



OXFORD COUNTY 2014 - 2016 CHILD CARE PLAN

MAY 2014

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Introduction

It is a time of transformative change in the child care sector. Beginning with Dr. Charles Pascal's report in June of 2009, "*With our Best Future in Mind*", a number of changes have taken place, including:

- The introduction of the Early Learning Program, including the implementation of Full Day Kindergarten for four and five year olds
- The transfer of child care responsibilities from the Ministry of Children and Youth Services (MCYS) to the Ministry of Education (EDU)
- The release of the Ontario Early Years Policy Framework in January 2013
- The movement to modernize child care

With the limited envelope of child care funding provided to municipal service managers by the Province, these changes have had an impact on the sustainability of the child care system in Oxford County - the most notable impact being from the implementation of Full Day Kindergarten.

The County of Oxford, as the Consolidated Municipal Service Manager (CMSM), is responsible to develop a local child care plan for its area. This plan will be a three year plan, spanning from 2014 to 2016.

The County undertook a number of steps to complete this plan, including:

- Reviewing key demographic data about the community
- Consulting with child care operators
- Consulting with special needs resourcing service providers

One of the aspects of developing a Child Care Plan for Oxford County was stakeholder consultation. Information was collected from child care operators and special needs resourcing service providers in a number of ways. An initial focus group was held with both groups and then was followed up with an online survey and an additional focus group. The link to the online survey for the child care operators/special needs resourcing service providers was sent electronically to each organization. An interview was also conducted with the two special needs resourcing service providers. Child care operators/special needs resourcing service providers were targeted to gather information about the strengths, opportunities for improvement, gaps and overlaps in the current child care system.

The resulting child care plan aligns with Oxford County's Strategic Plan and, in particular, with two of the Strategic Directions contained in this Plan:

1. ***A County that Works Together*** – Enhance the quality of life for all of our citizens
2. ***A County that Informs and Engages*** – Better harness the power of community through conversation and dialogue

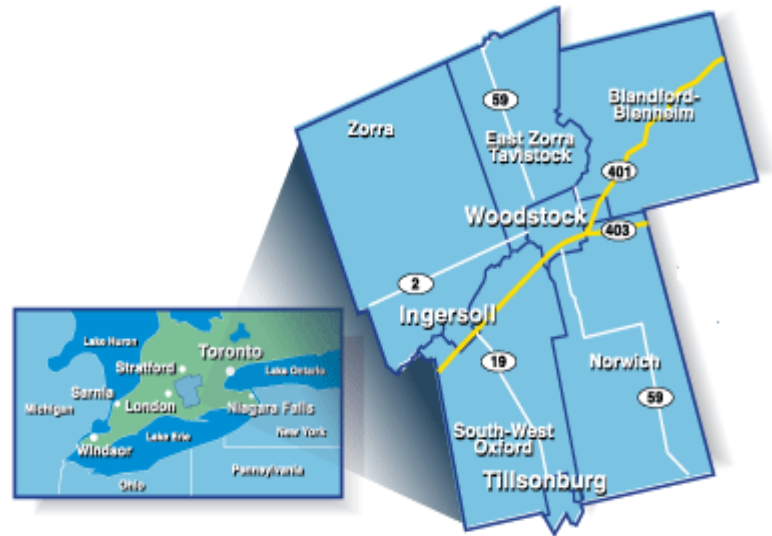
What do we know about children living in Oxford County?

Population of Oxford County

From 1991 to 2011 Oxford County's population grew by 13.8% from 92,900 to 105,700.

The majority of the population growth has occurred in the city of Woodstock (60% of the County-wide growth). Tillsonburg and Ingersoll have also experienced large percentage shares of the County-wide population growth.

A number of communities are declining in size, including East Zorra-Tavistock, Zorra and South-West Oxford (see the table below for further details).

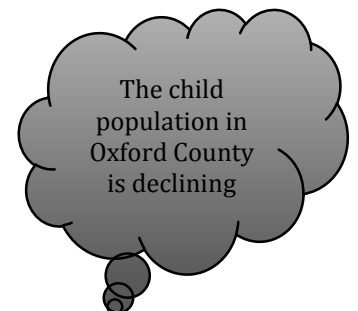


Municipality	1991 Population	2011 Population	Population Growth 1991-2011	Share of Population Growth
Woodstock	30,100	37,800	7,700	60%
Tillsonburg	12,000	15,300	3,300	26%
Ingersoll	9,400	12,100	2,700	21%
Blandford-Blenheim	7,300	7,400	100	1%
Norwich	10,100	10,700	600	5%
East Zorra-Tavistock	7,300	6,800	(500)	-4%
Zorra	8,200	8,100	(100)	-1%
South-West Oxford	8,500	7,500	(1,000)	-8%
Oxford County	92,900	105,700	12,800	100%

Source: Oxford County Growth Forecast and Employment Lands Study, 2013

Child Population

The child population in Oxford County has been declining steadily since 2001. Overall, for children 0 to 14 years, there was a 7.4% decrease from 2001 to 2011. This is in contrast to the overall population which has increased by 9% over this same time period. From 2006 to 2011, the largest decline in child population was experienced by the 10 to 14 year old age group (7.8% decrease). See the table below for further details.



