



**City of St. Thomas
Child Care and Early Years Service System Plan**

Plan Addendum

**June 29, 2023 ACCESS AND INCLUSION
FRAMEWORK UPDATE**

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Introduction

A planning process using information from the June 2021 Service Plan and updated census information was used in St. Thomas and Elgin County to develop this Update to the Child Care and Early Years Service System Plan from 2021 for the allocation of 701 child care spaces. This update to the Service Plan will be followed by a new Child Care and Early Years Service Plan in early 2024.

This update document was used for decision making to allocate child care spaces for the Ministry of Education under the Access and Inclusion Framework. This information was used to target priority neighbourhoods for the creation of 701 new spaces for St. Thomas and Elgin County.

There are significant challenges the creation of 701 new spaces for St. Thomas and Elgin. Currently, only 14 in 100 children are able to access a licensed child care space, which is well below the provincial benchmark of 37 in 100 children being able to access a licensed child care space. Although this plan, if achieved, will greatly improve access to licensed child care, a number of barriers exist to the creation of these spaces. Principal among the barriers is the lack of available buildings or capital to locate or build new Child Care Centres. St. Thomas Elgin Children's Services has surveyed the City of St. Thomas and Elgin County and found there was a lack of locations for child care.

In addition, to the lack of child care buildings there is a lack of qualified child care staff. This plan seeks to address that through recruitment and retention strategies but challenges with these staff having liveable wages remain.

Canada Wide Early Learning and Child Care System

The Government of Canada has identified child care as a national priority to enhance early learning and childhood development, support workforce participation and contribute to economic recovery.

Through its 2021 Budget, the federal government committed to investing in a national child care system with all provinces and territories, as well as Indigenous organizations. As part of this agreement, Ontario will receive \$13.2 billion over six years beginning in 2021-22. Funding under the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement (CWELCC) will be used to build and leverage the success of Ontario's existing early learning and child care system by increasing quality, accessibility, affordability, and inclusivity in early learning and child care, towards achieving the objectives of:

- a) Providing a 25% fee reduction retroactive to April 1, 2022, building to a 50% reduction in average parent costs (based on 2020 levels) for licensed early learning and child care by the end of calendar year 2022 and reaching an average fee of \$10 a day by 2025-26 for licensed child care spaces;
- b) Creating 86,000 new high-quality, affordable licensed child care spaces (relative to 2019 levels), predominantly through not-for-profit licensed child care;
- c) Addressing barriers to provide inclusive child care; and
- d) Valuing the early childhood workforce and providing them with training and development opportunities.

The City of St. Thomas and Elgin County received an allocation of 701 spaces for children 0 to 5 through the province of Ontario to be created by the end of 2026. This plan relies on licensed home child care to create 24 new licensed home child care providers (homes) that will create 144 child care spaces. The balance of spaces will be allocated to center based child care. The planning involved discussions with school boards and support in principle to open spaces when and where emerging opportunities are possible. The plan involved discussions with officials in East Elgin to identify possible locations given the lack of child care in this part of the county. The plan identifies low-income and indigenous neighbourhoods as priority communities for space creation where opportunities emerge.

The Provincial Context

Programs and services offered through the child care and early years service system are key in supporting the realization of Ontario's vision for the early years. This vision states:

All children and families have access to a range of high-quality, inclusive and affordable early years and child care programs and services that are child- and family-centred and contribute to children's learning, development and well-being.¹

Role of the City of St. Thomas as CMSM

Consolidated Municipal Service Managers (CMSMs) are responsible and accountable for managing local child care and early years programs and services. As outlined in the Child Care and Early Years Act (2014), service system managers are mandated to:

- Establish, administer, operate, and fund early years programs, including providing assistance to operators and evaluating and assessing the impact of public funding
- Deliver and administer local policies respecting the operation of early years programs and services
- Coordinate the planning and operation of early years programs and consult with school boards and other prescribed persons or entities in accordance with legislation
- Assess the economic viability of early years programs and facilitate changes to make programs more viable

This plan for space allocation, that was informed by the St. Thomas Elgin Service Plan, will be updated with a new Child Care and Early Years Service Plan for the next five years covering January 1, 2024 to December 31, 2029 to be approved by the City of St. Thomas Council in early 2024.

Building on the strengths of our current system of supports and services, we will continue to support a high-quality system that is affordable, accessible, high quality and responsive to the needs of families and children.

¹ Ontario's Renewed Early Year's and Child Care Policy Framework, (2017) Queen's Printer, Page 4.

