

# CHILD CARE ACTION PLAN

Report of the  
Child Care  
Task Team  
for Prince  
Edward County



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Supported by: Child Care Task Team for  
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# 1. INTRODUCTION

The [Economic Development Action Plan](#), presented to Council on January 30, 2025, highlighted a shortage of child care availability and options in Prince Edward County, creating a significant barrier for local businesses and challenges for families.

As a result, Prince Edward County Council directed staff to form a Task Team to develop a plan to explore increasing the availability of child care in Prince Edward County, including recommendations to Council that require municipal assets or support. The Task Team met three times between May and September 2025 and this report contains an overview of work completed and recommended action items.

It is important to note that this plan represents only the beginning of the work. The Task Team has developed a strong foundation of ideas and initial actions, and moving forward, continued collaboration will be essential to achieve short- and long-term goals. To support this, the establishment of an ongoing Child Care Planning Table is being recommended as a key action item. This collaborative effort would help implement action items and identify new opportunities as the child care landscape changes and evolves.

# 2. ABOUT THE TASK TEAM

The goals of the Task Team were to:

- Engage with affected parents, child care providers and other community organizations to seek creative solutions to the shortage of childcare options in Prince Edward County.
- Consider the needs of child care, where it can best support the economy.
- Develop an actionable plan to increase child care.

The Task Team included representatives from:

- Baxter Arts Centre - Gabriele Cole (Program Director)
- Hastings Prince Edward District School Board - Ken Dostaler (Superintendent of Education for Student Services) & Becky Hicks (Student Services Coordinator)
- The Hub Child and Family Centre - Stacey Stanford (Executive Director) & Carrie Davis (Finance Manager)

- Prince Edward County Councillors - Brad Nieman (Bloomfield & Hallowell Ward) & Corey Engelsdorfer (Wellington Ward)
- Prince Edward County Needs Child Care - Andrea Dawes & Rebecca Dunning
- Prince Edward County Staff - Ashley Stewart (Community Services, Programs and Initiatives Coordinator) & Karen Palmer (Economic Development Officer)
- Prince Edward Lennox & Addington Social Services - Pam Kent (Social Services Manager)

In addition to Task Team meetings that brought together stakeholders, an employer survey was completed in June 2025 with 55 responses. The County also participated in The HUB's Family Services Fair to connect with parents to hear their stories / challenges related to finding child care. Information collected complements the results from the [2022 Parent & Primary Caregiver Survey](#) compiled by the [PEC Needs Child Care Collective](#), which captured families' experiences in accessing child care in Prince Edward County.

While the 2022 results painted a grim picture, the Task Team agreed that unfortunately child care availability has not improved since then, and if anything, has gotten worse.

More information on the Child Care Task Team can be found in the [Terms of Reference](#).

## 3. LOCAL CHILD CARE LANDSCAPE

Prince Edward County's child care landscape includes a mix of licensed and unlicensed providers, offering spaces for infants, toddlers, and school-age children. Licensed spaces in Prince Edward County are provided through [The HUB Child and Family Centre](#), [Reaching for Rainbows](#) and the [YMCA of Central East Ontario](#). Licensing is regulated by the Province of Ontario under the [Child Care and Early Years Act](#) (2014). Some programs (e.g. summer camps, etc.) that are not licensed for child care may instead operate as [recreation programs](#).

The HUB is the largest provider of licensed care in Prince Edward County. As of September 2025, their waitlist included 363 infants and toddlers (pre-school), many of whom will age out of infant / toddler child care before a space becomes available, and 55 school-age children for before- and after-school care. The true number, however, is not known as not all families are on the list, and families may be on other lists in other jurisdictions and vice versa. Prince Edward Lennox and Addington Social Services (PELASS) is in the process of creating a centralized waitlist which will provide a more accurate understanding of the needs.

Some of this demand will be addressed when The HUB's new child care centre opens in 2026, alleviating 49 toddler / pre-school spaces. Looking ahead, however, as residential development continues and the population grows, demand for child care is expected to rise even more if new spaces are not created. A clear understanding of current shortages and future needs is essential for proactive planning

While The HUB offers incredible programs and is the largest provider of child care services in Prince Edward County, they can't be alone in finding solutions; this is a community issue that requires the support of the municipality, local organizations and the provincial and federal governments, working together.

