from the County's Quality Assessment Tool was not available to inform this audit as it was recently revised and re-launched in January 2025 and had limited data collected for several years due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Stakeholder interviews

Directly operated centres were consistently recognized by stakeholders as delivering high quality services that meet the needs of children and their families. Interviewees cited a range of service features including:

- Convenient opening hours (Monday – Friday from 6.30am – 6.00pm)
- A safe and nurturing environment including following safety and hygiene protocols
- A variety of stimulating and age-appropriate activities
- A balance of free play and planned educational learning opportunities
- A staff-to-child ratio that allows caregivers to provide personalized attention and support to each child
- Nutritional meals and snacks
- Space for quiet and active times, indoor and outdoor play
- A variety of easily available toys and equipment
- A flexible, yet predictable daily routine

It was also noted that the centres have access to pedagogical advisors who work alongside educators to design and promote practices that are responsive to the needs of the children within the centres. The centres also use the County's Enhanced Support System (Special Needs Resourcing) to ensure children with special needs and complex medical conditions can fully participate in the programmes. These supports are available to all licensed child care programmes in the County.

In addition, centre staff help families to navigate the County's social supports (e.g., child care subsidy, housing supports, newcomer settlement services, etc) as required.

Survey responses

Parent and caregiver survey respondents reported that directly operated centres provide a wide range of benefits:

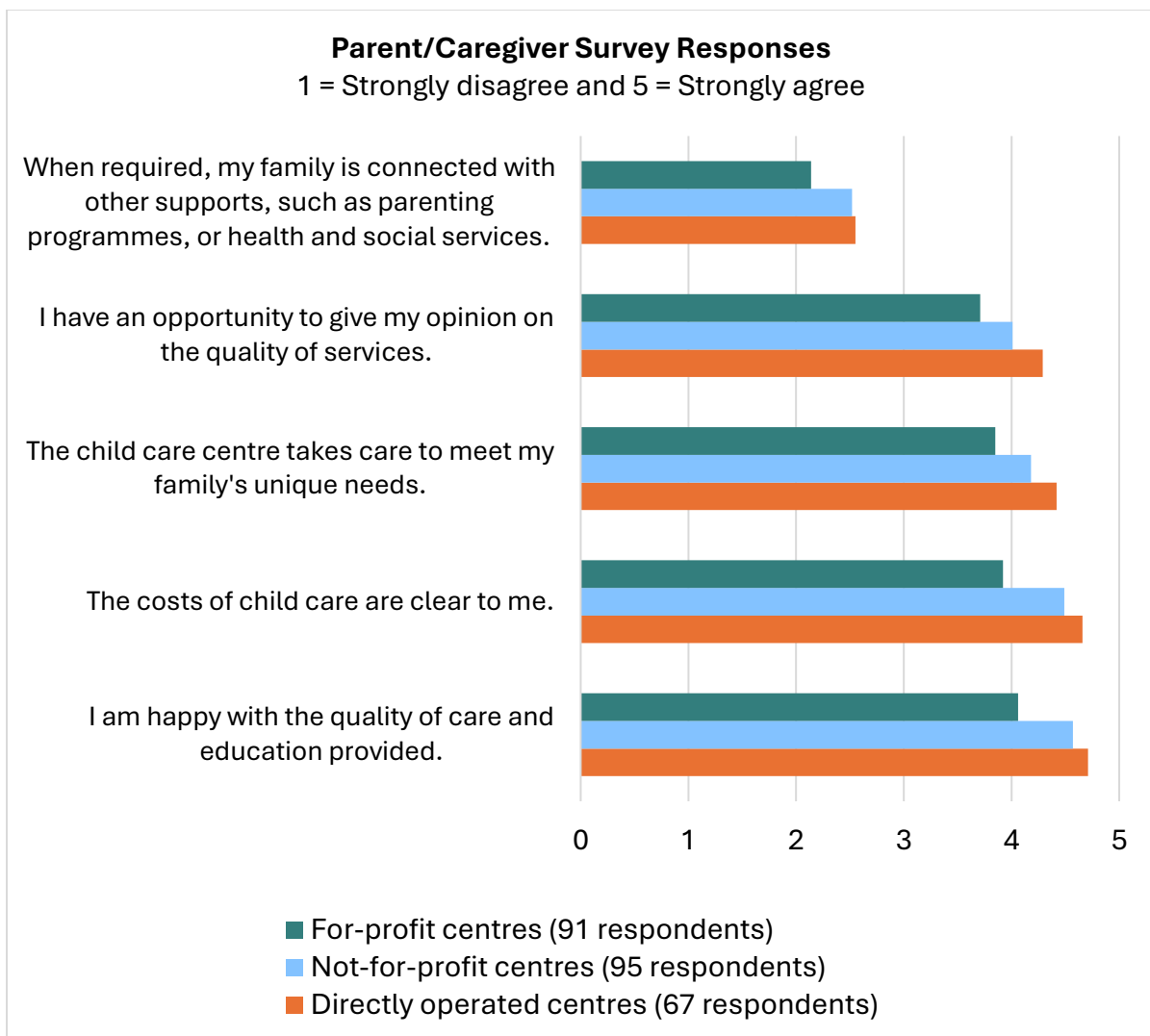
- 95% reported that they were happy with the quality of care and education provided

- 95% found the costs of child care to be clear
- 92% noted that the services provided are affordable
- 91% indicated that the centre takes care to meet their families' unique needs
- 89% reported that the directly operated programmes are accessible (e.g., ramps, wide doorways, elevators, accessible bathrooms)
- 89% found that information about community programmes services and supports are to everyone

When compared with other licensed child care operators, respondents that commented on directly operated centres reported higher levels of satisfaction in a range of areas. This includes accessibility, affordability, quality of care as well as inclusivity, information about resources, and clarity of costs.

The table below highlights the average response from the parent/caregiver survey, where 1 = Strongly disagree and 5 = Strongly agree.

Figure 7: Parent/Caregiver Survey Responses



As highlighted in the table above, respondents showed less agreement regarding being connected with other supports, such as parenting programmes, or health and social services. This is discussed in the opportunities section of the report.

Quality Assessment Tool

The County also has a strong commitment to maintaining quality and uses a Quality Assessment Tool for evaluating quality in early learning and child care programmes within Wellington-Guelph. The tool focuses on several key areas including pedagogy, curriculum, and pedagogical documentation, staff-child interactions, inclusion, equity, and respect for diversity, physical environments (indoor and outdoor), and the provision of materials, relationships and communication with families, supports for staff as people (i.e., employee well-being) and professionals (i.e., access to resources and learning opportunities) and health and safety.

Early Development Instrument

The Early Development Instrument (EDI) assesses children’s developmental health when they enter school by looking at five key areas or domains of child development: physical health and well-being; social competence; emotional maturity; language and cognitive development; and communication skills and general knowledge. EDI data provides population-level estimates of the percentage of children with social and developmental vulnerabilities (presented as the percentage of children vulnerable in one or more domain of development).

Figure 8: Early Development Instrument Data 2023

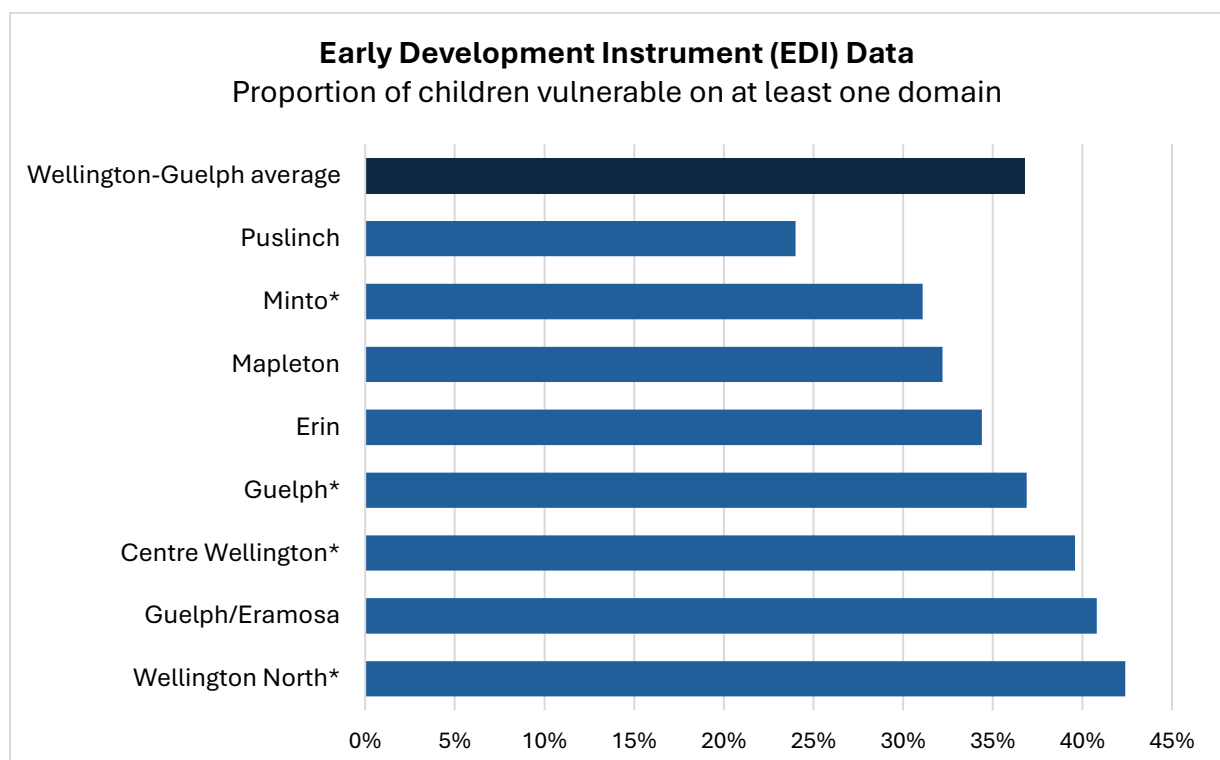


Figure 8 above highlights key 2023 EDI data for Wellington-Guelph. It shows that three of the four municipalities with directly operated programmes²⁴ (Guelph, Centre Wellington, and Wellington North) have a higher proportion of children, relative to the Wellington-Guelph average, who are vulnerable in at least one domain. This emphasizes the need to ensure that high-quality, accessible child care continues to be delivered in these municipalities.

