

# Early years and child care

## Service system plan 2019–2024



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# Introduction

I am pleased to introduce the Region of Peel's Early Years and Child Care Service System Plan for 2019-2024 ("System Plan"). This System Plan sets the path for how we will continue to build and grow an early years and child care system that is responsive to the current and future needs of children and families in Peel.

The Child Care and Early Years Act legislates that all Service System Managers develop a System Plan that sets the direction for the next five years. Our System Plan supports the 20-year vision for Peel which is Community for Life — a place where everyone enjoys a sense of belonging and has access to the services and opportunities they need to thrive throughout each stage of their lives. It also reflects our commitment to creating a healthy, safe and connected community.

Throughout the development of the System Plan we engaged with families, and our many diverse stakeholders and community partners, to ensure their voices were reflected. Through our research and broad community engagement, we developed a plan that is focused on several key priorities that I believe will make a difference in the lives of children and families in Peel, both today and for years to come.

Achievement of these priorities will depend on the ongoing collaboration and shared commitment from all our many partners; families, service providers, community partners, Ministry of Education and Regional Council.

I would like to sincerely thank everyone who contributed their time and input to develop a System Plan that is relevant and responsive to the changing needs of our community.

I look forward to the next five years where we will continue to build on our collaborations and transform the early years and child care community in Peel.

Sincerely,



Suzanne Finn  
Director, Early Years and Child Care Services  
Region of Peel



# Executive summary

Peel is a fast-growing, diverse municipality and the needs of its children and families have changed over the past 20 years. As a Service System Manager, the Region is mandated to develop an Early Years and Child Care Service System Plan (“System Plan”) that includes strategic priorities that will guide investments over the next five years and ensure a strong and responsive system.

## A Community for Life

The goal of establishing a strong and responsive early years and child care system is aligned with the Region’s Vision of creating a *Community for Life* — a place where everyone enjoys a sense of belonging and has access to the services and opportunities they need to thrive throughout each stage of their lives.

There are also additional drivers for building a resilient early years and child care system including significant economic, social and community benefits. Research clearly shows that a healthy early years and child care system has a ripple effect throughout all aspects of our community.

## Peel’s early years and child care system

The Region of Peel is responsible for planning, strategic supports, evaluation and oversight of the Early Years and Child Care system. In this role, we work with service providers to create positive outcomes for families. This is accomplished through investing in supports such as: fee subsidies, operating funding to offset the cost of licensed child care, capital investment to increase the number of programs available, special needs resourcing, and funding to providers to attract and retain qualified staff.

## Planning for Peel’s early years and child care system

To understand the current and future needs of Peel’s Early Years and Child Care system, we conducted a comprehensive community engagement process reaching a wide range of stakeholders. Through this engagement process, it was clear that, in addition to many strengths, there were several opportunities to improve. Families, services providers and community partners reinforced the need for a system that is affordable, inclusive, high quality, accountable and accessible.

## Strategic priorities and outcomes

To address the themes identified during the community engagement, strategic priorities and outcomes have been established as the framework for our work over the next five years.

## Ongoing measurement, collaboration and continuous improvement

There are specific timelines and measurement indicators for each priority that will track our progress. As we implement the System Plan, we will continue to collaborate with key partners, both internal and external to our organization, to ensure that it remains relevant and responsive to needs of children and families in Peel.

## Strategic Priorities

## Outcomes

### Affordable

Public funds are used to improve the **affordability** of licensed child care

- Improved affordability of child care for all families

### Inclusive

Early years and child care programs are **inclusive** of all children and families

- Service providers deliver inclusive programs that meet families' needs
- Families with children with special needs receive the supports they need
- Families report feeling a sense of inclusion

### High Quality

Service providers continuously improve early years and child care program **quality**

- Service providers have access to a range of continuous quality enhancement supports
- Service providers attract and retain qualified staff
- Early years and child care programs are continuously improving quality
- Families experience quality early years and child care programs

### Accountable

Early years and child care system management is future-oriented, responsive and **accountable**

- Service System Manager is financially responsible in the distribution of funding
- Service providers are held to a higher level of accountability for public funds
- Service providers experience fewer administrative barriers

### Accessible

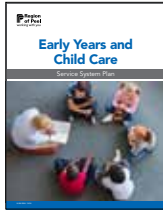
Families have **access** to early years and child care programs that meet their specific needs

- Families know where to access information about programs
- Families have increased knowledge of early years and child care programs
- Families can make informed decisions about early years and child care that meet their needs

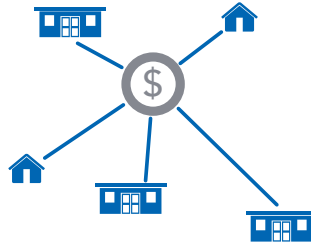
Families have **access** to accurate and up-to-date information about early years and child care programs

- Services providers expand access to early years and child care programs
- Families who qualify for fee subsidy have access to licensed child care
- Families have access to a range of early years and child care programs that meet their needs

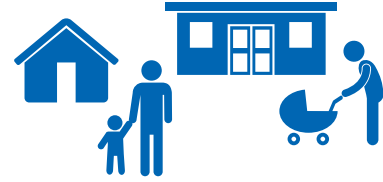
# Our role as service system manager



Responsible for evidence-based system planning



Accountable for the distribution of provincial funding to achieve system outcomes



Develop and administer local policies for the operation of child care and early years programs and services

A key responsibility of the Service System Manager is to set priorities that address constantly evolving system needs. To fully understand these needs, the Region benefits from an ongoing collaboration with community partners through a variety of system planning tables and network groups. These groups reflect the diverse experience of early years and child care partners region-wide and provide expertise and insight on system needs, regional policy and funding programs.

To deliver services to families and children, the Region of Peel manages a coordinated, responsive, early years and child care system.



# Key transformations 2009-2018

There have been large scale transformations in Peel's Early Years and Child Care System over the past nine years. These transformations are outlined below.

