



BOARD REPORT

REPORT No.: 2023-06

MEETING DATE: FEBRUARY 16, 2023

SUBJECT: CANADA WIDE EARLY LEARNING CHILD CARE (CWELCC)
PHASE 2 ACCESS AND INCLUSION FRAMEWORK AND PLAN

RECOMMENDATION

THAT with respect to Report No. 2023-06 (Integrated Social Services Division) we, The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board (the Board) approve the proposed Canada Wide Early Learning Child Care Phase 2, Access and Inclusion Framework Notional Spaces Plan (Plan), as presented;

AND THAT the Board authorize the Chief Administrative Officer to submit the approved Plan to the Ministry of Education.

REPORT SUMMARY

To request approval of the Canada Wide Early Learning Child Care (CWELCC) Access and Inclusion Notional Spaces Plan to the Ministry of Education, identifying proposed increases in licensed child care spaces in The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board (TBDSSAB) area.

BACKGROUND

Ontario's vision for the CWELCC system is that more families in Ontario have access to high quality, affordable, flexible, and inclusive early learning and child care no matter where they live. Under the CWELCC agreement with the Government of Canada, Ontario has been funded to support the creation of 86,000 new licensed child care spaces (relative to 2019) by December 2026. Since 2019, 33,000 new spaces have become operational, with another 53,000 spaces to be created.

The Ministry of Education (Ministry) has undertaken first steps toward allocating funding to create the remaining new CWELCC spaces. A key priority will be to create affordable spaces in communities with targeted populations who need them most. This directed growth approach is intended to support space creation in areas of the province that have had historically lower rates of space availability.

The Ministry has developed an Access and Inclusion Framework for consultation. The purpose of the framework is to support Service Managers with creating updated local

service system plans featuring an increased focus on access as it relates to inclusion. A copy of the Access and Inclusion Framework is attached (Attachment #1).

Under the Access and Inclusion Framework, the Ministry developed a model to allocate funding for new spaces for children ages 0-5, with a focus on improving equity of access. Most of the funding for spaces is allocated to help each region progress towards a targeted provincial ratio of spaces to children, or access rate, of 37%. This is equivalent to there being one affordable child care space available for every 2.7 children aged 0-5, based on the estimated 2025 (0-5) population, and the anticipated total licensed child care spaces in Ontario by the end of 2026. Working towards this ratio will significantly decrease the disparities in access to child care across the province.

Eligible expansion of spaces for ages 4-5 (kindergarten) are only for new full-day spaces. The allocation model is based on available data and has incorporated existing child care capacity and demographics. The Ministry then provided the following notional space targets for TBDSSAB for the period of 2022 through 2026. Total notional targets proposed by the Ministry include spaces to be created in schools as well as those in communities. The targets provided are suggested, and TBDSSAB is not bound by these numbers. The notional targets are subject to agreement with service system managers and ongoing monitoring.

The notional targets for TBDSSAB are as follows:

Total Spaces Allocated:

| Allocation | 2022 | 2023 | 2024 | 2025 | 2026 |
|------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| 419 | 54 | 104 | 106 | 95 | 61 |

School Based Allocation (Child-Care Programs in Schools):

| Allocation | 2022 |
|------------|------|
| 49 | 49 |

Note: These spaces already existed in TBDSSAB's overall licensed system - the Geraldton Day Care in BA Parker School 2022.

Community Based Allocation:

| Allocation | 2022 | 2023 | 2024 | 2025 | 2026 |
|------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| 370 | 5 | 104 | 106 | 95 | 61 |

In identifying priority neighbourhoods for space creation and updating service plans, TBDSSAB has been asked to consider the degree to which new affordable child care spaces in particular neighbourhoods will support access to licensed spaces for:

- Low-income families
- Vulnerable communities
- Diverse communities
- Children with special needs
- Francophone families
- Indigenous families
- Families needing non-traditional hours of care

To address the prioritization of the targeted notional spaces, Administration would create a policy outlining the criteria. This direction would be based on the Ministry’s priorities for access to licensed child-care spaces. For the purposes of this report, Administration will be concentrating on the birth to preschool age group.

COMMENTS

The Current Child Care Landscape

To identify an appropriate model to address the potential for expanded child care spaces in the TBDSSAB area, the current landscape must first be explored. The following data outlines the difference between licensed versus actual spaces. Licensed spaces are the maximum child care spaces that the Ministry allows for based on the square footage of each centre. The Ministry may allow for alternate capacities in the same spaces (for example, 2 toddlers with 10 preschool children) if appropriate. The following graphs illustrate the current infant, toddler, and preschool system.

Illustration #1 shows the percentage of used and unused spaces based on the Ministry’s actual licensed spaces of 1,126.

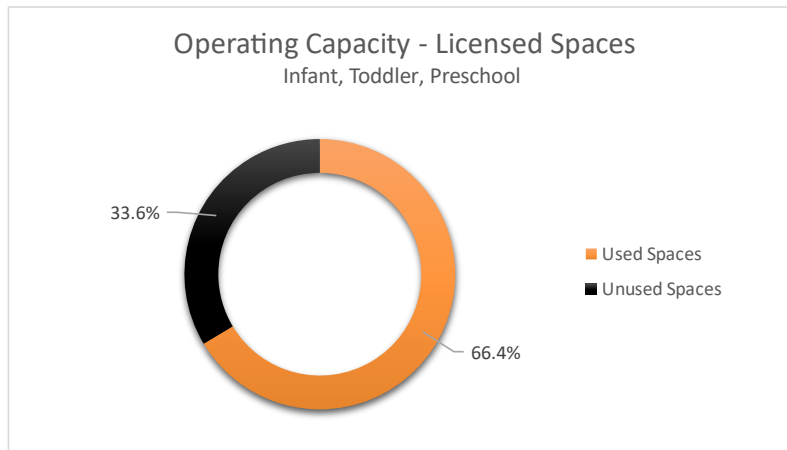
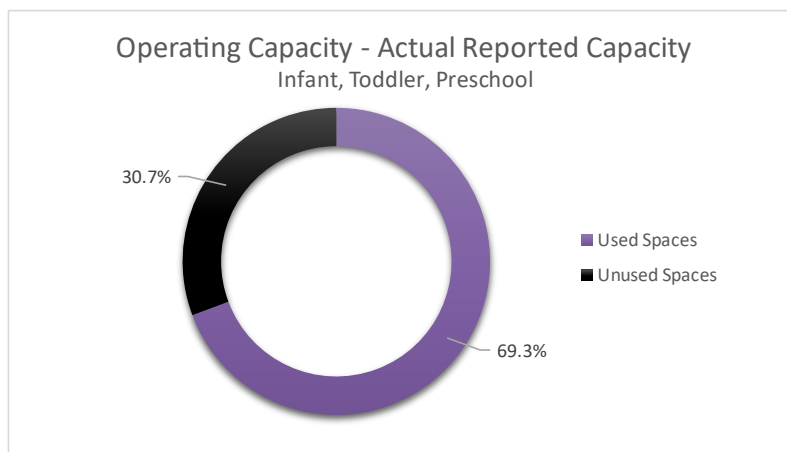


