



THE DISTRICT OF THUNDER BAY
SOCIAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION BOARD



Media Release:

Our Kids Count partners with TBDSSAB to open new child care program in Thunder Bay

July 16, 2025 – Our Kids Count (OKC) has partnered with The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board (TBDSSAB) to open 26 new child care spaces in Thunder Bay.

The Our Kids Count Early Learning Centre is located on McKenzie Street and will provide 10 toddler and 16 pre-school spaces for children under four years old. Families will have access to lower fees as part of the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC) system. This program will operate five-days a week, year-round, to meet the growing needs of the families within our community.

The new program at OKC opens as part of TBDSSAB's service system plan and the Ministry of Education's goal to create 196 new licensed CWELCC spaces across the District of Thunder Bay by December 31, 2026. CWELCC is funded by the provincial and federal governments and administered locally by TBDSSAB.

OKC has demonstrated its commitment to high quality licensed child care through the role as Licensed Home Child Care Agency. They have actively participated in initiatives for professional learning and maintained a supportive presence to many families within the community.

"We are proud to expand our services to include high-quality, licensed child care through the Our Kids Count Early Learning Centre," says Jackie Knough, Executive Director of Our Kids Count. "We recognize the growing need for more child care spaces in our community and are happy to help meet this need for families. This program reflects our commitment to supporting children and families in Thunder Bay by providing nurturing, affordable, and inclusive early learning environments. We're excited and ready to welcome families into this new space."

The OKC Early Learning Centre soft-opened on July 8, 2025. A grand opening will be hosted in October 2025.

Families will be enrolled at the OKC Early Learning Centre through the centralized child care wait list. To ensure an equitable process, TBDSSAB will support OKC to contact families on



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the wait list in chronological order to offer spaces to those who have been waiting the longest. In the coming weeks, an email will be sent through the child care registry for families to update their profile to add the Our Kids Count program to their list of preferred programs. To learn more about applying for child care through TBDSSAB, visit:
www.thunderbaychildcare.ca

“Access to affordable child care is the foundation of a functional society, economic stability, and engaged minds in the early years,” says Brian Hamilton, TBDSSAB Board Chair. “This new program at Our Kids Count creates opportunities and peace of mind for the families of 26 children. This centre not only fills a need, it does so while offering families access to affordable child care fees through the CWELCC program. Congratulations to OKC on opening your new program, and thank you to the Ministry of Education for giving service system managers like TBDSSAB the flexibility to support the expansion of child care spaces.”

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Additional Quotes:

- “Our Kids Count has been a welcome addition to our child care service system, and we are happy to support them in opening this new program. TBDSSAB is grateful to have a strong community of service providers who are willing to go the extra mile to support families in our district. We hope today’s announcement is just one of many to come.”
– Ken Ranta, CEO, TBDSSAB

Quick Facts:

- The District of Thunder Bay child care and early years service system includes:
 - 50 licensed child care program sites via 29 organizations, employing a combined total of 572 staff.
 - 1,528 children in CWELCC spaces as of June 2025.
- CWELCC is a national child care program aimed at lowering child care fees for parents and caregivers of children under the age of six, increasing child care spaces, and supporting and growing the child care workforce. Through CWELCC, child care fees across the province have been lowered to \$22/day or less as of January 2025.
- Federal and provincial governments have also provided provincial infrastructure funding for service system managers to support the creation of new licensed CWELCC spaces.



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- TBDSSAB issued an Expression of Interest in June to ensure an equitable process for organizations throughout the District to support the growth of not-for-profit licensed child care spaces. The EOI closed on June 13, 2025.

Background:

- The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board supports people to improve their lives and become self-sufficient. It does this as the service system manager for vital, quality social services needed by individuals and families - including child care and early years, community housing, and homelessness prevention - and through the delivery of Ontario Works. Visit the TBDSSAB website for more information at www.tbdssab.ca.
- Our Kids Count (OKC) is a grass-roots community development organization and we work with individuals & families to promote the health and development of all children and youth who are in financial need. Our programs are built on needs identified by the families we serve and include community kitchens, parenting & life skills workshops, pre/post-natal support, home visiting, the emergency food cupboard, Big Brothers Big Sisters mentoring, and counselling. Our Kids Count is the Licensed Home Child Care Agency for the District of Thunder Bay. For more information, visit www.OurKidsCount.ca

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