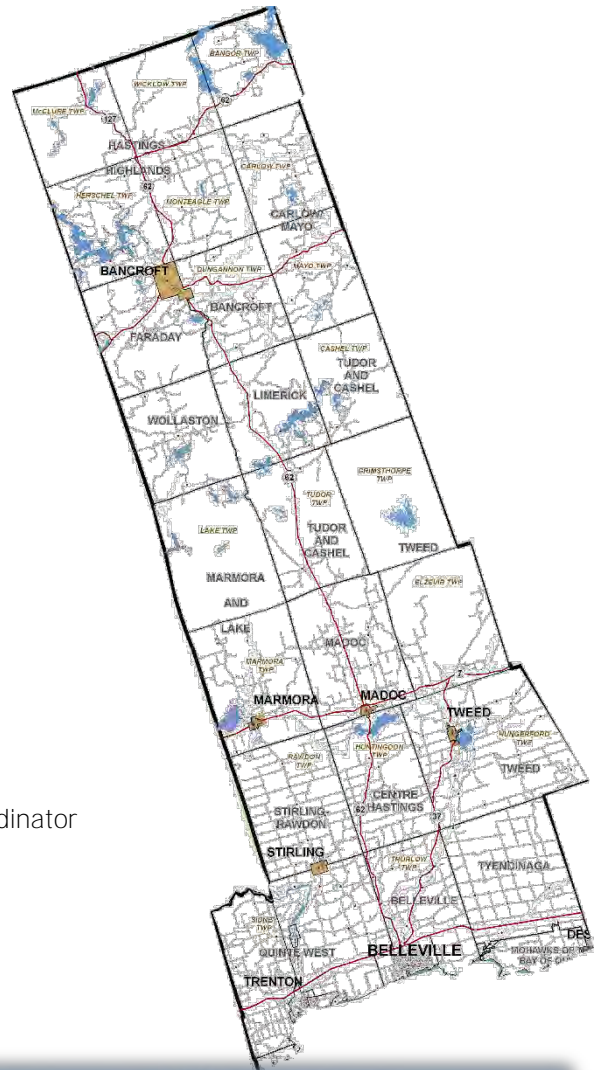


Hastings County  
Child Care and Early Years  
Service System Plan  
2019 - 2024

Prepared By:

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BUILDINGS  
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POSTAL BAG 4400  
BELLEVILLE, ONTARIO  
K8N 3A9

August 1, 2019

Message from the Warden,

The continued transformation of Ontario's Child Care and Early Years is an exciting time for municipalities in Ontario. The development of this Service System Plan that will serve as the guiding document as we move forward to a coordinated and integrated system that is centred on children and families is critical to ensure children have access to safe, affordable, culturally appropriate and accessible care.

The most important sources of information that guided this document came from the people who live in Hastings County, and the service providers and organizations that service our families and children including our francophone communities and Indigenous populations.

As the second largest County in Ontario by size, stretching almost 160 kilometers, Hastings County's largely rural communities total 49% of our region and collectively require a unique approach to child and family programs. Transportation is at the centre of every conversation had in Hastings County and is recognized as a barrier for many families accessing early learning programs and employment.

Additional spaces and flexibility for parents working non-traditional hours is important to highlight as this was identified as a need in all areas of Hastings County.

Choice and flexibility of day care options for families will create opportunities for families to find and maintain employment along with providing children opportunities to explore, be curious and engage in rich environments, where learning occurs in all forms.

Recommendations and strategies developed through this planning process are realistic, achievable but will take time to accomplish. They are community-informed and aim to include rural and urban families at the centre of Hastings County's core work of "Supporting People and Our Communities".

There is much work to accomplish over the next five years and staff in the Community and Human Services Department have many challenges ahead. Rest assured, our staff

*SUPPORTING PEOPLE AND OUR COMMUNITIES*

are committed to ensuring that children, parents and caregivers have access to high quality, affordable, responsive and accessible services and those sentiments are at the core of this document that will serve as a guide to support the work of the early years system.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rick Phillips". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Warden Rick Phillips

*SUPPORTING PEOPLE AND OUR COMMUNITIES*

## Introduction

The development of the Hastings County Child Care and Early Years, Service System Plan will serve as a road map over the next five years as Hastings County continues to work with children and families in Hastings County. Hastings County prides itself on the strong relationships built with community partners including school boards, public health and early learning providers who are providing high quality services to families and children in our communities.

Hastings County Children's Services is responsible for leading child care and early learning initiatives across 14 member municipalities with a total population of 136,445 people in Hastings County. Hastings County is committed to a responsive child care and early years system that fosters inclusive, integrated learning environments for our 18,240 children ages birth to twelve. As the Service Manager, Hastings County has a responsibility to lead, plan and manage all aspects of child care and early years programs and services. This work falls within the Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014, which **requires the "System Manager"** to establish a child care and early years program and service system plan that addresses matters of provincial interest under the Act.<sup>1</sup>

The plan will focus on key elements which are based on Ontario's vision for the early years. These components focus on: accessibility, responsiveness, affordability and high quality. The four elements for the early years will be the guiding components in identifying the priorities, needs, strengths and desired outcomes for the early learning sector, children and families in Hastings County. A fifth element has been identified and included in this plan related to "administrative burden".



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<sup>1</sup> Ontario Child Care and Early Years Service System Plan and Resource, Ministry of Education, p. 3



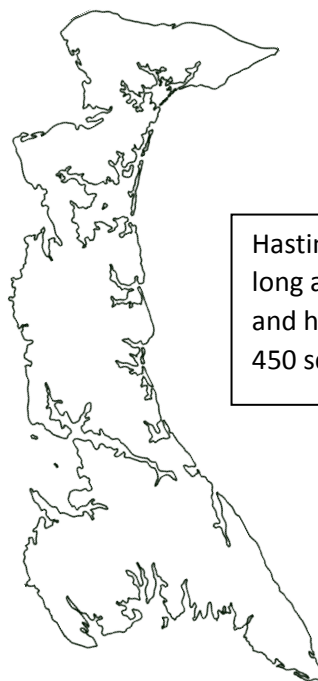
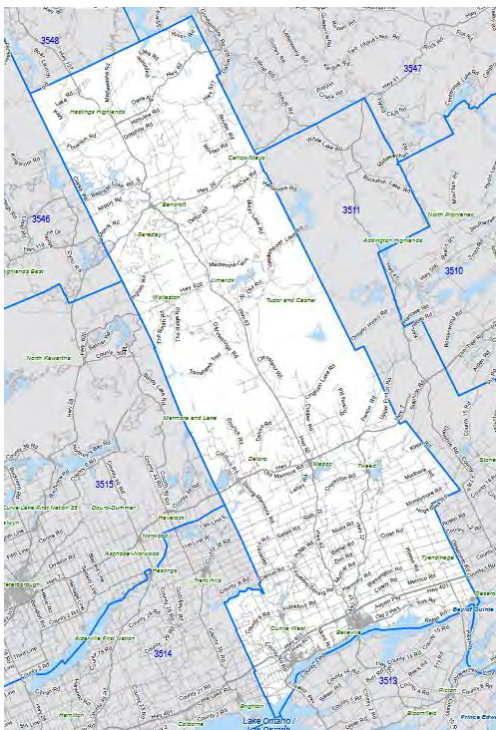
Hastings County is dedicated to supporting people and our communities. Research shows that *"strong communities provide a vital support to families with young children by encouraging opportunities for optimal early childhood development."*<sup>2</sup> The development of the

system plan will help to ensure that young children and their families in Hastings County will have the services and supports that they need to reach their potential.

Hastings County is the second largest County in Ontario with a total population of 136,445. The distance from Belleville in the south to the North is about 160 kilometres. About 70% of young children live in the urban centres of Belleville and Quinte West.