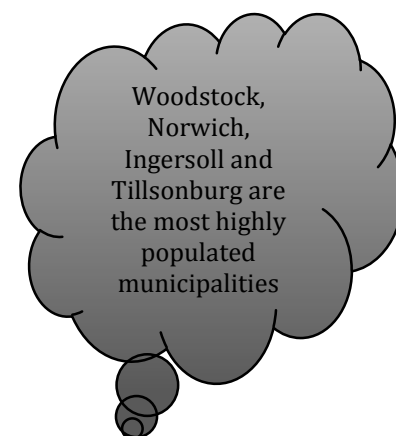
Age	2001 Population	2006 Population	2011 Population
0 to 4 Years	6,210	6,120	5,940
5 to 9 Years	14,390	6,580	6,230
10 to 14 Years		7,480	6,900
0 to 14 Years	20,600	20,180	19,070
Overall Population	99,270	106,580	108,230

Source: Statistics Canada

Where Children Live

The following table outlines where children live by municipality in Oxford County. Overall, the most highly populated municipalities are Woodstock, Norwich, Ingersoll and Tillsonburg. Of note:

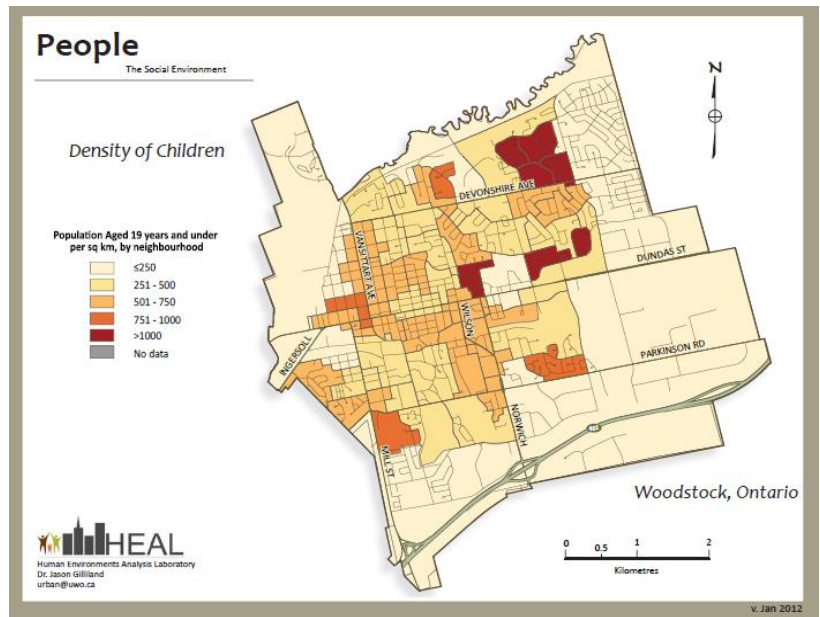
- Those municipalities with a growing 0 to 4 population include: Zorra, Ingersoll, Woodstock, Norwich and South-West Oxford. All other municipalities are seeing a decrease in the number of 0 to 4 year olds that ranges from a 12.2% decrease to a 1.3% decrease (from 2006 to 2011)
- Those municipalities with a growing 5 to 9 population include: Tillsonburg, Woodstock and South-West Oxford. All other municipalities are seeing a decrease in the number of 5 to 9 years olds that ranges from a 17.7% decrease to a 1.2% decrease (from 2006 to 2011)
- No municipalities are seeing a growing 10 to 14 population. The decrease in the number of 10 to 14 year olds ranges from a 14.2% decrease to a 3.4% decrease (from 2006 to 2011)



Municipality	Age Group	2001	2006	2011	% Change 2006- 2011
Woodstock	0 to 4	2,090	2,030	2,115	4.1%
	5 to 9	4,420	2,095	2,125	1.4%
	10 to 14		2,360	2,250	(4.7%)
Tillsonburg	0 to 4	720	765	730	(4.6%)
	5 to 9	1,655	750	780	4.0%
	10 to 14		880	775	(11.9%)
Ingersoll	0 to 4	725	675	745	10.4%
	5 to 9	1,690	780	725	(7.1%)
	10 to 14		880	810	(8.0%)
Blandford-Blenheim	0 to 4	500	390	385	(1.3%)
	5 to 9	1,275	490	465	(5.1%)
	10 to 14		595	540	(9.2%)

Municipality	Age Group	2001	2006	2011	% Change 2006- 2011
Norwich	0 to 4	800	785	815	3.8%
	5 to 9	1,770	860	850	(1.2%)
	10 to 14		885	855	(3.4%)
East Zorra- Tavistock	0 to 4	405	370	325	(12.2%)
	5 to 9	1,070	480	395	(17.7%)
	10 to 14		550	475	(13.6%)
Zorra	0 to 4	425	430	500	16.3%
	5 to 9	1,280	515	445	(13.6%)
	10 to 14		635	545	(14.2%)
South-West Oxford	0 to 4	545	510	520	2.0%
	5 to 9	1,225	540	550	1.9%
	10 to 14		605	555	(8.3%)

As noted above, Woodstock has the highest number of children in Oxford County. The map shows the most densely populated neighbourhoods in Woodstock.



