
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

EXPANDING CANADA-WIDE EARLY LEARNING AND CHILD CARE IN RENFREW COUNTY

Thank you

We would like to thank the Province of Ontario for your commitment to investing in the future of children. The introduction of the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care System (CWELCC) is a transformative initiative, ensuring equitable access to safe, affordable, and high-quality child-care programs for families across the province.

In Renfrew County, we believe that every child deserves the opportunity to grow and thrive in a safe, nurturing, and high-quality learning environment. Child care is not just a service; it's the foundation for future academic success, community stability, and economic growth. It empowers families to actively participate in the workforce and ensures children have the support they need to reach their full potential.

Proposal

The County of Renfrew has been allocated 427 new CWELCC spaces under the five-year provincial-federal agreement. We are proud to report that all these spaces have been successfully assigned to existing and new child-care expansion projects, marking significant progress in the growth of our licensed child-care system. However, the demand for child care far exceeds supply, creating challenges for families and service providers.

To fulfill our vision, we respectfully request the Ministry of Education allocate a minimum of 250 additional CWELCC spaces within the County of Renfrew to continue the system's growth and meet the urgent needs of our communities.

Background

Child care demand in Renfrew County consistently outpaces supply, leaving families without access to essential support for their children. This gap restricts parental participation in the labour market and impacts the safety and early learning opportunities available to children.

Key challenges include:

- **Long Waitlists:** Many families are unable to secure licensed child care due to significant wait times.
- **Requests for Expansion:** Local licensees frequently request opportunities to open new or expand existing centres to meet community needs.
- **No Growth Spaces for Two Consecutive Years:** Renfrew County is the only municipality in Ontario that has not received growth spaces for both 2025 and 2026.
- **Risk to Non-CWELCC Centres:** The County's three non-CWELCC child-care centres face potential closure due to changes in 2025 CWELCC funding guidelines, which limit financial support for centres not enrolled in the system. Without additional spaces, these centres cannot opt into CWELCC, jeopardizing their operations and leaving families and staff without viable options.

Rationale for Additional Spaces

Expanding child-care spaces will:

- **Enhance Community Stability:** Quality child care provides safe, nurturing environments and essential early learning opportunities, laying the foundation for children's academic success.
- **Support Economic Growth:** Increased child-care availability enables parents to participate fully in the workforce, contributing to economic stability and growth.
- **Address Vulnerabilities:** Additional spaces will ensure equitable access for vulnerable and diverse families, fostering inclusive opportunities for all children.
- **Prevent Closures:** Allocating new spaces will allow non-CWELCC centres to opt into the system, securing their operations and avoiding job losses, child displacement, and extended waitlists.

Local Readiness

Municipalities within Renfrew County are eager to expand child-care services, with viable plans to open new centres and enhance existing ones. However, these efforts depend on the availability of additional CWELCC spaces. Collaborative action is essential to meeting the growing demand and ensuring the success of local initiatives.

By prioritizing child-care expansion, the Province of Ontario can significantly enhance the well-being of children and families in Renfrew County. Allocating 250 additional CWELCC spaces will support community health and stability, empower families, and foster the development of resilient, well-rounded individuals prepared for future success.

We thank you for considering this critical request and look forward to your support in building a stronger, more inclusive child-care system for Renfrew County.