The Community and Human Services Department provides a broad range of human services to its 14 member municipalities and the separated cities of Belleville and Quinte West. These services include: **Children’s Services, Ontario Works, and Social Housing.**

**Children’s Services** strives to offer services that are inclusive and accessible and that meet the diverse needs of the community. Supporting a sense of belonging and well-being for children, families and educators will ensure optimal learning and development in all areas. Priorities **within the Children’s Services Department include supporting parents** with fee subsidy, special needs resourcing, wage enhancement and supporting licensed child care providers with general operating grant funding. Hastings County believes that investing in the early years brings an immediate return and that high quality early **years contributes to a child’s overall well-being.** Positive child care experiences create strong, confident and overall healthy children.



Hastings County is almost as long as Prince Edward Island, and has a total area more than 450 sq. km. greater than PEI.

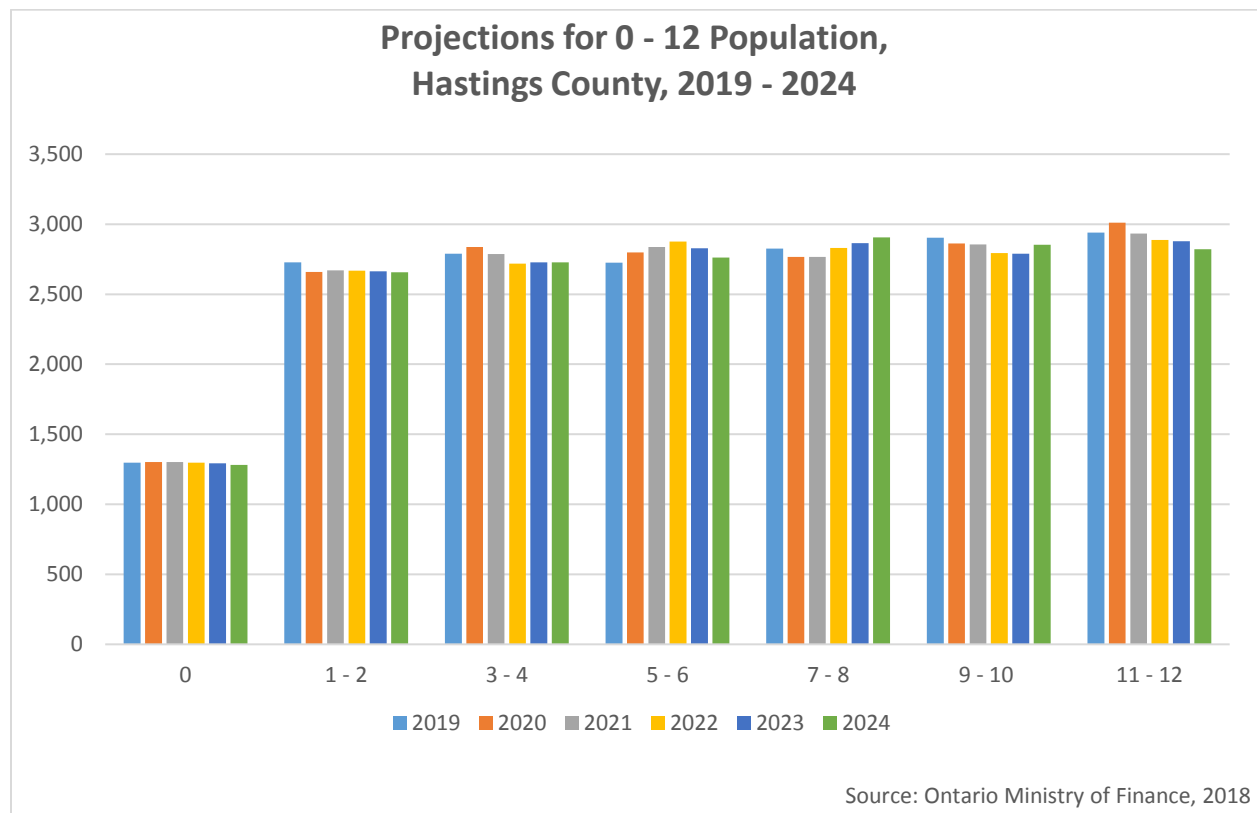
<sup>2</sup> Dr. Clyde Hertzman, former Director, Human Early Learning Partnership, UBC

# Environmental Scan: Hastings County

## CHILDREN IN HASTINGS COUNTY

Hastings County has roughly 1,400 children in each single-year age cohort (0-6), thus about 7,000 ages 0-4, and about 2,800 ages 5-6. There are an additional 8,675 children between the ages of 7 and 12.

Of the 18,240 total children ages 0-12 (2016 Census) in Hastings County, about 37.6% live in Belleville, with another third (33.3%) living in Quinte West. Central Hastings has 15.1% of the young children in Hastings, with about 6.6% of young children living in North Hastings and 5.1% in South-East Hastings. Population projections estimate very little change in the child population of Hastings County in the next 5 years.

