

Early Years and Child Care
Service System Plan
2025–2030



Land acknowledgment

As we work to create an inclusive early years and child care system in Peel, we are called to reflect on the histories and experiences of Indigenous peoples who called this region home long before Canada's formation. The land on which Peel Region now operates lies within the treaty lands of the Mississaugas of the Credit and the traditional territory of Anishinaabeg, Haudenosaunee, and Huron-Wendat peoples. We know that the lived experiences, values, and cultural traditions of these nations provide important insights that can shape and guide the delivery of early years and child care services in Peel. However, we also recognize the deep and lasting effects of colonialism on Indigenous children and families, including the loss of cultural traditions and the weight of trauma carried over generations. These harms have created barriers that continue to affect the well-being and opportunities of Indigenous children and families today. As we move forward, it is important that we create welcoming spaces that actively address these impacts while working to build more inclusive systems for all.

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Introduction

I am delighted to introduce Peel Region's Early Years and Child Care Service System Plan for 2025–2030 ("System Plan"). This comprehensive plan sets the strategic direction for creating an inclusive and responsive early years and child care system that meets the evolving needs of children and families in Peel.

In keeping with the *Child Care and Early Years Act*, this plan confirms our commitment to foster the learning, development, health, and well-being of children, where everyone has access to quality services. Peel's 20-year vision of a Community for Life is the foundation of this plan, guiding our efforts to create a sense of belonging and ensure a healthy, safe, and connected community.

The System Plan was developed through extensive consultation with families, service providers, and community partners. We prioritized hearing from diverse voices, especially those traditionally underserved in our community. Given Peel's diversity, it is essential that our programs are equitable, inclusive, and responsive to community needs. This engagement process helped us identify key priorities to support the well-being of Peel's children and families now and into the future.

The success of the priorities outlined in this system plan relies on the continued collaboration and commitment from all our partners, including families, service providers, community organizations, the Ministry of Education, and Regional Council.

A sincere thank you to everyone who contributed their time and insights to create a System Plan that meets the diverse needs of Peel families.

I am excited about the transformation we will achieve together in Peel's early years and child care system over the next five years.

Sincerely,

Nakiema Palmer

Director, Early Years and Child Care Services
Peel Region



Section 2

Executive summary

Peel is a fast-growing, diverse municipality and the needs of its children and families have changed over the past 20 years.

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

Peel Region is responsible for planning, strategic supports, evaluation, and oversight of the local early years and child care (EYCC) system. As the service system manager, Peel must develop an EYCC System Plan ("System Plan")

that includes strategic priorities that will guide investments over the next five years to ensure a strong and responsive system. This role also involves responding to the changing needs of the community by monitoring trends and demographic changes to keep system planning current and relevant. This role is important because Peel Region is accountable to the provincial government for the planning, funding, administration, and operation of early years and licensed child care services across the region.

To fully understand community needs, Peel collaborates with community partners through various system planning tables and networking 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.

Working closely with service providers, Peel aims to create inclusive, affordable, accountable, high-quality, and accessible early years and child care services for families. Peel does this by investing in EarlyON Child and Family Centres and key child care supports such as subsidies, operating funding to offset the cost of licensed child care, capital investment to increase the number of programs available, Peel Inclusion Resource Services (PIRS), and funding to service providers to attract and retain qualified staff.

Early years and child care system

The goal of establishing a strong and responsive early years and child care system complements Peel'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. Building a resilient early years and child care system is also driven by significant economic, social, and community benefits. Research clearly shows that a healthy early years and child care system has a positive ripple effect throughout all aspects of our community.

Engagement and strategic priorities for Peel's early years and child care system

To understand the current and future needs of families, we carried out a thorough community engagement, reaching a wide range of partners. It was clear that, in addition to the many strengths of the existing early years and child care system, there were several opportunities to improve. Families reinforced the need for a system that is affordable, high-quality, accountable, responsive, equitable, diverse, and accessible.



To address the themes identified during our community engagement, we have developed strategic priorities and outcomes as the framework to guide our work over the next five years.

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

Early years and child care (EYCC) System Priorities 2025–2030

Access

Families have access to early years and child care programs, services, and information that meet their specific needs.

- Expand licensed child care spaces and EarlyON services in high-need areas.
- Support service providers to increase service flexibility, including extended hours, weekends, and part-time service options.
- Improve access to information and make it easier for families to find and apply for programs and services.

Accountability

Early years and child care programs are responsive to the needs of families and accountable in the use of public funds.

- Implement transparent policies, processes, and procedures to ensure responsible oversight of public funds.
- Maintain open communication and seek continuous feedback to improve our programs and services.
- Support service provider financial and operational stability.
- Create a responsive system using technology, system modernization, and enhanced monitoring.



Affordability

Early years and child care programs are affordable for all families with children aged 12 years and younger.

- Prioritize investments in Child Care Subsidy to support access to licensed child care for lower income families.
- Implement the Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC) plan to achieve \$10-a-day on average child care.
- Make ongoing investments to reduce costs for families accessing before and after school care.

Diversity and inclusion

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

- Improve accessibility of EYCC programs for children with diverse abilities, and socio-economic needs, including those from traditionally underserved populations.
- Collaborate with service providers to enhance inclusive practices, ensuring that all children and their families feel a sense of belonging in our sector.