Affordability

Ensuring that early year's programs and services, including licensed child care, are within affordable reach for families.²

Funding under the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement (CWELCC) will be used to build and leverage the success of Ontario's existing early learning and child care system by increasing quality, accessibility, affordability, and inclusivity in early learning and child care, towards achieving the objectives of:

- a) Providing a 25% fee reduction retroactive to April 1, 2022, building to a 50% reduction in average parent costs (based on 2020 levels) for licensed early learning and child care by the end of calendar year 2022 and reaching an average fee of \$10 a day by 2025-26 for licensed child care spaces;
- b) Creating 86,000 new high-quality, affordable licensed child care spaces (relative to 2019 levels), predominantly through not-for-profit licensed child care;
- c) Addressing barriers to provide inclusive child care; and
- d) Valuing the early childhood workforce and providing them with training and development opportunities.³

Under CWELCC child care becomes more affordable for families of St. Thomas and Elgin County with the parent cost of child care reaching an average fee of \$10 a day by 2025-26 for licensed child care spaces for Children age 0 to 6 years old. The addition of new affordable child care spaces, both centre based and home child care spaces, means that parents have more choice to access lower cost child care.

Affordability is still a challenge for families with children participating in before and afterschool programs where the child care program is not eligible for reduced parent fees (6 to 12 year old's) under CWELCC.

Child Care Fee Subsidies will continue to play a role in the Child Care System after the implementation of the CWELCC system has been completed given that the majority of families on fee subsidy currently pay less than \$10 per day.

Financial Supports to child care agencies to offset the costs of parent fee reductions and supports for workforce funding help with the affordability of child care. Valuing the early childhood workforce and providing them with training and development opportunities contributes to the sustainability of child care human resources.

Accessibility and affordability have a close relationship in the Early Years system. For more child care spaces to become accessible to families, qualified Early Childhood Educators are required. The province is assisting with this through workforce funding to bring up the wages of Early Childhood Educators which will help to recruit the qualified educators required to provide accessibility. The cost of child care funding fee reductions and salary increases are being paid for through CWELCC meaning more parents are able to afford a licensed space. With the challenge of affordability addressed for younger children the CMSM can focus on accessibility.

² Ontario's Renewed Early Year's and Child Care Policy Framework (2017), Queen's Printer, Page 17.

³ Canada Wide Early Learning and Child Care System Guidelines (August 2022), Ministry of Education, Page 9.

Access

Increasing access to early years programs to give families more opportunity to benefit from high-quality early childhood programs and services.⁴

Our goal in St. Thomas and Elgin is to create 701 spaces by the end of 2026 greatly increasing access to child care for citizens. The additional spaces will move the child care system closer to the provincial target of having 37 in 100 children being able to access a licensed child care space from the current access rate of 14 in 100 children.

The increased spaces will result in increasing accessibility to licensed child care programs. The most noteworthy risk to accessibility remains the lack of Registered Early Childhood Educators (RECE), which affects all Early Years System services.

All children have the right to fully participate in a quality licensed early learning and care child program. Unfortunately, not all children have access for a variety of reasons including cost, availability, cultural barriers and/or special needs.

As the CMSM for early learning and child care, the City of St. Thomas and Elgin County Children's Services works to see that:

- Families are able to access child care and EarlyON programs in the City of St. Thomas and Elgin County.
- Families know about the child development and where to go to get information about their child's development.
- Families know about available programs and how to access them.
- Families with special needs children have access to supports in child care and early years settings that meet their specific needs.
- Families can make informed decisions about early years and child care programs to meet their specific needs.

In brief, accessible early learning services:

- Can be easily accessed by families and caregivers
- Are inclusive and accepting of the needs of different families
- Are available to families that need service
- Meet family unique needs for flexible service including days, hours, and locations of service
- Provide choice and flexibility for families within the continuum of early years and child care services available

Ensuring that families have access to child care is important for parents to work or attend school. Child Care access is an important support for the healthy development of children while parents are not available. An important consideration for families is having various supports to make informed decisions and the availability of child care close to home. The St. Thomas and Elgin Children's Services Child Care plan includes a mix of School Based, Community Centre Based and Home Child Care expanded spaces to provide a range of options to support parents.

⁴ Ontario's Renewed Early Year's and Child Care Policy Framework (2017), Queen's Printer, Page 17.

Quality

Enabling safe and reliable programs built on positive, responsive relationships, engaging environments, and meaningful experiences for children and families, delivered by educated and well-supported staff.⁵

St. Thomas and Elgin Children's Services is working through the Quality Initiative Coordinator to establish a number of initiatives to develop quality child care and early learning programs including: mentoring and the Leaders for Change system network, workforce development, recruitment and retention strategies and professional development conferences.