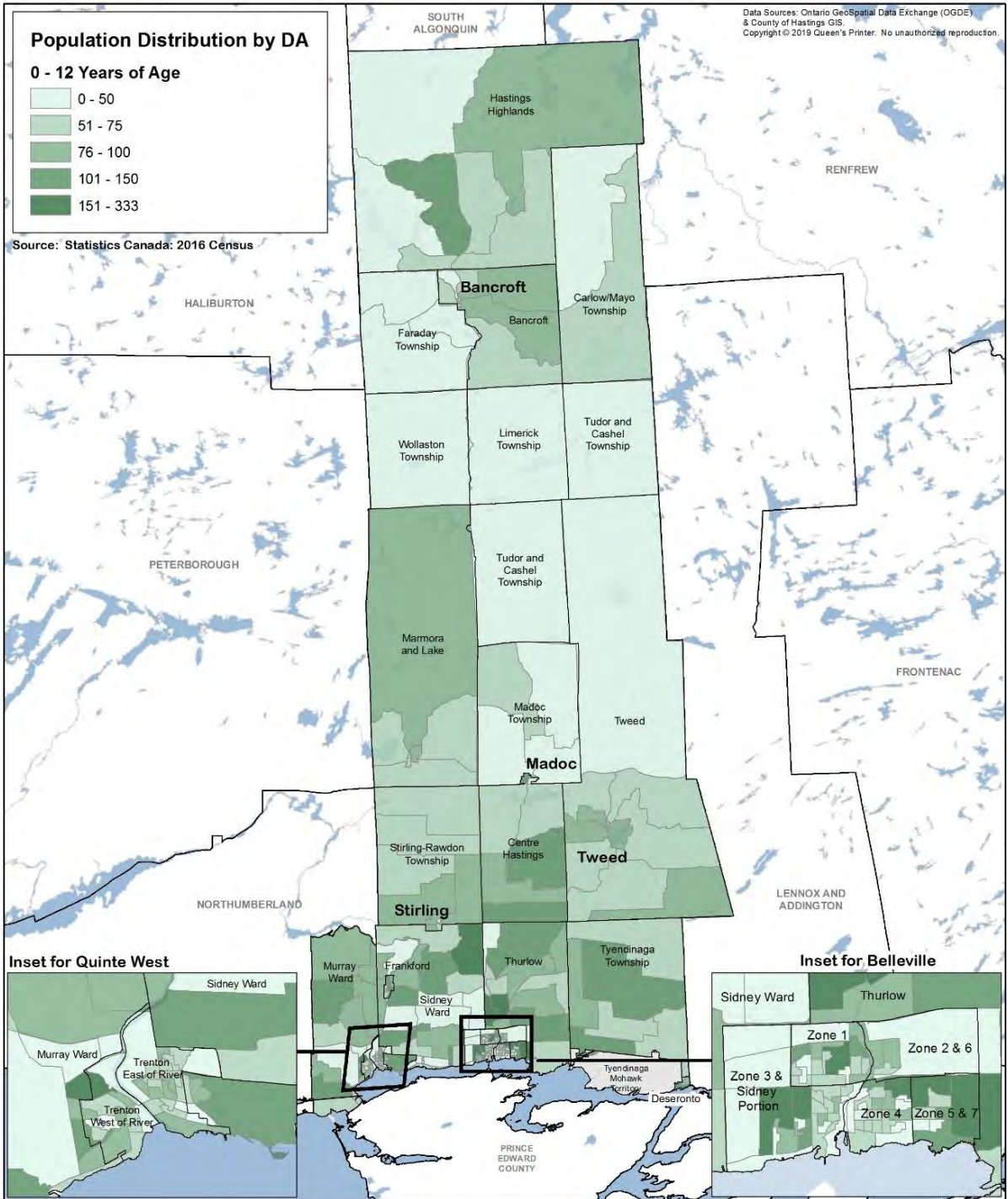


The actual child population may vary from these projections, based on unforeseen variations in factors such as the economy, labour force, employment possibilities and housing availability.

The child population varies in different parts of Hastings County. The map following shows the distribution of the young child population ages birth to 12 by Census dissemination areas (DAs).



# Population Distribution by DA 0- 12 Years of Age



## COMMUNITY PLANNING PROCESS

The community-informed process has been collaborative, communicative, and based on the strong relationships that are established in Hastings County. The priority of this plan is that recommendations be made based on evidence-based community feedback and data (anecdotal and/or quantitative).

The planning process is similar to that of the principles outlined in the Ministry of Education, *Ontario Early Years Child and Family Centres: Planning Guidelines for Service System Managers* and the *Ontario Child Care and Early Years Service System Plan Resource*. The community engagement process was designed in order to capture and understand the unique needs of children, parents and caregivers, and the needs that were identified informed the proposed service plan. Service providers including centre based, home child care, parents and caregivers were encouraged to identify areas of affordability, accessibility, quality, and responsiveness in our discussions and in questionnaires.

Key informant interviews with various community services, individual school boards in Hastings County, primary care providers as well as the parents and caregivers has ensured an integrated approach to the development of the service plan. Delegations to lower tier municipalities took place to inform council members of the planning process and to obtain important feedback. Questionnaires were also provided to The City of Belleville and Quinte West council for feedback. Municipal council was supportive of this process and the conversations and feedback received were important to the development of this plan.

The most important sources of data and information about Hastings County *came from the people who live here and the service providers and organizations that serve our people*. The engagement process captured invaluable information from the Hastings County community, which has informed this plan. In Hastings County, there has been a dedicated commitment to understanding community needs as they relate to early years child and family programs. The assessment of these local needs has entailed multiple approaches and sources. At the local level, getting input from a broad cross-section of the community was an essential part of the plan. Stakeholders consulted included:

- Anglophone and Francophone parents, caregivers, and families
- Indigenous parents and service providers
- Service providers
- Educators
- Representatives of school boards
- **Community partners and children's services organizations**
- Municipalities
- Staff in the Community and Human Services Department

Hastings' initial engagement process consisted of five main components:

### 1. Program and Service Inventory

An environmental scan of all early years and family programs was conducted. The data, collected directly from service providers, have been used to map existing programs and identify child care deserts in Hastings County. This information and mapping forms part of the plan.

### 2. Parent Surveys

Two distinct parent surveys were developed and targeted to parents and caregivers of children ages 0-12 in both French and English. Bookmarks with survey details were distributed across Hastings County through community partners, EarlyON locations, schools, employers, libraries, social media and Hastings County website, networks of agencies that include early years service providers, and public events. Four \$50 gift cards were offered as incentives to parents/caregivers who responded.

### 3. Key Informant Interviews and Meetings

Staff met with 18 key informants, whose expertise and informed perspectives were captured qualitatively in great detail. Each interview provided a different perspective whether it be about the greater early years service system or the individual child and family. One of the main functions of these interviews was to ensure that the recommendations of the plan would align with the needs of the children and families they support and work with daily. Refer to Appendix B for a complete list of key informants interviews.

### 4. Focus Groups and Community Consultations

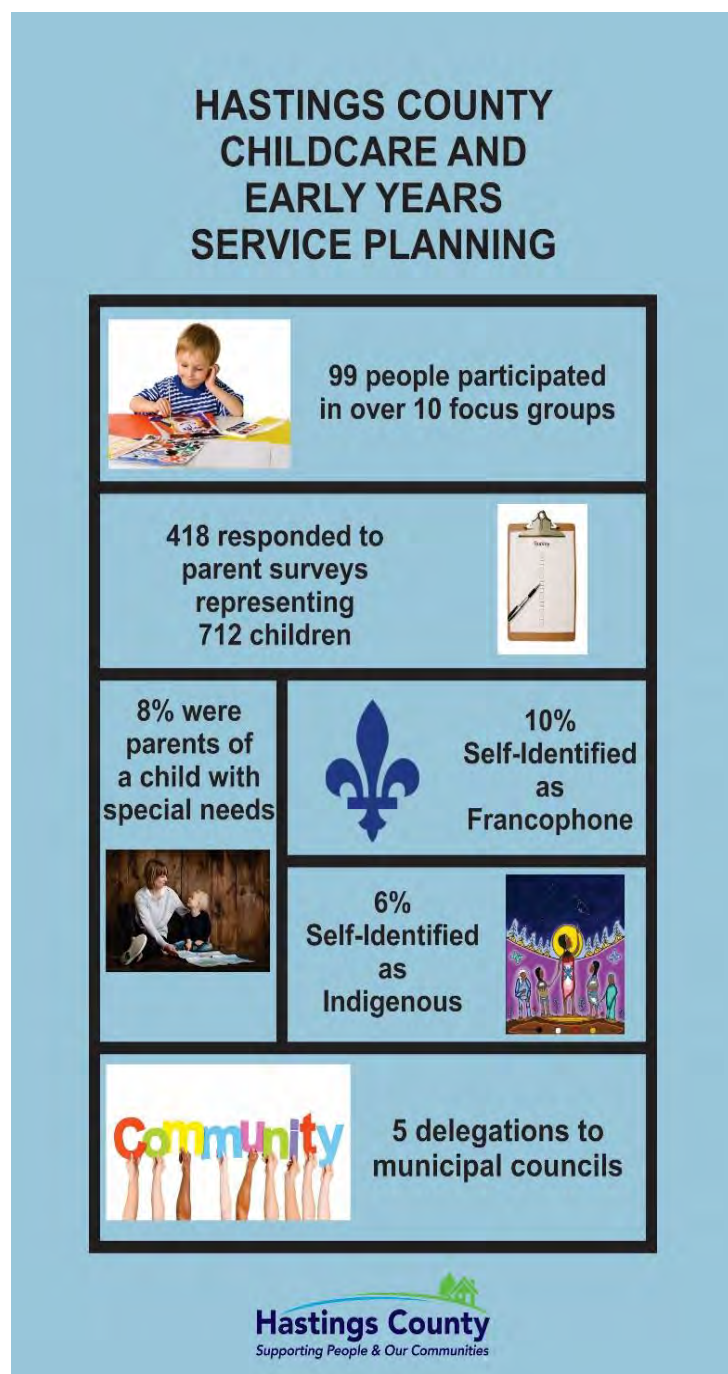
Staff conducted ten (10) focus groups in Hastings County. Feedback was gathered from **members of the child care supervisor's network**, home licensed child care providers, a parent group, EarlyON leads and before and after school programs. Refer to Appendix C for a complete list of focus groups.