Affordability

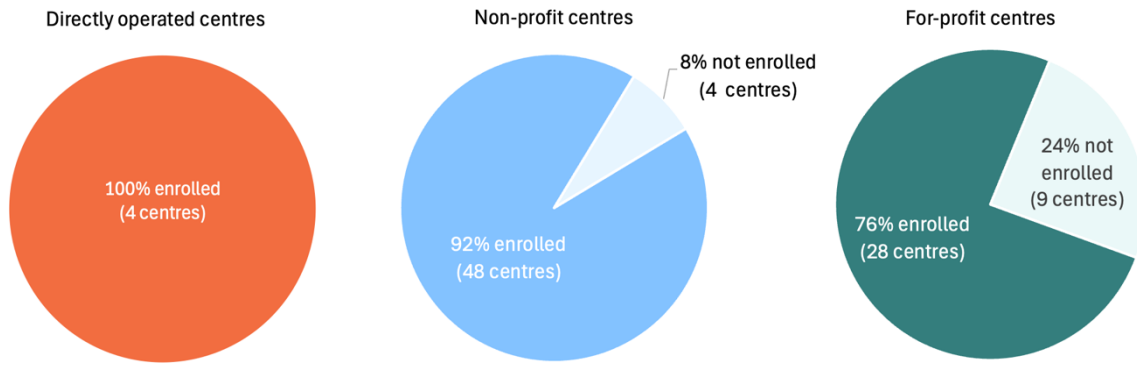
As the centres are part of CWELCC, it has significantly reduced the cost to families, strengthening affordability. The programme has reduced the infant daily rate from \$61.30 to \$22 for full-day, 5 days/week care.²⁵

| Age | Amount of care | Pre-CWELCC daily rates | Current daily rates |
|------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------|---------------------|
| Infant | Full day, 5 days/week | \$61.30 | \$22.00 |
| | Full day and less than; 5 days/week | \$73.40 | \$22.00 |
| | ½ day with lunch | \$39.85 | \$18.85 |
| | ½ day without lunch | \$36.70 | \$17.35 |
| Toddler | Full day, 5 days/week | \$49.55 | \$22.00 |
| | Full day and less than; 5 days/week | \$54.25 | \$22.00 |
| | ½ day with lunch | \$33.75 | \$15.95 |
| | ½ day without lunch | \$29.05 | \$13.75 |
| Preschool | Full day, 5 days/week | \$43.55 | \$20.55 |
| | Full day and less than; 5 days/week | \$48.05 | \$22.00 |
| | ½ day with lunch | \$27.95 | \$13.20 |
| | ½ day without lunch | \$24.40 | \$12.00 |

While all of the directly operated centres are enrolled in CWELCC, in contrast, almost one quarter (9) of the 37 for-profit centres and 4 of the 52 non-profit centres are not enrolled.

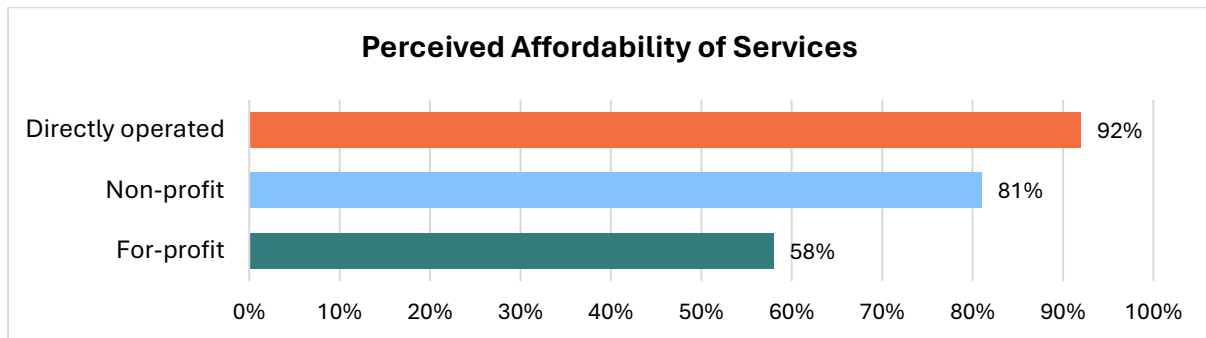
²⁴ Municipalities with directly operated programmes are indicated in the chart with an asterisk.

²⁵ The details on the rates are available at <https://www.wellington.ca/programmes-services/child-care-early-years/child-care-locations-waitlist/directly-operated>



Data on the daily rates associated with all of the centres is not available. However, in the survey, 92% of respondents using directly operated programmes felt that the services provided are affordable compared to 81% of those using non-profits and 58% who were using for-profits.

Figure 9: Percentage of Respondents who Felt Services Provided are Affordable²⁶



Staff conditions

Stakeholder interviews

Stakeholders reported that centres offer higher than average industry wages as well as a competitive benefits package with a pension plan. This plays a strong role in attracting and retaining staff in an industry facing high turnover rates²⁷ and significant workforce shortages.²⁸

²⁶ The question asked was “To what extent do you agree with the following statement: The services provided are affordable.” The number reported here is the % that agreed or strongly agreed with the statement.

²⁷ Research shows that child care centres have difficulty enticing new graduates and keeping existing staff as reported in the 2021 ECE workforce report: <https://ecereport.ca/en/workforce-report/>

²⁸ A 2024 study highlights that, if Ontario meets its expansion goal of 86,000 more child care spaces under the CWELCC program, by its own estimates it will be short 8,500 RECEs. Akbari, E., McCuaig, K., Schurter, M. Varmuza, P., Akbari, S., Mudie, S. (2024). Knowing Our Numbers: A Provincial Study with a Local Lens on the Early Childhood Education Workforce in Ontario. Accessed at https://knowingournumbers.ca/media/filer_public/52/22/5222b720-6d56-45f3-bd55-970c44eab60b/kon-executive_summary_en.pdf

In addition, it was noted that staff have access to more diverse career pathways offering opportunities within the County and have greater job security because of their unionized status.

There is also an active community of practice among centre supervisors who assist each other by sharing solutions and best practices.

Given the link between employee engagement and user satisfaction, many stakeholders emphasized that the centres' leadership has prioritized the development of a strong workplace culture. It was noted that employee attitudes, behaviours and teamwork, as well as interactions with children and their families can be strongly influenced by the supportive work environment within the centres. As a result, the centres aim to foster positive staff relationships, and provide opportunities for recognition, growth and development. This includes professional development that is a core part of monthly meetings.

Staff survey

The staff survey identified several key areas where respondents indicated that the working conditions at directly operated programmes were positive. For example, 96% of respondents indicated that they experienced meaningful work with tasks and responsibilities that align with their professional education, interests, values, and skills. Similarly, 93% felt that they receive fair and competitive compensation that reflects their skills, experience, and the value they bring to the organization. In contrast, 61% of non-profit and 32% of for-profit respondents agreed with that statement.

Table 3

| Statement | Number who strongly agreed or agreed with the statement Highest proportion is indicated in bold | | |
|--|--|-------------|-------------|
| | Directly Operated | Non-profit | For-profit |
| Meaningful work with tasks and responsibilities that align with my professional education interests, values, and skills | 27/28 (96%) | 41/44 (93%) | 17/25 (39%) |
| Fair and competitive compensation that reflects my skills, experience, and the value I bring to the organization | 26/28 (93%) | 27/44 (61%) | 8/25 (18%) |
| Opportunities for professional growth and advancement including access to training programmes, mentorship opportunities, and the potential for taking on new challenges and responsibilities | 26/28 (93%) | 38/44 (86%) | 20/25 (45%) |

| Statement | Number who strongly agreed or agreed with the statement Highest proportion is indicated in bold | | |
|--|--|-------------|-------------|
| | Directly Operated | Non-profit | For-profit |
| A supportive, inclusive, and respectful work environment that has effective communication, and strong relationships with colleagues and supervisors | 24/28 (88%) | 36/44 (82%) | 17/25 (39%) |
| Supportive work arrangements with reasonable working hours, flexible hours, and supportive policies regarding vacation time | 22/28 (79%) | 34/44 (77%) | 17/25 (39%) |
| The ability to engage in continuing education through a supportive work environment (e.g., paid time to attend courses, access to courses and resources, tuition reimbursement, etc) | 25/28 (89%) | 34/44 (77%) | 18/25 (41%) |
| Supports for the provision of quality child care (e.g., paid planning time, team and staff meetings, etc.) | 26/28 (93%) | 38/44 (86%) | 14/25 (32%) |

The table below highlights the average response from the staff survey, where 1 = Strongly disagree and 5 = Strongly agree. The highest-weighted response by auspice is shaded for each statement.

As the centres use County assets for human resources, technology, finance, and maintenance, stakeholders reported that it allows child care educators to focus on service delivery rather than these support functions. Some stakeholders emphasized the important role these ancillary services provide including ensuring greater predictability and confidence in addressing any issues. These added resources, in addition to higher than average pay and benefits, may add to the overall cost of the directly operated centres relative to not-for-profit comparators. However, the financial data was not reported in a way that allowed for determining significant cost differences.