The Early Years System is experiencing pressure points in affordability and accessibility that are dependent on the successful recruitment of Register Early Childhood Educators (RECE). Lack of qualified staff is the biggest barrier to consistent, high-quality programming throughout the community. The challenge of adequate staffing requires thoughtful efforts between the CMSM and service providers to recruit and retain qualified RECE staff. The CMSM is undertaking marketing campaigns to: promote registration at the St. Thomas Campus of Fanshawe Colleges Early Childhood Education Program, promoting working as a home child care provider, promotional videos marketing the value of working as a RECE in St. Thomas Elgin and quality of life in the area.

High quality early years and child care plays an important role in healthy child development and improving quality of life. Research has shown the positive impacts of high-quality early years and child care on children's physical, emotional, social and cognitive development.⁶ High quality early years and child care supports families to work or go to school, which contributes to the local economy, promotes well-being and increases social equity.⁷

Ontario's How Does Learning Happen? Pedagogy for the Early Years is the foundation for early learning and child care. The pedagogy identifies the child at the centre of learning and development through meaningful connections such as relationships between children, families, and educators.

There are four foundations to ensure optimal learning for children:

- Belonging: Creating a sense of belonging through fostering relationships and connections.
- Wellbeing: Engagement Expression Supporting children's sense of self, health, and wellbeing.
- Creating environments and experiences to engage children through play and inquiry.
- Supporting positive self-expression and communication in all forms.

Within the pedagogy children are viewed as competent, capable, curious, and rich in potential and experience. Moreover, parents and caregivers are co-learners and leaders in influencing positive child, family and community experiences and outcomes.⁸

⁵ Ontario's Renewed Early Year's and Child Care Policy Framework, (2017) Queen's Printer, Page 17.

⁶ Melhuish E, et al (2015). A review of research on the effects of early childhood education and care on child development.

⁷ Philpott. R., Young.G., Maich, K. Penny S & Butler. E., (2019) The Preemptive Nature of Quality Early Childhood Education on Special Needs Children.

<https://research.library.mun.ca/13571/1/The%20Preemptive%20Nature%20of%20ECE%2C%20Feb%2012.pdf>

⁸ Ontario Government. Ministry of Education. 2014. How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years. <https://files.ontario.ca/edu-how-does-learning-happen-en-2021-03-23.pdf>

Responsiveness

Providing a range of early years and child care programs that are inclusive and culturally appropriate, located in schools, communities, workplaces and home settings so that parents – including parents who work irregular hours can choose the options that work best for their family.⁹

Under the Access and Including Framework, the ministry has developed a model to allocate funding for new spaces for children age 0-5 across CMSM and DSSAB's, with a focus on improving equity access by working toward a common provincial access ration of 37 percent. The allocation model is based on available data and incorporates existing child care capacity, demographics, socio-economic indicators, official language minorities and capacity for growth, and provides the enclosed notional space targets in each CMSM or DSSAB for the period 2022 through 2026. Total space targets include spaces to be created in schools and those in communities. These notional targets are subject to the agreement with service system managers and ongoing monitoring.

In identifying priority neighbourhoods for space creation and updating service plans, CMSMs and DSSABs are asked to consider the degree to which new affordable child care spaces in those neighbourhoods will support access to licensed child care spaces for:

- Low-income families
- Vulnerable communities
- Diverse communities
- Children with special needs
- Francophone families
- Indigenous families
- Families needing more flexible models of care, including evening, weekend, and overnight care.¹⁰

The St. Thomas and Elgin County Space Allocation plan focus on priority neighbourhoods for space creation looking to locate centre based and home child care spaces in low-income neighbourhoods with diverse communities including Indigenous Families. Home Child Care is a big component of the plan and allows for more flexible models of care that have the potential to include evening, weekend and overnight care.

Implementing or restructuring programs in response to parent feedback is critical to maintaining credibility and trust in the Early Years system. The outcomes and actions that are part of this system plan are to be developed from feedback provided by families and incorporated into the next service plan.

Ensuring diversity goes beyond culture and language to include all types of family situations, working/non-working families and families with different needs. Early Years community service providers have committed to working towards enhanced parent engagement.

⁹ Ontario's Renewed Early Year's and Child Care Policy Framework, (2017) Queen's Printer, Page 17.

¹⁰ Memorandum, (December 19, 2022), Holly Moran Assistant Deputy Minister, Ministry of Education, RE: Access and Inclusion Framework and Notional Space Target,.

Access and Inclusion Framework – Plan UPDATE – 2023.

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

St. Thomas Elgin Children’s Services space allocation target is 702 spaces by 2026.