Quality

Families experience high-quality early years and child care programs and services.

- Enhance workforce recruitment and retention strategies to support the expansion of the EYCC workforce.
- Support high-quality, licensed child care and early years programs that help prepare children for life.
- Expand and invest in continuous quality enhancement initiatives and professional learning to grow a qualified workforce.



Section
3

Key system transformations

There have been large scale transformations in Peel's early years and child care system over the past several years. These transformations are outlined below.

2018



EarlyON Child and Family Centres

Peel Region's role as service system manager expanded to include overseeing the planning, funding, and delivery of EarlyON centres.

2020



COVID-19 pandemic

From March to June 2020, all licensed child care and EarlyON centres were closed, except for a few emergency child care centres for first responders and essential workers. Virtual EarlyON programs were created to support families remotely. Child care providers faced ongoing closures due to COVID-19 outbreaks until 2022. The pandemic created challenges for the sector, including some financial struggles and difficulty hiring and keeping staff.

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2021

○ **Truth and Reconciliation**

In 2021, the Regional Council voted to recognize National Day for Truth and Reconciliation to honour the report and calls to action. Call to Action 12 of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) focuses on early childhood education for Indigenous families. It calls on levels of government to work together to create culturally appropriate early childhood education programs that reflect Indigenous languages, traditions, and parenting practices.

2022

○ **Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC) plan and funding agreement**

In 2022, CWELCC was implemented. With the signing of a \$13.2 billion agreement between Ontario and the federal government, CWELCC focuses on: affordability, expansion, and workforce.

Affordability

- By 2023, child care fees for families paying full price were reduced by 52.75%, with the goal of achieving an average of \$10 a day by the end of 2026.
- In Peel, 95% of eligible child care providers enrolled in the CWELCC program, helping families benefit from these fee reductions.

Expansion

- A \$213 million Start-up Grant Program (2023-24) was introduced to support the creation of new, affordable child care spaces, with a focus on underserved families and communities.
- New guidelines and an updated Access and Inclusion Framework were released to guide a directed growth plan for expanding services.

continued...



Workforce

- Ontario committed to ongoing wage enhancements for child care professionals, raising Registered Early Childhood Educators' (RECEs) wages to \$23.86/hour in 2024.
- In Peel, RECEs already earn above this provincial rate, with an average wage of \$29.16/hour, reflecting local efforts to attract and retain qualified staff.

2023

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in EarlyON

Peel Region released “Our Intentional Journey of Growth,” a report of our work and approach to intentionally embedding Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) practices in EarlyON programs. Peel Region is one of the first municipalities in Ontario with a comprehensive [EarlyON DEI Strategy](#).

Key system transformations



Section
4

Peel's changing demographics

Peel is a fast-growing, diverse, municipality consisting of both well established and newly developed communities. This section shows trends in Peel that will continue to 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 the Peel Data Portal (data.peelregion.ca), which pulls information from Statistics Canada (2021 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 in the 2021 Census was almost **1.5 million residents**.



Peel has the **2nd largest population** in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), behind Toronto. Brampton and Mississauga are among Canada's 10 largest cities.



From 2016 to 2021, Peel's population grew by **5%**, and is expected to grow to over **2 million** by 2041, making it one of the fastest-growing areas in Ontario.

Most of Peel's population growth took place between 2016 and 2019. This slowed in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

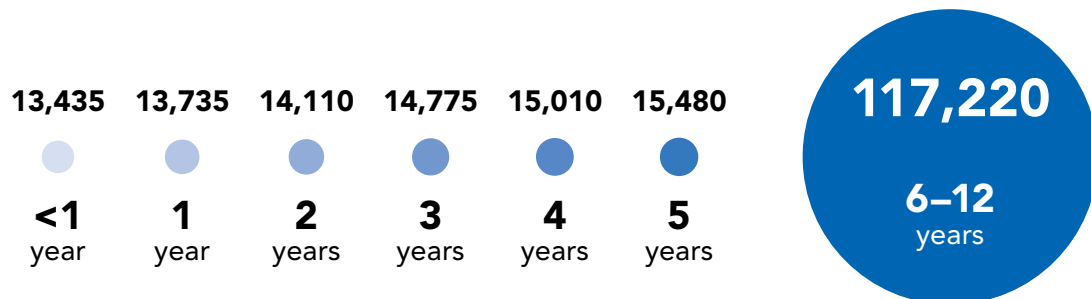
In 2021, there were 203,765 children 12 years and younger in Peel:

- Brampton: 100,470
- Caledon: 11,025
- Mississauga: 92,270

This group is expected to grow by 10% by 2026.

According to the latest census, Peel has the highest proportion of children in the GTA (42%). Peel has a young population, with children making up 16.5% of the total population.

Figure 1: Children in Peel 12 years and younger



Diversity

Over the past 25 years, Peel has become one of the most richly diverse municipalities in Canada, with immigration a major driving force behind our growing cultural diversity. As Peel's community changes, the early years and child care system should reflect the evolving and diverse needs of children and families. According to 2021 census data:



More than half (**52%**) of Peel's population is made up of people not born in Canada.



Peel also has the **highest percentage** of racialized people in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) at **69%**.



Peel is a multilingual community, with **6%** of the population having knowledge of both English and French, and **46%** of people speaking a non-official mother tongue.