### 5. Population Data

On a broader level, population and health data have been used both to establish a baseline and to enable comparisons of Hastings County with other jurisdictions. These sources included:

- **Statistics Canada's census data from 2016, 2011 and 2001**
- National Household Survey of 2011
- Health data from the Canadian Community Health Survey and Public Health Ontario Snapshots
- Early Development Instrument (EDI)
- **Ontario's Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO)**

## BY THE NUMBERS



★ 418 parents and caregivers from all areas of Hastings County completed parent surveys which represents 712 children

★ Almost 100 community members participated in over 10 focus groups including:

- Hastings County Community and Human Services
- Licensed Home Child Care Providers
- EarlyON Programs
- Parent Groups
- Private home day care providers

★ Five (5) municipal delegations were completed throughout Hastings County

★ 10% of survey respondents self-identified as Francophone

★ 8% of survey respondents were parents or caregivers of a child with special needs

★ 6% of survey respondents self-identified as Indigenous

★ 18 key informants interviews were completed

Over 3200 bookmarks were distributed in print throughout Hastings County and over 20 networks and companies were emailed the parent survey for further distribution. Bookmarks were distributed in French through École élémentaire catholique L'Envol and École Élémentaire Publique Cité-Jeunesse as well as the ON y va programs through the Trenton Military Family Resource Centre.

Information was posted on the Hastings County website ([www.hastingscounty.com](http://www.hastingscounty.com)), and the surveys were promoted further through the Twitter feed and the County's Economic Development Department's Facebook page.

Surveys were also promoted/distributed through GH Manufacturing employing over 100 staff and Proctor and Gamble Belleville who employs 825 staff. With Proctor and Gamble being one of the largest employers in the area, it was important to gather feedback from those who are working extended shifts.

Refer to appendix D for a complete listing of bookmark distribution.



**Hastings County**  
Supporting People & Our Communities



**We All Want the Very Best for Children and Families!**  
Your input is important to the planning process for Child Care and Early Years' programs and services.  
*You could WIN a \$50 gift card!*  
Complete survey by scanning code or go to  
[surveymonkey.com/r/ChildCareEarlyYearsSurvey](https://surveymonkey.com/r/ChildCareEarlyYearsSurvey)  
**Survey closes April 26th.**



**Hastings County**  
Supporting People & Our Communities



**Nous voulons tous le meilleur pour les enfants et les familles!**  
Votre contribution est très importante dans le processus de planification des programmes et des services de garde d'enfants et de petite enfance.  
*Vous pourriez gagner une carte-cadeau de 50 \$!*  
Remplissez le sondage en scannant le code QR ou allez à  
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Sondagesurlagardedenfants>  
**L'enquête se termine le 26 avril**



## ENGAGING THE COMMUNITY

Various methods for communicating with the public were utilized. Established relationships with front-line service providers were relied on to assist in disseminating surveys to families.

Numerous focus groups and delegations were made to various levels of stakeholders including:

- Parents and caregivers
- Municipalities
- **Hastings County, Children's Services Staff**
- Hastings County, Housing Programs Staff
- Inòdewiziwin Journey Together program
- Child Care Supervisors Network, Communities of Practice
- EarlyON Educators
- Loyalist College

- Various service providers, including the United Way of Hastings and Prince Edward and Highland Shores **Children's Aid** Society

Refer to appendix C for a detailed listing of engagement.

Efforts were made to engage as many parents/caregivers of young children as possible. The survey links were distributed to parents of kindergarten to grade 6 students through the Algonquin Lakeshore Catholic District School Board, Hastings and Prince Edward District School Board, Conseil des écoles publiques de l'Est de l'Ontario and Conseil des écoles catholiques du Centre-Est. Efforts were made to connect with the **early childhood educators' and several key** informant interviews took place with Directors/Managers of early years programs and child care centres.

The parents and caregivers who were the easiest to engage with were those who participate in EarlyON programs and services. The incentive of a \$50 gift card enhanced the conversation with parents as staff were visiting EarlyON locations.

Nevertheless, staff were aware that challenges exist in reaching parents, caregivers and some service providers. Employed parents often are unable to participate in early years programs because of time restraints and hours of operation. The most efficient way to reach out to employed parents is through the school system with parent surveys being linked to newsletters and distributed to children to bring home.

The surveys were the source of a great deal of information from many respondents. The literacy level and length of the questionnaire was taken into consideration prior to distribution. Reaching the francophone population also presented a challenge and staff relied heavily on our **community partners and EarlyON's to ensure distribution and promotion of the parent survey.**

Families and service providers spoke often during this process about their appreciation for being involved and consulted.

## HASTINGS COUNTY CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Children's Services supports licensed child care and continues to advocate for the safety and development of children. In Hastings County, licensed child care is provided in centres and homes, and is delivered by a mix of not-for-profit and for-profit organizations as well as Hastings County itself. Another vital program of Children's Services is EarlyON (ON y va), which continues to expand within the County. Both child care and EarlyON Child and Family Centres are available in both English and French, and Indigenous led programs play a vital role in services being available for all families in Hastings County.

Partnerships within the early learning sector continue to grow with a focus of supporting the needs of children and families within Hastings County. Fee subsidy, Special Needs Resourcing (SNR), Quality Initiatives and General Operating Grant Funding (GOG), are prioritized within the funding envelope.

### Centre-Based Licensed Child Care

As of January 31, 2019, there are 27 licensed child care head offices with Purchase of Service Agreements, operating on 60 sites. The total number of spaces in licensed child care centres is 2,757, which includes:

A total of 1,125 licensed spaces ages 0-4 with a further breakdown of:

- 116 infant spaces
- 260 toddler spaces (71 spaces in centres that provide services in French of which 24 spaces in one centre provides bilingual services)
- 749 preschool spaces

A total of 473 licensed spaces ages 5-6 (JK –SK spaces), and;

A total of 1,159 licensed primary-junior spaces ages 7-12 (school age).

### Cost for licensed centre-based child care in Hastings County



Infant, \$70/day  
\$18,200/year



Toddler, \$52/day  
\$13,520/year



Preschool, \$46/day  
\$11,960/year



Junior/Senior Kindergarten, \$42/day  
\$10,500/year

Average costs for licensed centre-based child care in Hastings County:

- For infants                 \$70/day             \$18,200/year<sup>3</sup>
- For toddlers               \$52/day             \$13,520/year
- For preschool             \$46/day             \$11,960/year
- For JK-SK                 \$42/day             \$10,500/year

Many families find licensed child care unaffordable. A strategy was implemented from September to December 2018, to support families with affordability of licensed daycare. Families with infants and toddlers were eligible to receive an affordability payment. An average 365 children were supported monthly with savings of approximately \$ 71,500 per month in fees to families.

Fifty-seven percent (57%) of parents identified lack of available space and waitlists as their most pressing challenges when looking for child care. Using the recent Statistics Canada report on child care arrangements<sup>4</sup>, there is a need for an increased number of child care spaces in Hastings County.

The following are future expansions for licensed child care including before and after school programs:

- École élémentaire catholique L'Envol, Quinte West (15 new spaces);
- **St Joseph's Catholic School in 2020/2021 including** an EarlyON Centre in the redesign of the school, Belleville; and
- Easthill Elementary School which will consolidate Queen Elizabeth and Queen Victoria with new construction in 2021, Belleville.

Availability of child care in Hastings County is related to differential geographic access. As the map following shows, most child care centres are in the cities of Belleville and Quinte West. There are a few child care centres in central Hastings, and one centre in Bancroft. Child care "deserts" (where no child care centres are located) exist in south east Hastings and most of North Hastings, including areas where there are many children between the ages of 0 and 4. In the cities, the centres are not exclusively located where large numbers of children live.

