

Niagara Region Children's Services

Providing Systems Planning and Management



Responsibilities

Child Care	Special Needs	EarlyOn
Directly operate	Directly Support	Purchase services on behalf of the province
Purchase services from 70+ service providers	Purchase of Services	N/A

How?

Fee subsidy	N/A	N/A
General operating grants which support access and affordability	Provide Resource Consultants to licensed child care services and EarlyOn centres	Ensure coordination of services across Niagara
Wage Enhancement Grant which support recruitment and retention	N/A	N/A

Provincial role through the Ministry of Education is to license, monitor, enforce and ensure compliance.

System of Child Care

Pre Pandemic – as at March 2020	Pandemic – as at December 2020
# of licensed child care spaces: 11,595	# of licensed child care spaces: 11,787
# of operational spaces: 8,836	# of operational spaces: 4,910
Average Daily Fee for child care: \$45.06	To be determined in 2021
Number of children in receipt of fee subsidy in March 2020: 2,620	Number of children in receipt of fee subsidy in December 2020: 1,553

Operations are based on 4 tenets: Affordability, Accessibility, Quality and Responsiveness

Affordability



The cost of child care is significant and the cap of annualized household income for fee subsidy is \$60,000, which has not been increased since 2005.

Reduction of provincial funding is anticipated for 2022 while the push to expand child care spaces will increase pressures for municipalities and will likely see an increase in parent fees.

Accessibility

Pre-COVID, there were long waitlists for child care.

COVID - there are still waitlists, however, demand has gone down as families have been impacted in their own employment, as well as deciding not to place their children in a group environment.

Children's Services monitor growth areas in Niagara and the need for child care.

Quality



Licensing of child care programs by the Ministry of Education is more focused on health and safety factors and not necessarily quality of services.

Niagara has a long standing quality initiative-Quality Child Care Niagara (QCCN).

No definition of quality has been developed by the Ministry of Education.

Responsiveness

The broader sector is advocating for a provincial and/or federal child care plan to assist in shaping the future vision of services.

Advocates believe that child care should be universally accessible and affordable for all families, citing the benefits associated with early childhood development, school attendance, women's success and equitable access in the labour market.

[illegible]

CARE credit vs. operating funding for licensed care - pros and cons of the approach.

Considerations going forward

Recommended living wages for Registered ECEs.

Expansion of child care spaces will require additional funding for operating dollars.