Peel's population is made up of **24,690** Francophone people, representing **1.7%** of the population.

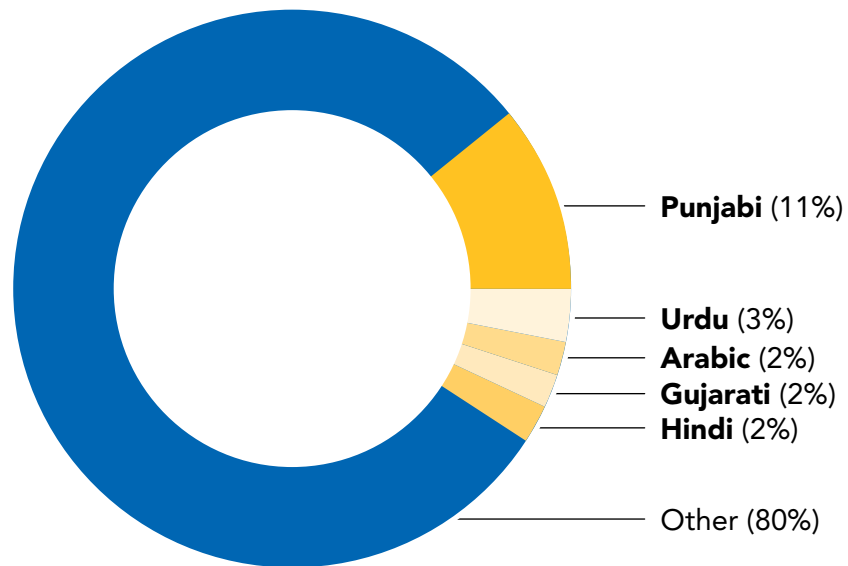


Peel's population is made up of **7,430** Indigenous peoples, which is **0.5%** of the population. However, according to the Assembly of First Nations, statistics around urban Indigenous people often do not fully capture true population data.

Languages in Peel

91% of Caledon residents speak English at home, compared to 63% and 62% of Mississauga and Brampton residents, respectively.

Figure 2: Top 5 home languages other than English in Peel



Education, employment, and income



Peel region has a **large and young workforce**, made up of roughly **half** of its total population.



58% of Peel's population aged 15 years and older have a **postsecondary certificate, diploma, or degree**.



In 2021, **65%** of Peel residents older than 15 years were in the labour force, with an overall employment rate of **57%**.



Since the pandemic, more people are working at home. In 2021, **28%** of Peel's employed population worked from home. This is a significant increase from **6%** in 2016.



In 2020, Peel's average after-tax household income was **\$94,000**, up **24%** since 2015. This is the largest increase seen in the past 20 years and largely because of COVID-19 income support programs. This support was temporary, and these trends are not expected to continue.



Early years and child care in Peel

In Peel, we have a strong early years and child care system. This snapshot shows our services at the end of 2024.



593

Licensed child care homes



49,166

Centre-based licensed child care spaces



59

EarlyON sites
delivering 1,101 hours
of programs per week

EarlyON Child and Family Centres

EarlyON Child and Family Centres offer free, accessible, high-quality programs for families with children from birth to six years. Peel Region currently has 59 EarlyON sites that provide a range of services where families can:

- Thrive in their relationship with their children.
- Get advice from early child development professionals.
- Find out about, and get connected to, other services in their community.
- Get to know other families in their community.
- Enjoy fun activities such as reading, storytelling, and games that support healthy child development.

EarlyON statistics in 2024



27,667 children and **31,105** parents, guardians, and caregivers attended.



646,598 family visits (**330,839** children and **315,759** parents, guardians, and caregivers).

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

- Operates in a variety of spaces including schools, community or recreation centres, libraries, workplaces, places of worship, and standalone buildings.
- Offers 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.

Peel Inclusion Resource Services

Peel Inclusion Resource Services (PIRS) connects licensed child care providers with a dedicated Resource Consultant. Resource Consultants work with educators, building their skills to help children 12 years and younger who need extra support while in licensed child care. No diagnosis is needed.

Resource Consultants help families:

- access community services and resources,
- can help identify children who may benefit from extra supports, and
- create a positive early childhood education experience for all children.

Child Care Subsidy

- We reduce the amount of money that eligible families pay for child care for children 12 years and younger so that families with lower incomes have access to licensed child care.

Licensed child care statistics



198 service providers who operate **560** sites with a total of **49,166** spaces.



There are **30,357** licensed child care spaces for children younger than **6** years, and **18,809** licensed child care spaces for children **6-12** years old.



There are **593** licensed child care homes registered with licensed agencies in Peel with a total potential capacity of **3,558** spaces.



System plan development: Community planning and engagement

What we did

Over the past five years, we have done a lot of work with our early years and child care partners to engage the community and collect valuable data. This includes engagements such as:

- Client satisfaction survey on Peel Inclusion Resource Services (PIRS) and Child Care Subsidy.
- EarlyON diversity, equity, and inclusion engagement.
- Early years and child care workforce study.
- Service System Plan community engagement with families.

Throughout all our planning efforts, we also engaged and worked alongside our service providers, including EarlyON and Child Care Providers Advisory Groups, PIRS service providers, and The Indigenous Network.