Increasing access to child care continues to be a strategic priority for Hastings County. Space continues to be a challenge within the schools and the community, especially in rural areas. According to *Ontario's Early Years and Child Care Annual Report, 2018*,<sup>5</sup> 22% of Ontario's children 0–12 have access to licensed spaces in child care programs; in Hastings County, only 15% of children 0–12 have that access. This difference is statistically significant.

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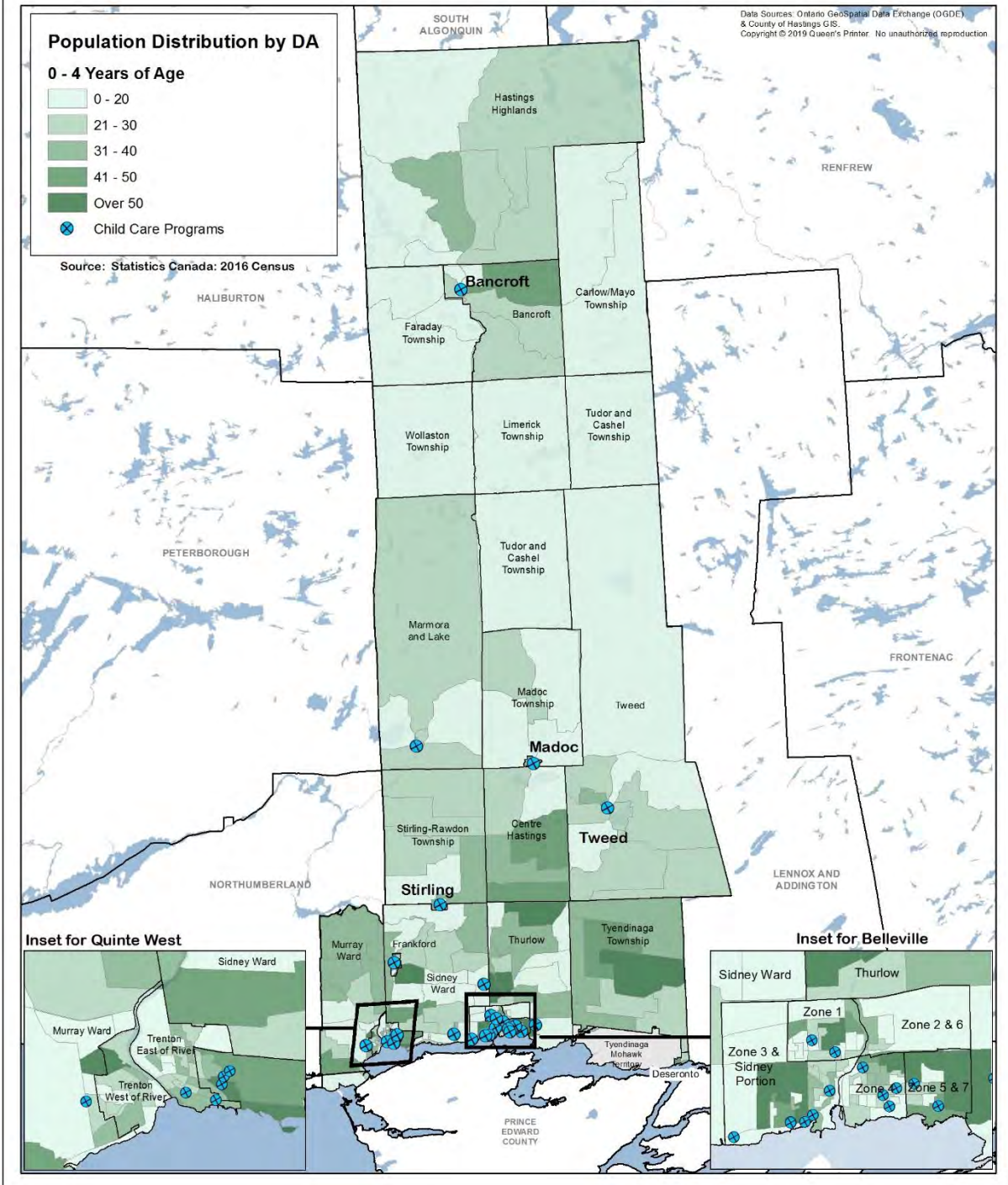
<sup>3</sup> Based on 260 days/year. Source: Michael Krashinsky, *Understanding the Proposed Tax Credit*. Presentation to OMSSA, January 23-24, 2019.

<sup>4</sup> Statistics Canada, 2019. *Early learning and child care arrangements for children aged 0 to 5 years*. Available at: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/daily-quotidien/190410/dq190410a-eng.pdf?st=wrLeelLr>

<sup>5</sup> Ministry of Education, 2018. *Ontario's Early Years and Child Care Annual Report, 2018*. Available at: <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/childcare/annual-report-2018.html>



# Child Care Programs - Hastings County 0-4 Years of Age Population Distribution



Refer to Appendix A for a complete listing of child care programs in Hastings County.

## Home-Based Licensed Child Care

As of January 31, 2019, three (3) licensed home child care agencies operating in Hastings County have purchase of service agreements. Family Space Quinte Inc., Trenton Military Family Resource Centre and Little Lambs Home Day Care are responsible for the delivery of the Licensed Home Based programs.

These agencies are licensed for a total of 100 homes, with a possible total capacity of 600 children. As of April, 2019 there is a total of 61 licensed homes. This segment of care has increased over the years and is promoted throughout Hastings County. The map following indicates that the majority of home based licensed care are within Belleville and Quinte West. The map identifies the areas in which there is limited choice for families who may be looking for home-based options, especially in Central and North Hastings.

A focus group was held with over 20 licensed home-based child care providers in early 2019. When asked why they have become a licensed provider, they identified a number of reasons, including:

- Advice, service and security of the provider
- Support and trust
- Value in the money
- Service provider handles fee collection/payments
- Help with referrals
- Low ratios
- Subsidy option available for families
- Use of Service Providers policies
- Use of Resource Consultant
- Taken seriously by parents
- Longevity – children can thrive in their home