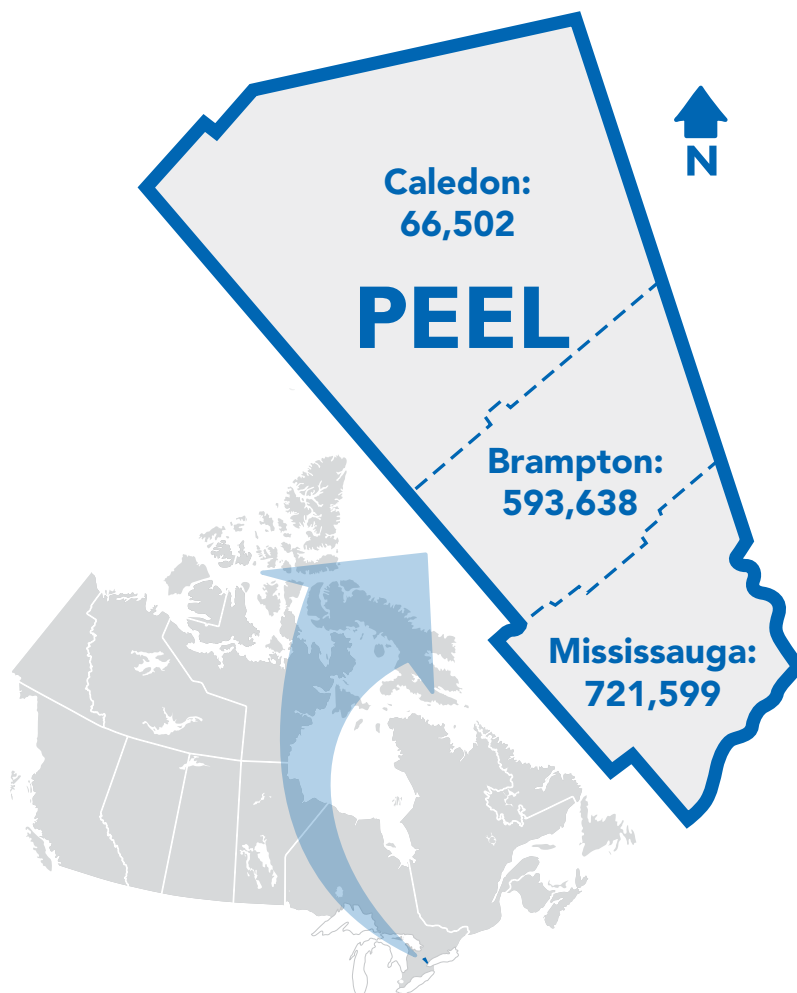


# Peel at a glance

Peel is a fast-growing, diverse, municipality consisting of both well-established and newly developed communities. The dynamics of Peel's children and families have drastically transformed over the past 20 years. As Service System Manager, the Region of Peel monitors community trends and demographic changes to ensure system planning remains current and relevant to the needs of the community. This section shows the trends in Peel that will influence system planning for the early years and child care system over the next five years. The statistics represented here and throughout the document are from Statistics Canada (2016 Census) unless otherwise indicated.

## Population

Peel consists of three municipalities: the cities of Mississauga and Brampton and the town of Caledon. The total population of Peel as of 2016 census was 1.4 million residents making it the second largest municipality in Ontario.<sup>1</sup>





## Population growth

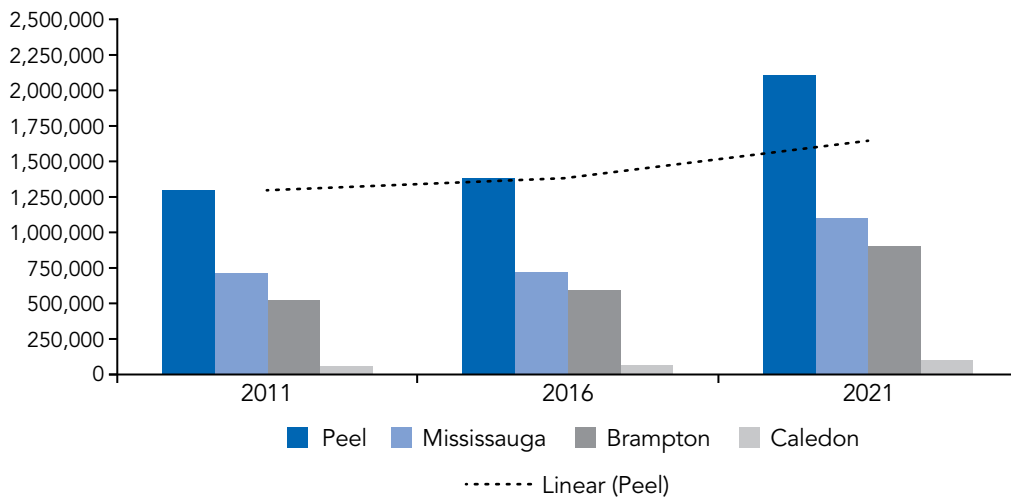
Peel  
Population  
↑ **40%**

From 2001 to 2016, Peel's population grew by 40%. Peel is now the fourth-largest municipality in Canada.



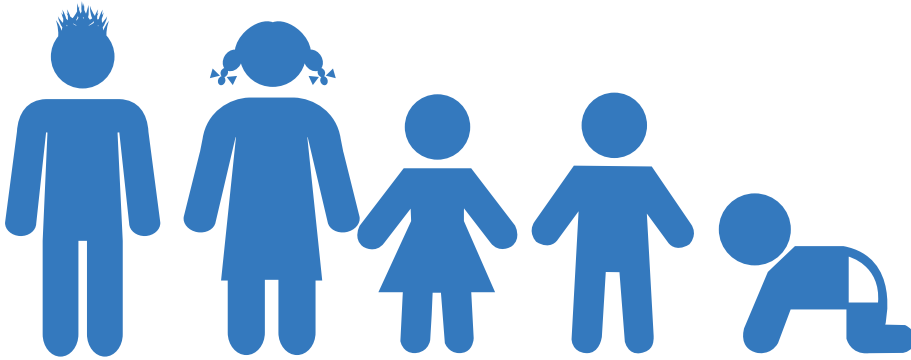
**Brampton & Mississauga**  
are among Canada's ten largest cities.

## Peel and area municipalities population



Source: Statistics Canada (2011, 2016) and Hemson Consulting Population Forecasts (2012).

## Population growth



In 2016, there were 218,015 children aged 0 to 12 in Peel.  
This group is forecasted to grow by 10 per cent between 2016 and 2026.

Source: Population predictions based on Hemson Consulting Population Forecasts (2012)

Peel Region has a comparatively young population, with children representing 16 per cent of the total population; one of the highest percentages in Ontario. In addition, 18 per cent of Peel's children live in poverty.<sup>2</sup>

For these reasons, effectively managing the early years and child care system is of significant importance.



## Children in Peel aged 0 to 12 years



### Fact

In 2016, Peel's 0 to 12 years population totalled 218,015.  
Brampton 104,305, Caledon 10,285 and Mississauga 103,425.