We have used this data and feedback to guide our work, and focused our most recent community planning and engagement efforts in 2024 on building a service system plan that reflects the needs of children, families, and communities in Peel.

Who we engaged

As part of our strategy to reach all families, we recently connected with Peel's diverse populations, including vulnerable and underrepresented groups, and invited them to share their thoughts. We heard from:

- **Low-income families**
- **Vulnerable communities**, such as newcomers, recent immigrants, refugees, international students, single-parent households, job seekers, families unhoused or at risk of being unhoused.
- **Diverse communities**, including Indigenous, Black, South Asian, Chinese, Arab and other racialized families, rural families, 2SLGBTQ+ people, parents or caregivers with disabilities.
- **Francophone families**
- **Families needing more flexible models of care**, including evening, weekend, and overnight care, such as shift workers, on-call workers, service and healthcare industry workers, families requiring non-standard or inconsistent hours of care.
- **Children 12 years and younger**, including children with special needs and their families.

The input received was used to directly shape Peel's early years and child care priorities, policies, and services, ensuring they meet the unique needs of Peel's communities. We connected with Peel's diverse population in several ways:



In-person pop-up consultations: Engaged **147** families across **5** locations.



Phone surveys: Collected **400** survey responses through random digit dialing.



Online surveys: Collected more than **1,210** responses through a web-based survey.



Virtual focus groups:

Engaged **40** families across six sessions.



In-person interviews:

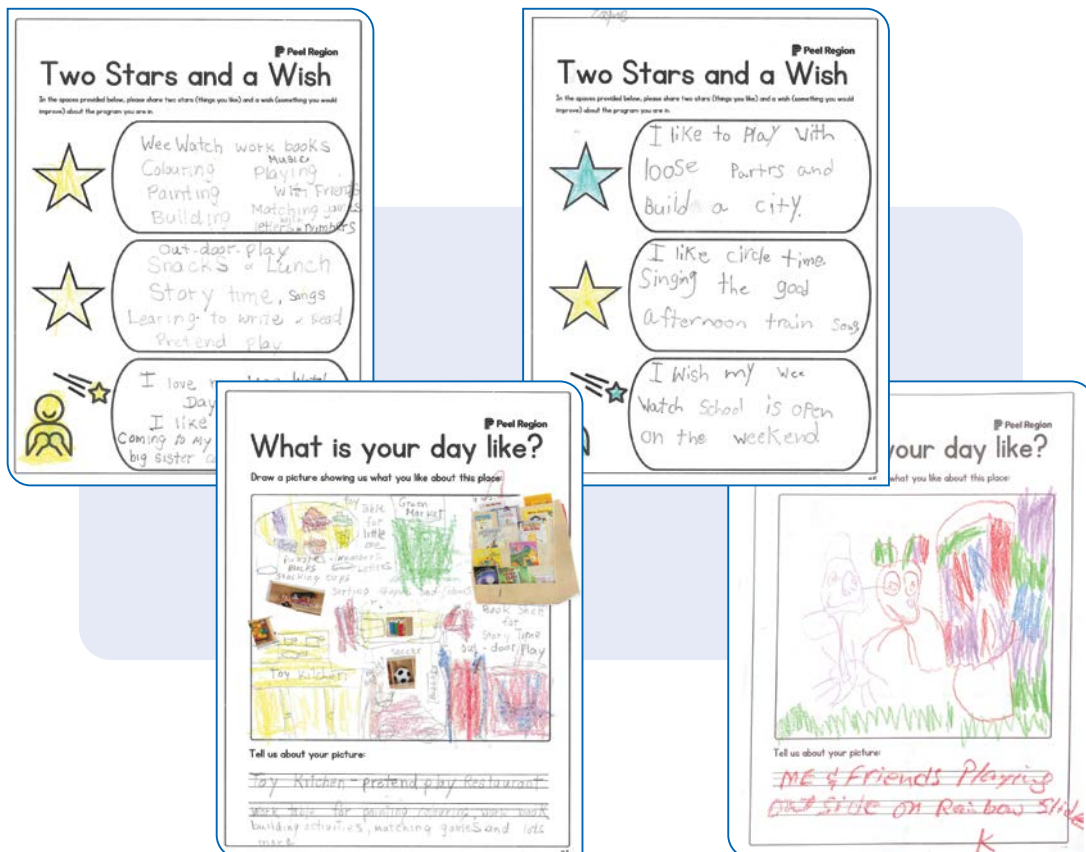
Conducted **13** interviews with rural and Francophone families.



Child activity toolkits:

Received **430** completed toolkits, capturing children's perspectives.

Children provided valuable insights through the child activity toolkits. Here are a few examples of their feedback.



What we heard and learned

Our five key priorities align with Peel's vision, mission, and long-term outcomes.

Vision Community for Life

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

Long-term outcomes People's lives are improved in their time of need • Communities are integrated, safe, and complete • Government is future-oriented and accountable



Feedback from families and service providers shaped the priorities.

Access

- Families require better access to child care, including before and after school care, as they experience long waitlists, and are turned away due to lack of available spaces.
- Families require extended operating hours, part-time and flexible care options, and convenient locations.
- Families require clear, accessible information on programs and services, and a simplified way to navigate the system and services.
- Service providers cannot operate at their full licensing capacity, due to staffing shortages.