ST. THOMAS ELGIN – FIVE YEAR SPACE ALLOCATION – CWELCC

TOTAL SPACE ALLOCATION						SCHOOL BASED	COMMUNITY BASED SPACE ALLOCATION					
TOTAL	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	TOTAL 2023	TOTAL	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
701	30	242	109	86	234	157	544	30	130	94	71	219

St. Thomas Elgin allocation has a focus on improving equity of access by working toward a common provincial access ratio of 37% through the growth of new spaces for children age 0-5 across the CMSM. Currently, the access ratio is St. Thomas and Elgin County is 14% and the addition of spaces will greatly support families to access licensed child care.

The allocation model for new spaces is based on available data and incorporates existing child care capacity, demographics, socio-economic indicators, official language minorities and capacity for growth, and provides the enclosed notional space targets in each CMSM or DSSAB for the period 2022 through 2026. Total space targets include spaces to be created in schools and those in communities. These notional targets are subject to the agreement with service system managers and ongoing monitoring.

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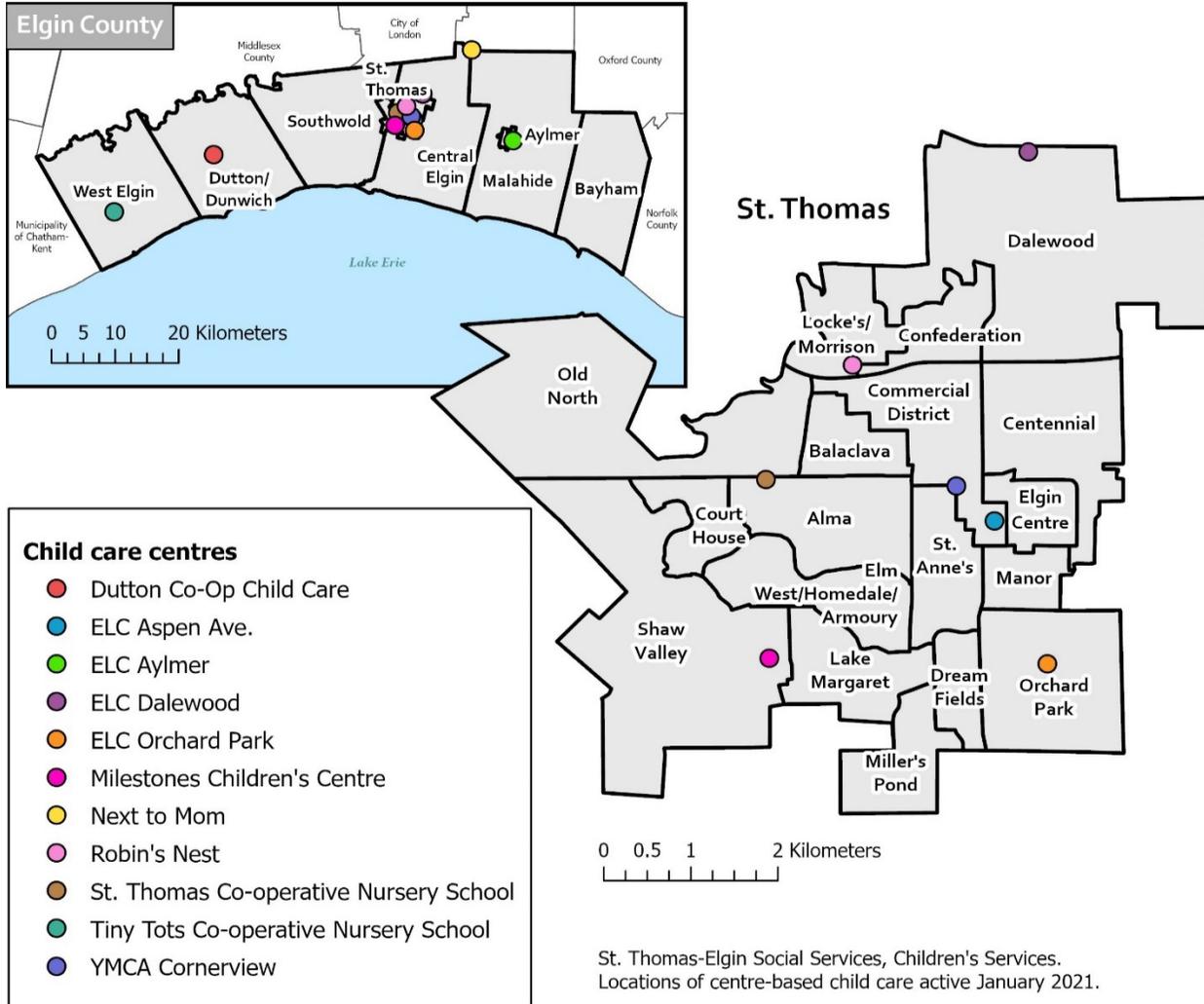
- Low-income families
- Vulnerable communities
- Diverse communities
- Children with special needs
- Francophone families
- Indigenous families
- Families needing more flexible models of care, including evening, weekend, and overnight care.