Knowing Our Numbers study

Recent research undertaken through the 2024 Knowing Our Numbers study provides insights into key aspects of staffing conditions across auspice type, including compensation.²⁹ The study reveals that on average across RECE status, educators at

²⁹ Akbari, E., McCuaig, K., Schurter, M. Varmuza, P., Akbari, S., Mudie, S. (2024). Knowing Our Numbers: A Provincial Study with a Local Lens on the Early Childhood Education Workforce in Ontario. The Counties of Dufferin and Wellington, accessed at

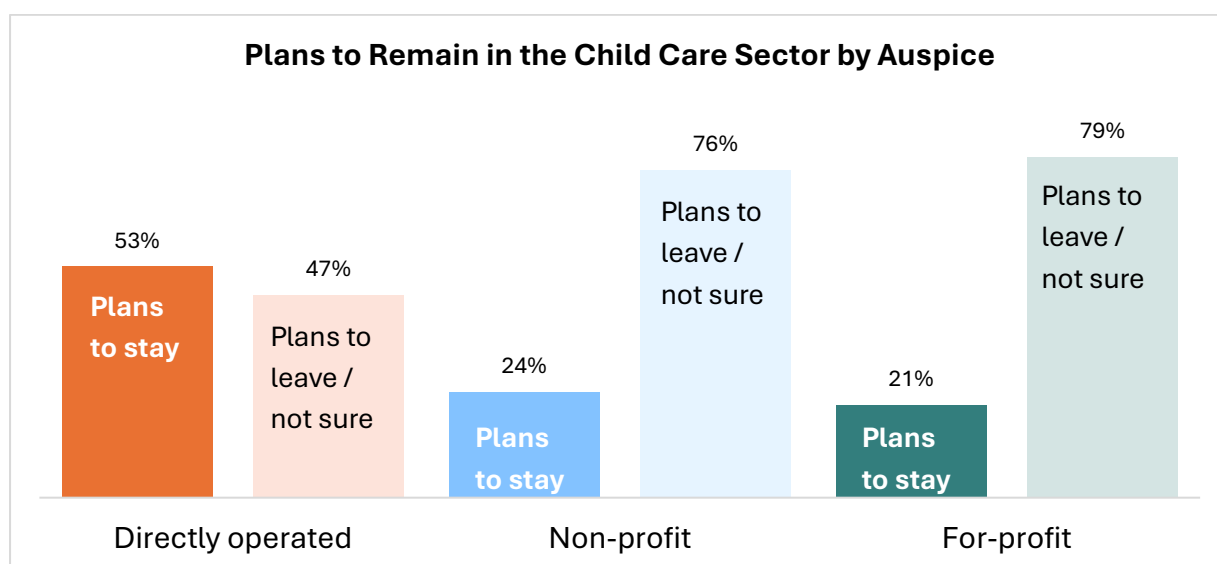
directly operated centres in Wellington-Guelph and Dufferin³⁰ are compensated 52% more than their counterparts at for-profit centres (an additional \$11.56 per hour). Educators at directly operated centres are compensated 35% more than educators at non-profit centres (an additional \$8.69 per hour).

Table 4: Hourly Wages by Auspice and RECE Status

| Auspice | Non-RECE | RECE | Average across RECE status |
|------------------------|----------|---------|----------------------------|
| Directly operated | \$30.00 | \$33.92 | \$33.64 |
| Non-profit | \$22.71 | \$25.22 | \$24.95 |
| For-profit | \$20.33 | \$23.06 | \$22.08 |
| Average across auspice | \$21.88 | \$26.13 | \$25.43 |

The study also examined educator’s plans to remain in the sector (Figure 10), where those who work in for-profit programs are most likely to report plans to leave or say they are unsure (79%). Those who work in public programs are most likely to report plans to stay in the sector (53.3%). These findings have important implications for staff retention strategies, which is particularly critical in the context of workforce shortages and high demand for child care.

Figure 10: Plans to Remain in the Child Care Sector by Auspice



https://knowingournumbers.ca/media/filer_public/9b/7f/9b7fd63c-ab71-4ffb-bb4e-a38115a1f5f3/kon-dufferin-wellington.pdf

³⁰ The study merged data from the Counties of Dufferin and Wellington in consultation with regional officials.

Along with compensation, two key contributors to determining whether to remain in the child care sector are job satisfaction and stress. Figure 11 and Figure 12 below show that in both cases, the educators who took part in this study reported favourable conditions at directly operated centres when compared with non-profit and for-profit centres.

Figure 11: Average Stress Level by Auspice

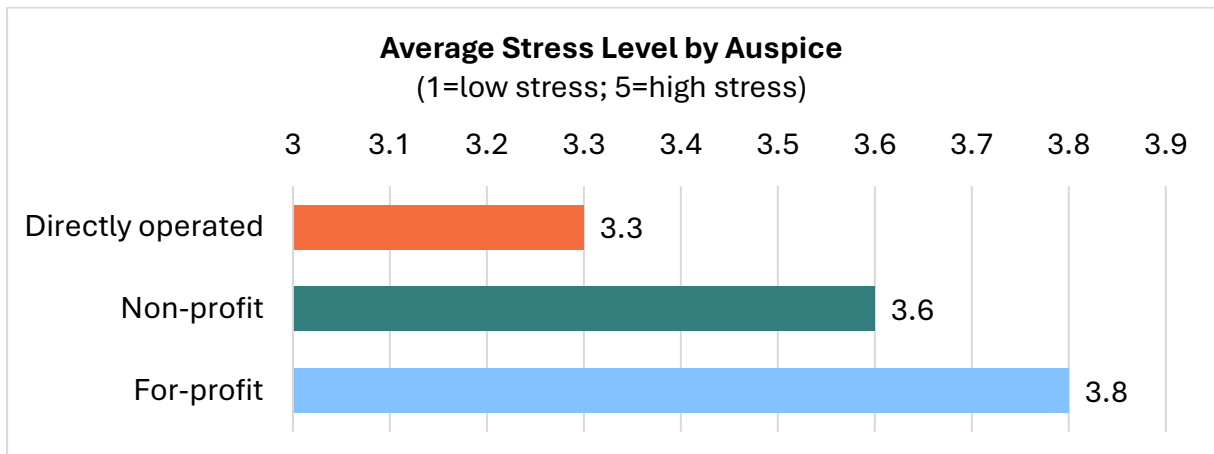
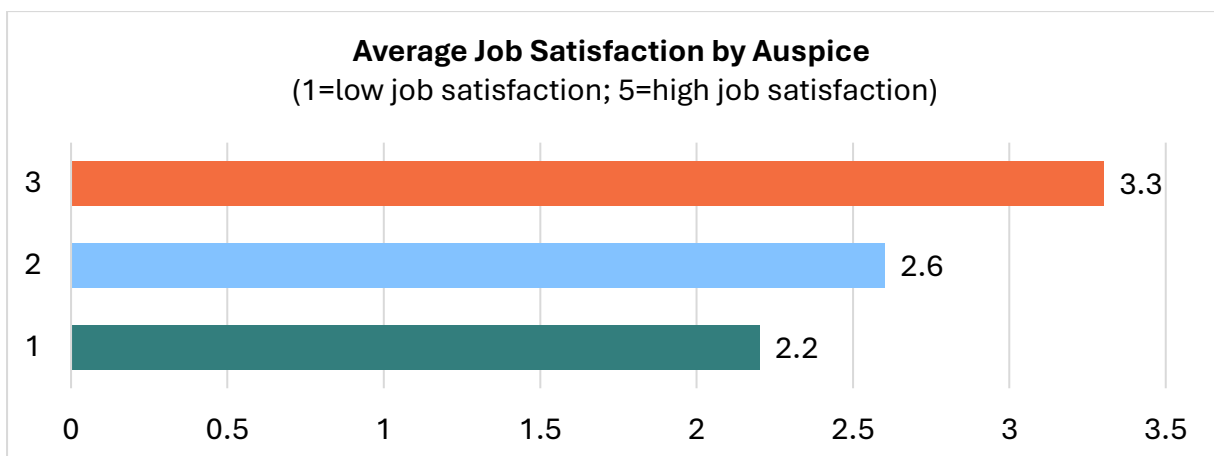


Figure 12: Average Job Satisfaction by Auspice



The *Knowing Our Numbers* study highlights that educators at directly operated child care centres receive higher compensation and are subject to more favourable working conditions on average than educators at for-profit and non-profit centres. This may have an impact on their likelihood to remain in the child care sector – a key provincial priority.³¹

³¹ Ontario Government (2023). Ontario Child Care Workforce Strategy, accessed at https://efis.fma.csc.gov.on.ca/faab/Memos/CC2023/EYCC05_EN.pdf

Effectiveness in Meeting Local and Provincial Outcomes

The following table provides an overview of the way directly operated programmes achieve the strategic priorities of the County and the Ministry of Education. This is intended to complement and build upon the analysis in the preceding section.

Local outcomes

The County of Wellington has outlined five strategic priorities for the child care and early years system in its 2023-27 Service Plan.³² Table 5 assesses the extent to which these outcomes are met by directly operated programmes. In general, the directly operated programmes meet the County’s strategic priorities – particularly in terms of quality and affordability. The greatest opportunity for improvement may be to enhance equitable availability to child care for families dependent on fee subsidy, though it is noted that the County is currently exploring ways to achieve this.