Accountability

- Families and service providers want open communication and opportunities to provide continuous feedback.
- Families want clear and consistent policies from across the system and service providers.
- Families prioritize the importance of a safe environment with qualified staff.

Affordability

- Many eligible families do not access or are unaware of Child Care Subsidy.
- \$10 a day is still unaffordable for some families.
- Families with children over the age of six are not currently covered under CWELCC's fee reduction and face affordability challenges.
- Service providers have indicated the need for timely and clear funding guidelines and public funds to ensure financial and operational stability.

Diversity and inclusion

- Families want early years environments that are inclusive, encourage families to be their authentic selves, and celebrate diversity.
- Families desire settings where all children feel welcomed, regardless of their background, abilities, or needs.
- Families value informed staff, culturally responsive care, and the integration of inclusive practices that support racialized children who come from diverse cultural backgrounds. This includes Indigenous children, and children with diverse developmental, behavioural, and socio-economic needs.
- Embed behaviours and practices that advance a sense of belonging, including alignment with The Seven Grandfather Teachings: humility, bravery, honesty, wisdom, truth, respect, and love.

Quality

- Families want reliable, high-quality child care services that are accountable to families and the community.
- Families highlighted the importance of strong relationships with staff, including consistent communications, and having a home-like environment for those in licensed home child care.
- Families want early years environments that are responsive to the interests of their children and that promote nature-based activities.
- Service providers have indicated 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 those with special needs expertise.

Findings

About 81% of families surveyed online use licensed child care programs. In comparison, 29% of families surveyed randomly over the phone use licensed child care programs.

Approximately 64% of all families surveyed online and 62% surveyed over the phone identified as racialized. We received the most survey responses from families who identified as South Asian, Black African, Black Caribbean, South-East Asian, and White.

Strengths

- A vast majority (93%) said they were satisfied with licensed child care centres and school-based before and after school programs.
- 86% would recommend EarlyON programs to family and friends with young children.
- The most important aspects of the licensed child care experience include qualified staff (49%), strong staff-child relationships (46%), and safety (44%).
- Families value having friendly staff (56%) and feeling a sense of belonging (35%) in early years and child care settings. They also appreciate when early years and



child care settings reflect their cultures, which is especially important for South Asian families (31%) and Black Caribbean families (33%).

- Many families in Peel do not use licensed child care and instead get help from their own family members (27%). This might be because a high percentage of households in Peel have multiple generations living together (10%).
- Many families, especially South Asian (71%) and Black Caribbean (73%) families, care for their children themselves or rely on their spouse or partner, which may reflect a cultural preference for family-based care.

Opportunities

- Most families reported difficulty in finding child care (53%), with most saying those issues were due to waitlists.
- The sector experiences high turnover rates (22%). Factors influencing turnover include compensation, desire for permanent positions, and insufficient benefits.
- Racialized families were more likely to report barriers to access:
 - Black – African (66%) families most often report cost as a barrier to access.
 - Asian – South-East (95%) families most often report a lack of spaces or waitlists as a barrier.
- 59% of EarlyON families surveyed felt that they had been treated differently based on their ethnicity or other factors.
- More than two in five families surveyed online who are not currently using a licensed child care program do not use it because there are waitlists at the licensed child care places they want.

- Many families reported location issues (46% of South Asian families), waitlists (60% of Black Caribbean families), and affordability (40% of South Asian and Black Caribbean families each) as reasons for never using licensed child care before.
- Among vulnerable and underrepresented families surveyed online, their reasons for not using licensed child care include:
 - being unable to get subsidy (31%).
 - lack of support for a child's special needs, disability, or chronic illness (22%).
 - concerns about child's health and safety (22%).
- Newcomer families said that staff must be patient and create comfortable learning spaces as their children begin to adapt to an unfamiliar setting and country.
- Among the 18 families surveyed who have experienced homelessness, about 40% did not attend a licensed child care centre in the past two years. They noted cost as a significant barrier (75%), with high waitlists and inconvenient hours also impacting access (50% each).

Indigenous engagement

With the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Call to Action 12, we are committed to developing culturally appropriate early childhood education programs that reflect the diverse needs of Indigenous families and communities. Connected to the goals of developing a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) strategy, Peel is working closely with Indigenous partners and community members to ensure that Indigenous children and families have access to quality early years and child care programs that respect cultural practices and needs. We engaged with:

- Indigenous community members through three online sharing circles.
- Families of diverse cultural backgrounds through a Corn Husk Doll Workshop and Sharing Circle hosted at the Peel Art Gallery Museum and Archives (PAMA).
- Families of diverse backgrounds through an Indigenous Strawberry Teachings Workshop and Sharing Circle hosted at PAMA.

The feedback highlighted the importance of creating settings that are safe, inclusive, and culturally rich with a focus on:

Sharing Circles are an Indigenous practice used for many purposes. They are respectful and inclusive spaces where participants come together to share thoughts, experiences, and feedback on a topic. Active listening is a key part of the process because each person's contribution is welcomed. And valued.

Cultural safety: Families need to feel respected for their identities and have spaces to express themselves, celebrate diversity, and see their cultures reflected in the programming and environment. This includes celebrations, food, and clothing.