## 4. CHALLENGES RESULTING FROM THE CHILD CARE SHORTAGE

The shortage of child care in Prince Edward County has far-reaching impacts on the entire community, not just for caregivers and families. A lack of child care spaces affects healthcare, poverty, food security and the overall well-being of the local economy in the following ways:

### Health Care Challenges

[County Docs](#), Prince Edward County's physician recruitment and retention organization, confirmed that the community has missed out on two new family physician recruits due to the lack of child care, while a third expressed hesitation about relocating here for the same reason. In addition, two healthcare workers shared that they did not return to work after maternity leave because they could not secure child care that worked around shift work.

## Economic Challenges

A lack of access to child care is preventing some employers from expanding operations, boosting productivity, extending hours, or opening on weekends or evenings. This not only limits individual earning potential but also stifles business growth and productivity. Diverse child care options can help unlock workforce capacity, support year-round employment, and create the conditions for sustainable economic expansion.

In the employer survey, Prince Edward County employers noted that:

- 45.5% have lost staff due to a lack of child care
- 43.6% have lost new hires / recruits due to a lack of child care
- 36% of employers strongly or somewhat agree that the municipality should be using taxpayer funds to attract and retain early childhood educators
- 43% of employers strongly or somewhat agree that the municipality should be using taxpayer funds to encourage the creation of licensed home-based child care.
- 49% of employers strongly or somewhat agree that the municipality should be using taxpayer funds to convert municipal spaces into new child care centres

From the survey, employer respondents anecdotally noted:



"We've accepted a lower output because of child care needs, though it could be improved with greater access to care."

"Employees have been unable to return from maternity leave because they were unable to access child care. Not having weekend child care available affects retail environments."

"Staff always need to leave for pick-up times as they no longer have someone to watch their children and they are unable to return to work."

"Employees would be able to work full-time hours if child care was more widely available in PEC."



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"Limited access to child care can be a huge barrier for women to succeed and advance in the workplace. We are not living up to our full potential as a modern society when women are not adequately supported, or when their unique challenges are not understood or addressed."

"Access to child care significantly impacts employees' ability to work full time, manage stress and maintain a consistent workflow. When reliable child care is unavailable or unaffordable employees are often forced to reduce their hours, take unexpected time off, or juggle responsibilities in ways that affect their productivity and mental well-being.

If child care were no longer a barrier, I believe many employees would be able to work more hours, engage more fully in their roles and approach their work with greater focus and stability. It would also likely reduce stress and improve overall job satisfaction and retention."

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## Socio-Economic Challenges

A lack of access to child care results in increased rates of poverty, as parents / caregivers, particularly women, are unable to participate fully in the workforce. Having access to child care acts as an anti-poverty tool, supporting family stability and creating more equitable opportunities for both children and caregivers. The [2024 Vital Signs Reports](#) indicate that "children from low socio-economic communities are nearly twice as likely to fall behind in early development skills compared to their higher-income peers."

From the survey, employer respondents touched on this as follows:

“If finding good child care was not a barrier I would have been farther ahead as a single Mom and would have been helped easier to leave an abusive relationship”

“Not having child care made me homeless, unemployed and left me in an abusive relationship.”

The [Hastings and Prince Edward Children and Youth Planning Table](#) was formed to support the well-being of children, youth and families through collaboration and informed planning. The Planning Table's [Early Learning, Childcare and Education Committee](#) was formed with the goal to focus on early intervention and support for the 0-6 years population and their families, and the development of a community coordinated service delivery program.

Access to licensed child care is a vital support for families living in poverty, particularly those without access to a family doctor.

### Access to licensed child care can:

- serve as a gateway to essential services / referrals
- contribute to addiction prevention and mental health support through early intervention and early identification of at-risk children
- support a smooth transition into the school system, ensuring that appropriate supports are in place from the beginning

## Challenges for Families

A shortage of child care in Prince Edward County has left families scrambling and piecing together ad hoc child care. Alternatively, some parents / caregivers are forced to spend hours on the road to access child care in neighbouring municipalities, as that is the only option available. Some families can secure care for one child, but not for their sibling/s. Other parents have opted not to return to work after parental leave and have left the workforce altogether.

During The Hub's open house, when asked about the challenges of finding child care in PEC, parents / caregivers shared the following:

- Lack of options for before- and after-school care, with several noting that they have care for one child, but not for siblings.
- Families securing child care outside of PEC in Belleville or Trenton, while other partners delayed / opted not to return to work because there was no availability locally.
- Child care options don't align with work hours, especially for those working in agriculture, healthcare or industries with non-traditional work hours.
- Only full-time child care is available, but part-time is needed.



"I work from home (Picton), but commute to child care (Trenton)"

"I've been struggling with the lack of child care issue in PEC since we moved here five years ago. I'm glad something is finally being done. I can say this problem is 100% pushing families away."