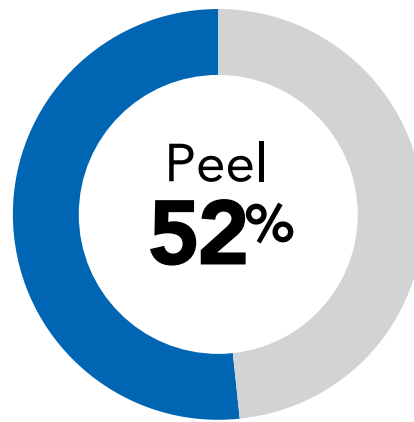


## Diversity

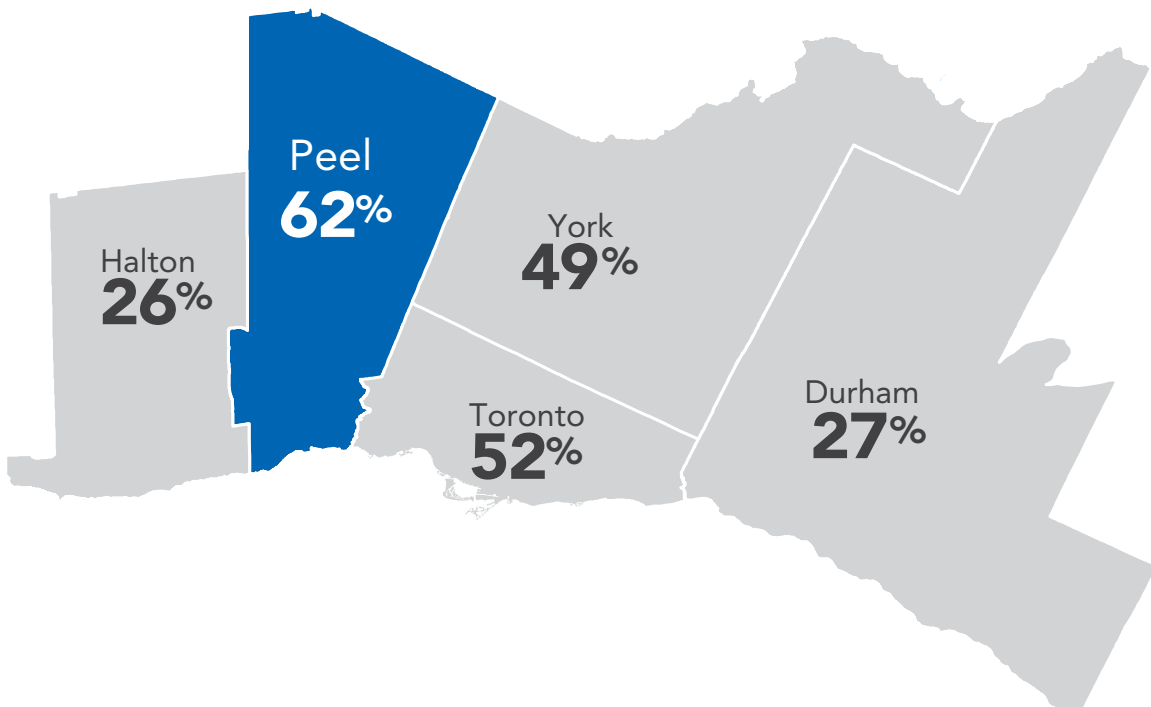
Over the past twenty years, Peel has become one of the most richly diverse municipalities in Canada. Immigration is a major driving force behind Peel's growing cultural diversity with more than half of the population made up of people not born in Canada. Peel also has the highest percentage of visible minorities in the Greater Toronto Area at 62 per cent.

As Peel's community changes the early years and child care system should reflect the evolving and varied needs of children and families.

### Percentage of Peel residents who were born outside of Canada



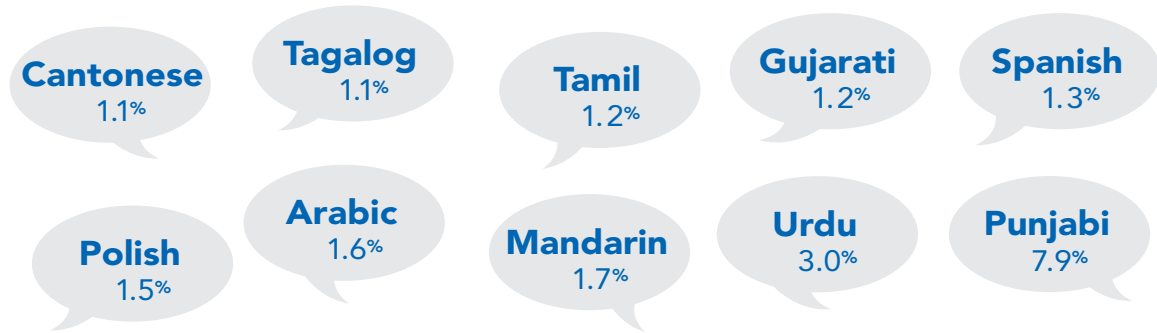
### Percentage of visible minorities in the GTA



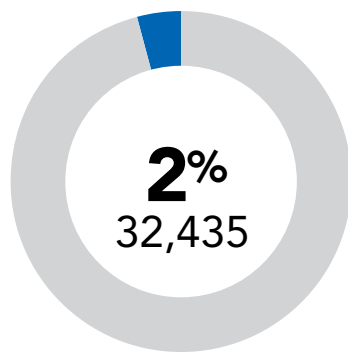
## Languages

English is spoken at home by 86 per cent of Caledon residents, compared to 61 per cent and 58 per cent of Mississauga and Brampton residents, respectively.<sup>3</sup>

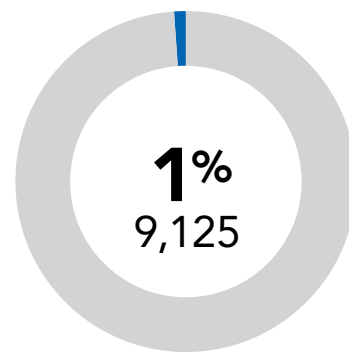
### Top home languages other than English



### Francophone and indigenous representation



Francophone population




Indigenous population



## Education and employment

### Level of education



Level of Education	Less than High School	High School Diploma	Apprenticeship or Trade School Diploma	College Diploma or Certificate below the bachelor level	University Degree or higher
Peel (%)	7	21	5	21	46
Ontario (%)	9	21	6	24	40
Toronto (%)	16	24	4	16	39
York (%)	16	26	4	17	36
Durham (%)	16	30	7	25	22

### Employment

In 2016, 67 per cent of Peel residents over the age of 15 were in the labour force, with an overall employment rate of 62 per cent. In 2016, Caledon boasted the highest labour force participation rate (68 per cent) when compared to Brampton (62 per cent) and Mississauga (61 per cent).

### Median household after-tax income (2016)



in Peel  
**\$75,667**

# Value of a strong early years and child care system

## Community for Life

Establishing a strong early years and child care system is aligned with the Region's vision of creating a Community for Life — a place where everyone enjoys a sense of belonging and has access to the services and opportunities they need to thrive throughout each stage of their lives.