St. Thomas Elgin Children’s Services considered these criteria in identifying priority neighborhoods for new space creation. The June 2021 Service Plan provided context for decision making on spaces and social demographic information was updated through the 2021 census and used to identify priority neighbourhoods. Low-income neighbourhoods and neighbourhoods with indigenous families were identified. In many ways low income neighbourhoods also represent diverse populations struggling financially. There is cultural diversity in all the neighbourhoods of St. Thomas Elgin and this dimension of priority was not separated out at a community level.

Location of Child Care Centres by Neighborhoods

The following is a map of community neighborhoods used by Children’s Services to plan for Child Care programs.

Locations of Centre-based Child Care in St. Thomas and Elgin County



Priorities Neighbourhoods Based on Service Plan

In identifying priority neighbourhoods for space creation, we looked at the priority groups location, noted in orange below:

Children Living in Low Income

- According to the 2021 Canada Census, while the prevalence of low income, based on the low-income measure, after tax (LIM-AT) of the County was 9.6% overall, there were 745 children aged 0 to 5 years living in low-income families, or a prevalence of 11.9% among that age group. The prevalence figure of children under the age of 6 was lowest in Southwold and followed by Central Elgin. St. Thomas had the highest prevalence of 14.3%, followed by Bayham, West Elgin, Malahide and Aylmer.

Municipality	Children age 0-5 in low income families	Prevalence in the municipality	Distribution in Elgin County
West Elgin	35	13.0%	4.7%
Dutton/Dunwich	25	8.5%	3.4%
Southwold	15	3.2%	2.0%
St. Thomas	370	14.3%	49.7%
Central Elgin	35	5.6%	4.7%
Malahide	95	12.6%	12.7%
Aylmer	80	12.2%	10.7%
Bayham	90	13.0%	12.1%
Elgin County Total	745	11.9%	100%

East Elgin including Malahide has 95 low-income children. Aylmer has 80 low income children and Bayham has 90 low income children are priority areas of child care.

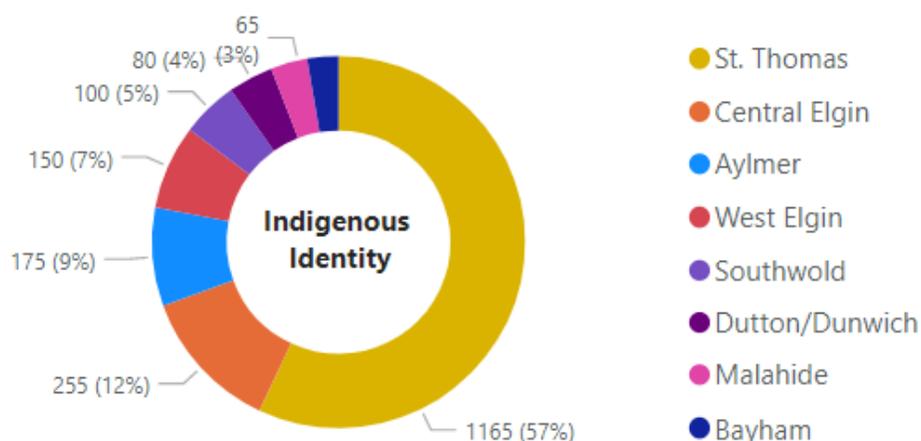
The City of St. Thomas is seen as a priority area for child care with 370 low income children.

In the 2021 census low income neighbourhoods are identified in the following chart with priority neighbourhood highlighted in orange:

Community Zone	Community Subzone	Children 0-5 living in low income (n)	Prevalence of children 0-5 living in low income (%)	Children 0-17 living in low income (n)	Prevalence of children 0-17 living in low income (%)
Central	Alma	40	14.0%	125	13.9%
	Court House	5	8.3%	20	11.1%
	Elm West/ Homedale/ Armoury	15	13.6%	65	17.3%
North-Central	Commercial District	10	12.5%	40	13.1%
	Confederation	70	35.9%	145	28.2%
	Locke's/ Morrison	15	25.0%	35	17.9%
West-Central	Balaclava	45	31.0%	90	20.5%
	Old North	40	22.9%	140	28.0%
East	Elgin Centre	15	13.6%	65	16.1%
	Manor	20	12.1%	65	12.7%
	St. Anne's	30	18.2%	75	14.0%
North-East	Centennial	0	0%	10	3.8%
	Dalewood	10	3.6%	30	3.2%
South	Dream Fields	10	14.3%	35	15.2%
	Lake Margaret	5	7.7%	5	1.8%
	Miller's Pond	5	6.7%	15	7.5%
	Orchard Park	10	2.4%	50	3.2%
	Shaw Valley	5	5.6%	20	7.0%
Total		350	14.3%	995	12.5%