## 5. WHY IS CHILD CARE IMPORTANT?

Access to affordable child care is essential for reducing some of the economic volatility within Prince Edward County's seasonal economy. With health care and hospitality driving much of the local employment, many residents face non-traditional work schedules and fluctuating income throughout the year. Affordable and flexible child care options empower parents - especially women who are disproportionately affected by limited child care options - to remain active in the workforce year-round, pursue off-season training or entrepreneurship, and transition more easily between seasonal and permanent roles. By investing in child care, The County can better support its goal of building a four-season economy that works for everyone.

With an adequate availability of child care in place, municipalities benefit from stronger local economies and more attractive communities for young families. High-quality, affordable child care also reduces income inequality, improves public health, and strengthens community well-being.

Neighbouring municipalities and organizations are undertaking creative solutions to help support an increase in child care as follows:

- In 2023, Russell Township's Council increased child care staff salaries by 20%, took over the operation of a struggling private child care centre to create 456 new spaces and funds non-graduate educators with the cost of schooling toward obtaining a registered ECE designation.
- In July 2025, a [66-unit Habitat for Humanity](#) development was announced in Belleville, with a child care facility on site.
- The City of Peterborough operates two full day child care centres and two before- and after-school programs. They've also established a municipal vision, mission and guiding principles for child care:

### Our vision and mission

[Vision](#)   [Mission](#)   [Guiding principles](#)   [Quality child care](#)   [Our educators](#)

For all families to have access to high quality child care and early learning that fosters success for every child.

<https://www.peterborough.ca/recreation-culture-social-services/social-services/childrens-services/municipal-child-care-programs/>

## 6. WHY MUNICIPALITIES CAN SUPPORT CHILD CARE

In Ontario, municipalities are legally mandated to play a central role in the child care system and serve as "service system managers" with primary responsibility for planning, implementing, and administering child care services. Municipal governments are uniquely positioned to understand and respond to local needs, given their close connection to the communities they serve. Unlike higher levels of government, municipalities can leverage planning tools and local data to effectively forecast child care demand, particularly in growing or changing communities.<sup>1</sup>

Researchers in the field of early learning and child care indicate, however, that child care should be a shared responsibility between the province and federal government:

*"Delivering affordable child care services so that they are universally accessible to meet the diverse needs of different families across Ontario has to be a collaborative, ongoing activity. Further, the province and the federal government have the money; municipalities do not. Property taxes will not rise as women's labour-force participation and GDP rise, but provincial and federal income taxes will. Therefore, municipalities should not be expected to rely on the property tax base to share the costs of child care services with the provincial government."*<sup>2</sup>

For this reason, advocating to higher levels of government for increased funding and an increase in the allocated number of spaces for Prince Edward County is the top recommendation.

In Prince Edward County, the responsibility for child care is contracted to [Prince Edward Lennox and Addington Social Services](#) (PELASS), the designated Consolidated Municipal Service Manager (CMSM) responsible for establishing a child care and early years service system plan. The [Child Care and Early Years Service Plan](#) (2020-2024) identifies intended outcomes and strategic priorities that are reflective of community priorities, gaps and needs.

PELASS provides a [child care fee subsidy program](#) intended to help families with the cost of child care expenses. Through this program, eligible families receive essential support to balance career and family, while working or pursuing education or training.

[1] The Municipal Role in Child Care, Eidelman, G. and Neufeld, S.

[2] The Role of Municipalities in Canadian Child Care: What Do They Do? What Could They Do? How Could They Make a Difference? Friendly, M.

## 7) RECOMMENDED ACTION ITEMS

Based on a review of what other municipalities - large / small and urban / rural - are doing, and review of reports referenced, the Task Team is recommending that the municipality undertake the following action items in the next 1-3 years. Action items are categorized into 6 themes, with the role for the municipality identified as either:

- **Leading** - responsible for driving the initiative with support from stakeholders, and making decisions
- **Supporting** - actively contributes but does not lead
- **Enabling** - provides resources or conditions that make the action possible
- **Observing** - monitors without direct involvement

### Recommendation #1: ADVOCACY

*Goal: Advocate to provincial governments for sustainable child care funding through the CWELCC program for children ages 0-6 to increase CWELCC spaces allocated to Prince Edward County by 30% within the next 3 years.*