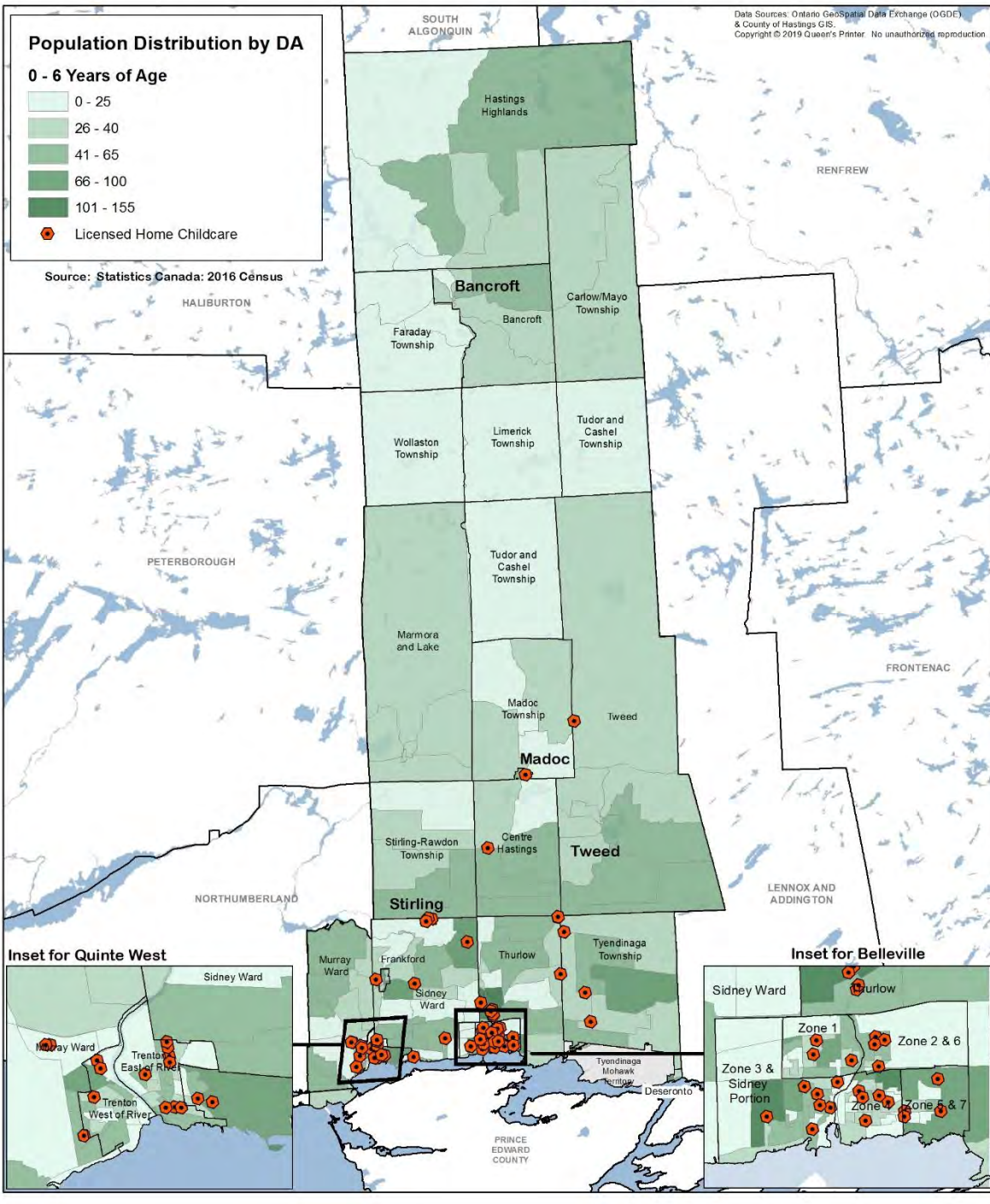
The providers also identified professional development, funding for safety equipment, grant funds, and resources such as assistance with income tax were all supports that they felt were important to them as a licensed home provider.

When asked what recommendations they could make to Hastings County, their suggestions included:

- Changing the perception of home licensed care
- Increase promotion in smaller communities
- Increase money for outdoor equipment
- More resources for children ages 6-12

**Hastings County Children's Services recognize and support the vital role that home-based licensed child care serves in providing early childhood education for children and flexible child care options for families.**

# Licensed Home Child Care - Hastings County 0-6 Years of Age Population Distribution



## Licensed Before and After Programs

In Hastings County, there are just over 40 licensed before and after school programs, including those directly operated by the County of Hastings and the two francophone schools boards in Trenton. They are widely distributed throughout the County, although, as the map following indicates, there is a strong concentration of before and after school programs in Belleville and Quinte West, and limited programs in the Deseronto and Tyendinaga areas.

**Children's Services** recognizes the excellent work that all providers do with these programs for school-aged children. Of particular note, is the work of YMCA of Central East Ontario, both in Belleville and Quinte West, who are the service provider accounting for 40% (16) of these programs.

The County of Hastings directly operates four before and after school programs located in the areas of Belleville and Quinte West. The waitlists continue to increase due to many factors such as: convenience, hours of school time, transportation, extended work hours/shift work and difficulty in finding alternate methods of care. Wait lists are particularly long in September with new routines and schedules, resulting in parents requiring alternate methods of care.

Hastings County recognizes the value of childcare in school facilities and continues to work in partnership with local school boards to provide programs for school aged children. Surveys are conducted to show local need within the school and to ensure program viability.

Currently, Hastings County in partnership with the Algonquin & Lakeshore Catholic District School Board is considering space for Before and After programs in the following schools:

- Holy Name of Mary, Marysville
- St Mary Catholic School, Tyendinaga
- Our Lady of Fatima Catholic School, Belleville

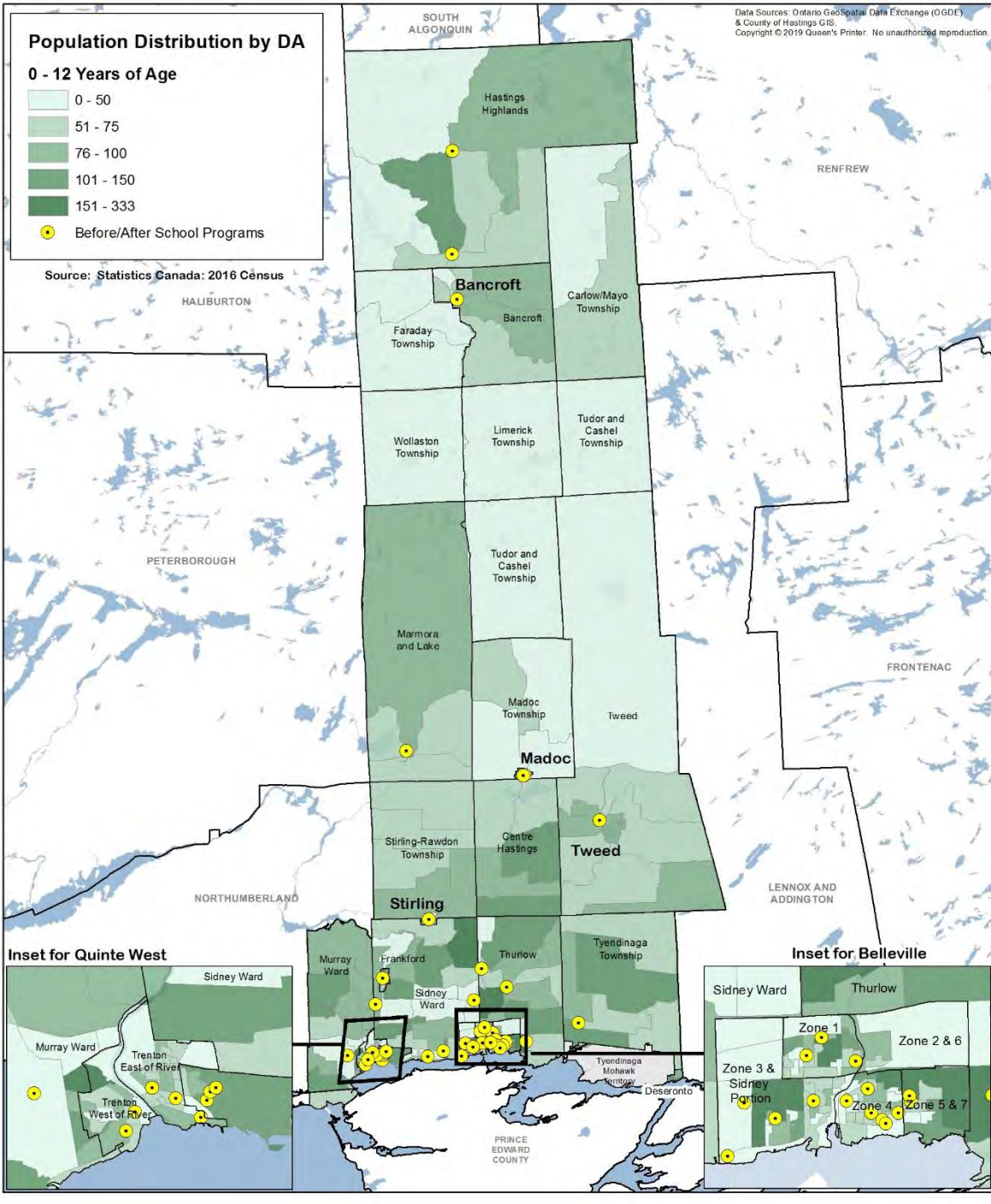
**Future reconstruction of St. Joseph's Catholic School** in Belleville will include before and after programs, child care, and EarlyON programs.