Indigenous Population

With its proximity to three First Nations, including Oneida Nation of the Thames, Chippewas of the Thames, and Munsee Delaware Nation, Elgin County is home to a number of Indigenous persons. The 2021 Statistics Canada census reports that 2,045 persons of Indigenous identity reside in Elgin County, with 57%, or 1,165 these individuals living in St. Thomas.



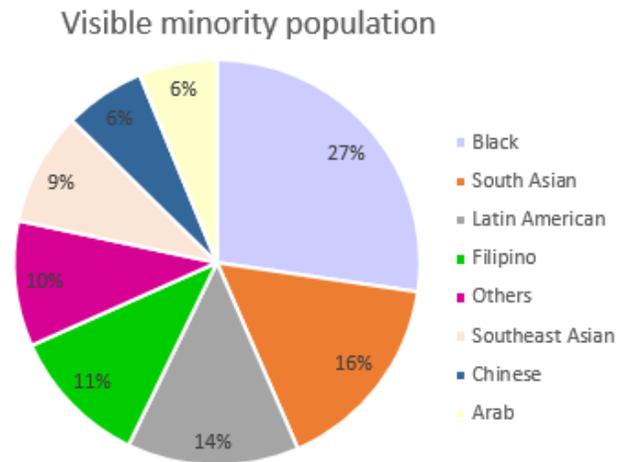
Indigenous populations in the 2021 census are concentrated in Community Subzones in St. Thomas with higher numbers of Indigenous persons in: Alma, Old North, Confederation, Dalewood, Balaclava, Orchard Park, Commercial District, Elm West/Homedale/Armoury and Dalewood as per the table below:

Community Zone	Community Subzone	Indigenous identity	% of Indigenous identity in St. Thomas	% of Indigenous identity in Elgin County
Central	Alma	150	14.4%	7.3%
	Elm West/ Homedale/ Armoury	75	7.2%	3.7%
North-Central	Commercial District	75	7.2%	3.7%
	Confederation	75	7.2%	3.7%
West-Central	Balaclava	80	7.7%	3.9%
	Old North	125	12.0%	6.1%
	Manor	60	5.8%	2.9%
	St. Anne's	55	5.3%	2.7%
	Dalewood	65	6.3%	3.2%
	Orchard Park	95	9.1%	4.6%

Immigration and Languages

According to the 2021 Statistics Canada census data, Elgin County is home to 10,920 immigrants, or 11.7% of its population, with 7.6% of the immigrants being recent from 2016 to 2021. Of the immigration population, 16.5% was children under the age of 5 years and 25.9% was between the age of 5 and 14 years at the time they immigrated to the County.

There were 4,275 people from visible minority population, accounting for 4.5% of Elgin County population. Black community takes up 27% of this population, followed by South Asian, Latin American, Filipino and Southeast Asian. Chinese, Arab, West Asian, Korean, Japanese and other visible minority groups altogether comprise 31% of the County visible minority population.



Almost 5% of the population, or 4,505 people speak a non-official language as their language spoken most often at home. The most common non-official language spoken in Elgin County is German, with 3,025 individuals reporting this as the language they speak most often at home. German being spoken at home is most prevalent in east Elgin, in Bayham, Malahide, and Aylmer. This figure may be under-reported, as other studies have stated that Elgin County is home to 12,000 to 15,000 Low German speaking families. Francophones are not prevalent in Elgin County, with only 155 individuals, or approximately 0.2% of the population, report speaking French most often at home.

Low German/Mennonite Population and the Inclusion Framework

The Low German Mennonite population has a unique social structure and community and has been included as a priority population for planning purposes. There are many strengths within the community. There are also vulnerabilities related to literacy for example. The community has been identified as a population in need of child care in the access and inclusion template. We reported it as a racialized community in the sense that it is considered a diverse and vulnerable population noting that is recognized as unique. This population is located principally in Bayham, Malahide and Aylmer.

Access Equity

Based on the child population, it is clear that large numbers of families use unlicensed child care.

Access Equity: The majority of funding for spaces allocated by the province is to help each region progress towards a target provincial ratio of spaces to children, or access rate, of 37%. This is equivalent to there being one affordable child care space available for every 2.7 children aged 0-5. Working towards this ratio will significantly decrease the disparities in access to child care across the province.