<p>a. Advocating to provincial and federal government for increased and sustainable funding for more child care spaces, through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council Resolution</li> <li>• Pointed advocacy letter to the Province</li> <li>• Make child care a priority within advocacy groups (e.g. ROMA, EOWC, OMAA)</li> <li>• Partner with non-profit organizations dedicated to advocating for child care (e.g. ON Coalition for Better Child Care)</li> <li>• Child Care delegation at ROMA, AMO conferences.</li> </ul>	Leading	
<p>b. Promoting awareness of local child care needs by building collaborative partnerships across local community, businesses, and organizations.</p>	Supporting	
<p>c. Improve municipal connection to local organizations involved in offering licensed child care (e.g. Municipal representative to sit on local Boards)</p>	Supporting / Enabling	
<p>d. Advocate to the <a href="#">College of Early Childhood Educators (ECE)</a> and the <a href="#">Ministry of Colleges, Universities, Research Excellence and Security</a>, for ECE students to be able to complete mandatory placements at their place of work.</p>	Leading / Supporting	
<p>e. Advocate to the Province for a Provincial ECE wage grid for early childhood educators.</p>	Leading / Supporting	

**Recommendation #2: FUNDING / IN-KIND SUPPORT**

*Goal: Increase access to child care by leveraging funding, incentives, and partnerships to expand child care services.*

a. Micro-grant pilot program to encourage an increase in licensed home-based child care, when CWELCC spaces become available (e.g. fencing and other child care infrastructure)	Leading
b. Funding to establish transportation between Belleville and PEC, ensuring non-driving ECEs / child care staff have transportation to and from work.	Leading / Supporting
c. Provide funding / encourage partnership for child care during non-traditional hours (e.g. evenings / weekends)	Leading / Supporting
d. Explore a reserve fund specifically for child care infrastructure, financed through Development Charges, Municipal Accommodations Tax (MAT).	Leading
e. Municipal funding applications for child care services to augment current offerings (e.g. Vital Impact Fund).	Leading / Supporting

**Recommendation #3: GOVERNANCE / STRATEGY**

*Goal: Embed child care as a community priority through coordinated planning and collaborative implementation.*

a. Following the work of this Task Team, formation of a municipally facilitated Child Care Planning Table that brings together new partners (e.g. Reaching for Rainbows, YMCA, United Way HPE, Service Clubs and more) and existing partners to implement recommendations and identify additional opportunities.	Leading / Supporting
b. Including child care as essential social infrastructure that is prioritized in official community plans / Council priorities as they are developed / updated.	Leading

**Recommendation #4: PLANNING / LAND-USE POLICY**

*Goal: Proactively plan and zone for child care needs to enable future growth and avoid reactive solutions.*

a. Ensuring that zoning for child care infrastructure is appropriately designated in new institutional and residential developments, so that child care centres can be established if / when more child care spaces and funding become available.	Leading
c. Encouraging developers to consider child care as essential social infrastructure through Community Benefits Network.	Enabling

**Recommendation #5: DATA COLLECTION / FORECASTING**

*Goal: Linking planning and implementation rather than waiting for the market to respond.*

a. Conducting child care needs assessment to understand forecasted needs in the context of upcoming development and forecasted population increases, categorized by age and needs, including infant, toddler, school-age child care, as well as the corresponding staffing requirements.	Leading / Supporting
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**Recommendation #6: OTHER**

*Goal: Support and encourage innovative and flexible child care solutions as new opportunities emerge.*

a. Nominal lease arrangement for non-profit child care operators in municipal spaces, if an appropriate space is identified.	Leading / Supporting
b. Explore expansion of non-profit licensed care in PEC (CWELCC / non-CWELCC) as the preferred option.	Supporting / Enabling
c. Explore attraction of for-profit licensed care in PEC (CWELCC / non-CWELCC)	Enabling / Monitoring
d. Exploration of care for school-age children through the municipal Recreation and Facilities Department (e.g. summers, March Break, PA Days, etc) in line with recommendations from the Parks and Recreation Master Plan, when finalized.	Leading

## 8) CONCLUSION / NEXT STEPS

Prince Edward County is experiencing a child care shortage that affects families, employers, and the community as a whole. Many families are left without reliable options, often commuting long distances or relying on ad hoc arrangements. With population growth and new development anticipated, demand for child care will continue to increase if additional spaces are not secured.

The recommendations outlined in this report provide a path to begin addressing these challenges. By planning proactively and working collaboratively with local partners, employers, and higher levels of government, the County can help expand access to child care and support the stability and well-being of families as well as the local economy. Taking steps now will position the community to meet current needs while preparing for future growth and development.

## Appendix 1 REFERENCES

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