**Vision:**  
*Community for Life*

**Mission:**  
*Working with you  
to create a healthy,  
safe and connected  
community*

### Living

People's lives are improved  
in their time of need.

### Thriving

Communities are integrated,  
safe, and complete.

### Leading

Government is future-oriented  
and accountable.

## Community benefits

There are multiple drivers for building a strong early years and child care system including significant economic, social and community benefits. Research clearly shows that a strong early years and child care system has a ripple effect throughout all aspects of our community.

### Economic benefits

Public investment in early years and child care helps drive economic development in Peel.



Over the last three decades, the need for child care has grown steadily, with the rise in dual-income earner families.<sup>4</sup>

Access to child care is an economic driver as it permits more people, especially women, to participate in the workforce or go to school.<sup>5</sup>

More women in the workforce boosts the Gross Domestic Product and increases income from taxes.<sup>6</sup>



**“The benefits of high-quality early learning far outweigh the costs. Analysis shows that for every dollar spent on early learning the return ranges from roughly \$1.50 to almost \$3.00 and potentially more than \$10 return for disadvantaged children.”**

Craig Alexander, SVP & Chief Economist, TD (2012)





### Social benefits:

Access to inclusive early years and child care services leads to a sense of belonging and well-being.<sup>7</sup>

For newcomer families, finding child care is often their first step to securing employment, improving English or upgrading qualifications.<sup>8</sup>

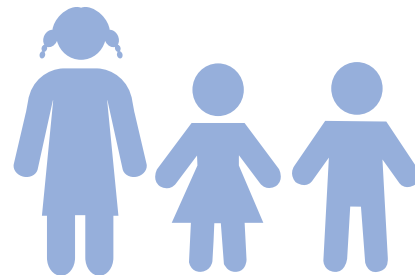
Early years and child care programs are often the first social institutions that newcomer families access in their new country.<sup>9</sup>

**“Safe, affordable and flexible child care is one of the essential supports and services are required to create well-being and social inclusion.”**

Peel Poverty Reduction Strategy 2018-2028

### Benefits to families:

EarlyON and child care programs help families build social networks, provide them with the tools and resources on child and family well-being and help connect them to their community services.



Safe and affordable licensed child care is a critically important factor for families as many parents rely on child care in order to be able to go to work or school.<sup>10</sup>

**“The kids love it. They have developed so many social skills that they may not have otherwise, because the reality is, some families just cannot afford paid child care. As a result, they would have missed out on this important skill building.”**

Mom attending EarlyON.

## Benefits to children:

High-quality child care and early years programs benefit children by providing enriching early learning experiences that promote future well-being.<sup>11</sup>

Early child development is a key determinant of health, well-being and future learning.<sup>12</sup>

Children's experiences in the early years of life influence the way they develop. A child's ability to learn when they enter school is strongly influenced by the brain development that takes place in these early years.<sup>13</sup>



## Readiness for school

A strong early years and child care system helps prepare children for future success<sup>14</sup>. The Early Development Instrument (EDI) is a tool used to measure a child's ability to meet age appropriate developmental milestones and their readiness for success in school.

EDI results show that Peel children appear to be similarly prepared for school as other children in Ontario. In 2015, based on EDI scores, three out of ten children were not fully prepared for school. However, these scores vary greatly across Peel. These local and neighbourhood differences are taken into consideration as we do our planning for early years and child care in Peel.





## Peel Children's Charter of Rights

The System Plan reflects the Region's commitment to progressing many rights outlined in Peel's Children's Charter.

1. The Right to Basic Needs
2. The Right to Make Friends and Freely Meet in Groups
3. The Right to Religion, Culture and Beliefs
4. The Right to Privacy
5. The Right to Justice, Protection and Treatment
6. The Right to Education
7. The Right to a Caring Home Environment
8. The Right to Be Heard
9. The Right to an Identity
10. The Right to Peace
11. The Right to Equal Access
12. The Right to Play



# Early years and child care

## EarlyON Child and Family Centres

EarlyON Child and Family Centres offer free early learning programs for parents and caregivers with children aged 0 to 6 years.

EarlyON centres provide:

- A place for families to connect with other families
- Opportunities for children of all abilities to learn through play and exploration and have fun
- Information on early child development, early literacy, health and nutrition, and child care options
- Direct referral to services and community connections
- Access to special needs supports.



### Fact

In 2018, Peel Regional Council endorsed a new EarlyON service delivery model to ensure equitable access to high quality programs across Peel. As a result of additional Regional investment in EarlyON, from 2019-2022, the total number of program hours will be increased.



**65**

**Locations**

**28** centres

**37** mobile locations



**188,297**

**Visits**

by children  
and families



**79,367**

Children and  
Families Served at  
**EarlyON Sites**



**5,888**

**Referrals** to  
community resources

Source: Statistical Profile of Peel's Early Years and Child Care System (2018)

## Licensed child care

- Licensed Child Care is regulated by the Ministry of Education and offers programs for infants, toddlers, preschoolers, kindergarten, and school-age children. Licensed child care is provided in either a centre or through a home child care setting.

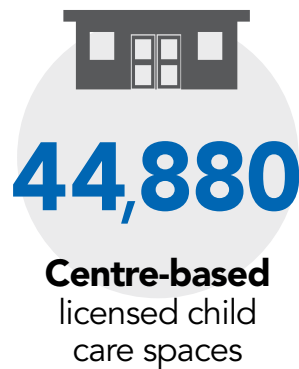
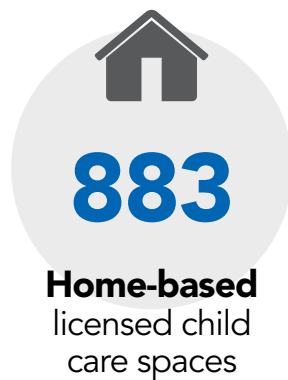


### Centre-based care

- Operate in a variety of spaces including schools, community or recreation centres, libraries, workplaces, places of worship, and standalone buildings
- Offer full-day, part-time and before and after school programs
- Extended/evening care is available but limited.

### Home-based care

- Provided by caregivers who are contracted by home child care agencies that are licensed by the Ministry of Education.
- Extended/evening care is available but limited.



Source: Statistical Profile of Peel's Early Years and Child Care System (2018)

## Authorized recreation and skill building

Authorized recreation and skill building programs are intended to provide options for families seeking care after school for children ages 4 to 12 years. Their primary purpose is to provide child care but also include activities that promote recreational, artistic, musical, or athletic skills or provide religious, cultural or linguistic instruction for up to three hours per day. Through legislation, the Region has the option to authorize these recreation and skill building programs and as part of the implementation of this System Plan we will explore this role further.