Population Projections

Looking out to the 2040s, the child population is projected to remain fairly constant in Oxford County. As a percentage of the overall Oxford County population, the 0 to 14 year old grouping is expected to decrease from 17.6% of the total population in 2011 to 15.1% of the total population in 2041.

In terms of this three year child care plan, the 0 to 4 year old population is expected to continue to decline from 2011 to 2016 by 5.1%, the 5 to 9 year old population is expected to remain the same and the 10 to 14 year old population is expected to decline by 3.0% (see the table below for further details).

Age	2011	2016	2021	2026	2031	2036	2041
0-4 years	5,940	5,640	6,230	6,500	6,440	6,070	5,700
5-9 years	6,230	6,250	5,980	6,480	6,740	6,680	6,310
10-14 years	6,900	6,690	6,740	6,330	6,820	7,090	7,020
0-14 years	19,070	18,580	18,950	19,310	20,000	19,840	19,030
Overall Population	108,230	111,730	115,480	118,820	121,900	124,180	125,760

Source: Oxford County Growth Forecast and Employment Lands Study, 2013

In terms of the population growth in specific municipalities, all municipalities are projected to experience population growth between 2011 and 2014 with the exception of Zorra and East-Zorra Tavistock which are projected to remain at 2011 numbers and South-West Oxford which is expected to experience a decreasing population.

What do we know about the current child care system?

As of February 2014, there are 10 contracted, licensed child care operator head offices in Oxford County with 39 child care sites across the county.

Number of Licensed Centre-Based Spaces

As of February 2014, there were 784 licensed operating spaces in the centre-based child care system in Oxford County. The majority of these licensed centre-based spaces are in the school age and preschool age group (see the table below for details). The number of operating spaces is less than the number of licensed child care spaces in the system (by 410 spaces).

Type of Space	Number of Spaces (Operating)	% of Operating Spaces	Number of Spaces (Licensed)	% of Licensed Spaces
Infant	32	4.1%	40	3.4%
Toddler	107	13.6%	153	12.8%
Preschool	296	37.8%	420	35.2%
JK/SK	17	2.2%	10	0.8%
School Age	332	42.3%	571	47.8%
TOTAL	784	100%	1,194	100%

In 2011, 9.8% of children aged 0 to 4 years living in Oxford County had access to a licensed centre-based space. Based on the operating capacity of licensed centre-based care, as of February 2014, 7.3% of children aged 0 to 4 years had access to a licensed centre-based space.

Location of Centre-Based Licensed Spaces (Operating)

The majority of licensed centre-based child care spaces are located in Woodstock (56.6% of all spaces). The other two towns with higher amounts of spaces are Tillsonburg (18.5%) and Ingersoll (14.0%). See the table below for further details.

Area	Infant	Toddler	Preschool	JK/SK	School Age	TOTAL	% of Total
Woodstock	20	52	170		202	444	56.6%
Ingersoll	6	13	36		55	110	14.0%
Tillsonburg	6	40	60	17	22	145	18.5%
Tavistock			15		4	19	2.4%
Thamesford			11		18	29	3.7%
Embroy					12	12	1.5%
Norwich		2	4			6	0.7%
Plattsville					14	14	1.8%
Blenheim					5	5	0.6%
TOTAL	32	107	296	17	332	784	100%

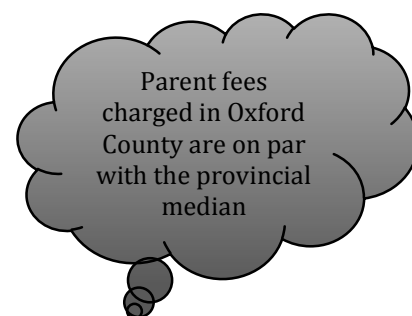
As noted above, the top four municipalities for child population are: Woodstock, Norwich, Tillsonburg and Ingersoll. When comparing where the licensed child care spaces are located vis-à-vis the child population in Oxford County, Norwich has a disproportionately lower number of licensed child care spaces in its community compared to the percentage of children aged 0 to 14 living there¹. Woodstock has a much higher proportion of spaces, which could be due to the fact that parents/caregivers are working in Woodstock (see table below).

Area	Child Population (0-14)	% of Total Child Population	# of Licensed Child Care Spaces (Operating)	% of Total Licensed Child Care Spaces (Operating)
Woodstock	6,490	34.0%	444	56.6%
Norwich	2,520	13.2%	6	0.7%
Tillsonburg	2,285	12.0%	145	18.5%
Ingersoll	2,280	12.0%	110	14.0%

Rates Charged by Licensed Child Care Centres

The fees parents are charged for the provision of child care services in Oxford County are presented in the table below. The table details the parent fee based on age group and program type, showing the top fee and lowest fee charged and the average fee charged across centres. This is then compared to the provincial median parent fee (source: Licensed Child Care Questionnaire 2012 Results, ontario.ca/childcare). Of note:

- For the most part, the fees charged to parents in Oxford County for licensed child care are lower than the provincial median parent fee
- Those age groups paying higher than the provincial median parent fee include: infant – half day, before and after school, and school age PD day



¹ Note: In Norwich families and other families in the community tend to provide care for their children.