Cultural values and family involvement: Families want to see their values reflected in child care environments and relationships. This includes welcoming family and community involvement in early years and child care spaces.

Respecting and supporting children: Children’s voices should be heard, and their strengths recognized. Educators should encourage exploration and growth, with mentorship from Indigenous community members.

Incorporating language: Learning Indigenous languages, using storytelling traditions, and celebrating cultural practices help preserve languages and strengthen pride and cultural identity.

Nature-based learning: Outdoor activities and nature-based environments are important for learning as they reflect the strong connection between Indigenous cultures and the natural world.

Culturally relevant programming: There’s a need for more diverse representation in resources and programming to ensure Indigenous children see themselves represented in early years and child care settings.

Professional development: Educators need regular training on Indigenous cultures, histories, trauma-informed care and strength-based approaches, and inclusive practices to better support Indigenous families.

Barriers: Common challenges include long waitlists, affordability, and a need for flexible care options. Participants also noted the impact of colonialism and stereotypes on urban Indigenous communities and the importance of providing supports that strengthen families while meeting children’s needs.

Trauma-informed care means understanding how difficult experiences in someone’s past may affect them and using this understanding to support them in a way that helps them feel safe, respected, and valued.

A strength-based approach means focusing on a person’s abilities, talents, and positive qualities to build on their strengths, rather than only focusing on their needs, challenges, or difficulties.



Peel's early years and child care priorities 2025–2030

Peel's priorities are based on what we learned through the community engagement process and research. Building on the significant progress achieved to date, the next five years will be a continuation of this work, with these priorities guiding our actions in partnership with our community partners.

● Access

Families have access to early years and child care programs, services, and information that meet their specific needs.

Child Care Expansion

Progress to date

- By the end of 2024, we had approved more than 7,700 new spaces into Peel's CWELCC expansion program. This represents more than half of Peel's expansion goal.
- Close to 5,000 new spaces have opened between 2019 and 2024.



What we hope to achieve (2025–2030)

- In keeping with provincial direction, we will create more than 12,000 new licensed child care spaces by the end of 2026.
- Our expansion will increase child care spaces in Peel by 42% for children younger than six years of age by 2026, focusing on creating access for underserved communities across Peel.
- For the rest of the current CWELCC expansion window, we will focus on expanding our system by over 4,100 spaces to achieve our overall expansion goal.

EarlyON Expansion

Progress to date

- In 2023, we celebrated the opening of eight new EarlyON sites.
- We have increased programming hours by 47% since 2018; from 737 hours in 2018 to 1,081 program hours each week in 2023.

What we hope to achieve (2025–2030)

- We will focus on improving access to EarlyON centres for all families by continuing to review programs, policies, and practices to reflect the diversity of our community, and build spaces where all families feel a sense of belonging.
- We will continue to explore opportunities to expand the number of EarlyON centres in response to demand from families.

Service System Navigation

Progress to date

- In collaboration with Child Development Resource Connection Peel (CDRCP), we created a child care search tool and service navigation program to help families find EarlyON and licensed child care, connect with services, and make informed decisions.



What we hope to achieve (2025–2030)

- We will work with CDRCP and develop strategies to build awareness of different services that are available, such as EarlyON centres, Peel Inclusion Resource Services (PIRS), and Child Care Subsidy.
- We will find ways to provide extra support to families facing barriers, such as vulnerable populations and those needing more help by improving system navigation resources, including the search tool and complaints form.

Workforce Strategy

Progress to date

- The pandemic, along with the increased cost of living and an undervalued sector, have made the shortage of Registered Early Childhood Educators (RECEs) even worse. However, by the end of 2024 the workforce returned to 95% of pre-pandemic staffing levels.
- We have created a workforce strategy to support and retain caregivers, grow the system, and build strong partnerships. It includes clear actions to attract, hire, and keep qualified professionals.
- We partnered with several colleges and municipalities to offer grants towards Early Childhood Diploma programs. This includes tuition reimbursement programs for equity-deserving groups.
- We partnered with Niagara College to offer a two-year online, self-guided diploma program so that staff can earn an Early Childhood Education (ECE) diploma while staying in their current jobs.
- In 2022, our tuition grant program supported 1,949 students, with 23% from Peel. In 2023, we expanded our support to 1,551 students.

What we hope to achieve (2025–2030)

- In 2025, we will continue with the workforce strategy and focus on addressing the need for approximately 1,546 more qualified staff to deliver programs in the new spaces under the CWELCC expansion plan.



- We will focus initiatives and advocacy efforts on immigration pathways to attract and retain qualified RECEs, funding flexible training for career advancement, and offering retention incentives for the current workforce.
- We will invest \$228.5M to increase child care staff salaries to attract and retain staff to deliver quality programs.
- We will continue partnering with colleges and municipalities to offer funding support. Our next major initiative will be continuing to support Niagara College’s self-guided diploma program until 2026.

● Accountability

Early years and child care programs are responsive to the needs of families and accountable in the use of public funds.

Progress to date

- In 2022, we processed more than \$184M in grants.
- By moving to a single Early Years and Child Care Funding Agreement, Peel has reduced the number of contracts to sign by 79%, cutting down on administrative work.
- We improved how we collect and use data to make better decisions and streamline reporting.
- We developed an accountability framework to ensure effective use of public funds.