Across all of St. Thomas and Elgin County, there are licensed spaces to serve 14 percent of the child population aged 0-4. Nursery school spaces are included in this figure. The 14 percent of the ration of licensed spaces for children indicates that access to licensed child care falls significantly short of the provincial access goal of 37 percent.

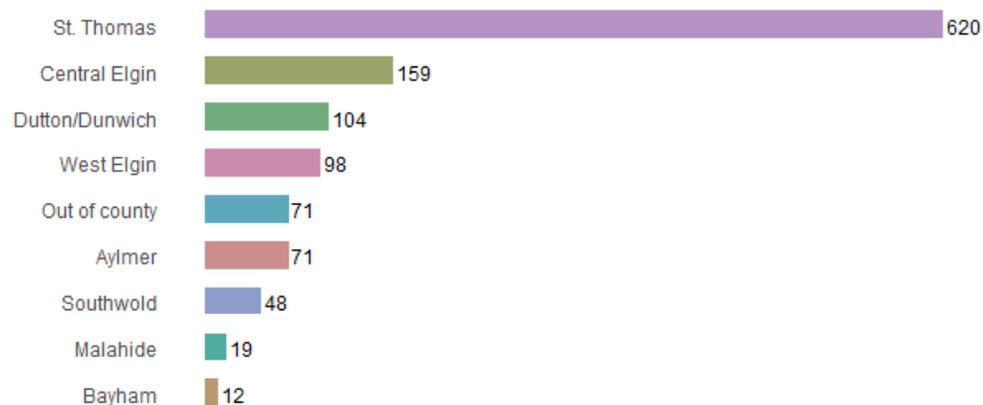
Waitlists

We took a quick look in February 2023 at the unique children on the waitlist by neighbourhoods in St. Thomas. This is reported based on postal code and considered most accurate for St. Thomas information.

Unique children by neighborhood in St. Thomas

	Infant	Toddler	Pre-School	JK/SK	School Aged	Total
Orchard Park	59	29	29	19	19	155
Dalewood	25	8	9	8	0	50
Alma	14	10	13	3	9	49
Shaw Valley	15	11	6	6	2	40
Commercial District	13	9	8	6	2	38
Confederation	8	7	13	3	4	35
Old North	10	6	7	5	4	32
Elgin Centre	9	4	5	5	4	27
St. Anne's	11	5	4	2	5	27
Elm West/Homedale/Armoury	11	9	4	2	1	27
Miller's Pond	12	5	5	2	2	26
Manor	13	2	6	3	2	26
Centennial	11	4	2	3	2	22
Balaclava	10	4	1	3	0	18
Lake Margaret	6	2	3	3	0	14
Locke's/Morrison	7	3	3	1	0	14
Court House	3	5	0	1	3	12
Dream Fields	5	3	0	0	0	8
Total	242	126	118	75	59	620

Unique children by parent location



Special Needs Resourcing

The All Kids Belong (AKB) program through Merrymount is responsible for the provision of Special Needs Resourcing on behalf of the Consolidated Municipal Service Manager for St. Thomas and Elgin County. The mandate of the AKB program is to support the inclusion of children with special needs in licensed child care centres, licensed home child care, EarlyON Child and Family Centres, before and after school programs, children's camps and authorized recreational and skill building programs at no additional cost to parents/guardians.

Special Needs Resourcing is legislated by the Province of Ontario under the Child Care and early Years Act (2014) and has specific Ministry of Education guidelines to guide its implementation.

Special Needs requirements of children are spread across centres and geography. The service model allows for service across St. Thomas and Elgin County.

Resource Consultants provide case management for families using an integrated service model. They enhance and support skills development, overall program capacity and strengthen the relationship between the family and the program, while promoting inclusivity, communication, and family centered practice. They provide referrals to other community supports and share community information. The Resource Consultants deliver training, facilitate transitions, support developmental screening, and support the overall integrated system of services.

Program Assistant funding is provided to licensed child care centres, licensed home child care, before and after school programs, children's camps and authorized recreational and skill building programs for the operator to hire additional staff to work in the program. This funding is made available to support inclusion, while implementing a plan of support for the program. These additional staff work in conjunction with regular program staff and the Resource Consultant to meet the needs of children with special needs.

Home Child Care Expansion Planned Growth for 2023, 2024 and 2025

The St. Thomas Elgin plan to expand licensed child care spaces relies heavily on the conversion of unlicensed child care spaces into licensed home child care through **Elgin Home Child Care**.