Age Group	High End	Low End	Average	Provincial Median Parent Fee
Infant – Full Day	\$51.00	\$41.60	\$46.35	\$50.00
Infant – Half Day	\$38.50	\$36.00	\$37.25	\$30.00
Toddler – Full Day	\$46.00	\$36.00	\$41.72	\$42.30
Toddler – Half Day	\$33.00	\$21.00	\$26.00	\$27.00
Preschool – Full Day	\$40.00	\$36.00	\$37.84	\$38.00
Preschool – Half Day	\$29.00	\$16.88	\$23.77	\$25.55
Before School	\$10.75	\$8.00	\$10.20	N/A
After School	\$11.40	\$8.06	\$10.98	N/A
Before and After School	\$21.50	\$16.50	\$19.46	\$18.22
School Age PD Day	\$37.90	\$31.20	\$36.78	\$34.21

Hours of Operation of Licensed Child Care Centres

In terms of the daily hours of operations in the licensed child care centres in Oxford County:

- The majority of programs start at 7:00 am (73.9%) and end at 6:00 pm (70.8%)
- For before and after school programs, the majority of the programs run from 7:00 to 9:00 am (76.9%) and 3:30 to 5:30 pm (70.6%)



The majority of the licensed child care centres operate from Monday to Friday. No licensed child care centre operates on the weekends, during the evening or overnight on weekdays.

Wages Paid in Licensed Centre-Based Care

According to a report by the Child Care Human Resources Sector Council, “*What Factors Influence Wages and Benefits in Early Learning and Child Care Settings*”, there is a strong correlation between the compensation of early learning and child care staff and the quality of services delivered. This report notes that “attracting and retaining skilled and well-trained staff is critical...as high quality child care helps ensure positive outcomes for children” (page 2).

The following table details the hourly wages paid to Early Childhood Educators (ECEs) in Oxford County as compared to the provincial median hourly wages². The range of wages paid in Oxford County is broader than the range of provincial median wages.

	High End	Low End	Average	Median
Oxford County	\$23.12	\$11.50	\$17.02	\$16.34
Provincial Median Hour	\$19.19	\$15.67	N/A	N/A

² The source for the provincial median hourly wages is: Licensed Child Care Questionnaire 2012 Results, ontario.ca/childcare.

Licensed Home-Based Child Care

In addition to the licensed centre-based spaces identified above, Oxford Community Child Care operates the Home Child Care Program. As of April 2014, the program has 23 homes operating, with four more in the process of opening. It is licensed for 65 homes. The licensed home-based child care providers operate in: Woodstock, Tillsonburg, Ingersoll, Norwich and Tavistock, and in 2013 an average of 54 children were served per day.

Most licensed home-based child care providers offer care Monday to Friday between 6 am and 6 pm. Some provide care into the evenings. Currently, two providers offer Saturday care and an additional two providers offer overnight care. As of the writing of this plan, three children were accessing weekend care and no overnight care was being provided.

Fee Subsidy Program

From 2008 to 2013 there has been a 17.3% increase in the utilization of the child care fee subsidy program. Although there has been an increase since 2008, the utilization of this program peaked in 2010 and has been declining since then.

Year	Number of Children Served
2008	346
2009	432
2010	467
2011	429
2012	432
2013	406

There has been a 13.1% decrease in utilization of the fee subsidy program since 2010.

At present, there is no waitlist for child care fee subsidy in Oxford County and the County pays the full market rate to child care centres for fee subsidy.

Special Needs Resourcing Program

The Special Needs Resourcing Program in Oxford County is called A Child First. It has been in operation since 2000. Special needs services in Oxford County are provided by two agencies:

- Good Beginnings provides services in Woodstock and north of the 401 highway
- Community Living Tillsonburg provides services in Ingersoll and south of the 401 highway

Both agencies provide the following services:

Services	Brief Description
Resource Consultant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develops a Family Service Plan ▪ Helps families locate a child care space ▪ Works with the child care program to implement the Family Service Plan ▪ Provides case coordination ▪ Provides workshops ▪ Carries a roster of child care centres and families/children ▪ Assists with transition to school

Services	Brief Description
Program Assistant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide additional support to child care centres in the form of a program assistant ▪ Child care centres receive a certain number of hours a week of assistance based on the children with special needs attending their centre

The average number of children served through the Special Needs Resourcing program has been fairly consistent since 2008 (see the table for further details).

Year	Average Number of Children Served
2008	164
2009	121
2010	154
2011	150
2012	175
2013	175

While the number of children served has remained fairly consistent, the number of program assistant hours provided to licensed child care centres has decreased by 9.6% from 2010 to 2013. Good Beginnings typically provides 62 to 63% of the program assistant hours with Community Living Tillsonburg providing 37 to 38% of the hours (see the table below for further details).

Year	Good Beginnings	Community Living Tillsonburg	TOTAL
2010	4,244.01 (62.1%)	2,585.00 (37.9%)	6,829.01 (100%)
2011	3,642.75 (56.3%)	2,821.00 (43.6%)	6,466.75 (100%)
2012	4,101.00 (62.4%)	2,466.00 (37.6%)	6,567.00 (100%)
2013	3,906.25 (63.3%)	2,264.00 (36.7%)	6,170.25 (100%)

Although there is no waiting list for special needs resourcing services, during peak times during the year (May/June and September/October) the length of time to access service has increased from two weeks from point of referral to four to six weeks.

Data about the services provided through the two agencies are noted in the table below.