There are approximately 30 organizations providing authorized recreation and skill building programs in Peel. Fee subsidy is available to families who participate in some of these programs run by area municipalities and the YMCA.



# Supporting early years and child care in Peel

The Region supports Early Years and Child Care in Peel in a number of ways. Below are a few highlights:

## Fee subsidy

A significant component of the Region's early years and child care budget is dedicated to the Child Care Fee Subsidy program which provides financial assistance to families in need. Eligibility is based on a provincially-mandated calculation which determines the amount of fee subsidy a family may receive.

In 2018 the Region provided 16,877 fee subsidies to eligible families so they could access licensed child care.



**97%** of Peel's licensed child care system accepts families in receipt of fee subsidy.

## Improving affordability

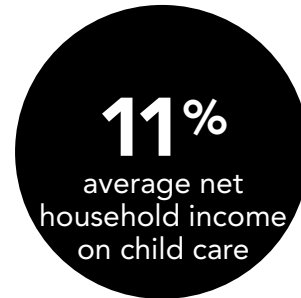
The Region provides operating funding to licensed child care providers to help offset fees charged to families. Affordability of licensed child care remains a major challenge for families in Peel.

### Affordability benchmark in Peel

Families currently spend



Families should spend no more than



**“Thanks to the Region of Peel, we were able to enroll our son in a high-quality, licensed daycare that we could afford – and cut down our monthly child care costs by \$200! Without the Region’s support, we might have chosen a daycare that we might not have been as comfortable or happy with.”**

Mom of child attending a licensed child care centre.

#### Fact

In 2018, 12,000 children (0 to 4 years) attending centre based care benefitted: Fees were reduced by **\$12 per day** for full-time care and **\$6 per day** for part time care.

## Improving access

From 2012 to 2018, Peel’s licensed child care system has grown by 19,814 spaces to more than 45,000 spaces with further growth anticipated. Over the life of the System Plan, the Region will continue to work collaboratively with partners to identify opportunities to increase the number of licensed spaces, particularly in areas of need and for younger age groups.

Expansion of EarlyON programs responds to Peel’s increasing child population in parallel with the rapid growth of many new communities.

#### Fact

Up to **1,193** new **child care spaces for children 0 to 4 years** will be created by 2020.



## Special needs supports

**2,829**  
children  
supported

**96%**  
of licensed  
child care  
providers  
participate

Fall  
**2019**  
EarlyON  
pilot program  
planned

Source: Region of Peel, Statistical Profile of Peel's Early Years and Child Care System (2018).

In Peel, regardless of where families access the early years and child care system, special needs supports are available at no additional cost through Peel Inclusion Resource Services. Staff with expertise in working with children with special needs help support providers to adopt best practices; they support children's successful participation in early years and child care programs.

## Capacity building

Since 2013, the Region has funded professional development opportunities that help build a system of responsive, inclusive, skilled educators. This includes workshops, training, mentoring and participation in a continuous quality enhancement program which engages educators in ongoing reflective practice, critical thinking and collaborative inquiry to enhance quality in their environments.



### Fact

- In 2018 over **20,000** early years and child care staff participated in **4,500** professional education opportunities
- **96 per cent** of child care and all EarlyON programs participated in a continuous quality enhancement initiative.

Source: Region of Peel, Statistical Profile of Peel's Early Years and Child Care System, December 2018

## French-language needs

There are currently 11 centres providing licensed child care solely in French. Together, these centres have the capacity to serve 847 children from 0 to 12 years of age. French-language programming is available at three EarlyON centres. There is also one solely French EarlyON site.

## Indigenous outreach program

In 2018, Peel's Indigenous Network (formerly known as Peel Aboriginal Network) was funded to deliver Indigenous-led outreach programs for families and children ages 0 to 12 years. To support this exciting initiative, the Region facilitated a partnership between the Indigenous Network and early years and child care providers to deliver culturally specific activities such as drumming, story-telling and crafts.

### Fact

**60 early years and child care programs are supported with Indigenous-led, culturally relevant programming.**



# Community planning and engagement

Community engagement was central to the development of this System Plan and we are committed to continued engagement over the next five years through ongoing discussions, surveys and conscious outreach to our community. Below is a summary of how we did our community engagement and what we learned.



## What did we do?

A comprehensive community engagement strategy was initiated to facilitate outreach into the Peel community over a two-year period. Families, educators, and child care and early years program providers provided their insights and feedback regarding their experiences within Peel's Early Years and Child Care System.

### Phase 1

The first phase of community engagement was conducted for Peel's EarlyON Child and Family Centres. This community consultation focused on several key areas:

- The needs of families with children 0 to 6 years of age with respect to EarlyON services, locations, and time availability
- Current gaps, barriers and challenges associated with existing EarlyON programs in Peel
- The strengths of the existing EarlyON programs in Peel
- How to maintain new mandatory services while also meeting the needs of families through evidence-informed, sustainable, cost-effective, culturally appropriate and accessible programs.



## Phase 2

The second phase of community engagement concentrated on Peel's child care system in order to understand:

- Type of child care and frequency of use
- Parent/caregiver perception of quality child care programs
- Parent/caregiver experience in accessing child care
- Improvements that can be made to better meet the needs of families
- Children's reflections on their experiences in EarlyON and child care programs.



## Phase 3

The third phase of community engagement validated the proposed priorities for Peel's Early Years and Child Care system. This phase included speaking to parents/caregivers, child care providers and educators, external partners and Region of Peel staff and focused on the clarity of the proposed priorities and identifying any gaps.



## Methods of engagement

Multiple research methods were used and they were offered in multiple languages where applicable:



**Surveys**



**Focus Groups**



**Key Informant Interviews**



**Sharing Circles**



**Pop up interviews**





## Who did we hear from?



Throughout the engagement process we took steps to ensure that the voices and needs of all Peel residents were reflected in the research. Special effort was made to hear from recent immigrants, low income families and families that have children with special needs. We also offered focus groups in three languages: Punjabi, Urdu and Cantonese.

### The following chart shows who we heard from:

<b>Providers and Community Partners</b> 	<b>Families</b> 
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Licensed Home Child Care Agencies</li> <li>Licensed Centre-based Providers</li> <li>Authorized Recreation Providers</li> <li>EarlyON Service Providers</li> <li>Indigenous Partners</li> <li>Francophone Organizations and Networks</li> <li>Success By 6 Peel</li> <li>English and French School Boards</li> <li>Peel Public Health</li> <li>Chinese Association of Mississauga</li> <li>Punjabi Community Health Services (Brampton &amp; Milton)</li> <li>Other Specialized Community Service Agencies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Families of children with special needs</li> <li>Single parent families</li> <li>Families expecting a child</li> <li>Low income families</li> <li>Newcomers to Peel</li> <li>Stay at home parents</li> <li>Families using licensed child care</li> <li>Families using unlicensed child care</li> <li>Families who don't speak English</li> <li>Francophone</li> <li>Rural families</li> </ul>

## What did we learn?



### Parents/caregivers said:

- They are unaware of the range of early years and child care programs
- Information is hard to find and not in one place
- Child care costs are too high
- Waitlists for child care are too long
- They would like more early years programs closer to home and with longer hours
- There's a shortage of spaces for children under four years of age
- They require more special needs services
- They need flexible options (e.g. extended, part-time/weekend/evening programs)
- They would like more diverse menu options.