Table 5: Directly Operated Programmes Assessed Against the County's Strategic Priorities

| Local outcomes The County’s strategic priorities within the Child Care and Early Years System Plan 2023-2027 | Overall assessment The extent to which these outcomes are met by directly operated programmes | Key strengths | Opportunities for improvement |
|---|--|--|--|
| High quality Child care programming that that supports the healthy development, learning, and well-being of children through safe, nurturing, and stimulating practices | Directly operated programmes perform well against key quality indicators, including parent/caregiver satisfaction with the quality of care and education provided. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive feedback from stakeholders and survey respondents on key dimensions of quality, including 94% of parents/caregivers reporting satisfaction with the quality | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leverage Quality Assessment Tool for continuous improvement • Continue to conduct parent/caregiver surveys to identify level of satisfaction with quality and |

³² County of Wellington (2023). Child Care and Early Years Service Plan 2023-2027. Accessed at <https://www.wellington.ca/media/file/child-care-and-early-years-service-plan-2023-2027>

| Local outcomes The County's strategic priorities within the Child Care and Early Years System Plan 2023-2027 | Overall assessment The extent to which these outcomes are met by directly operated programmes | Key strengths | Opportunities for improvement |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | of care and education provided <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality Assessment Tool being used to measure programming • Based on recent research, RECE intention to remain in the child care sector may be relatively high compared to other auspices³³ | opportunities for improvement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to implement the County's workforce strategy to improve recruitment and retention of qualified child care and early years professionals |
| Equitably available Child care services that are accessible to all families, regardless of their background, income, location, or specific need | Child care spaces are currently available on a first-come, first-served basis, which may provide opportunities to enhance equitable access. There are 7 children in receipt of fee subsidy at the directly operated centres, across 177 spaces. It is noted that this may shift in the future, as the County explores ways to | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 177 spaces are available on a first-come first serve model • All centres operate in areas with low access rates • Mount Forest (4x lower than provincial access rate) and Palmerston centres (4x lower than provincial access rate) operate in areas with particularly low access rates | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to advocate for additional child care spaces and explore ways to make the system more responsive to the high demand • Continue to explore ways to prioritize families receiving fee subsidy • Gather data on family demographics served by directly operated centres to identify opportunities for |

³³ Akbari, E., McCuaig, K., Schurter, M. Varmuza, P., Akbari, S., Mudie, S. (2024). Knowing Our Numbers: A Provincial Study with a Local Lens on the Early Childhood Education Workforce in Ontario. The Counties of Dufferin and Wellington.

| Local outcomes The County's strategic priorities within the Child Care and Early Years System Plan 2023-2027 | Overall assessment The extent to which these outcomes are met by directly operated programmes | Key strengths | Opportunities for improvement |
|--|---|--|---|
| | prioritize families receiving fee subsidy. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 88% of parents/caregivers indicated that the programme takes care to meet their families' unique needs • 87% reported that the directly operated programmes are accessible (e.g., ramps, wide doorways, elevators, accessible bathrooms) | targeting vulnerable populations, e.g., through directed growth planning, marketing of services, etc. |
| Equitably accessible Families are aware of the benefits of child care, the programming offered in the County, and how to access it | While the County has promoted the child care centres, the competition for spaces (as a result of the very high demand) and the variations in a given family's capacity to access it may reduce equity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The County's website provides helpful information on access for the child care centres • 95% of parents/caregivers found the costs of child care to be clear • 89% found that information about community programmes services and supports are available to everyone | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to promote child care centres, including in areas accessed by vulnerable populations • Continue to identify opportunities to streamline the application process (e.g., through user-centred design research initiative) |

| Local outcomes The County's strategic priorities within the Child Care and Early Years System Plan 2023-2027 | Overall assessment The extent to which these outcomes are met by directly operated programmes | | Opportunities for improvement |
|---|--|---|---|
| | Key strengths | | |
| Affordable The cost of child care services to families does not create a financial burden or prevent access | As all centres are part of CWELCC, costs to families have been significantly reduced, enhancing affordability. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The programme has reduced the infant daily rate from \$61.30 to \$22 for full-day, 5 days/week care • 90% of parents/caregivers surveyed reported that the services are affordable | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to roll out CWELCC within existing plans |
| Leadership and accountability The effective guidance, decision-making, and responsibility of those involved in the planning, delivery, and oversight of child care services | There is strong leadership in place to oversee the delivery of directly operated centres. Stakeholders also reported that the governance and reporting structures of centres have more direct accountability to residents because they are delivered through the County. Although it is important to note that the level of support may change depending on the composition of the council and its priorities. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholder satisfaction with the strong leadership and support for child care • Stakeholders emphasized that the centres' leadership has prioritized the development of a strong workplace culture. The centres aim to foster positive staff relationships, and provide opportunities for recognition, growth and development • Staff who responded to the survey reported that there are opportunities for professional growth and advancement, including | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to prioritize leadership and accountability, including through regular management meetings between centre leadership and the County • Ensure that leadership and accountability is measured as part of the Quality Assessment Tool • Continue to provide a range of relevant, high-quality professional development opportunities for RECEs seeking to become supervisors or centre managers |

| Local outcomes The County's strategic priorities within the Child Care and Early Years System Plan 2023-2027 | Overall assessment The extent to which these outcomes are met by directly operated programmes | Key strengths | Opportunities for improvement |
|--|---|--|--------------------------------------|
| | | access to training programmes, mentorship opportunities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The County chairs a child and youth planning table, Growing Great Generations, which focuses on service coordination with community partners | |

Provincial outcomes

Table 6 documents the extent to which the directly operated programmes support the Ministry's objectives under Ontario's Access and Inclusion Framework 2023.³⁴ The directly operated programmes meet all Ministry objectives as outlined below.

³⁴ Ontario Government (2023). Ontario's Access and Inclusion Framework 2023, accessed at <https://files.ontario.ca/edu-access-and-inclusion-framework-en-2023-07-07.pdf>

Table 6: Directly Operated Programmes Assessed Against Ontario's Access and Inclusion Framework

| Provincial outcomes Ministry's objectives under Ontario's Access and Inclusion Framework 2023 | Overall assessment The extent to which these outcomes are met by directly operated programmes | Key strengths | Opportunities for improvement |
|---|--|--|---|
| Affordability Reduce parent fees for children aged 0-5 to achieve \$10/day average fees | As all centres are part of CWELCC, costs to families have been significantly reduced, enhancing affordability. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The programme has reduced the infant daily rate from \$61.30 to \$22 for full-day, 5 days/week care • 92% of parents/caregivers surveyed reported that the services are affordable | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to roll out CWELCC within existing plans |
| Quality Increase the number of RECEs to 60% of workforce and implement wage minimums | The County is implementing a workforce strategy to improve recruitment and retention of qualified child care and early years professionals. In addition, the <i>Knowing Our Numbers</i> study highlights that educators at directly operated child care centres receive higher compensation and are subject to more favourable working conditions on average | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RECE intention to remain in the child care sector is relatively high compared to other auspices³⁶ • Staff of directly operated centres who responded to the survey answered favourably when measured against other auspices, e.g., staff feel their work is meaningful, with tasks and responsibilities that align with their professional | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to implement the County's workforce strategy to improve recruitment and retention of qualified child care and early years professionals • Explore initiatives to support RECE qualification process |

³⁶ Akbari, E., McCuaig, K., Schurter, M. Varmuza, P., Akbari, S., Mudie, S. (2024). *Knowing Our Numbers: A Provincial Study with a Local Lens on the Early Childhood Education Workforce in Ontario. The Counties of Dufferin and Wellington.*

| Provincial outcomes Ministry's objectives under Ontario's Access and Inclusion Framework 2023 | Overall assessment The extent to which these outcomes are met by directly operated programmes | Key strengths | Opportunities for improvement |
|---|--|--|--|
| | than educators at other auspices. ³⁵ | education, interests, values, and skills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On average RECEs at directly operated centres are compensated at a higher rate than at other auspices³⁷ • Positive feedback from stakeholders and survey respondents on key dimensions of quality, including 94% of parents/caregivers reporting satisfaction with the quality of care and education provided | |
| Access 86,000 new child care spaces created in high need areas by December 2026 | All programmes operate in areas with low access rates – in particular, centres at Mount Forest (4x lower than provincial access rate) and Palmerston (4x lower than provincial access rate). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 177 spaces are available on a first-come first serve model • All centres operate in areas with low access rates • Mount Forest (4x lower than provincial access rate) and | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to advocate for additional child care spaces and explore ways to make the system more responsive to the high demand • Gather data on family demographics served by |

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

| Provincial outcomes Ministry's objectives under Ontario's Access and Inclusion Framework 2023 | Overall assessment The extent to which these outcomes are met by directly operated programmes | Key strengths | Opportunities for improvement |
|--|--|---|---|
| | | Palmerston centres (4x lower than provincial access rate) operate in areas with particularly low access rates | directly operated centres to identify opportunities for targeting vulnerable populations, e.g., through directed growth planning, marketing of services, etc. |
| Inclusion Ensure affordable spaces and access to child care for priority populations, including low income, vulnerable children, Francophone, Indigenous and other diverse communities | Child care spaces are currently available on a first-come, first-served basis, which may provide opportunities to enhance equitable access. There are 7 children in receipt of fee subsidy at the directly operated centres, across 177 spaces. It is noted that this may shift in the future, as the County explores ways to prioritize families receiving fee subsidy. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 177 spaces are available on a first-come first serve model • 91% of parents/caregivers indicated that the programme takes care to meet their families' unique needs • 89% reported that the directly operated programmes are accessible (e.g., ramps, wide doorways, elevators, accessible bathrooms) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to explore ways to prioritize families receiving fee subsidy • Gather data on family demographics served by directly operated centres to identify opportunities for targeting vulnerable populations, e.g., through directed growth planning, marketing of services, etc. |
| Data and reporting Support successful implementation through data and reporting | The County uses a Quality Assessment Tool to measure and report on key metrics at directly operated centres. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality Assessment Tool being used to measure programming | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to report results of the Quality Assessment Tool, EDI, and key research initiatives |

| Provincial outcomes Ministry's objectives under Ontario's Access and Inclusion Framework 2023 | Overall assessment The extent to which these outcomes are met by directly operated programmes | Key strengths | Opportunities for improvement |
|---|--|--|--------------------------------------|
| | <p>Comprehensive data is consolidated within a centralized spreadsheet, including on community demographics, access and affordability, child development, and participation in professional development. In addition, the County reports against key provincial benchmarks, such as the Early Development Instrument (EDI) and participates in the studies such as <i>Knowing our Numbers</i>.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehensive and relevant data consolidated for benchmarking • Reports against key provincial benchmarks, including the EDI • Participated in the 2024 <i>Knowing Our Numbers</i> study | |

Key opportunities

Increasing spaces

The number of licensed child care spaces available for children aged 0-5 in all of Wellington-Guelph is 26% (11 percentage points lower than the provincially established level of 37%). As CWELCC has significantly reduced the cost of child care at the centres, many families are more able to afford child care without carrying the full cost burden.