*"...it was very expensive and difficult to find care for before/after school that was flexible based on my ever changing work hours"*

Parent Survey, 2019

Parents continue to raise concerns about the lack of availability of before and after school care.

# Before & After School Programs - Hastings County 0-12 Years of Age Population Distribution



## EarlyON Child and Family Centres



EarlyON programming officially launched July 1, 2018. As of early 2019, there are 34 sites located throughout Hastings County including several at conservation areas and parks for outdoor programs. Three lead partners for EarlyON include: **Family Space Quinte, North Hastings Children's Services** and the Trenton Military Family Resource Centre.

Additional partners include:

- Algonquin and Lakeshore Catholic District School Board
- Hastings and Prince Edward District School Board
- École Élémentaire Publique Cité-Jeunesse
- École élémentaire catholique L'Envol
- Hastings Prince Edward Public Health

ON y va programs are operating in both École Élémentaire Publique Cité-Jeunesse, and École élémentaire catholique L'Envol in partnership with Trenton Military Family Resource Centre. These programs have had a successful start and continue to see increased families accessing the francophone programs.

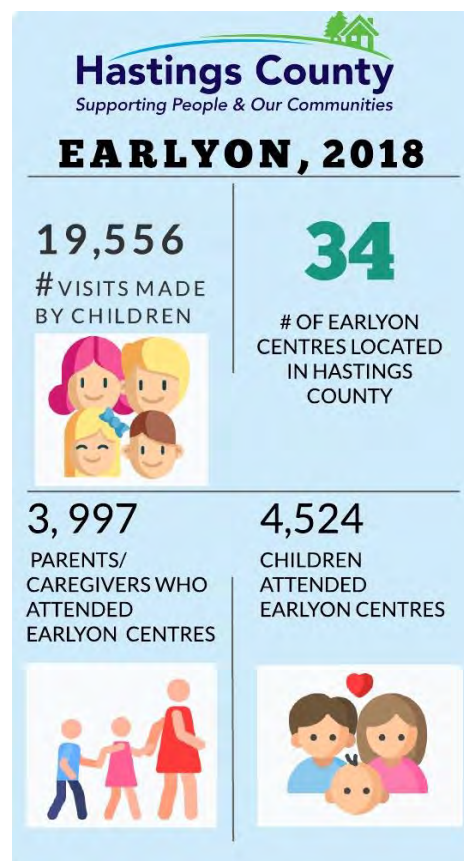
### EarlyON Six Month Evaluation

A six month progress/evaluation report was completed in December 2018 for the purposes of ensuring programs were meeting the needs of parents.

**Staff from Hastings County Children's Services held formal focus groups and informal conversations at 12 different EarlyON sites throughout Hastings County.** Approximately 80 parents/caregivers had the opportunity to share their insights into EarlyON programs and services and their impact.

This also resulted in 144 surveys completed by parents and caregivers who collectively brought 231 children to EarlyON programs during this time. Overall, parents and caregivers indicated the following:

- EarlyON programs are making a difference for themselves and their children
- The primary area of impact was the interaction and socialization of the children
- Children are learning new skills and have wonderful opportunities to explore and discover
- Many parents see this development as an essential preparation for school



- Parents are pleased with the many outdoor programs available to them throughout Hastings County; and
- Parents and caregivers also attend EarlyON programs for advice and recommendations that the educators provide, for interaction with other adults, and for the programming.

Beyond opportunities for children, developing meaningful connections with other parents/caregivers was also very important. Sometimes this idea was expressed in terms of **supporting the mental health of the adults, “staying sane”**. EarlyON programs also provided tools for parents/caregivers to use at home. Furthermore, parents/caregivers felt that they had access to information about behavioural and developmental issues through the educators.

Continuous efforts are being made throughout all EarlyON programs to advertise programs through various means of communication.



Outdoor programs continue to be well attended and increased outdoor programming is responsive to the request of parents and caregivers to provide more opportunities to families and children to interact outdoors with nature. Outdoor programs encourage increased creativity, engagement with nature, and curiosity

within a natural setting. Research indicates **engaging in the outdoors is essential to a child’s** healthy brain development and overall health and well-being.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Wildwood Parent Handbook, Family Space

## French Language Child Care and Early Years Services

Hastings County works in partnership with the two francophone schools, École Élémentaire Publique Cité-Jeunesse, and École élémentaire catholique L'Envol who both operate licensed child care centres within the school environment.

Quinte West has a higher than average proportion of francophones. Sixty percent (60%) or 2,230 francophone individuals in Hastings County live in Quinte West. Almost 350 young children ages 0-9 (7.4%) in that area are francophones. Since Hastings County is not one of the 26 designated areas for French services in Ontario, there is no requirement for francophone services.

In planning for the transformation to EarlyON Centres in 2017/2018, Hastings County undertook an extensive community engagement process with various stakeholders, including parents, caregivers, service providers and young children. A key concern for francophone stakeholders was the complete lack of French specialized services for their children, especially resource consultants for children with special needs, occupational therapy, speech and language therapy, **and children's mental health programs**. There is no francophone assessment or diagnosis of young children available in Hastings County.

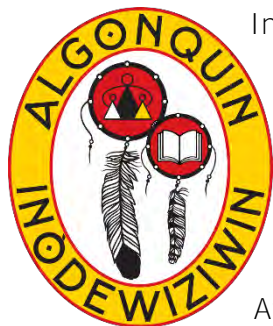
Sixteen percent (16%) of grade three children at the two (2) francophone schools in Hastings County were identified as having special needs, however these children would not have been assessed until they entered school.

An application was made to Employment and Social Development Canada under the Early Learning and Child Care Social Development Partnership Program in 2018, to provide enhanced services to francophone children and families; however the proposal was unsuccessful.





## Indigenous-Led Child and Family Programs (Formerly Journey Together: Ontario's Commitment to Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples)



In early 2018, The Ministry of Education announced that Hastings County was successful in its application for Journey Together Funding. The funding was to support the establishment of the Algonquin Inòdewiziwin Child and Family Centre in Maynooth in partnership with North Hastings Children's Services and Anishinaabe Baptiste Community Organization. Funding also included purchases of culturally relevant materials and set up of the classroom in Maynooth Public School.

At this Child and Family Centre both Indigenous and non-Indigenous parents and caregivers have access to high quality indigenous services that will support **them in their role as their children's first teachers. In particular, children and parents will** both learn the Algonquin language, history and culture. The advanced Indigenous programming has been seen as a model for similar programs across the province. The equipment is both high quality and reflective of Algonquin culture, and the excellent staff are keenly interested in bringing the culture into the classroom.

The Anishinaabe Baptiste Community Organization and the Kijicho Manito Madaouskarini Algonquin Nation Community **have partnered with North Hastings Children's Services to** administer the EarlyON program. Several programs are offered throughout the week providing a variety of opportunities including Algonquin language classes and an open circle with many cultural activities such as traditional crafts, hand drum circle, guest speakers and storytelling. These programs are open to everyone interested in learning more about Algonquin culture and traditions.



*"Hastings Highlands is fortunate to have the Algonquin Inòdewiziwin EarlyON program operating out of the Maynooth Public School. This shows true partnership and we are encouraged by the number of families and children who are attending and interested in learning the Algonquin culture. We see this as another step towards reconciliation."*

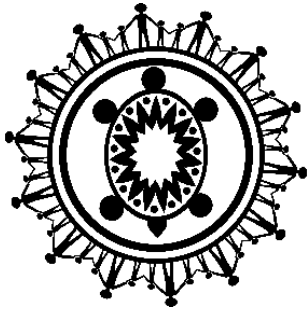
Mayor Vic Bodnar, Hastings Highlands

The program is noticing an increase in families attending with Open Circle becoming especially popular with families. This program focuses on the sharing of elements in Indigenous culture and traditional knowledge. The presence of Algonquin grandmothers in the program is also providing very important cultural continuity and teachings. At almost every open circle program, there is a focus on literacy by reading books to the families.