**"I couldn't find anywhere that had a spot for my son. Everywhere I looked had a waitlist and I had no idea how long the waitlists were."**

**"It (EarlyON) is an opportunity for my child to get familiar with the concept of school and teachers. He/she learns how to share things and is able to learn how to speak English fluently."**



**Providers said:**

- The Region needs to cut the administrative red tape and reduce the administrative burden
- They would like fewer restrictions to how they can use funding
- It's a struggle to manage rising operational costs
- They need more access to buildings/locations where they can deliver or expand programs
- That low wages make it difficult to attract and retain experienced staff
- They find it difficult to find qualified staff with special needs expertise
- Find ways to help make physical access to school-based child care program easier.

**“One of the biggest indicators of quality program or the biggest driver of quality program is the quality of the staff themselves. You can have the most effective curriculum in play but if you have 50 per cent turnover it has a direct impact on the quality of the program.”**



**Community partners said:**

- The Region plays a key role in advocating for the needs of children/families
- They want to be more engaged in our planning process
- There is a need to streamline current committee tables
- The Region could do more to ensure early years and child care centres are included in the design and planning of new buildings.

**“This municipality has continued to take a leadership role in collaboration and engagement of the sector. They’re one of the only municipalities that continues to bring the senior leadership folks together, operators, school boards, the Region, to have a dialogue. I use the Region of Peel as the model when I’m talking to the other municipalities.”**





## Voice of the child

Children are at the heart of the System Plan and their voices were an important aspect of the community engagement process. Our service providers worked with children to gain a better understanding of their personal experiences with child care and EarlyON programs.

Front-line staff within both child care and EarlyON programs captured the voice of the child through multiple strategies best suited for the child and their age grouping.



## Feedback from children in child care centres

“What do you like to play with when you are here?”

**art supplies**  
**baby dolls**  
**trucks/cars**  
**blocks/magnets**  
**toy kitchen**

“What is special about this place?”

**we work together**  
**drawing/art**  
**playing with friends**  
**my teachers**

“What have you learned by coming here?”

**help each other**  
**how to draw**  
**be kind**  
**reading/writing**  
**about animals**

I like van pip char

" I like when  
people share "



What is special about coming to school?



Describe your picture:

I like it because  
my brother is in the same class  
with me

## Feedback from children at EarlyON centres

"What have you learned by coming here?"

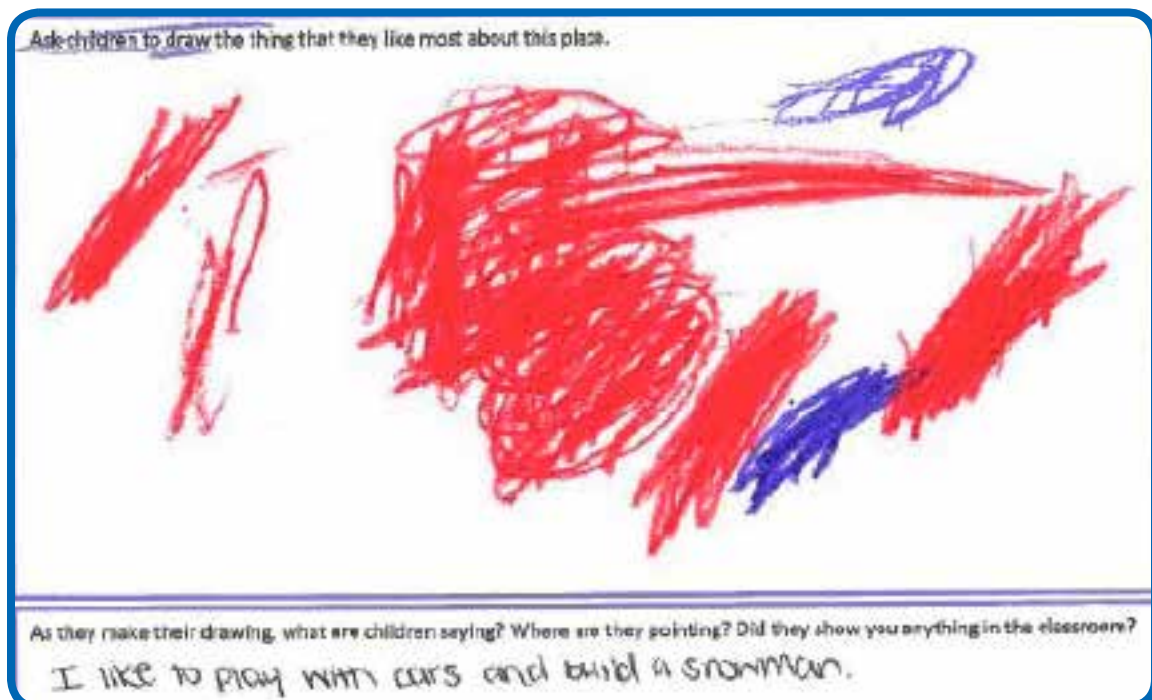
**help each other  
how to draw  
be kind  
reading/writing  
about animals**

"What do you like/find special about coming here?"

**feel happy  
interacting with other kids  
painting  
teachers**

"Have you learned anything from coming here?"

**songs  
socializing/playing with children  
wash hands before and after eating  
numbers  
sharing**



# Strategic priorities actions, outcomes, measures and timelines

## Where do we focus next?

The following priorities are based on what we learned through the research and an extensive community engagement process. These priorities will guide the Region's work over the next five years and are the foundation of our implementation plan.

This section describes the strategic priorities, intended outcomes, and actions that are responsive to community needs and align with the Province's vision for early years and child care. It includes a measurable and action-oriented implementation plan and describes how the strategic priorities and outcomes will be met. All proposed actions and timelines outlined in this section are subject to change based on ongoing funding commitments and local needs.

## Peel's early years and child care priorities 2019-2024

1. Public funds are used to improve the affordability of licensed child care
2. Early years and child care programs are inclusive of all children and families
3. Service providers continuously improve early years and child care program quality
4. Early years and child care system management is future-oriented, responsive and accountable
5. Families have access to accurate and up-to-date information about early years and child care programs
6. Families have access to early years and child care programs that meet their specific needs.