2013	Good Beginnings	Community Living Tillsonburg	TOTAL
Number of Resource Consultant FTEs	3	2	5
Number of Children Served	Av. 101	Av. 53	Av. 154

2013	Good Beginnings	Community Living Tillsonburg	TOTAL
Number of Workshops Provided	37	27	67 ³
Program Assistant Hours	3,906.25	2,264	6,170.25

The two community agencies providing this service note the following challenges:

- Increase in Resource Consultant caseloads
- Increase in the number of referrals
- Increase in the number of program assistant requests
- Higher level of need in children
- Difficulty finding qualified program assistants



What did we hear from child care operators?

Online surveys were completed by the following child care operators:

1. A Child First (comprised of Good Beginnings Day Nursery Woodstock, Inc. & Community Living Tillsonburg)
2. Community Living Tillsonburg - Tillsonburg Children's Centre
3. Friendship Cooperative Playschool
4. Good Beginnings Day Nursery
5. Oxford Community Child Care
6. Parkside Childcare Centre
7. Sonbeam Christian Day Care
8. Wee Creations Christian Preschool
9. YMCA of Western Ontario

As the majority of child care operators responded to the online survey, the findings from the survey are generalizable to all child care operators in the community.

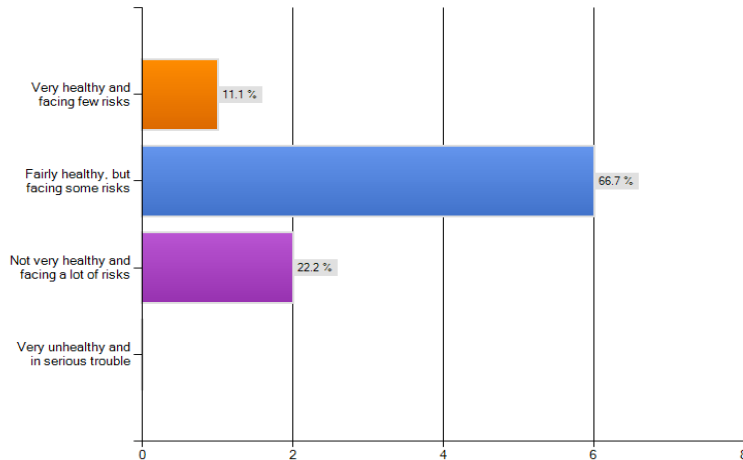
Health of Licensed Child Care

Child care operators were asked to rate the health of licensed child care in Oxford County. The majority of child care operators (77.8%) rated the health of licensed child care as “fairly healthy, but facing some risks” (66.7%) or “very healthy and facing few risks (11.1%). 22.2% of operators rated the health of licensed child care as not very healthy (see figure below).

³ Note: the agencies offered an additional three workshops together

The health of licensed child care in Oxford County is rated fairly high by child care operators.

How would you describe the health of licensed child care in Oxford County (select one response from the list below)



Child care operators noted that the implementation of Full Day Kindergarten, the inability to sustain enrollment and to retain and recruit qualified staff is making them more vulnerable as organizations and is lessening the health of the overall licensed child care system.

Impact of Full Day Kindergarten

Child care operators report that the impact of the implementation of Full Day Kindergarten on their centre has been more negative than positive (see figure below for more details).

- 88.9% of operators feel that the implementation of Full Day Kindergarten “has had some impact, mostly negative”
- Only 11.1% of operators feel that the implementation of Full Day Kindergarten “has had some impact, mostly positive”



Child care operators noted that the negative impact of the implementation of Full Day Kindergarten has been felt in the levels of enrollment, the ability to recruit and retain quality staff, and in the area of supporting children with special needs.

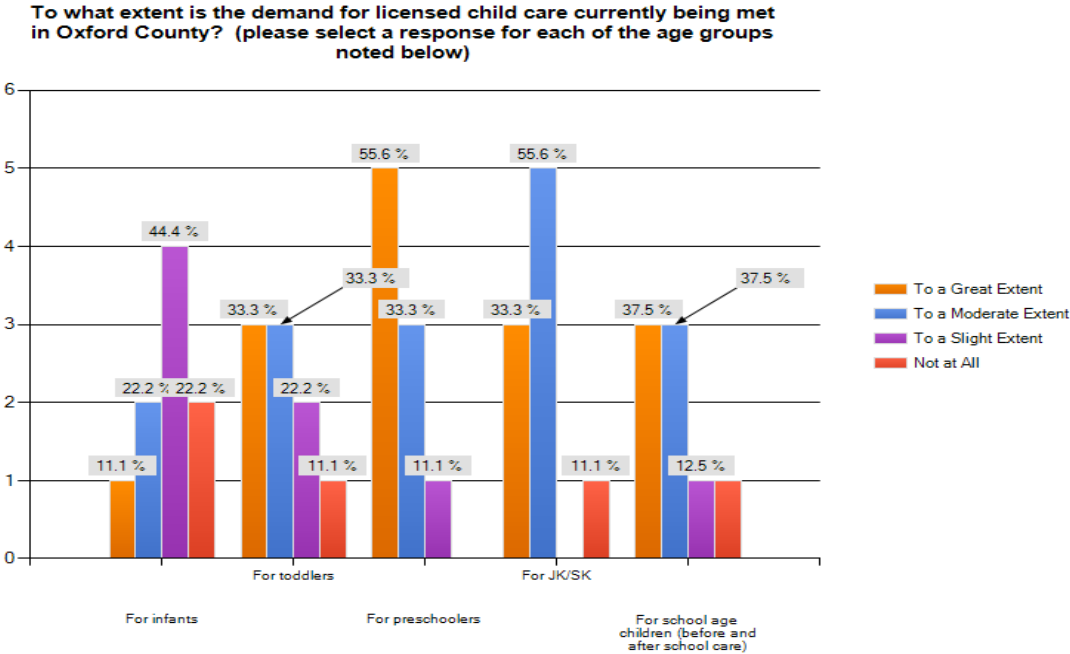
In response to the implementation of Full Day Kindergarten, child care centres have made changes, including converting older age group spaces to younger age groups. In terms of additional support required as a result of the impact of the implementation of Full Day Kindergarten, child care operators anticipate needing:

- Continued support in the form of wage subsidy, funding for toys and equipment for younger age groups, supplies to renovate for the younger ones in a preschool room and training

- Marketing strategies to promote quality, inclusive licensed child care across Oxford County and the Province, including incentives for families to use licensed programs versus unregulated child care
- Additional funding for program assistant supports through A Child First to meet the needs of children returning from Full Day Kindergarten and throughout the summer
- Professional development for teachers

Demand for Licensed Child Care

Child care operators were asked to what extent the demand for licensed child care is currently being met in Oxford County. Based on the responses to the question, it appears as though the demand for licensed child care for preschoolers, JK/SK and school age children is being met more than the demand for infants and toddlers (see figure below for further details).

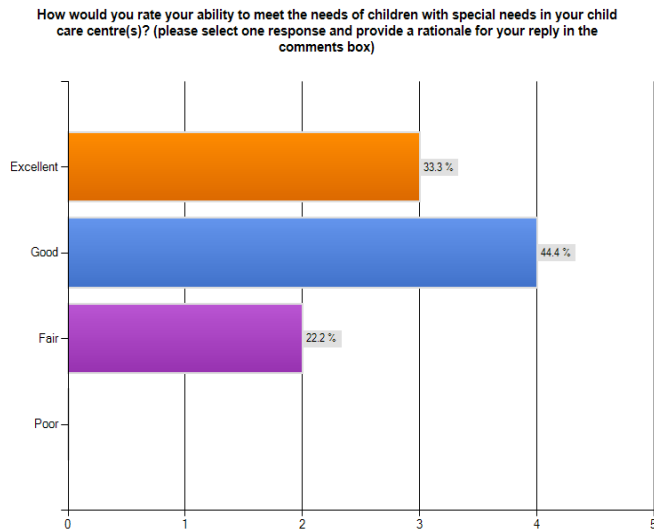


- 66.6% of child care operators feel that the demand for licensed child care for infants is being met to a slight extent (44.4%) or not at all (22.2%)
- 55.5% of child care operators feel that the demand for licensed child care for toddlers is being met to a moderate (33.3%) or slight extent (22.2%)
- 88.9% of child care operators feel that the demand for licensed child care for preschoolers is being met to a great extent (55.6%) or moderate extent (33.3%)
- 88.9% of child care operators feel that the demand for licensed child care for JK/SK is being met to a great extent (33.3%) or moderate extent (55.6%)
- 75% of child care operators feel that the demand for licensed child care for school age children is being met to a great extent (37.5%) or moderate extent (37.5%)

When asked if demand varies across the county, child care operators said that they think so, but did not provide specific areas that may have unmet demand.

Provision of Inclusive Services

- The majority of child care operators (77.7%) rate their ability to meet the needs of children with special needs as good (44.4%) or excellent (33.3%)
- 22.2% of child care operators rated their ability as fair (see graph for further details).



A number of operators commented that A Child First provides quality support to their programs. The one area where it was noted that more resource help is required is for school age children.

Gaps in Early Years Services

Child care operators were asked if there are early year's services that parents are looking for that they are unable to find or access. The most commonly mentioned services included:

- Speech and language services (current waiting list is up to six months)
- A "no wrong door" approach to service delivery
- Public transportation, especially in Tillsonburg, Norwich and Ingersoll to get families to programs
- More parent workshops on nutrition, sleep, mom's day out and field trips
- Recreational programs, including financial assistance to access programs and programs for younger preschoolers
- Services for children with special needs, including OT/PT supports (covered by OHIP) for preschool children who do not already have a developmental diagnosis, supports for "behavioural" needs of children that are not due to developmental delay (in child care/school/home), special needs resourcing to serve those children not attending licensed child care settings