The plan will result in the creation of 30 net new Home Child Care Spaces in 2022 (between September and December 31), 42 Home Child Care Spaces in 2023, 60 Home Child Care Spaces in 2024 and 6 Home Child Care Spaces in 2025.

Home child care will be used to target child care in low income neighbourhoods in St. Thomas specifically in the St. Thomas communities of Alma, Balaclava, Confederation, Dalewood, Elm West/Homedale/Armoury, Manor, Old North, Dream Fields and St. Annes.

Given the low and dispersed populations in East and West Elgin County it is recommended that expansion in the West and East part of Elgin County focus on Home Child Care.

Elgin Home Child Care is operated by the Early Learning Centre. Licensed Home Child Care Providers have a contract with Elgin Home Child Care. The Ministry of Education issues the license to the agency. The licensed agency then screens, selects, and signs a contract with home providers. Qualified Home Visitors monitor the safety and quality, as well as provide additional resources and support to the Home Child Care Providers.

This expansion will focus on providers that care for infants, toddlers, and pre-school aged children.

The plan to expand home child care also builds in flexibility for the provision of overnight and weekend care to meet the needs of families.

The CWELCC agreement will significantly reduce parent fees for licensed child care to \$10 a day at full implementation. This creates a demand from parents for licensed home child care. Current unlicensed home child care providers will be incentivized to become a part of the licensed home child care system in order to have parents benefit from reduced fees. This is anticipated to drive the growth in licensed home child care in 2024, and 2025.

St. Thomas Elgin Children's Services plans to use the Child Care and Early Years Workforce Funding to grow and attract operators to the licensed home child care system through radio advertising in 2023 promoting becoming a child care provider through the Canada Wide Early Learning Agreement.

Note: Elgin Home Child Care is operating with 20 Homes on December 31, 2022 (15 at September 2022) but has licensed capacity to operate 50 homes. This plan builds the operating capacity through CWELCC investments and marketing to increase the number of licensed home child care providers targeting 2023, 2024 and 2025 for this growth.

Current Approved Projects

St. Thomas-Elgin Social Services Hub (St. Thomas): Construction of a child care centre to create 10 infant spaces, 30 toddler spaces and 48 preschool spaces. Total of 88 spaces in 2023.

Assumption Catholic School (Aylmer): Construction of a child care centre to create 10 infant spaces, 15 toddler spaces and 24 preschool spaces. Total of 49 spaces by 2023.

Aldborough (Rodney): Construction of a child care and child and family centre to create 10 infant spaces, 15 toddler spaces and 39 preschool spaces. Total of 64 spaces in 2023 – 48 Net New because existing 16 for Tiny Tots.

St. Mary's (West Lorne in West Elgin): Construction of a 15 space family age grouping program at St. Mary's school in West Lorne expected in 2023.

Summary of New Spaces to be created in priority neighborhoods

Space Growth Targets by Priority Areas		If the priority neighbourhood is identified to serve the following population, mark					YES
Name of priority neighborhoods/areas	# of spaces	Low-Income families	Children with disabilities and children needing enhanced or individual supports	<i>Francophone</i>	Indigenous children	Black children	New Immigrants
Bayham	21	Yes	Yes				Yes
Aylmer	89	Yes	Yes				
Malahide	85	Yes	Yes				Yes
West Elgin	45	Yes	Yes				
Dutton/Dunwich	55	Yes	Yes				
St.Thomas - Orchard Park	6		Yes		Yes		
St.Thomas - Confederation	106	Yes	Yes				
St. Thomas - Alma	12	Yes	Yes				
St. Thomas - Balaclava	71	Yes	Yes		Yes		
St. Thomas - Dalewood	6		Yes		Yes		
St. Thomas - Elgin Centre	18	Yes	Yes				
St. Thomas - Elm/West/Homedale/Armour y	6	Yes	Yes				
St. Thomas - Manor	12	Yes	Yes				
St. Thomas - Old North	88	Yes	Yes				
St. Thomas - St. Anne's	18	Yes	Yes				
West Elgin	48	Yes	Yes				
West Elgin - West Lorne - St. Mary's School	15	Yes	Yes				
Additional neighborhoods for Consideration							
St. Thomas – Commercial District					Yes		
St. Thomas - Orchard Park					Yes		

Note: The creation of these spaces is notional and dependant on opportunities to create spaces such as licensed home child care providers signing up with Elgin Home Child Care, buildings becoming available to operate Child Care Centre and operators being identified to operate the centres.

St. Thomas and Elgin Children's Services intends to explore processes such as Requests for Proposal (RFP) to solicit interest in becoming an operator to create spaces in the City of St. Thomas and Elgin County.