What we hope to achieve (2025–2030)

- We will continue to make changes to our technology, to modernize funding administration and reporting practices, and reduce administrative tasks.
- We will look into using technology solutions to improve access to services and make it easier for families to navigate available supports.
- We will develop processes to increase provider knowledge of policies, funding and guidelines, and professional learning opportunities to responsibly administer public funds and support overall program quality.

● Affordability

Early years and child care programs are affordable for all families with children aged 12 years and younger.

The Canada-Ontario Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC) plan

Progress to date

- By the end of 2024, we lowered child care fees for children younger than six years of age by 53%. This provided an annual savings of \$16K for a family with two toddler and preschool children.
- By 2024, 95% of existing licensed child care sites in Peel participated in the CWELCC plan.

What we hope to achieve (2025–2030)

- Effective January 1, 2025, child care fees are a daily maximum rate of \$22.
- The goal is to maintain participation rates in the CWELCC plan across licensed child care sites in Peel and to deliver an average of \$10 a day by 2026.

Child Care Subsidy

Progress to date

- In 2023, we invested \$30.9M in Child Care Subsidy, supporting 9,665 children in accessing licensed child care and camp programs for children 12 years and younger. There is currently no waitlist for Child Care Subsidy.
- Changes were made to modernize the Child Care Subsidy program to make it easier for families to access the program.
- Approximately 79% of children receiving subsidy received child care for \$10 or less a day by the end of 2024.

What we hope to achieve (2025–2030)

- The goal is to continue to improve access to the Child Care Subsidy program, as many families would not be able to afford licensed child care without subsidy, even when child care is \$10 a day.

Before and After School Programs (BASPs)

Progress to date

- From September 2023 to December 2024, we piloted a program in BASPs to reduce fees by 50%, making child care more affordable for those who are not eligible for CWELCC. The pilot is expected to benefit approximately 7,000 children ages 6 to 12.

What we hope to achieve (2025–2030)

- We are looking at how we can shift the BASP program from a pilot to a regularly funded program going forward.



● Diversity and inclusion

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

Progress to date

- In the fall of 2023, we released the diversity, equity, and inclusion report ‘Our Intentional Journey of Growth,’ which outlined learnings related to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in EarlyON, our progress, and our goals.
- In 2024, we launched the DEI Communities of Learning and Practice for EarlyON which is mandatory for all EarlyON staff and leadership. This initiative builds DEI understanding through key concepts and real EarlyON scenarios, so that staff can create welcoming programs for all families.
- Peel partnered with The Indigenous Network (TIN) and early years and child care providers to deliver the Indigenous-led Journey Together program to approximately 60 programs across the region.
- In 2022, Peel added a voluntary survey for families using Child Care Subsidy and EarlyON services. This survey gathered information on things like gender, ethnicity, income, and language, which helps us plan better programs.
- In 2024, we hired SMD Consulting to help us learn more about DEI in Peel Inclusion Resource Services (PIRS) and licensed child care.

What we hope to achieve (2025–2030)

- We are creating and implementing a DEI framework for the Early Years and Child Care Services division at Peel and early years and child care providers to promote equity and inclusion. This includes working with providers to identify and remove barriers to access, reviewing and updating policies to reflect best practices, and promoting inclusive language and approaches across the system.
- In 2025, we will be launching our first Indigenous-led EarlyON program, led by TIN.
- The DEI Communities of Learning and Practice for EarlyON will continue into 2025.
- EarlyON providers will continue to develop and implement DEI action plans.
- All PIRS agencies will develop and implement DEI action plans.

Peel Inclusion Resource Services (PIRS)

Progress to date

- In 2023, 2,825 children were provided with PIRS supports in licensed child care.
- In 2023–24, we invested in staffing for PIRS to respond to the growth in the child care system and maintain access to PIRS without a waitlist.
- In addition to PIRS consultation supports, Enhanced Program Support funding is available to centre-based providers to hire additional staff to support the inclusion and participation of all children in classrooms where complex needs are present.

What we hope to achieve (2025–2030)

- We will continue to grow PIRS as our system grows and ensure it is responsive to the needs of educators and families.

● Quality

Families experience high-quality early years and child care programs and services.

Workforce Capacity Building

Progress to date

- Peel has funded ongoing initiatives such as workshops, trainings, mentoring, and participation in quality programs that help educators reflect on their work to improve the quality of child care settings and their interactions with families. In 2024, we offered 446 professional learning opportunities that had 21,615 attendees.

What we hope to achieve (2025–2030)

- We will continue to give all educators more access to training, mentorship, and resources to help them grow.

Child Care Quality Initiatives

Progress to date

- Early years and child care professionals participated in quality-focused communities of practice (CoPs) conducted by Child Development Resource Connection Peel (CDRCP) Quality Initiatives (QI) Mentors. In 2024, Peel offered 46 CoPs that had 865 total attendees.
- The CoPs focused on key themes impacting the sector such as Engaging Families and Growing Anti-Bias Partnerships; Getting Back to Pre-Covid Routines and Rhythms; Community Engagement; and Staff Retention and Recruitment.
- 97% of licensed child care programs participate in initiatives that support continuous quality improvement.