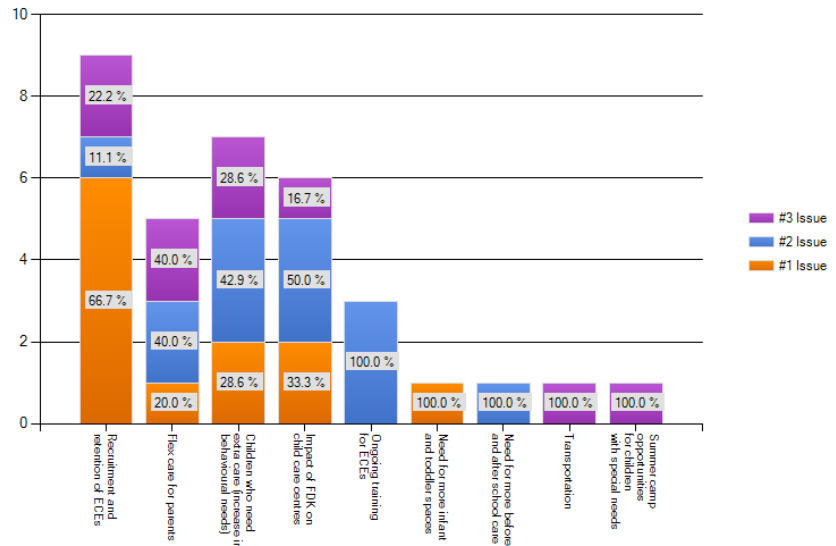
It was also noted that planning for the child care system should be a family-centred process, with families being represented at the planning table.

Top Issues Facing Licensed Child Care Centres

At the November 28, 2013 meeting of child care operators, a list of issues facing licensed child care in Oxford County was developed. Child care operators were asked to select the top three issues from this list. Based on this, the top, identified issues facing licensed child care in Oxford County are:

1. Recruitment and retention of ECEs
2. Children who need extra care (increase in behavioural needs)
3. Impact of FDK on child care centres

At the November 28 Child Care Operator meeting a list was generated of top issues facing licensed child care in Oxford County. This list is noted below. From this list select what you consider to be the top three issues.



Based on the findings from the online survey, at their meeting on March 21, 2014, child care operators identified potential priority areas for this child care plan. These potential priority areas include:

- Additional support for children at risk/behaviour issues (particularly in school age due to the higher ratio)
- Additional capacity for infants and toddlers in the licensed home child care system
- Focus on the recruitment and retention of ECEs. Potential actions that can be taken to address this are: wages, pension, professional development that's enjoyable, image, environment, inconsistencies with ECEs in the school board system
- Maintaining/increasing enrolment in child care centres. Potential actions that can be taken to address this are: marketing plan/education about licensed child care, oneHSN/oneList, educate staff and the community partners about what's available in the child care system
- Need for flexible child care – need different hours to fill in between shifts (for example: 11 am to 3 pm), need an earlier start time in school based centres (current times are 7 am and 7:30 am)



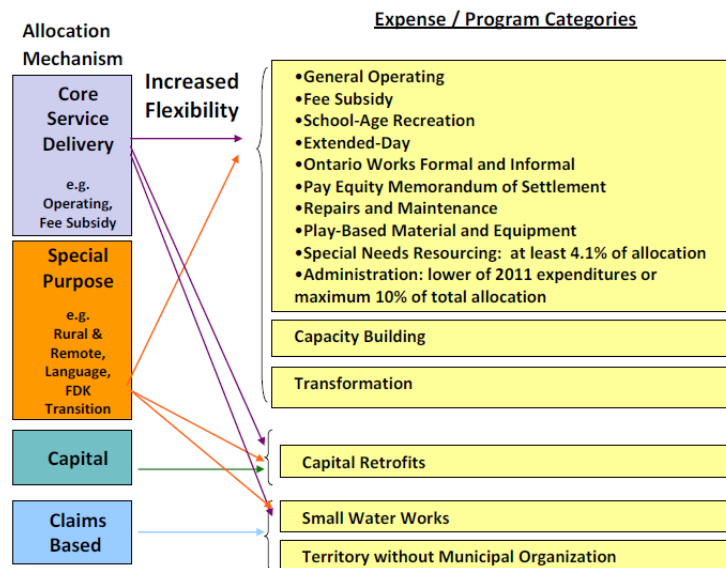
What is provincial policy telling us?

There are a number of provincial documents which inform the work in the child care sector. These include the Ontario Early Years Policy Framework and How Does Learning Happen?

Ontario Early Years Policy Framework

The Provincial government released the Ontario Early Years Policy Framework in January of 2013. One of the key directions in this document was to stabilize and transform the child care system. Subsequent to this, the Ministry of Education announced a new funding framework and formula for the child care system. Funding was simplified into three main allocation components:

- Core Service Delivery
- Special Purpose
- Capital



Flexibility in spending was provided to Consolidated Municipal Service Managers (CMSMs) so that local needs could be met.

One of the biggest changes in the funding formula is that there are no longer dedicated allocations for wage subsidy, wage improvement, special needs resourcing and pay equity. The intent and purpose of the historical wage subsidy and wage improvement funding is captured in the new General Operating program category. And while there is no allocation for special needs resourcing, CMSMs are required to continue serving children with special needs by spending at least 4.1% of their total child care allocation on special needs resourcing.

2013 and 2014 have been identified as transition years, with implementation of the new funding formula to be completed by January 2015.