Illustration #2 show the percentage of used and unused spaces of actual reported capacity of 1,080.



As of November, 2022 the licensed private home system has an operating capacity of 156 spaces in 26 homes but is currently operating at 18 occupied spaces in 3 homes.

The Current Birth to Preschool System

The current child care system requires an additional 130 educators to allow the system to operate at full capacity of 2,756 licensed spaces. The child care system operates on an educator to child ratio, as outlined in the *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014* (CCEYA). The ratios are as follows:

- Infant 1 educator for every 3 children
- Toddler 1 educator for every 5 children
- Preschool 1 educator for every 8 children

Also, within the CCEYA, programs are allowed to operate under an age group mix where there is a 20% mix of infant to toddlers, 20% mix of toddler to preschool and a 25% mix of preschoolers to kindergarten. The ratio followed would reflect the youngest age group.

Administration has worked to increase the number of licensed spaces over the past 6 years through an Expression of Interest (EOI) process. This process generated 10 EOI's being submitted by interested parties. This resulted in the opening of 1 new non-profit child care program with 6 infant, 10 toddler, and 16 preschool spaces as well as 3 expansions of existing programs adding 9 infant, 5 toddler, and 16 preschool spaces.

The feedback received from those that retracted their submissions concerned the availability of educators. In the same period, 2 programs closed resulting in the loss of 18 toddler and 49 preschool spaces. This contributed to a net gain of 15 infant spaces, a net loss of 3 toddler spaces and 17 preschool spaces.

Confederation College Early Childhood Education Graduate Stats and Enrollment

Confederation College offers a 2-year Early Childhood Education Program in the District of Thunder Bay. As illustrated below, COVID-19 impacted the number of Early Childhood Educators graduating from the program which in turn added more pressure in the recruitment of Registered Early Childhood Educators to the child care programs.

| Number of Graduates 2020/21 | |
|-----------------------------|----|
| 2020 | 18 |
| 2021 | 36 |

| Enrollment in ECE Program 2022/23 | |
|-----------------------------------|----|
| 1 st year | 43 |
| 2 nd year | 39 |

On January 22, 2023 Administration met with child care licensees to discuss the possibility of opening new spaces. The result of this discussion was a unanimous opinion that the existing child care programs were not able to consider the opening of more spaces at this time due to a shortage of qualified staff. There was consensus

among operators that there was little prospect of attracting enough new educators to meet the Ministry's proposed growth targets.

The largest and most significant impediment to growth that exists within the child care system is the lack of a qualified workforce. As the system is currently estimated to be 130 educators short to meet full occupancy, the concerns of the sector related to growth are understood.

What is being done to address this shortage?

In 2022 and 2023, TBDSSAB received Workforce Funding from the Ministry to support recruitment, development and retention of the child care and early years workforce. The strategies developed for this effort align with the following objectives:

1. Sustain the existing child care and early years workforce to ensure a more stable and high-quality early years and child care system.
2. Enhance access to opportunities for the workforce that promote retention and recruitment, including professional development, training, and qualification upgrade programs.
3. Grow the number of qualified staff in the early years and child care workforce to increase access to high quality licensed child care for families.
4. Attract and support the development of an increasingly diverse workforce to reflect the children and families accessing early years and child care programs more effectively.

TBDSSAB will engage and collaborate with local community partners to build and implement innovative strategies to support the recruitment and retention of the child care and early years workforce.

Administration has been working with Confederation College to create a plan to address the recruitment of new qualified workers to the sector. Currently in the draft stage of development, some items under consideration are:

- Tuition/Bursary that would provide financial support to costs associated with tuition thereby reducing monetary barriers to (2023) second year ECE students.
- Prior Learning Assessment Program (PLAR) designed for staff working in the child care sector that do not have an ECE Diploma. This would provide an education pathway for employees currently working in Early Childhood Education programs as non-ECEs to obtain the necessary education, credential completion, and registration with the Ontario College of Early Childhood Educators.
- Currently, a pre-ECE Program is operating at Confederation College that provides some foundational education, ECE knowledge, and placement

competencies. Some placement hours are recognized in the 2-year ECE diploma.

Other areas are being explored at this time include:

- Dual credit course in partnership with high schools throughout the district and Confederation College to deliver credits which may be applied towards an ECE diploma after graduation. This would give high school students the opportunity to take specific ECE courses in their school. It would also give high school students an opportunity to acquire knowledge of the ECE Program and attract students into the ECE program as a career path.
- Another opportunity being explored with Confederation College is a recruitment campaign and marketing opportunity to develop a video to promote the ECE program. This would build on the current provincial campaign by Service System Managers and would attract attention to the ECE profession.

Proposed Notional Spaces to the end of 2026

Although the child care and early years sector is experiencing many challenges, the Ministry is pressing ahead with ambitious implementation timeframes. TBDSSAB received correspondence on December 19, 2022 from the Ministry which included the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC) Space Reporting Template.

The purpose of this reporting template is to seek input from TBDSSAB regarding the notional targets that have been provided by the Ministry. The Ministry has committed to work with TBDSSAB to meet the overall space expansion targets and acknowledges that the targets may shift from year to year to align with emerging needs within communities.

Administration is recommending the following areas would move forward for consideration for future notional spaces, pending an increase in the child care and early years workforce. These notional spaces are less than the 419 that the Ministry has calculated for the District of Thunder Bay.