Publicly funded licensed child care has traditionally been an important way to improve socioeconomic mobility and address poverty. However, there are concerns that the reduced cost can increase competition for a limited number of spaces, with the potential for families that have greater resources to be more likely to benefit. This can increase socioeconomic inequality and heightens the urgency to expand the number of spaces in the system.

The County has placed a high priority on increasing access to licensed child care and should continue its work to increase the number of spaces including by advocating for additional funding and working with the provincial government and sector stakeholders to support expansion from existing operators and encourage new licensed child care operators.

Equity

Stakeholders reported long waitlists of up to three years, highlighting the high demand and comparatively limited supply of licensed child care in Wellington-Guelph. The shortage of child care spaces creates particular challenges in providing access for underserved and vulnerable children, as families with fewer resources may be less likely to plan ahead and join the waitlist. In addition, the “first-come first served” model focuses on timing and does not examine “need” or “alignment” with provincial priorities within the Access and Inclusion Framework³⁸.

As the current intake process is based on when a family joins the waitlist, some stakeholders suggested that there may be an opportunity to more closely monitor the composition of children in child care, and prioritize access for underserved and vulnerable populations.³⁹ There may be an opportunity to enhance “equitable availability” to child care for families dependent on fee subsidy, though it is noted that the County is currently exploring ways to achieve this. For example, while 4% of the 177 spaces were taken by children receiving fee subsidy in 2024, this is down from 14% in

³⁸ Available at <https://files.ontario.ca/edu-access-and-inclusion-framework-en-2023-07-07.pdf>. The

³⁹ Ontario’s Access and Inclusion Framework 2023 notes that underserved and vulnerable children and children from diverse populations include but are not limited to: children living in low income families, children with special needs and those needing enhanced or individual supports, Indigenous children, Black and other racialized children, children of newcomers to Canada, and official language minorities.

2022 and compares to 8% of the spaces in the four community licensed child care operator spaces (for which data was available to be reviewed for this study).⁴⁰ As CWELCC has reduced the cost for child care, without a commensurate increase in the number of spaces available, it can create the potential for greater competition for spaces that may reduce access for equity deserving populations.⁴¹

If child care fee subsidy caseloads are consistently unreflective of the population in the areas they serve, the County could address this through a number of steps. This includes targeting communication / marketing to equity deserving groups the importance of signing up to child care waitlists early on. There may also be an opportunity to publish information on enrolment (to promote transparency on the number of children enrolled at the centre compared to the area's population demographics). As a further step, the centres could prioritize equity deserving groups on the wait list (by triaging at intake based on the population profile). However, it would be important to carefully analyze the root causes of the issue, and explore the feasibility of solutions including the costs, benefits and the potential for any risks or unintended consequences.

Extended hours

There may also be opportunities to look at increasing the hours to support families that are more vulnerable and / or working “non-standard” hours. For example, this may include exploring opportunities to partner with large employers, such as manufacturers or hospitals, to offer licensed child care options outside standard hours. If there is sufficient demand and it is deemed a high priority, the County may also choose to redirect resources from “standard” to “non-standard” hours. However, it is important to note that it is often difficult for centre-based operations to meet the needs of extended hours and it can often be more efficiently delivered through other child care formats such as licensed home child care.

Quality Assessment Tool for continuous improvement

While the County has a robust Quality Assessment Tool⁴², it should continue to use this data to benchmark performance across the system and identify potential leading

⁴⁰ It is important to note that due to limited data availability, the figure of 8% reported here is not across all licensed child care operators and is a small sample size for comparison purposes.

⁴¹ Families with greater resources may be more likely to access child care for a variety of reasons. This includes better access to information (increased knowledge about child care options through social networks or community connections), capacity and influence (more time, resources, or connections to sign up for their child's placement early on), work schedule flexibility (employed in jobs that offer more flexibility such as through remote work or flexible hours), allowing families to attend tours, interviews, or registration events more easily), transportation options (the ability to travel further for high-quality child care, accessing centres outside their immediate neighbourhood), proximity to centres offering CWELCC, and prioritization policies (some child care centres prioritize siblings of their current caseload).

⁴² Evaluations using Wellington's Quality Assessment Tool are conducted by Children's Early Years Division staff who have been trained to interpret the tool reliably and consistently across all programmes

practices that could be scaled up more fully. By identifying centres that are performing particularly well, it can conduct further analysis to determine what practices are in place and how those practices could be adapted and implemented at other sites. This may be particularly helpful in identifying opportunities for improving quality at centres that have comparatively weaker performance.

Integration with other supports

Stakeholders reported that the directly operated centres prioritize connecting families to community supports in order to offer seamless and holistic human services support. This is often coordinated through the County’s centralized social services. However, there may be an opportunity to strengthen these connections. When asked in the survey “if when required, my family is connected with other supports (e.g., parenting programmes, or health and social services)”, although many respondents indicated that it was not applicable, this statement had lower support compared to other statements in the survey.⁴³ The absence of coordination and information sharing can lead to interventions that are not organized to deliver the best outcomes for residents.

in Wellington’s service delivery area (“Wellington-Guelph”). Evaluations are performed once annually, and comprise of an observation visit, leadership questions, and a collection of policies and procedures from programmes.

⁴³ For example, 45% of respondents felt that when required, their family is connected with other supports (e.g. parenting programmes, or health and social services). However, 35% indicated it was not applicable to them, 15% were neutral and 1.5% (1 respondent) disagreed with the statement. 5% (3 respondents) indicated “don’t know”.

Next Steps and Further Considerations

Licensed child care delivery in Wellington-Guelph involves a combination of directly operated and community licensed child care operators. This system combines the strengths of multiple child care models to promote accessibility, affordability, flexibility, and quality for diverse family needs. Not only do families that use the directly operated child care benefit from high quality services, it can also strengthen the overall system of child care in Wellington-Guelph. As these centres develop and use leading practices in service delivery, the County can document and support the scaling up of these practices across the network, in its legislated capacity as Service System Manager.

As highlighted in this document, it is important to interpret the findings and recommendations within the context of the scope of the study. As further data and information is available, the findings and recommendations should be reviewed and refined as required.

This report does not recommend the divestment of the directly operated centres. However, to support the County with making decisions regarding the future of the centres it is important to highlight four key areas that should be considered in the context of any discussions surrounding divestment.

1. Is there another operator willing to step in? Considerations related the cost to serve are particularly important. For example, in areas of Wellington-Guelph with fewer transportation links, it can increase the cost to serve and reduce the interest among other operators to be involved. To explore this, a market sounding exercise can be conducted that involves a dialogue with potential operators. It can be used to gather information to assess the feasibility and financial viability of transferring responsibility and assessing the capacity of a community operator to be involved.
2. Will the interested operator maintain the programming to a similar high quality standard? As noted elsewhere in this report, the directly operated programmes provide child care to a high standard and it is important to explore whether any new operator can deliver to a similarly high standard.
3. Will the interested operator support the maintenance of the required auspice ratio of non-profit to for-profit operators to qualify for CWELCC funding? The CWELCC agreement requires the Province to have a maximum of 30% of CWELCC spaces operated by for-profit operators and Service System Managers are required to maintain their auspice ratio effective December 31, 2022. In Wellington-Guelph a maximum of 31% of CWELCC spaces may be for-profit.
4. Will the interested operator take on the union successor rights? As demonstrated in other municipalities where Collective Agreements with unionized staff are in place, the ability of the County to redirect funding from

directly operated services to an alternative operator is governed by the “contracting out” and / or “successor rights” terms of the Collective Agreement and the Employment Standards Act of Ontario. These terms can result in the Collective Agreement being imposed on the new operator.

While this report is intended to help assess the value-for-money of directly operated programmes, it also aims to support greater dialogue about how to continue to innovate to better serve users of child care services across the County.