# 1. Public funds are used to improve the **affordability** of licensed child care

## How does this priority address stakeholder feedback?

- Families and service providers both clearly indicated a strong desire to prioritize funding to improve the affordability of licensed child care.
- Families reported that the cost of child care is the main factor that influenced their decision not to enroll their child in licensed care.
- Parents/caregivers feel that eligibility criteria for the fee subsidy program is too narrow and does not take into consideration the reality of their situation.



## Outcome and measurement indicators

Outcome	Sample indicators
Improved affordability of child care for all families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Percentage of child care fees supported by the Region of Peel</li> <li>• Number of children supported by fee subsidy</li> </ul>

## Actions and timelines

#	Action	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
1.1	Continue to develop and implement policies that ensure operating funding to licensed child care providers offsets fees paid by parents						
1.2	Continue to establish benchmarks for the true cost of delivering child care (i.e. centre and home-based)						
1.3	Identify strategies that directly support families with their child care fees, in alignment with provincial policies						
1.4	Continue to develop and implement rate policies to effectively manage fee subsidy child care rates						

## 2. Early years and child care programs are **inclusive** of all children and families

### How does this priority address stakeholder feedback?

- Families require a responsive early years and child care system that meets their diverse needs.
- Some families of children with special needs expressed frustration at the inability of licensed child care programs to accommodate their children.
- EarlyON and child care service providers reiterated the need for greater supports and resources to allow them to effectively support children with special needs.
- Families and service providers indicated there are opportunities to further develop the early years and child care system to reflect the cultural and linguistic needs of families in Peel.



### Outcome and measurement indicators

Outcome	Sample indicators
Service providers deliver inclusive programs that meet families' needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Percentage of service providers who report feeling more knowledgeable about delivering inclusive programs</li> <li>• Number and percentage of service providers that actively participate in Peel Inclusion Resource Services</li> </ul>
Families with children with special needs receive the supports they need	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Percentage of families who report satisfaction with their experience in EarlyON and child care programs</li> </ul>
Families report feeling a sense of inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Percentage of families who report improved social connectedness (through formal and informal supports) as a result of EarlyON programs</li> </ul>

## Actions and timelines

#	Action	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
2.1	Re-envision special needs resourcing model to serve children 0-4 years with special needs in licensed child care						
2.2	Expand special needs resourcing in home-based child care programs						
2.3	Implement special needs resourcing model in before-and-after school programs						
2.4	Implement special needs resourcing model for summer camp programs						
2.5	Implement special needs resourcing model for EarlyON programs						
2.6	Further enhance service providers' knowledge, understanding and implementation of inclusive practices (i.e. special needs, cultural and diverse needs) to support all children and families through professional education opportunities						
2.7	Strengthen partnerships with the Indigenous community to enhance and expand The Journey Together program across early years and child care programs						
2.8	Continue to collaborate with Francophone partners to expand access to child care programs						
2.9	Develop and implement a framework to monitor active participation in inclusive practices for early years and child care service providers who receive public funds						



### 3. Service providers continuously improve program **quality**

#### **How does this priority address stakeholder feedback?**

- Families and service providers identified the availability of high-quality programs as a critical priority for Peel's Early Years and Child Care system.
- Families define quality early years and child care programs as those having a healthy, safe, welcoming and nurturing environment where children and their family have a sense of belonging.
- Service providers stated that the high turnover rates of program staff continue to have an impact on the quality of programs offered to families.
- Service providers struggle to hire and retain qualified staff especially with special needs expertise.
- Service providers identified the need to enhance Early Childhood Education program curriculum standards which will result in better qualified graduates.





## Outcome and measurement indicators

Outcome	Sample indicators
Service providers have access to a range of continuous quality enhancement supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Percentage of service providers actively participating in professional education opportunities offered through the Region</li> <li>Percentage of service providers reporting the training they accessed met their needs</li> </ul>
Service providers attract and retain qualified staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Percentage reduction in wage gap between average Early Childhood Educator in early years and child care programs and school boards</li> <li>Percentage of staff wages supported by Regional funding</li> </ul>
Early years and child care programs are continuously improving quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number and percentage of EarlyON and child care service providers that actively participate in Peel's Continuous Quality Enhancement Initiative</li> <li>Percentage of service providers reporting that Peel's Continuous Quality Enhancement Initiative has had a positive impact on their programs</li> </ul>
Families experience quality early years and child care programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Percentage of families that report having a positive experience at an EarlyON program</li> <li>Percentage of families that report having a positive experience at a child care program</li> </ul>



## Actions and timelines

#	Action	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
3.1	Evaluate and refine the current approach to system-wide capacity building and continuous quality enhancement program initiative						
3.2	Formalize the Region of Peel's role regarding ensuring quality in licensed child care programs						
3.3	Implement a framework to monitor participation in continuous quality improvement for EarlyON and child care service providers who receive public funds						
3.4	Develop a quality evaluation and monitoring framework for implementation in EarlyON programs						
3.5	Establish a working group with service providers, colleges and universities to address the quality of Early Childhood Educators entering early years and child care programs and influence curriculum and placement standards						
3.6	Continue to invest funds to support competitive staff wages and benefits to attract Early Childhood Educators and other qualified professionals to seek employment in early years and child care programs						
3.7	Explore policies for distribution of staff wage and benefits funding aligned with Peel's living wage						
3.8	Use existing system planning tables to understand recruitment and retainment challenges in early years and child care programs and co-create strategies to address these challenges						



## 4. Early years and child care system management is future-oriented, responsive and **accountable**

### How does this priority address stakeholder feedback?

Service providers indicated the need for the Region to:

- reduce red tape and administrative burden;
- modernize technology to improve administrative processes;
- address duplication across system planning tables; and
- advocate to the Province in support of continuous funding to support wage enhancement, professional development of staff, quality standards and Early Childhood Education program standards.

### Outcome and Measurement Indicators

Outcome	Sample indicators
The Region is responsible for the distribution of funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Cost per program hour for EarlyON delivery of programs</li></ul>
Service providers are held to a greater accountability for public funds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Percentage decrease in high-risk providers</li></ul>
Service providers experience less administrative barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Percentage of time the Region meets established service standards for supporting providers.</li></ul>



## Actions and timelines

#	Action	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
4.1	Assess and streamline the use of committee tables						
4.2	Reduce red tape and administrative burden for service providers						
4.3	Implement technology to modernize funding administration and reporting practices						
4.4	Implement an enhanced Accountability Framework for funding and administration						
4.5	Strengthen compliance of policies to responsibly administer public funds						
4.6	Establish a Parent Advisory Group to inform system planning						
4.7	Increase advocacy efforts to the Province on issues related to early years and child care programs						
4.8	Modernize delivery of fee subsidy program						
4.9	Align internal resources to effectively support the implementation of system priorities						



## 5. Families have **access** to accurate and up-to-date information about early years and child care programs

### How does this priority address stakeholder feedback?

- Families spend a significant amount of time searching for up-to-date information about early years and child care programs in Peel.
- Parents do not understand the difference between the various early years and child care program options available (e.g. licensed vs. unlicensed child care).
- Families are unaware of the programs available at EarlyON Child and Family Centres and where to find EarlyON programs in their area.