Given the constraints that may weigh upon implementation, Administration is recommending the following spaces for the years of 2025 – 2026:

Kakabeka Falls Public School

In 2018, the child care program at Kakabeka Falls Public School closed due to a staffing shortage which has left the community without a child care centre. This will be considered a priority area under the access and inclusion framework. The child care space is ready in this school and would only require funding for start-up and minor repairs and maintenance.

Spaces for expansion would be dependent upon demand in the community. For the proposed CWELCC funding, this would include spaces for children from birth to five

years old. Notionally this may be an allocation of 5 toddler, 8 preschool, and 13 kindergarten spaces.

Conseil scolaire public du Grand Nord de l'Ontario (previously Edgewater Park School)

This site would require capital that would be accessed through the Ministry's School Capital Fund. Administration has been in contact with the Board and have encouraged them to reach back to the Ministry of Education for details on establishing a new centre.

At this time, notional space allocation for expansion in this proposed childcare facility would be dependent upon demand, physical space available, and the number of qualified francophone Early Childhood Educators.

Notionally this may be an allocation of 5 toddler, 8 preschool, and 13 kindergarten spaces.

Terrace Bay

The Township of Terrace Bay reached out to Administration inquiring about child care in their community and Administration shared the most current Ministry criteria for new licensed spaces under the CWELCC.

At this time notional space allocation for expansion in any proposed childcare facility would be dependent upon demand, physical space available, and the number of qualified Early Childhood Educators.

Notionally this may be an allocation of 5 toddler, 8 preschool, and 13 kindergarten spaces.

Licensed Private Home Expansion

Administration would propose that the Ministry consider the expansion of any new Licensed Private Child Care Homes be a part of the community based notional space allocation.

Notionally this may be an allocation of 4 new Private Licensed Child Care homes for 2022, resulting in 24 child care spaces.

Notional Spaces for 2023, 2024, 2025, and 2026

The expansion of spaces will be dependent on many factors but the most important will be availability of the workforce. Administration is recommending that spaces for Kakabeka, Conseil scolaire public du Grand Nord de l'Ontario, and the Township of Terrace Bay be considered for the year 2025 - 2026 funding year, pending Ministry approval of these locations. Licensed Private Home spaces are proposed for expansion in 2023, 2024, 2025 and 2026.

STRATEGIC PLAN IMPACT

This report supports the Strategic Plan vision of establishing flexible, inclusive services through enhanced early year and child care programs. Decisions made as part of the new CWELCC system will continue to support the Strategic Plan.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

CWELCC funding under the Access and Inclusion Funding program is calculated at \$350,000 for the creation of 50 spaces. Funding would be prorated for any expansion of spaces less than 50.



CWELCC is 100% funded through the agreement between the Federal and Provincial governments.

CONCLUSION

It is concluded that this report provides the Board with an overview of the Child Care System and its current state and approve the submission of the proposed Canada Wide Early Learning Child Care (CWELCC) Phase 2, Access and Inclusion Framework Notional Spaces Plan as presented.

REFERENCE MATERIALS

- Attachment #1 [Ontario's Access and Inclusion Framework 2022](#)
 #2 [CWELCC Space Reporting Template](#)

| | |
|---------------|---|
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Ontario's Access and Inclusion Framework 2022

Draft for Consultation

Canada-wide Early Learning and Child
Care System

December 2022

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Introduction

On March 27, 2022, Ontario reached a \$13.2 billion agreement with the federal government on funding for and the terms of a Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC) system. The new system will lower child care costs and improve access, quality and inclusion across Ontario's child care and early years sector.

Quick Facts

- There are more than 5,500 child care centres, 139 licensed home child care agencies, and around 464,000 licensed spaces in Ontario.
- Ontario's child care system offers a range of options for families with differing needs, including licensed, unlicensed, for-profit, not-for-profit, centre/school-based and home-based child care.
- Since 2018, the Ontario government has invested over \$1.5 billion in capital projects within the education sector, including 4,908 new, licensed child care spaces within schools. In 2021, the Ontario government invested more than \$95 million to create 3,094 more school-based licensed child care spaces for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers.

Child care is foundational to supporting early childhood development, learning, well-being and student success. It is also a key enabler of workforce participation, particularly for women, both as parents and providers. The Ontario government is committed to providing access to high quality, affordable child care to as many families as possible. Currently, children are supported by a system of early learning and child care that is integrated with publicly funded schools to support access and seamless experiences for all Ontario families.

Ontario's vision for the CWELCC system is that more families in Ontario have access to high quality, affordable, flexible, and inclusive early learning and child care no matter where they live.

Under the CWELCC Agreement, Ontario will support the creation of approximately 86,000 new licensed child care spaces by December 2026, including more than 33,000 licensed child care spaces created since 2019.

A focus will be given to creating affordable child care spaces in communities with populations who need them most. This targeted growth approach will support space creation in regions of the province that have had historically low rates of space availability.

The Ministry of Education will engage with Consolidated Municipal Service Managers and District Social Services Administration Boards (CMSMs and DSSABs) on a plan that supports child care access for low-income children, vulnerable children, children from diverse communities, children with special needs, Francophone and Indigenous children. In addition to collaborating with service system managers, the ministry will engage with various partners from the child care and early years sector, as well as the federal government to strengthen the ministry's approach to access and inclusion.

Ontario will release the finalized Access and Inclusion Framework in November 2022, which will be used by service system managers to guide the development and implementation of local service management plans.

Purpose of the Access and Inclusion Framework

The purpose of Ontario's Access and Inclusion Framework is to support CMSMs and DSSABs with developing and implementing local service system plans with an increased focus on access as it relates to inclusion. These plans build on existing service plans and will be integrated into the broader provincial Access and Inclusion Framework.

The ministry will work with CMSMs and DSSABs to gather data, assess barriers, and support a plan for increased access to affordable licensed child care, which will include the analysis of underserved geographic regions, as well as an inclusion plan.

By December 2022, CMSMs and DSSABs will be required to confirm space expansion targets and identify priority neighbourhoods for CWELCC funding, and incorporate space expansion and inclusion plans into their existing five-year service plans by spring 2023 to inform the provincial allocation of funding for new affordable child care spaces and to ensure these spaces are created in communities and for populations that need them most.