Appendix 1: Non-profit child care programmes⁴⁴

| | Child Care Centre | Location | Total # of spaces | # of spaces for age 0-4 |
|----|---|------------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 | Campus Child Care Co-operative of Guelph Inc. | 2 South Ring Road West, Guelph | 70 | 70 |
| 2 | Community Resource Centre - Salem Public School | 23 Woolwich Street East, Elora | 26 | |
| 3 | Community Resource Centre - St. Mary | 251 Irvine Street, Elora | 26 | |
| 4 | Community Resource Centre Child Care - JD Hogarth School | 360 A Belsyde Avenue East, Fergus | 144 | 32 |
| 5 | Community Resource Centre Childcare – St. Joseph’s School | 150 Strathallan St., Fergus | 56 | |
| 6 | Community Resource Centre Childcare at James McQueen School | 365 St. George Street West, Fergus | 112 | |
| 7 | Community Resource Centre Childcare- Elora Public School | 288 Mill Street East, Elora | 30 | |
| 8 | Gingerbread House Co-Operative Preschool | 400 Stevenson Street North, Guelph | 24 | 24 |
| 9 | Guelph Community Christian Pre-School | 195 College Avenue West, Guelph | 16 | 16 |
| 10 | La Garderie de l'Arc-en-ciel | 221 Scottsdale Drive, Guelph | 123 | 47 |
| 11 | Les Etoiles Brillantes - Garderie | 30 Brighton, Guelph | 76 | 26 |
| 12 | Lillians Children Centre | 495 Willow Road, Guelph | 56 | |
| 13 | Lillian’s Children Centre | 500 Willow Road, Guelph | 39 | 39 |
| 14 | Lilliput Land Co-Operative Nursery School | 161 Norfolk Street, Guelph | 16 | 16 |
| 15 | Mapleton Preschool | 35 High Street, Drayton | 16 | 16 |
| 16 | Noah's Ark Childcare | 95 Crimea Street, Guelph | 137 | 137 |
| 17 | Parkview Day Care | 89 Speedvale Avenue East, Guelph | 65 | 65 |
| 18 | Rockwood Nursery School Inc. | 191 Main Street South, Rockwood | 16 | 16 |
| 19 | Royal City Co-Operative Preschool Inc. | 87 Dean Avenue, Guelph | 28 | 28 |

⁴⁴ As of September 30, 2024

| | Child Care Centre | Location | Total # of spaces | # of spaces for age 0-4 |
|----|---|------------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|
| 20 | Royal City Montessori Academy | 55 Devere Drive, Guelph | 39 | 39 |
| 21 | Star Seedlings Family and Childcare Centre | 81 Speedvale Avenue East, Guelph | 38 | 38 |
| 22 | Station Road Before and After School Program | 35 Trafalgar Road, Hillsburgh | 56 | |
| 23 | Station Road Co-op. Nursery School Inc. | 14 Boland Drive, Erin | 31 | 31 |
| 24 | The Elora Co-Operative Preschool Inc. | 75 Geddes Street, Elora | 18 | 18 |
| 25 | The Olive Daycare Center Inc | 5471 Highway 6 N, Guelph | 29 | 29 |
| 26 | University of Guelph Child Care and Learning Centre | 125 Arboretum Road, Guelph | 121 | 121 |
| 27 | Victory Kids Club | 135 Exhibition Street, Guelph | 112 | |
| 28 | Wellington Early Learning Centres | 8 Bishop Court, Guelph | 56 | |
| 29 | Wellington Early Learning Centres - Kortright Hills | 23 Ptarmigan Drive, Guelph | 56 | |
| 30 | Wellington Early Learning Centres - Taylor Evans | 271 A Stephanie Drive, Guelph | 117 | 31 |
| 31 | Whistle Stop Co-operative Preschool | 23 Brock Road South, Aberfoyle | 16 | 16 |
| 32 | Workside Early Childhood Education Centre | 99 Woolwich Street, Guelph | 53 | 53 |
| 33 | YMCA of Three Rivers Child Care - Arthur | 315 Tucker Street, Arthur | 82 | 26 |
| 34 | YMCA of Three Rivers Child Care - Brant Ave | 64 Brant Avenue, Guelph | 26 | |
| 35 | YMCA of Three Rivers Child Care - Central | 97 Dublin Street North, Guelph | 56 | |
| 36 | YMCA of Three Rivers Child Care - Edward Johnson | 397 Stevenson Street North, Guelph | 26 | |
| 37 | YMCA of Three Rivers Child Care - Erin | 185 Daniel Street, Erin | 49 | 49 |
| 38 | YMCA of Three Rivers Child Care - Fred A Hamilton | 160 Ironwood Road, Guelph | 82 | 26 |
| 39 | YMCA of Three Rivers Child Care - Holy Trinity | 487 Grange Road, Guelph | 56 | |
| 40 | YMCA of Three Rivers Child Care - Jean Little | 56 Youngman Drive, Guelph | 97 | 26 |
| 41 | YMCA of Three Rivers Child Care - John McCrae | 189 Water Street, Guelph | 86 | |

| | Child Care Centre | Location | Total # of spaces | # of spaces for age 0-4 |
|----|---|-----------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|
| 42 | YMCA of Three Rivers Child Care - Kensington | 84 Kensington Street, Guelph | 75 | 75 |
| 43 | YMCA of Three Rivers Child Care - King George | 72 Lemon Street, Guelph | 71 | |
| 44 | YMCA of Three Rivers Child Care - Paisley | 406 Paisley Road, Guelph | 56 | |
| 45 | YMCA of Three Rivers Child Care - Rickson Ridge | 177 Rickson Avenue, Guelph | 118 | 47 |
| 46 | YMCA of Three Rivers Child Care - Sacred Heart | 5148 Wellington 27 Road, Rockwood | 49 | |
| 47 | YMCA of Three Rivers Child Care - Sacred Heart BASP | 5146 Wellington Road 27, Rockwood | 56 | |
| 48 | YMCA of Three Rivers Child Care - St. John Brebeuf | 30 Millwood Drive, Erin | 56 | |
| 49 | YMCA of Three Rivers Child Care - St. Michael | 9 McElderry Road, Guelph | 88 | 32 |
| 50 | YMCA of Three Rivers Child Care - St. Peter | 150 Westwood Road, Guelph | 56 | |
| 51 | YMCA of Three Rivers Child Care - William C. Winegard | 25 Lee Street, Guelph | 56 | |
| 52 | YMCA of Three Rivers Child Care - Woodland Glen | 130 Woodland Glen Drive, Guelph | 175 | 132 |

Appendix 2: For-profit child care programmes⁴⁵

| | Child Care Centre | Location | Total # of spaces | # of spaces for age 0-4 |
|----|---|---------------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 | Appleseed Child Care Centre - Preschool | 5395 Wellington Road 52, Erin | 39 | 39 |
| 2 | Appleseed Child Care Centre Kid's Club Brisbane | 9426 Wellington Road 124, Erin | 56 | |
| 3 | Appleseed Kid's Club - Erin Public School | 185 Daniel Street, Erin | 86 | |
| 4 | Bulldog Interactive Fitness for Youth | 259 Grange Road, Guelph | 80 | |
| 5 | Eh to Zed Preschool Canada Early Learning Academy | 322 Eastview Rd, Guelph | 73 | 73 |
| 6 | ELA - Sacred Heart | 125 Huron Street, Guelph | 56 | |
| 7 | ELA - St. Francis | 287 Imperial Road South, Guelph | 56 | |
| 8 | ELA - St. Ignatius | 251 Colonial Drive, Guelph | 86 | |
| 9 | ELA - St. John | 63 Victoria Road, Guelph | 56 | |
| 10 | ELA - St. Patrick | 391 Victoria Road North, Guelph | 56 | |
| 11 | ELA - St. Paul | 182 Clairfields Drive East, Guelph | 56 | |
| 12 | Eramosa Learning Academy | 112 Guelph Street, Rockwood | 26 | 26 |
| 13 | Eramosa Learning Academy - Harcourt | 87 Dean Avenue, Guelph | 65 | |
| 14 | Eramosa Learning Academy - Rockwood | 115 Main Street, Rockwood | 30 | |
| 15 | First Steps Early Learning Center | 390 Speedvale Avenue East, Wellington | 60 | 50 |
| 16 | First Steps Early Learning Center - Lakeside | 7654 Conservation Road, Guelph | 84 | 26 |
| 17 | GUELPH MONTESSORI SCHOOL | 151 Waterloo Avenue, Guelph | 74 | 74 |
| 18 | Guelph Outdoor Preschool Ltd | 5420 Highway 6 North, Guelph | 32 | 32 |
| 19 | Harriston Preschool | 57 Young Street West, Harriston | 8 | 8 |
| 20 | Jack & Jill Day Nursery | 32 Arnold Street, Guelph | 32 | 32 |

⁴⁵ As of September 30, 2024

| | Child Care Centre | Location | Total # of spaces | # of spaces for age 0-4 |
|----|---|---|-------------------|-------------------------|
| 21 | Kids Come First Child Care Centre | 1416 Gordon Street, Guelph | 139 | 115 |
| 22 | Learning Tree Academy - Guelph | 20 Cowan Place, Guelph | 121 | 121 |
| 23 | Lighthouse Montessori Canada | 160 Research Lane, Guelph | 75 | 75 |
| 24 | Little Angels Development | 10 Sideroad 18, Fergus | 66 | 66 |
| 25 | Little Angels Development Inc. (Elora) | 30 Geddes Street, Elora | 34 | 34 |
| 26 | Little Champs Day Care Centre Inc. | 58 Dawson Road, Guelph | 35 | 35 |
| 27 | Little Folks Montessori-Guelph | 577 Willow Road, Guelph | 24 | 24 |
| 28 | Little Leaf Daycare Erin | 5072 Winston Churchill Boulevard Northwest, Terra Cotta | 36 | 26 |
| 29 | Little Learners Day Care Centre | 214 Victoria Road South, Guelph | 33 | 33 |
| 30 | Montessori Academy Learning Centre Inc. | 286 Water Street, Guelph | 49 | 49 |
| 31 | Montessori School of Wellington | 2 Samuel Drive, Guelph | 77 | 77 |
| 32 | Montessori School of Wellington School Age Programme – Westminster Woods | 140 Goodwin Drive, Guelph | 86 | |
| 33 | Montessori School of Wellington School Age Programme Arbour Vista Public School | 200 McCann Street, Guelph | 71 | |
| 34 | Mother Earth Childcare Centre | 190 Nicklin Road, Guelph | 30 | 30 |
| 35 | Noel's Children's Centre - Woodland | 468 Woodlawn Road East, Guelph | 52 | 52 |
| 36 | The Kings Daughter Center for Kids | 68 Suffolk Street, Guelph | 65 | 39 |
| 37 | Montessori School of Wellington School-Age Programme Sir Isaac Brock | 111 Colonial Drive, Guelph | 71 | |

Appendix 3: Overview of Licensed Child Care in Wellington-Guelph

| Municipality | Access rate ⁴⁶ | Difference from provincial target (of 37%) ⁴⁷ | Fee subsidy (# of children) | Operating auspice | | |
|--|---------------------------|--|---|----------------------|----------------|------------|
| | | | | Directly operated | Not-for profit | For profit |
| Wellington-Guelph (full service delivery area) | 25.5% | 1.47 | 338 (includes children from o/s county) | 4 | 52 | 37 |
| Centre Wellington | 19.4% | 1.93 | 19 | 1 (Wellington Place) | 7 | 2 |
| Erin | 40.5% | N/A – currently 3 percentage points higher | 9 | - | 4 | 4 |
| Guelph | 33.0% | 1.14 | 273 | 1 (Willowdale) | 34 | 26 |
| Guelph/Eramosa | 24.5% | 1.53 | 1 | - | 4 | 4 |
| Mapleton | 1.4% | 27.54 | 1 | - | 1 | - |
| Minto | 8.1% | 4.61 | 9 | 1 (Mount Forest) | - | 1 |
| Puslinch | 4.6% | 8.20 | 4 | - | 1 | - |
| Wellington North | 8.8% | 4.24 | 14 | 1 (Palmerston) | 1 | - |

⁴⁶ The number of licensed child care spaces available for children birth up to age 5 as a proportion of the number of children who live in each area.