What we hope to achieve (2025–2030)

- Along with CDRCP, we are developing a new quality initiative for all licensed child care programs in Peel. This new initiative is based on research and includes feedback from service providers about their needs.
- We will aim for all licensed child care programs to take part in quality improvement efforts.

EarlyON Quality Initiative

Progress to date

- All EarlyON providers participated in the Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) initiative to enhance quality in EarlyON. The CQI was co-created with providers and allows staff to engage in reflective practice, highlight their successes, and set goals to further improve quality.
- Staff at EarlyON sites reflect on their practice across five quality elements, including relationships, diversity, equity, and inclusion, qualified team, program design and environment, and pedagogy.
- All EarlyON centres participate in initiatives that support continuous quality improvement.

What we hope to achieve (2025–2030)

- We will continue to focus on using a reflective practice model to enhance quality in EarlyON settings, including meeting annual quality goals.



Section
8

Strategic priorities, actions, outcomes, and measures

The following measurable outcomes and indicators will describe how we will meet the strategic priorities and outcomes. All proposed items in this section are subject to change based on ongoing funding commitments and flexibility to be responsive to local needs. This is not a complete list, as we may explore more outcomes and examples to reflect changing priorities and community input.

● Access

Table 1: Measurable outcomes and indicators for Access

Outcomes	Sample indicators
Early years and child care services and spaces are available for families and meet child care and EarlyON centre demand.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of new spaces created. • Number of EarlyON hours offered. • Percentage of families reporting that they experienced a barrier when accessing early years or child care services. • Percentage of families reporting flexible care options that meet their needs.
Families are satisfied with early years and child care programs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percentage of families reporting satisfaction with the range of programs available. • Percentage of families reporting that early years and child care programs meet their needs.

Outcomes	Sample indicators
Families know where and how to access information and resources about early years and child care programs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of families who accessed information about early years and child care programs through various sources, such as Peel Region's website.
Families have increased knowledge of early years and child care programs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of families reporting that they received the information they needed about early years and child care programs. Percentage of families reporting awareness of early years and child care programs.

● Accountability

Table 2: Measurable outcomes and indicators for Accountability

Outcomes	Sample indicators
Service providers experience fewer administrative barriers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number and type of administrative barriers reduced through policy changes or process improvements.
Service providers are confident in implementing the CWELCC funding formula.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of service providers who report increased confidence in implementing the CWELCC funding formula after attending professional learning opportunities or sessions hosted by Peel.



● Affordability

Table 3: Measurable outcomes and indicators for Affordability

Outcomes	Sample indicators
Families have increased awareness of and access to Child Care Subsidy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of families reporting awareness of Child Care Subsidy. • Number of children supported by Child Care Subsidy.
Early years and child care services become more affordable for families with children six years and younger.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percentage of child care fees supported by the Peel Region. • Percentage of families reporting that child care is affordable.
Before and after school care becomes more affordable for families with school-aged children.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The amount families save on before and after school care costs due to regional investments. • Percentage of families reporting that before and after school care is affordable.



● Diversity and inclusion

Table 4: Measurable outcomes and indicators for Diversity and inclusion

Outcomes	Sample indicators
Families feel welcomed, valued, and included in early years and child care services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of families who report feeling feel welcomed, valued, and included with their experience in EarlyON and child care programs.
Early years and child care providers deliver inclusive programs that meet the unique needs of families.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of EarlyON providers actively putting DEI action plans into operation, measured by progress on key initiatives. Percentage of Peel Inclusion Resource Services (PIRS) agencies, that are making measurable progress on their DEI action plans. Number and percentage of service providers that actively participate in PIRS.



● Quality

Table 5: Measurable outcomes and indicators for Quality

Outcomes	Sample indicators
Service providers attract and retain qualified staff.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of staff wages supported by Peel funding.
Service providers deliver high-quality early years and child care programs to children and families.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of child care service providers with at least two quality standards identified as a promising practice for each site annually. Percentage of families who report having a positive experience at an EarlyON program. Percentage of families who report having a positive experience at a child care program.
Service providers and early years and child care professionals are trained and well equipped with resources to provide quality early years and child care programs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of service providers reporting the training they accessed met their needs. Number and percentage of EarlyON and licensed child care programs that participate in Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) or Quality Enhancement Initiatives (QEI). Percentage of service providers reporting that Peel's CQI or QEI has had a positive impact on their programs.





Ongoing community engagement and collaboration

Community engagement and collaboration are key to early years and child care planning in Peel region. Over the next five years, ongoing community engagement will ensure that we continue to connect with and work with diverse communities to meet the needs of children and families to ensure we are serving the community effectively.

We are committed to accountability and will continue to measure the performance of each of our priorities to ensure we are delivering on our commitments.

Conclusion

Our System Plan sets the path for how Peel Region 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 meet the changing needs of diverse communities effectively and efficiently in Peel. Throughout the development of the System Plan we engaged with families, service providers, and diverse community partners. We will continue to do so to ensure that we reflect and include their voices in decision making. We feel confident that we have a plan that focuses on key priorities that will make a difference in the lives of children and families in Peel, both today and for years to come.





Let's keep the conversation going!

We need your ongoing feedback to ensure that our strategic priorities continue to meet your needs.

Visit peelregion.ca/children-parenting/new-road-map-early-years-child-care or scan the QR code to share your thoughts. Look for the **feedback button** on that web page.





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