General Operating

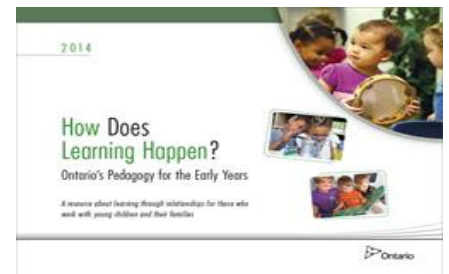
The purpose of the General Operating funding has been identified by the Province as being:

- To Reduce wait times and fees for services
- To Stabilize service levels
- To Improve access to high quality, affordable early learning and child care services for children and their families

General operating may be used for ongoing costs, including: Staff Wages and Benefits, Lease and Occupancy Costs, Utilities, Administration, Transportation for Children, Resources, Nutrition, Supplies and Maintenance.

How Does Learning Happen? Ontario’s Pedagogy for the Early Years

In April of 2014, the Provincial government released How Does Learning Happen? Ontario’s Pedagogy for the Early Years. This document is an optional professional learning resource “designed to provoke deeper thinking about the delivery of high-quality programs and services for children and families in early years settings across Ontario.”



How should the general operating grant be allocated to licensed child care centres?

Available Funding

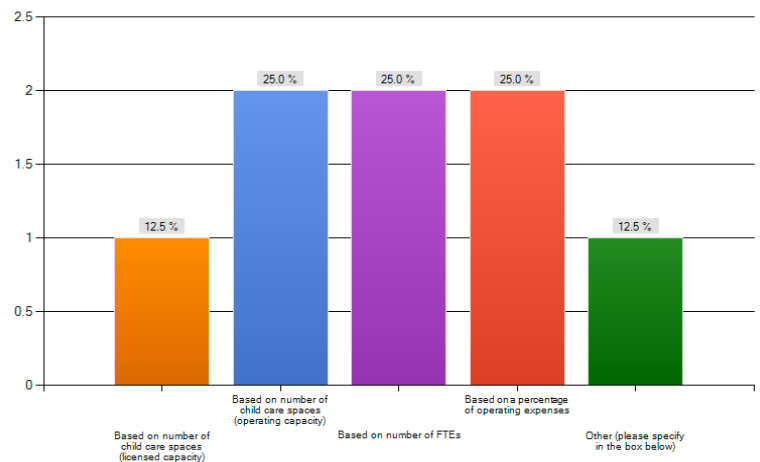
\$1,599,578 in former wage subsidy and wage improvement is available for general operating funding to licensed child care centres in Oxford County.

Calculating the General Operating Grant

On the online survey, child care operators were asked how the County should calculate operating grants for licensed child care centres. There was no clear cut option identified by child care operators, with 25% selecting each of the following options (see the table below for further details):

- Based on number of child care spaces (operating capacity)
- Based on number of FTEs
- Based on a percentage of operating expenses

The County of Oxford is looking at developing criteria for an operating grant for licensed child care centres. There are a number of options for calculating this grant, including basing it on spaces, FTEs or operating expenses. How do you think the County should calculate operating grants (base funding) for licensed child care centres? (please list below)



As there was no clear cut suggestion for the general operating grant, the child care community reviewed this topic again at its meeting on March 21, 2014. At this meeting the group reviewed the purpose of the General Operating Grant along with allocation formulas developed in a number of other communities. Based on this, the group agreed that they liked the idea of the funding being allocated based on number of spaces. Other considerations identified by the group include:

- Should the allocation be based on operating capacity (based on the staff/child ratio)
- There should be a weighted, flat rate per space
- Need to be aware that the operating capacity may fluctuate in year
- Should there be incentives for infants, toddlers and preschool spaces?
- How should mitigation funding be used?
- There needs to be a different formula developed for licensed home child care providers

Funding Formula for Licensed Centre-Based Child Care Operators

Based on the input provided by the child care community and the review of models of funding in other municipalities, the County of Oxford will be allocating the general operating grant to licensed centre-based child care operators based on the number of operating spaces, noting the following:

- It will support both non-profit and commercial operators
- The number of operating spaces used to calculate the general operating grant will be based on the prior year's average operating capacity, with the number of spaces for the new amount of funding beginning April 1st of each year
- Each age group will be allocated a different amount to equalize the spaces. This equalization of spaces will occur using the following weighting:
 - Infants (100%)
 - Toddlers (60% of infant space amount)
 - Preschool (37.5% of infant space amount)
 - Full Day Kindergarten (30% of infant space amount and divided by 2 – for lesser hours)
 - School Age (20% of infant space amount and divided by two – for lesser hours)
- Incentive funding will be provided to those child care sites that are operating at 70% or more of their site's licensed capacity
- Quarterly payments will be made to the child care operator
- Mitigation funding may be made available, based on funding that is available to the County of Oxford and a viability plan being provided by the child care operator

Funding Formula for Licensed Home-Based Child Care

The funding formula for licensed home-based child care will be reviewed over the course of 2014. The current funding formula will remain in place until then.

What are our priorities for the next three years?

Based on the information collected for this plan, four priorities have been identified to work on over the course of this three year Child Care Plan. Action plans will be developed for each of the priorities to outline concrete steps to be taken in 2014, 2015 and 2016.

1.	General Operating Grant Implement the new funding formula
2.	Special Needs Resourcing Conduct a comprehensive review of the program in 2015 and implement required changes
3.	Recruitment and Retention of Early Childhood Educators (ECEs) Explore ways to increase recruitment and retention of ECEs
4.	Impact of Full Day Kindergarten (FDK) Assess the impact of the full implementation of FDK on the child care system