⁴⁷ Amount (ratio) the access rate needs to increase by to hit the provincial target

Appendix 4: Stakeholder Interview Guides

Two interview guides were used to conduct the consultations based on whether the interviewee was a councillor or other stakeholder. The following interview questions were used as a semi-structured guide and were tailored and adapted based on the interests and expertise of the interviewee.

Councillor interview guide

1. In your role as a Councillor, what have you learned about early learning and child care as a result of the County's role in directly operating early learning and child care programmes?
2. From your perspective, what impact do Wellington County's directly operated centres have on the communities they support?
3. Why is it important for the County of Wellington to directly operate early learning and child care programmes?
4. Considering the County as an employer, what do you think the County is able to provide to the Registered Early Childhood Educator workforce in relation to recruitment and retention for the sector?
5. As a Councillor, you understand the inequity of access to licensed child care across our communities. What role should the County play a role in addressing these gaps?
6. To what extent do you feel the directly operated centres should continue as is, increase or reduce their presence?
7. As part of this value-for-money study, do you have any specific feedback you'd like to share with us?
8. Looking ahead, what opportunities do you see for the directly operated centres in the coming years?
9. Do you have any other observations regarding the County's Children's Early Years Division that you would like to share?

Other stakeholders

1. Please tell us about your role and responsibilities in relation to early child care and learning centres at the County of Wellington?
2. From your perspective, what are the key strengths of Wellington County's directly operated centres? What are the key challenges?

3. To what extent are the centres tailored to individual learners' and families' needs?
4. What impact does child care have on children and families in Wellington County? Does the programme meet the current needs of the community?
5. How well-integrated are the services with other key community and social services? e.g., newcomer services, public health, etc.
6. How efficient are the centres to administer, deliver, and monitor? How does that compare to centres that are not directly operated by the County?
7. Do you have any observations on specific "best practices" at centres that are not directly operated by the County that could be adopted by directly operated centres?
8. Looking ahead, how do the centres need to adapt to continue to be successful in one, three, and five years from now? What key initiatives and opportunities should the centres focus on in the next 3-4 years?
9. Do you have any other observations regarding children's services in the County you would like to share?

Appendix 5: Survey Overview

The surveys conducted for Wellington-Guelph parents/caregivers and staff provided feedback on child care centres, focusing on the directly operated programmes. These surveys explore stakeholder experiences on a variety of dimensions such as programme quality, accessibility, and overall service delivery.

It is important to note that as the sample size represents a subset of the overall population, it may not capture the full diversity of perspectives or experiences within the broader community. Additionally, participation rates and self-selection biases could influence the results. However, when combined with other data sources collected for this initiative, the surveys provide a valuable qualitative and quantitative evidence base to draw upon.

Parent and caregiver survey: In total, 269 responses were received between November 29 and December 20, 2024

The survey included 22 questions focused on the following areas:

- Respondent profile, e.g., demographic and household considerations
- Experience with child care, e.g., inclusivity, accessibility, support, perceived quality of care
- Programme satisfaction, e.g., areas of strength and opportunities for improvement

Staff survey: In total, 123 survey responses were gathered between November 29 and December 20, 2024

The survey included 27 questions focused on the following areas:

- Respondent profile, e.g., employment status and education
- Work experience, e.g., work satisfaction and meaningfulness
- Additional comments related to working in Wellington-Guelph more generally

Appendix 6: Comparison Table for Cost for Child Care Centres

| Auspice | Centre | Total cost | Number of full-time spaces (at Sept 2023) | Average cost per space | Total staff cost | Staff-cost ratio (%) | Total supply, material, equipment cost | Supply-cost ratio (%) |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------|---|------------------------|------------------|----------------------|--|-----------------------|
| Directly operated centres | Willowdale Child Care | \$ 1,309,606 | 32 | \$ 40,925 | \$ 1,136,035 | 87 | \$ 65,477 | 5 |
| | Wellington Place Child Care | \$ 2,228,902 | 64 | \$ 34,827 | \$ 1,931,771 | 87 | \$ 120,752 | 5 |
| | Palmerston Child Care | \$ 1,691,491 | 49 | \$ 34,520 | \$ 1,489,094 | 88 | \$ 64,589 | 4 |
| | Mount Forest Child Care | \$ 1,310,705 | 62 | \$ 21,140 | \$ 1,135,807 | 87 | \$ 71,146 | 5 |
| Non-profit centres | Non-profit A | \$ 3,262,000 | 121 | \$ 26,959 | \$ 3,079,000 | 94 | \$ 85,000 | 3 |
| | Non-profit B | \$ 1,554,858 | 65 | \$ 23,921 | \$ 1,296,674 | 83 | \$ 84,574 | 5 |
| | Non-profit C | \$ 1,604,655 | 70 | \$ 22,924 | \$ 1,339,745 | 83 | \$ 134,753 | 8 |
| | Non-profit D | \$ 1,193,087 | 53 | \$ 22,511 | \$ 966,161 | 81 | \$ 43,697 | 4 |
| For-profit centres | For-profit A | \$ 1,206,276 | 74 | \$ 16,301 | \$ 627,665 | 52 | N/A | N/A |

History of the Directly Operated Programmes

Mount Forest CCLC

- **1972** – Mount Forest Day Nursery opened.⁴⁸
- **1982** – Agreement between the Town of Mount Forest and the County of Wellington for the Town of Mount Forest to operate Mount Forest Day Nursery.⁴⁹
- **1993** – The County of Wellington took over the administration of the Needs Assessment and Subsidy programme for Mount Forest Day Nursery. Grey County also subsidized children at the Day Nursery.
- **1998** – Request from the Town of Mount Forest for the County of Wellington to take over as operator of Mount Forest Day Care Center.⁵⁰
 - Child care spaces: 10 toddlers, 32 preschoolers, 15 school age
- **2000** – Following the amalgamation of the Township of Wellington North, Wellington County took over as operator of Mount Forest Day Nursery.⁵¹
- **2005** – Mount Forest Day Nursery changed to Mount Forest Child Care and Learning Centre.⁵²
- **2008** – Ceremony to celebrate construction on the new Mount Forest Child and Family Service Hub, which will include the (new) Mount Forest CCLC. Expected to be completed in March **2009**.⁵³
- **2010** – 51 child care spaces.⁵⁴

Palmerston CCLC

- **1986** – Request for Purchase of Service Agreement with Palmerston Cooperative Nursery School.⁵⁵
- Child care spaces:
 - 16 spaces in **2000**
 - 24 spaces in **2003**.

⁴⁸ [Join Social Services Committee Report](#). November 3, 1998.

⁴⁹ [By-Law number 3294-82](#). November 10, 1982.

⁵⁰ [Join Social Services Committee Minutes](#). July 11, 1998.

⁵¹ [By-Law number 4295-99](#). July 5, 1999.

⁵² [Council Meeting Minutes](#). September 14, 2005.

⁵³ County Celebrates Beginning of New a Child Care Centre. (2008, Jul. 11). *Wellington Advertiser*, p. 14 & 39. [eservices.wellington.ca/museum.advertiser/Home/GetNewspaperPDF/?newspaperID=c5c0d78c-0dfb-40a0-972e-b264653ba99a#search="child care and learning centre"](http://eservices.wellington.ca/museum.advertiser/Home/GetNewspaperPDF/?newspaperID=c5c0d78c-0dfb-40a0-972e-b264653ba99a#search=)

⁵⁴ County of Wellington 2010 budget programme overview. City of Guelph Committee Agenda. February 16, 2010. Retrieved from: guelph.ca/wp-content/uploads/ssh_minutes_2010.pdf

⁵⁵ [Council Report](#). 1986.

- **2013** – Due to challenges putting the centre at risk of closing, the County of Wellington took over operations from The Early Learning Centre of Minto (TELC).^{56,57}
 - Child care spaces:
 - Changed from 10 toddler and 13 preschool, to 5 toddler spaces and 13 preschool.
 - Staff positions at the new centre:
 - 1 full time non-union supervisor
 - 2 full time union teachers
 - 2 part time teacher assistants
 - 1 part time cook
- **2015** – Children’s Early Years Division approved a New Build Capital Expansion funding application from the Upper Grand District School Board.⁵⁸
 - Conditional on the County of Wellington having priority to directly operate the new centre.
 - Former centre provided 13 child care spaces (5 toddler, 8 preschoolers).
 - New centre anticipated 49 child care spaces (10 infant, 15 toddler and 24 preschool).
- **2018** – County agreement with the Upper Grand District School Board for Children’s Early Years Division to directly operate the new Palmerston CCLC.⁵⁹

Willowdale CCLC

- **1975** – Willowdale Day Care Centre opened.⁶⁰
- **1983** – The County of Wellington granted \$1000 to the City of Guelph to use towards improving the grounds at Willowdale Day Care Centre.⁶¹
- **1983** – The County of Wellington recommends that Willowdale Day Care Centre tries to enroll 5 toddlers and 40 preschoolers with a staff of 6.²¹
- **1983/1984** – A license for Willowdale Day Care Centre was applied for and issued to the County.⁶²

⁵⁶ [Social Services Committee Report](#). September 11, 2013.