Simultaneously, throughout the fall and winter, the ministry will update *How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years* and will continue to work with CMSM and DSSAB partners to review updates to the Special Needs Resourcing guideline (and the income test for fee subsidy).

Opportunities and Challenges

The CWELCC system presents opportunities for the ministry and service system managers to plan for and build an affordable child care system that is inclusive and accessible to all.

Opportunities

The ministry's strong relationships with CMSMs and DSSABs and child care partners provides opportunities to:

- collectively assess the data and limitations related to diversity, equity, and inclusion within the child care system;
- gather information about the types of data that CMSMs and DSSABs collect and leverage this information to support future policy/program initiatives; and
- engage with external organizations working with vulnerable and diverse populations to acquire insights into gaps in data collection related to underrepresented communities.

Challenges

To fully implement a comprehensive service plan, the plan must be informed by the appropriate data. The lack of availability of sufficient data poses several challenges, including:

1. demographic and socio-economic data related to children in licensed child care settings is limited;
2. data related to Special Needs Resourcing such as the type of special needs (i.e., cognitive, physical, behavioural, communications) or professional learning supports has not been collected.

Access and Inclusion Principles and Approach

Ontario's Action Plan includes a focus on improved access and inclusion.

Access

Through the CWELCC system, Ontario will improve access to child care by allocating funding to support the creation of 86,000 new, high-quality, affordable child care spaces. This includes more than 33,000 new spaces already created between 2019 and August 2022. These new licensed child care spaces will include a mix of not-for-profit and for-profit settings to provide families with choice and flexibility. Under the agreement, Ontario has committed to maintaining or improving the proportion of not-for-profit licensed child care spaces for children aged 0 to 5 at 70% or higher by 2026.

The province recognizes the critical role CMSMs and DSSABs play in gathering and maintaining in-depth knowledge about their community's needs, planning and managing the system, identifying and addressing service gaps, and supporting service coordination.

Currently, the *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014*, requires service system managers to establish a child care and early years programs and service system plan (service system plan) for their service area that addresses matters of provincial interest under the legislation.

Service system plans include the following key elements:

- environmental scan results that assess current and future child care and early years service gaps and opportunities;
- a description of the community planning processes used to inform the development of the plan and a commitment to consult, at regular or relevant intervals, through the life of the plan;
- strategic priorities and intended outcomes that are responsive to community needs and align with Ontario's vision for child care and early years and provincial interest;
- a measurable and action-oriented implementation plan that describes how strategic priorities and outcomes will be met; and
- accountability methods including the public posting of plans and reporting in accordance with the *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014*. In addition to the key areas identified, service system managers should also identify any other programs, needs, opportunities and/or challenges that may exist in their communities in their service system plan to support the ongoing reporting and planning process.

In order to ensure improved access to licensed child care, service system managers will build on their existing plans to identify areas where targeted expansion of affordable child care spaces is most needed in their communities.

Approximately 53,000 of the 86,000 child care spaces in Ontario's Action Plan remain to be created by 2026.

Planning allocations have been developed for these spaces to support local plans for the expansion of licensed child care spaces aligned with the objectives described below.

Principles for Access

The ministry's approach to the funding allocations that will support access are:

1. Access Equity:

- Provide a similar level of access to 0-5 child care spaces across the province by allocating funding for spaces to CMSMs and DSSABs towards a common proportion of spaces to children over the next five years.

2. Targeted Spaces for Vulnerable Populations:

- Allocate funding for additional spaces based on socio-economic indicators to support child care for vulnerable populations. These spaces are in addition to the access equity allocation.
- Meet or exceed the proportion of French language spaces for ages 0 to 5 proportional to the population of Francophone people in Ontario.

Approach to Access

To ensure that access to affordable child care aligns with the principles above, service system managers will play a role in directing where this growth occurs. The ministry will provide each service system manager with growth targets and allocations for their region and in turn, CMSMs and DSSABs will be required to incorporate these targets in their local service plans. These plans will outline where affordable child care spaces are required in their communities, how new affordable child care spaces will be best supported, which populations are most in need, and will align with ministry target requirements.

Service plans should aim to address questions such as:

- Which geographic areas are facing a lack of access to affordable child care options?
- How will the needs of Black, racialized, Indigenous and Francophone populations be addressed?
- How will the needs of vulnerable groups, including newcomers, low income families and children with special needs be addressed?
- How will child care be targeted to support labour market participation, including through flexible models of child care to support parents who are shift workers?
- How many spaces are needed and where?
- Should these spaces be centre-based or home-based?
- Are additional interventions needed to ensure that new spaces are made available to vulnerable populations?

Allocation Model

The ministry has developed a model to allocate funding for new age 0-5 child care spaces across regions in line with the objectives above. This model incorporates demographics, socio-economic indicators, and existing licensed child care capacity. Since 2019, some 33,000 new CWELCC eligible spaces have become operational, with another 53,000 to be created.

Access Equity

The majority of funding for spaces is allocated to help each region progress towards a target provincial ratio of spaces to children, or access rate, of 37%. This is equivalent to there being one affordable child care space available for every 2.7 children aged 0-5.¹ Working towards this ratio will significantly decrease the disparities in access to child care across the province.

Targeted Spaces for Vulnerable Populations

In addition to the above, funding for a portion of spaces will be allocated to regions based on five socio-economic factors in order to support access to affordable child care for vulnerable populations. These additional spaces are to ensure that regions with high-needs populations have capacity to provide affordable child care for those who need it most. These spaces should not be interpreted to be the number of spaces required to meet the needs of vulnerable populations. Ensuring vulnerable populations have access to affordable child care should be a consideration in planning all new child care spaces allocated to a region.

Socio-economic variables used in the allocation model:

- *Children age 0-5 in lone-parent families*
- *Low Income Measure (with children age 0-5)*
- *Households spending >30% of income on shelter costs*
- *Recent immigrants, 2011-2016*
- *Women age 25-44 not participating in labour force*

Each variable was weighted evenly, and spaces were distributed in proportion to each region's population of each variable.

Funding for growth has also been allocated to ensure equitable access to French-language child care. The age 0-5 population of each region with knowledge of French was used to ensure an access rate for these children that is proportional to Francophone presence in each CMSM and DSSAB.