### Outcome and measurement indicators

Outcome	Sample Indicators
Families know where to access information about programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Percentage of families who accessed information about early years and child care programs through particular sources</li> </ul>
Families have increased knowledge of early years and child care programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Percentage of families reporting that they received the information they needed about early years and child care programs</li> <li>• Families' self-rated knowledge of key areas i.e. difference between licensed and unlicensed child care</li> </ul>
Families can make informed decisions about early years and child care that meet their needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Percentage of families who can identify components of a high-quality early years and child care program</li> </ul>

## Actions and timelines

#	Action	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
5.1	Explore the use of modern technology to access just-in-time information for early years and child care programs						
5.2	Evaluate existing channels that provide early years and child care program information						
5.3	Co-create an awareness and marketing campaign for EarlyON Child and Family Centres						
5.4	Co-create an awareness campaign for licensed home child care						
5.5	Leverage Provincial EarlyON and child care awareness campaign to increase knowledge of and participation in Peel programs						



## 6. Families have **access** to early years and child care programs that meet their specific needs

### How does this priority address stakeholder feedback?

There is a gap between the forecasted demand for licensed child care and the availability of spaces.

- Currently, only 63 per cent of the demand for care for children **under four years of age** is being met.
- Families said they need access to a wider and more flexible range of programs (e.g. extended hours, weekend care).
- Families indicated that they often struggle to find suitable programs that meet their needs.

### Outcome and measurement indicators

Outcome	Sample indicators
Families who qualify for fee subsidy have access to licensed child care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number and percentage of child care service providers that are inclusive of children in receipt of fee subsidy</li> <li>• Percentage of families reporting experiencing a barrier when looking for child care</li> </ul>
Services providers expand access to early years and child care programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Percentage of new spaces created with a Fee Subsidy and Funding Agreement</li> <li>• Number of child care spaces and EarlyON programs created through Capital Funding</li> </ul>
Families have access to a range of early years and child care programs that meet their needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Percentage of families that report having access to EarlyON programs that meets their needs</li> <li>• Percentage of families that report having access to licensed child care that meets their needs</li> </ul>

## Actions and timelines

#	Action	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
6.1	Continue to collaborate with system partners (i.e. school boards, Housing and Planning Departments, area municipalities) to plan for dedicated child care and EarlyON sites in development planning						
6.2	Increase access to more flexible options for licensed child care (i.e. hours, weekend, evening care)						
6.3	Explore the potential for a centralized child care waitlist						
6.4	Continue to expand the number of EarlyON community and school-based sites						
6.5	Develop and implement a framework to monitor active participation in the Fee Subsidy program for child care service providers who receive public funds						
6.6	Explore the Region's role to authorize recreation and skill building programs						





# Ongoing community engagement and collaboration

Community engagement and collaboration are integral parts of Early Years and Child Care planning at the Region of Peel. Over the next five years, ongoing community engagement will ensure that we continue to connect with our community to ensure we are serving them effectively.



## Here's how we will continue to engage and collaborate

Through our recent community engagement process, we learned that Peel families and community members are engaged and eager to collaborate, but they also lead busy lives. Therefore, our ongoing community engagement strategy is multi-faceted, flexible, targeted and will take advantage of digital technology and social media.



Multiple engagement methods will be used to capture feedback with online surveys, focus groups, panels and one-on-one engagement strategies.



Longer term outreach will also be implemented to engage parents on a continuous basis in the form of recurring surveys, an online forum, and a parent advisory group.



Low income, marginalized, new immigrant families, and those from geographical regions that are typically harder to reach, will be targeted during ongoing engagement.

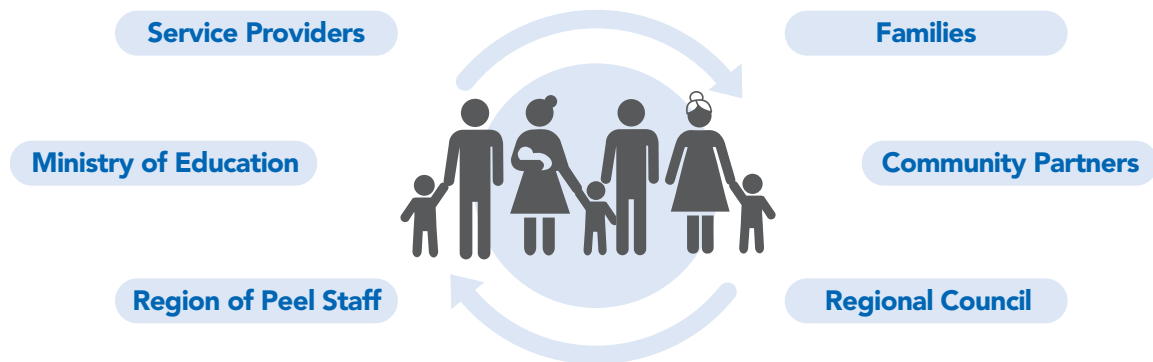


To support ongoing community engagement and promote feedback from parents/caregivers, service providers, and community partners, social media will be an integral tool to enhance participation.

## Ongoing collaboration with partners

Peel's Early Years and Child Care system is built on strong community partnerships that promote comprehensive, coordinated, and integrated programs and services for our families. By engaging in collaborative and sustaining partnerships, the Region is supported to ensure families have access to quality programs that are responsive to the community's changing needs.

Achievement of these priorities will require a **shared commitment** from all partners.



As we implement our System Plan, we will collaborate with partners, both inside and outside of our organization. Other relevant Region of Peel plans such as Peel Poverty Reduction Strategy, Housing and Homelessness Plan and Peel Public Health's Community Safety and Well-Being Plan will continue to inform the work we do.



# Conclusion

Our System Plan sets the path for how the Region of Peel will continue to build and grow an early years and child care system that is responsive to current and future needs. It reflects our commitment to continually evolve and to effectively and efficiently meet the changing needs of our communities.

Throughout the development of the System Plan we have, and will continue to, engage with families, and our diverse stakeholders and community partners, to ensure their voices are reflected. We feel confident that we have a plan that is focused on key priorities that will make a difference in the lives of children and families in Peel, both today and for years to come.



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