⁵⁷ [Social Services Committee Report](#). October 11, 2017.

⁵⁸ [Social Services Committee Report](#). October 11, 2017.

⁵⁹ Social Services Committee Minutes. June 13, 2018. Item 5.1. Retrieved from: <https://pub-wellington.escribemeetings.com/FileStream.ashx?DocumentId=12177>

⁶⁰ Community & Social Services Committee Staff Report. March 12, 2013. Report number CSS-CESS-1313. Retrieved from: https://guelph.ca/wp-content/uploads/css_agenda_031213.pdf

⁶¹ [Joint Social Services Committee Report](#). 1983.

⁶² [Joint Social Services Committee Report](#). 1983.

- **1984** – Conditional approval for an “integration program” for children with disabilities at Willowdale Day Care Centre.⁶³
- **1989** – Willowdale granted funds through a Direct Operating Grant from the County of Wellington.⁶⁴
- **2000** – According to the [2000 Service Plan](#) (p.45), Willowdale Day Care had toddler and preschool spaces for half and full day care.
- **2005** – Willowdale Day Care Centre changed to Willowdale Child Care and Learning Centre, to coincide with the Centre’s 30th anniversary.⁶⁵
- **2011** – Asbestos was found in insulation, therefore the site temporarily closed.⁶⁶ Temporary site at 58 Dawson Road was opened a few weeks later for the 50 children.⁶⁷
- **2012** – Original site re-opened.⁶⁸
- **2013** – Recommendation from Child Care Services to add 10 infant spaces (previously 0 spaces).⁶⁹
- **2013** – Centre closed again because of asbestos.⁷⁰
 - 55 children enrolled.
- **2014** – New Willowdale (now called Willowdale Child Care and Learning Centre) site was constructed,⁷¹ and opened.⁷²
 - 6 infant, 10 toddler, 16 preschool spaces.

⁶³ [Committee Report](#). November 22, 1984.

⁶⁴ [Joint Social Services Committee Report](#). 1988.

⁶⁵ [Committee Report](#). July 13, 2005.

⁶⁶ Asbestos found in day care centre insulation. (2011, Nov. 4). *Wellington Advertiser*, p. 1. [eservices.wellington.ca/museum.advertiser/Home/GetNewspaperPDF/?newspaperID=082839d3-2d93-468b-b9f4-a0236d37b31b#search="child care and learning centre"](http://eservices.wellington.ca/museum.advertiser/Home/GetNewspaperPDF/?newspaperID=082839d3-2d93-468b-b9f4-a0236d37b31b#search=)

⁶⁷ New day care home. (2011, Nov. 25). *Wellington Advertiser*, p. 17. [eservices.wellington.ca/museum.advertiser/Home/GetNewspaperPDF/?newspaperID=d596eaf9-1170-4138-ab2b-920283454c85#search="child care and learning centre"](http://eservices.wellington.ca/museum.advertiser/Home/GetNewspaperPDF/?newspaperID=d596eaf9-1170-4138-ab2b-920283454c85#search=)

⁶⁸ Willowdale Child Care set to re-open. (2012, Oct. 26). *Wellington Advertiser*, p. 3. [eservices.wellington.ca/museum.advertiser/Home/GetNewspaperPDF/?newspaperID=36c3ba00-2551-48cd-836f-d84f04e0446e#search="child care and learning centre"](http://eservices.wellington.ca/museum.advertiser/Home/GetNewspaperPDF/?newspaperID=36c3ba00-2551-48cd-836f-d84f04e0446e#search=)

⁶⁹ [Social Services Committee Report](#). January 9, 2013.

⁷⁰ County closes Willowdale day care, looks for new location. (2013, May. 17). *Wellington Advertiser*, p. 7. [eservices.wellington.ca/museum.advertiser/Home/GetNewspaperPDF/?newspaperID=fb737098-87eb-4b8a-bfc8-dc87d8fc4058#search="willowdale day care"](http://eservices.wellington.ca/museum.advertiser/Home/GetNewspaperPDF/?newspaperID=fb737098-87eb-4b8a-bfc8-dc87d8fc4058#search=)

⁷¹ Sveta, K. (2014, Feb 7). County tax hike set at 2.2% for 2014. *Wellington Advertiser*, p. 1. [eservices.wellington.ca/museum.advertiser/Home/GetNewspaperPDF/?newspaperID=02b750c2-8b42-475b-8e55-0bfb91a14778#search="child care and learning centre"](http://eservices.wellington.ca/museum.advertiser/Home/GetNewspaperPDF/?newspaperID=02b750c2-8b42-475b-8e55-0bfb91a14778#search=)

⁷² Willowdale Child Care and Learning Centre reopens. (2015, Jan. 2). *Wellington Advertiser*, p. 2. [eservices.wellington.ca/museum.advertiser/Home/GetNewspaperPDF/?newspaperID=83139181-fe79-4a33-8458-9a8df6a4468e#search="child care and learning centre"](http://eservices.wellington.ca/museum.advertiser/Home/GetNewspaperPDF/?newspaperID=83139181-fe79-4a33-8458-9a8df6a4468e#search=)

- **2014** – County approved the purchase of Willowdale Child Care and Learning Centre from the City of Guelph.⁷³

Wellington Place CCLC

- **2018** – Tender to construct the new Wellington Place Child Care and Learning Centre.⁷⁴
- **2018** – Groundbreaking ceremony.⁷⁵
- **2019** – Official opening.⁷⁶

⁷³ March County Council Highlights. (2014, Apr. 4). *Wellington Advertiser*, p. 51. [eservices.wellington.ca/museum.advertiser/Home/GetNewspaperPDF/?newspaperID=53ce658d-5d9c-401e-89ce-f080dfe2f087#search="child care and learning centre"](https://www.eservices.wellington.ca/museum.advertiser/Home/GetNewspaperPDF/?newspaperID=53ce658d-5d9c-401e-89ce-f080dfe2f087#search=)

⁷⁴ Tender Award - Wellington Place Child Care and Learning Centre (New Construction). Social Services Committee Minutes. August 30, 2018. Retrieved from: <https://pub-wellington.escribemeetings.com/FileStream.ashx?DocumentId=12184>

⁷⁵ County receives grant to open child care and learning centre. (2018, Sept. 6). *Wellington Advertiser*, p. 4. [eservices.wellington.ca/museum.advertiser/Home/GetNewspaperPDF/?newspaperID=a26063cb-dccb-4ba8-80de-80ab87ea14cd#search="child care and learning centre"](https://www.eservices.wellington.ca/museum.advertiser/Home/GetNewspaperPDF/?newspaperID=a26063cb-dccb-4ba8-80de-80ab87ea14cd#search=)

⁷⁶ New Centre Wellington child-care centre officially opens. (2019, Aug. 29). *Guelph Mercury Tribune*. https://www.guelphmercury.com/news/new-centre-wellington-child-care-centre-officially-opens/article_492cb642-2874-5b99-ac52-8ee41f2680c8.html

Appendix A: Licensed Child Care Spaces Over Time (2015-2024)

Table 1: Licensed Child Care Spaces at Mount Forest Child Care and Learning Centre

| | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | 2024 |
|---------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Infant | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 |
| Toddler | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 |
| Preschool | 16 | 16 | 16 | 16 | 16 | 16 | 16 | 16 | 16 | 16 |
| Kindergarten & School Age | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 32 | 32 | 32 | 32 | 32 | 32 | 32 | 32 | 32 | 32 |

Source: County of Wellington Licensed Child Care database. Data as of December 31, 2024.

Note: Data presented here excludes the 30 school-age spaces that were added to the license to accommodate a fire at the local school. These school-age spaces are not typically used, and therefore not considered a part of regular licensed child care space data reporting.

Table 2: Licensed Child Care Spaces at Palmerston Child Care and Learning Centre

| | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | 2024 |
|---------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Infant | 0 | 0 | 0 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 |
| Toddler | 5 | 5 | 5 | 15 | 15 | 15 | 15 | 15 | 15 | 15 |
| Preschool | 13 | 13 | 13 | 24 | 24 | 24 | 24 | 24 | 24 | 24 |
| Kindergarten & School Age | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 18 | 18 | 18 | 49 | 49 | 49 | 49 | 49 | 49 | 49 |

Source: County of Wellington Licensed Child Care database. Data as of December 31, 2024.

Table 3: Licensed Child Care Spaces at Willowdale Child Care and Learning Centre

| | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | 2024 |
|---------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Infant | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 |
| Toddler | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 |
| Preschool | 16 | 16 | 16 | 16 | 16 | 16 | 16 | 16 | 16 | 16 |
| Kindergarten & School Age | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 32 | 32 | 32 | 32 | 32 | 32 | 32 | 32 | 32 | 32 |

Source: County of Wellington Licensed Child Care database. Data as of December 31, 2024.

Table 4: Licensed Child Care Spaces at Wellington Place Child Care and Learning Centre

| | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | 2024 |
|---|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Infant | N/A | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 |
| Toddler | N/A | 30 | 30 | 30 | 30 | 30 | 30 |
| Preschool | N/A | 24 | 24 | 24 | 24 | 24 | 24 |
| Kindergarten & School Age | N/A | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Total | N/A | 64 | 64 | 64 | 64 | 64 | 64 |
| Source: County of Wellington Licensed Child Care database. Data as of December 31, 2024. | | | | | | | |