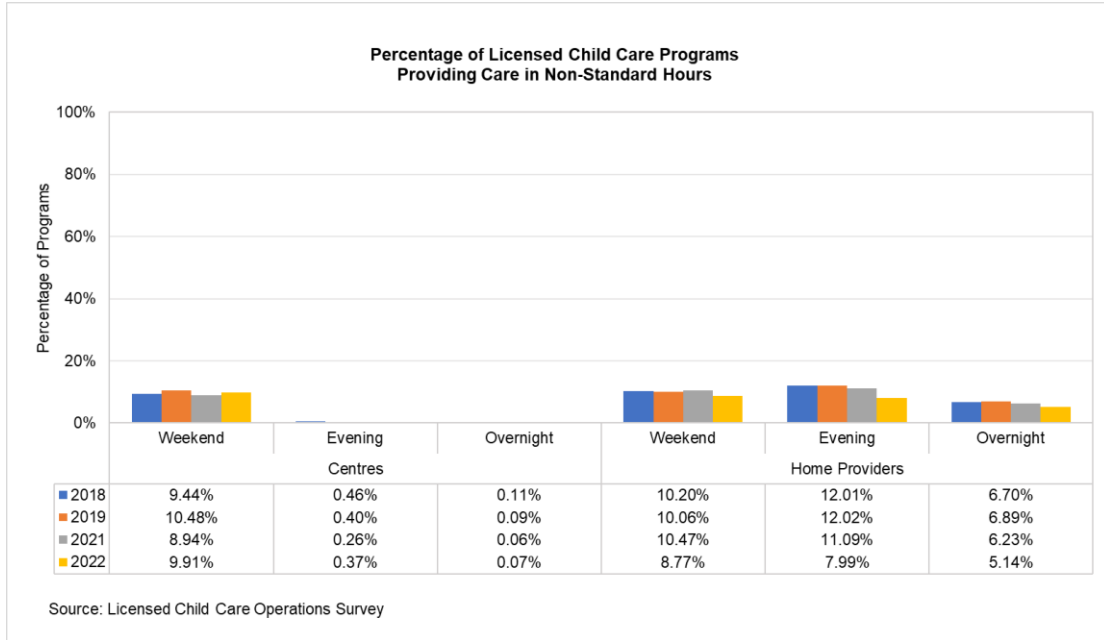
Flexible Child Care Models

The ministry will work with CMSMs and DSSABs to enable increased parental labour market participation with flexible spaces for those who work non-traditional hours and in non-traditional locations. To support parents who are shift workers, further consideration is needed to funding spaces that will increase the availability of flexible models of care. This includes evening, weekend, and overnight child care.

The ministry collects data on licensed child care programs providing care in non-standard hours (such as evenings, overnight, and weekends):

- Child Care Centres: less than 1% identify offering service in the evenings or overnight; 9%-10% identify offering weekend care
- Home Child Care: 8-12% identify offering service in the evenings, 5-7% offering services overnight; 9-10% offering services on weekends (see below).

¹ The access rate of 37% is based on the estimated 2025 population of children age 0-5 and the anticipated total licenced child care spaces in Ontario by the end of 2026 once all of the 86,000 new affordable licenced spaces have been created.

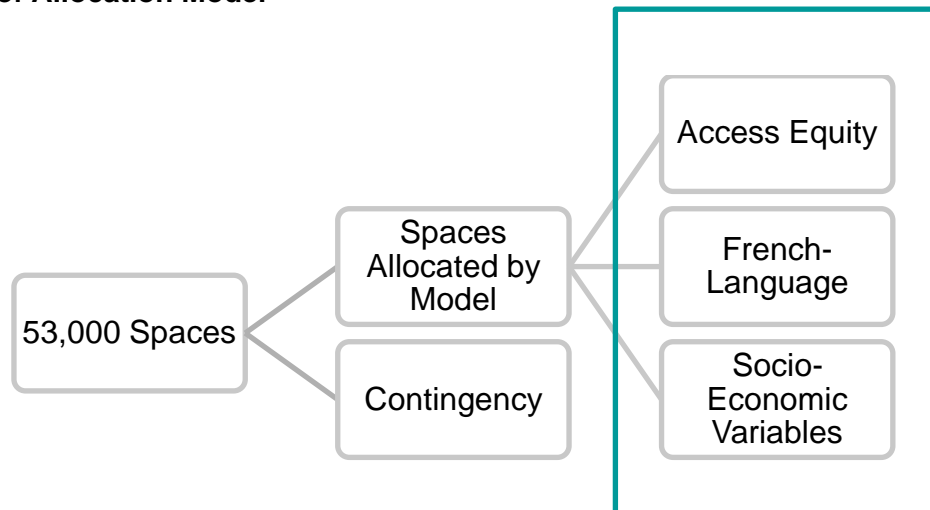


Implementation Considerations

The allocation model also supports successful implementation through the following contingencies:

- A small portion of the new spaces to be created are set aside to address potential space pressures in the planning discussions with CMSMs and DSSABs.
- This may include allocations to reflect the needs of specific vulnerable populations, and fast growing CMSMs and DSSABs.
- As well, allocations will take into account the ministry’s current and ongoing build out of school based child care spaces.

Overview of Allocation Model



Inclusion

The CWELCC system presents an opportunity for Ontario to introduce initiatives that support the needs of diverse and underserved populations, including low-income, Francophone, Indigenous, Black, other racialized and newcomer communities, as well as vulnerable children and those with special needs.

Ontario's inclusion framework is intended to help reduce barriers for vulnerable children and children from diverse populations. It aims to support children to have access to inclusive environments where they can participate and collaborate in meaningful ways and form authentic, caring relationships.

This vision is supported by the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities which both highlight how all children, including those with special needs, are entitled to the same opportunities – for example to health care, nutrition, education, social inclusion, and protection.²

Principles for Inclusion

Local service plans from CMSMs and DSSABs should consider the principles of accessibility, participation and belonging, and equity. Adopting inclusive practices is vital for ensuring that children, despite their background or who they are, have an equal opportunity to succeed.

1. Accessibility

Providing a wide range of opportunities for learning, play, and inquiry in physical and teaching environments across diverse settings and context is essential.

Key components of accessibility involve:

- Removing/reducing physical and systemic barriers (e.g., transportation, space and socioeconomic, cultural, language).
- Ensuring opportunities are sufficient in terms of intensity and frequency for every individual.³ Incorporating multiple means of representation, engagement, and expression in learning spaces and programs (i.e., Universal Design, Universal Design for Learning). Rather than modifying/adapting the physical and learning/instructional environments after the fact, programs need to be ready to support all children at the front end.⁴

2. Participation and Belonging

This principle involves the intentional and instructional intervention approaches that enable children to actively engage in all parts of the day including play and learning activities and social interactions.

Participation fosters a sense of belonging which contributes to developmental and lifelong well-being. Belonging refers to a sense of connectedness to others, an individual's

² How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years (Ministry of Education, Ontario, 2014).

³ Barton, E. E., & Smith, B. J. (2014). Fact sheet on preschool inclusion. Pyramid Plus: The Colorado Center for Social Emotional Competence and Inclusion. Denver, CO. Practice, 17(1), 1-13.

⁴ Strain, P., Schwartz, I., Barton, E.E. (2011). Providing Interventions for Young Children With Autism Spectrum Disorders: What We Still Need to Accomplish. Journal of Early Intervention, 33, 321-332.

experiences of being valued, of forming relationships with others and making contributions as part of a group, a community, the natural world.

Participation requires strategies, accommodations, modifications and adaptations to spaces and programs so that children can fully engage with each other and their environment.

Key considerations of participation and belonging include:

- Values, policies, and practices that support the right of every child and their family, regardless of ability, to participate in a broad range of activities and contexts as full members of families, communities, and society.
- Employing engagement approaches that ensure participants feel that they belong, are valued and heard.
- Ensuring diversity in engagement approaches, spaces and programs (e.g., staff share similar backgrounds and lived experience as participants, participant interaction is maximized through multiple mediums and languages).

3. Equity

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

Key considerations of equity include:

- Programs, services and supports that take account of the backgrounds and intersecting identities of children and their families.
- Ensuring assessment tools are unbiased and designed for use with children.
- Providing differing levels of support for children depending on their individual needs.

Approach to Inclusion

Ontario has been working to advance inclusion through the following initiatives:

- **Special Needs Resourcing:** In Ontario, Special Needs Resourcing (SNR) provides support for the inclusion of children with special needs with their peers in child care and early years settings. Funding is provided to CMSMs, DSSABs and First Nation communities for SNR costs to support the inclusion of children with special needs at no additional costs to parents. CMSMs and DSSABs are required to spend at least 4.1% of total child care funding allocation on SNR. The ministry is currently completing a review of SNR policies to inform updates to the guideline. As the child care system expands, there will be a need to ensure that children with special needs can be supported as required in the new spaces.
- **Fee Subsidy:** Fee subsidy is an essential support for many parents that helps to balance the demands of career and family and enables parents and caregivers to participate in the workforce or pursue education or training. Ontario's child care fee subsidy provides \$880 million in direct support annually for low-income families to access child care. The amount a subsidized family pays for child care is determined through the income test. Other factors include the parents' employment/education

activities and/or the special needs of the child, as well availability of subsidy funds within the budget of the CMSM or DSSAB, and space availability.

To maintain stability throughout this transitional year of the CWELCC system, the ministry will continue with the current fee subsidy model to assist families who are in need of financial assistance. The ministry has ensured that an equivalent fee reduction is applied to families currently in receipt of child care fee subsidy to support equity within Ontario's child care system.

- **How Does Learning Happen (HDLH): Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years:** In Ontario, structural quality (e.g. ratios of adults to children, staff qualifications, health and safety requirements) is supported through provincial licensing standards and program quality is guided by *How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years (2014)*.

HDLH sets out values, goals and approaches to guide program development. Together with the *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014* regulations, HDLH helps to ensure children experience positive, responsive relationships and engaging programs and environments that support learning, development, and well-being. HDLH is mandated under the *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014*, for educators and administrators to support pedagogy and program approaches which aligns with the Kindergarten Program and is informed by early brain development research.

- **Indigenous and Francophone Child Care:** The ministry provides funding for professional learning supports for Indigenous and Francophone child care professionals to support the implementation of HDLH. These supports are intended to enhance culturally relevant programs and the delivery of high quality child care and early years programs, which will help promote Francophone and Indigenous culture in Ontario.

Additionally, the Canada-Ontario Early Childhood Workforce Funding Agreement provides \$1.5 million in one-time federal funding over 2021-22 and 2022-23 to enhance existing Communities of Practice for Francophone and Indigenous communities to meet the growing professional learning needs related to mental health, cultural diversity, mentorship, and networking. This initiative is intended to enhance safe, culturally relevant child care and early years programs.

- **Ontario Child Care Tax Credit:** The Ontario Child Care Tax Credit remains in effect to support parents with the cost of child care and help them re-enter the workforce. This program continues to provide an estimated 300,000 families each year with up to 75 per cent of their eligible expenses, including for licensed and unlicensed child care in centres, home based care, camps, and other settings.
- **Canada-Ontario Early Childhood Workforce Funding Agreement:** In August 2021, the governments of Ontario and Canada signed the new Early Childhood Workforce Funding Agreement. This agreement provided \$149.9 million in one-time federal funding to help retain the current child care and early years workforce, as well as attract new individuals into the profession. This included a professional learning and development strategy (\$74 million); workforce capacity and innovation fund (\$71.5 million); enhancements to the Early Childhood Educators Qualifications Upgrade Program (\$3 million); and support for equity-based communities of practice (\$1.5 million).

In the late Fall of 2022, the province began to engage with service system managers, other provincial government ministries, and a broad range of external partners on the framework for inclusion. This framework will be used by service system managers to guide the development and implementation of local service plans.

Research Demonstrates:

- High quality inclusive settings benefit all children – with and without special needs.
- Social outcomes are critical and a key indicator that an inclusive program is successful.
- Collaboration is critical to the success of inclusive programs.

To support the needs of diverse communities and populations, service system managers will collaborate with service providers and the community, to gather data to assess the barriers focused on:

- enhanced service accessibility for children and families, particularly isolated, newcomer, and low-income families;
- active engagement with those populations who are Francophone, Indigenous, Black, racialized, newcomer, LGBTQ2S+, persons with disabilities, or from low-income households to dismantle barriers in the planning, management and delivery of responsive programs and services;
- support for local decision making to enrich programs, facilitate smooth transitions and enhance integration between child care and early years services, schools and specialized community services; and
- regular collection and insights from parents, caregivers and children to inform local programs and services.

In the Winter of 2022, municipal service system managers will be required to submit access and inclusion plans to ensure a broad range of communities and populations have access to high quality, affordable and inclusive child care. These plans will be used to help inform the provincial allocation of funding for new child care spaces across the province.

The plans will require the inclusion of specific access and inclusion targets, which will be implemented by the province and service system manager based on provincial direction and local context and priorities. Examples of specific local priorities include an identified need for more Indigenous child care spaces in a community, more licensed child care spaces in a specific area where there is a high newcomer population, and others. At a minimum, the targets set out in each service system manager's plan must reflect the demographics of their region and ensure that sufficient licensed child care spaces are available for priority groups. These negotiated targets will be used to inform reporting to the federal government.

Opportunities to Address Barriers to Access and Inclusion

Recognizing that inclusion is a shared responsibility, the ministry is building from its current initiatives to ensure that the above noted principles are embedded in the provision of child care.

In addition to providing funding to create new affordable child care spaces in targeted regions and for underserved communities and populations, Ontario has several other initiatives that provide opportunities to address barriers to access and inclusion: start-up grants, pedagogical framework, Special Needs Resourcing, fee subsidy funding, and workforce development (see Table 1).

| Start-up Grants | Pedagogical Framework | Special Needs Resourcing | Fee Subsidy Funding | Workforce Development |
|---|--|---|--|--|
| <p>Provide start-up grants to support the creation of new spaces in locations and for populations most in need.</p> <p>Enable new space creation in regions that may not be accommodated through natural market growth. Identify regions with high need populations.</p> <p>Start-up grants would be used to offset the initial costs required to expand or create spaces in these regions, such as equipment and leasehold improvements.</p> | <p>Make changes to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensure Indigenous practices that foster children's learning are prominent raise awareness of systemic barriers for racialized children and families address educator bias, attitudes and beliefs that impact children's sense of belonging and competence support CWELCC commitments related to equity, inclusion and quality | <p>Clarify policies to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> focus funding on evidence-based supports to improve access and participation of children with inclusion support needs in early years and child care settings foster consistency in the provision of SNR-funded services across the province reduce duplication with other early intervention services engage in discussions with partner ministries on the delivery of out of scope services currently being funded through SNR Address service gaps identified for medically fragile children requiring nursing supports in licensed child care. | <p>Maintain fee subsidies to support families, including families with children age 0 to 5, for whom lower fees under the CWELCC system continue to be unaffordable.</p> | <p>Continue funding for existing professional learning strategies for Francophone and First Nation, Métis, Inuit and Indigenous communities to meet the growing professional learning needs related to mental health, cultural diversity, mentorship and networking, and expansion of this funding to additional organizations and areas of focus.</p> |

Scope of Investments

CWELCC System funding will be targeted toward licensed programs and activities for children under age six that will have an impact on families, including families more in need such as lower-income families, Indigenous families, and families in underserved communities, including Black and racialized families; families of children with disabilities and children needing

enhanced or individual supports; and families with caregivers who are working non-standard hours and Francophone families with limited or no access to programs in their language.

Start-Up Grants

Start-up grants will be provided to support the creation of new spaces in locations and for populations most in need and would enable new space creation in regions that may not be accommodated through natural market growth. Ontario will use a variety of existing tools to identify regions with high need populations including vulnerable children, children from diverse populations, children with special needs and Indigenous and Francophone communities.

The ministry will provide additional information about start-up grants in December 2022.

Framework Accountability

In Ontario, CMSMs and DSSABs are designated under the *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014*, as service system managers responsible for planning, managing and coordinating child care within their regions.

The *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014*, requires CMSMs and DSSABs to develop and update their child care and early years service plan every five years. The ministry publishes the [“Ontario Child Care and Early Years Service System Plan Resource”](#) which outlines the requirement for CMSMs/DSSABs to conduct an environmental scan, strength/gaps analysis and the identification of action items to improve access to child care and early years programs for children and families.

The review of access and inclusion plans, which service system manager are required to submit in late Fall 2022, enables the province to monitor and assess if a broad range of communities and populations have access to high quality, affordable, and inclusive child care.

Ontario will work with service system managers and other sector partners to gather data and conduct assessments on barriers to access for children of diverse populations and children with varying abilities to implement targeted strategies that support these children to access licensed child care.

Reporting

Ontario’s Action Plan commits to enhancing existing data collection activities to support reporting to the federal government on key indicators associated with the CWELCC system. Ontario has laid out specific measures and indicators under the CWELCC system in its Action Plan for each of the key priority areas and will publish its results in the province’s Early Years and Child Care Annual Report starting in 2023.

Specific to access and inclusion priorities, this includes:

- number of net new spaces created during the fiscal year, broken down by age groups of child, auspice and type of setting
- number of net new spaces supported with start-up grants during the fiscal year, broken down by age groups of child, auspice and type of setting

- annual funding and percentage of total provincial child care allocation spent on Special Needs Resourcing
- number of licensed child care spaces for children under the age of six that offer French-language and bilingual programs
- outcomes of engagement undertaken with Indigenous partners.

Specific measures and indicators to be reported in the service system manager's plan would encompass, but would not be limited to:

1. Total number of current licensed child care spaces for the aforementioned priority groups, through statistical methods where possible, segmented by:
 - age group of child (i.e., under age 6 and 6-12)
 - type of setting
2. Total number of inclusive licensed child care spaces created/converted for the aforementioned priority groups, through statistical methods where possible, segmented by:
 - age group of child (under age 6 and 6-12)
 - type of setting
3. Number of children receiving fee subsidies segmented by:
 - age group of child (under age 6 and 6-12)
 - children that receive partial subsidies
 - children that receive full subsidies
4. Number and proportion of children under age six and 6-12 years in flexible licensed early learning and child care arrangements and number and proportion of centres/providers that provide flexible arrangements (i.e. non-traditional arrangements such as flexible/irregular hours, weekend and emergency services); and geographic distribution of spaces
5. Number of children under age six and 6-12 years with disabilities and children needing enhanced or individual supports that are in licensed early learning and child care spaces
6. Number or proportion of child care service providers who provide services that are adapted to the needs of children with special needs and children needing enhanced or individual supports.

The targets set out in each service system manager's plan must reflect the demographics of their region and ensure that licensed child care spaces are available for priority groups such as:

- children living in low income families
- children with disabilities and children needing enhanced or individual supports
- Indigenous children, Black and other racialized children
- children of newcomers to Canada and official language minorities.

Qualitative Reporting

Additional narrative reports may be requested in the service system manager's plan. These reports may include, but would not be limited to:

- how systemic barriers to access to licensed child care are currently being addressed (e.g. implementation of recommendations, data collection for evidence informed strategy/policy creation, progress reports)
- diversity and equity initiatives/projects undertaken and their impacts and outcomes.

Qualitative reporting may also explore areas within these following reflective questions specific to licensed child care:

- What are your access and inclusion initiatives currently underway?
- What are the specific considerations for different priority groups?
- What are your other equity and inclusion priorities that have yet to be developed?
- What strategies have worked well when identifying gaps and opportunities to inform your service plan?
- How can the ministry best support CMSMs and DSSABs to develop and implement an inclusion plan?

Conclusion

The CWELCC system aims to make high-quality child care in Ontario affordable, accessible, and inclusive. The province is committed to a child care system that is accessible for children and will be working towards developing a plan that supports access to affordable child care for low-income families, vulnerable children, and children from diverse communities, including Indigenous, Francophone, Black and other racialized, newcomer, LGBTQ2S+ children and families, and children with special needs.

The purpose of Ontario's Access and Inclusion Framework 2022 is to support CMSMs and DSSABs with developing and implementing local service plans with an increased focus on access and inclusion. These plans build on existing service plans and will be integrated into the broader provincial Access and Inclusion Framework.

By Spring of 2023, CMSMs and DSSABs will be required to incorporate access and inclusion plans within their existing five-year service plans to ensure a broad range of communities and populations have access to high quality, affordable, and inclusive child care. As it expands its child care system, the ministry will work with service system managers and a range of other partners to ensure equitable funding approaches based on community need. Ontario will also provide capital start-up grants to support the creation of new spaces in targeted regions and underserved communities and populations. The start-up grants will assist operators to purchase equipment or renovate spaces to support licensing requirements.

Where possible, Ontario will report the annual public expenditures on child care programming dedicated to children from diverse and/or vulnerable families. The province will also work with the federal government on monitoring quality and inclusion goals with statistical data. Ontario will work with partners to gather data and conduct assessments on barriers to access.

CWELCC Space Reporting Template

CMSM/DSSAB:

The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board (TBDSSAB)

On behalf of the above CMSM/DSSAB, I confirm that our community will endeavour to open 247 total spaces between 2022 and 2026 under the CWELCC system, consisting of 49 school-based spaces [a] and 198 community-based spaces [b].

| | 2022 | 2023 | 2024 | 2025 | 2026 |
|-----------------------------|------|------|------|------|---------|
| School-based Spaces [a] | 49 | | | | |
| Community-based Spaces [b] | 0 | 30 | 30 | 30 | 30 + 78 |
| Total Spaces [a + b] | 49 | 30 | 30 | 30 | 108 |

Community-based spaces will be opened in the following priority neighborhoods/areas of our CMSM/DSSAB.

| Name of priority neighborhoods/areas | Check communities the new spaces will serve (Choose all that apply) | # of spaces to be opened |
|--|--|---|
| | | |
| Kakabeka | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Low-Income families <input type="checkbox"/> Children with disabilities and children needing enhanced or individual supports <input type="checkbox"/> Francophone <input type="checkbox"/> Indigenous children <input type="checkbox"/> Black children <input type="checkbox"/> Other racialized children (please specify _____) <input type="checkbox"/> New Immigrants Other | Access- Rural/Remote Community Notional 5 Toddler 8 Preschool 13 Kindergarten |
| Consiel scolaire public du Grand Nord de l'Ontario | <input type="checkbox"/> Low-Income families <input type="checkbox"/> Children with disabilities and children needing enhanced or individual supports <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Francophone <input type="checkbox"/> Indigenous children <input type="checkbox"/> Black children <input type="checkbox"/> Other racialized children (please specify _____) <input type="checkbox"/> New Immigrants | Notional 10 Toddler 16 Preschool |

| Name of priority neighborhoods/areas | Check communities the new spaces will serve (Choose all that apply) | # of spaces to be opened |
|--------------------------------------|--|---|
| | | |
| Township of Terrace Bay | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Low-Income families <input type="checkbox"/> Children with disabilities and children needing enhanced or individual supports <input type="checkbox"/> Francophone <input type="checkbox"/> Indigenous children <input type="checkbox"/> Black children <input type="checkbox"/> Other racialized children (please specify _____) <input type="checkbox"/> New Immigrants Other | Access- Rural/Remote Community Notional 5 Toddler 8 Preschool 13 Kindergarten |
| Licensed Home Child Care | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Low-Income families <input type="checkbox"/> Children with disabilities and children needing enhanced or individual supports <input type="checkbox"/> Francophone <input type="checkbox"/> Indigenous children <input type="checkbox"/> Black children <input type="checkbox"/> Other racialized children (please specify _____) <input type="checkbox"/> New Immigrants | Notional 20 LHCC Homes /Year 120 Spaces Birth to Preschool |

HIS MAJESTY THE KING IN RIGHT OF ONTARIO as represented by Minister of Education

by:

Date: _____

Name: Holly Moran

Title: ADM, Early Years and Child Care Division

Authorized Signing Agent

The District of Thunder Bay Social Services
Administration Board

by:

Date: _____

Name: Ken Boshcoff

Title: Chair

Authorized Signing Agent

The District of Thunder Bay Social Services
Administration Board

by:

Date: _____

Name: William Bradica

Title: Chief Administrative Officer

Authorized Signing Agent

I/We have authority to bind the Recipient.