*"Continue with Indigenous programming. It is so important and it is making such a difference in North Hastings."*

Parent, Survey

## Kahwa:Tsire, Indigenous-led Program



The Kahwa:Tsire Initiative, developed in partnership with Prince Edward Lennox and Addington, City of Kingston-County of Frontenac, Hastings County and the Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte, is underway with planning that occurred over the course of 2018. Three language and cultural leaders directly deliver drop-in programs for parents and caregivers. The leaders also continue to develop and circulate the e-newsletter, **"Come Walk in my Moccasins"**. Prince Edward-Lennox and Addington Social Services took the lead and submitted this Journey Together proposal.

In Hastings County, there are a few Kahwa:Tsire programs running weekly with an outdoor program being offered through Quinte Conservation in partnership with the Family Space EarlyON team.



## Child Care Fee Subsidies

**Hastings County Children’s Services administers child care fee subsidy to help eligible parents** pay for child care. Parents/guardians rely heavily on Child Care Fee Subsidy to assist with monthly Child Care costs. If parents qualify, costs for children in licensed care, both centre-based and home-based, may be fully subsidized for all child care costs or partially subsidized with parents having to pay a portion of their total monthly child care costs. Parents/guardians making \$20,000 or under will be fully subsidized. The majority of parents/guardians state that they would not be able to continue to work if they did not receive this support.

Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program clients are automatically financially eligible for Child Care subsidy if they are involved with an approved activity, such as continuing education, employment, Child Special Needs Referral or a Parent Special Needs Referral.

During the summer months, child care fee subsidy is now available for eligible families for summer recreation camp options for school age children offered by the City of Belleville and YMCA of Central East. This fills a gap for school age children in the community before subsidies could be applied to these additional summer school age programs.

Currently Hastings County has four (4) full time caseworkers and one (1) part time caseworker. Full time caseworkers have approximately 210 families on their caseload, and the part time caseworker has responsibility for approximately 20 families. The caseworkers meet with parents/guardians once a year in person to complete a yearly file review, and reapplication for subsidy. In addition, a mail out is completed for families to report any changes to their file every six months.

Fee subsidy is available to support children with special needs to attend subsidized child care, whether their parents/guardians are employed or not. This availability also applies if a parent has a special need, in which case Hastings County may be able to help subsidize child care.

In June, 2019, there were 785 families receiving child care fee subsidy. The subsidies were used to make child care more affordable for 1,055 children. The majority of fee subsidy supports children in centre-based care, with approximately 16.5% in licensed home child care.

	Number of subsidized children utilizing Home Child Care as of 30/04/19	Average number of subsidized children utilizing Child Care as of 30/04/19	Percentage of subsidized children utilizing Home Child Care as of 30/04/19
Infants	21	76	27.63%
Toddler	48	179	26.82%
Preschool	63	352	17.90%
School Age	45	466	9.66%

## Special Needs Resourcing (SNR)

### **Hastings County Children's Services supports the inclusion of children with special needs in**

licensed child care settings and authorized recreation programs. Family Space Quinte is the lead agency for Special Needs Resourcing (SNR) for all of Hastings County. Resource consultants have specialized knowledge and techniques needed to promote the inclusion of children with exceptionalities. In 2018, 396 children were supported through SNR. Of that, the main reasons for referral included: behavioural, communication, intellectual, physical and many with multiple barriers. There are currently 9-10 resource consultants with average caseloads of about 25-30 children.



Evidence supports the idea that there are increasing numbers of children with exceptionalities in Hastings County, and that rate of children with special needs is higher than Ontario as a whole. For example, grade 3 EQAO results show that 25% of students are identified, whereas 18% are identified in all of Ontario, and the rate in Hastings is steadily increasing. The 2018 EDI results show that in Hastings, 8.2% of children have already been formally identified by senior kindergarten, and 18.3% were

considered to have a problem that influences their ability to do school work in a regular classroom, both above the Ontario averages.

Resource consultants work with young children in child care settings and help them with their transition to school. Consultants support and mentor early childhood educators in their work with these children, as educators working in child care settings may have limited experience working with children with special needs. In Hastings County, there are limited resources for children with unique needs and an increasing number of parents who would be considered high risk. Wait lists are increasing for both children and parents who are requiring extra supports such as speech and language, autism and children's and adult mental health.

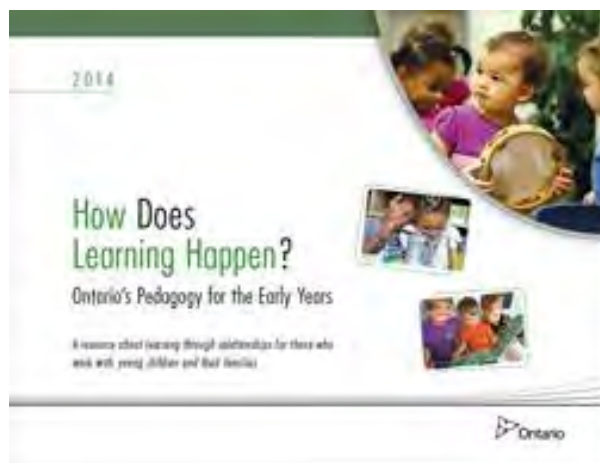
Resource consultants have identified that the complexity of the needs of children are continuing to grow. Increased expertise in the area of extreme behaviours and how to support families is important for staff which will ultimately benefit the children and families. Resource consultants are now working in situations whereby the family as a whole require interventions, referrals and supports in a time where waitlists for all services continue to be increasing.

*"It is harder to find structured care for school aged children over six with special needs when school isn't in session."*

Parent Survey, 2019

## Professional Learning and Quality Initiatives: *How Does Learning Happen?*

Hastings County is committed to supporting professional development within the early learning community.



Quality programs means different things to different people including parents and educators. In *How Does Learning Happen?*, “quality refers to the kinds of programs that, according to research and practice from around the world, contribute to positive experiences and outcomes for children”.<sup>7</sup>

*"Since the introduction of the Ministry of Education's Pedagogy, How Does Learning Happen?, I believe this document brought with it an understanding of providing early childhood education holistically to the child and includes family, values, and nurturing responsive relationships."*

Key Informant Interview, 2019

The Children's Services Department employs a Quality Initiatives Coordinator who supports learning and mobilization of professional knowledge using evidence-based research. This aligns with the Ministry of Education directives and identified community needs to enhance early learning practices. Other key responsibilities include:

- Establishing and providing leadership to build networking and mentoring programs such as communities of practice to continuously enhance the quality of early learning
- Developing and mentoring relationships grounded in reflective strength-based practice
- Supporting child care programs with *HDLH?* learning approaches
- Visiting child care centres in Hastings County.

Over 600 participants attended various professional learning opportunities throughout 2018. This included individualized communities of practice whereby centre specific topics are delivered using a reflective practice model.

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<sup>7</sup> An Introduction to *How Does Learning Happen?, Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years*, For Educators, (2014)

Several training opportunities and information sharing in partnership with service providers took place in 2018 including:

- On the Land Indigenous Outdoor learning series in partnership with service providers, Quinte Conservation and a Knowledge Keeper
- Evergreen outdoor training in partnership with Hastings and Prince Edward Public Health
- A six part pedagogical leadership series in partnership with First Adventure and Family Space
- **A Behaviour Guidance workshop through the lens of self-regulation in partnership with Central Hastings Early Education and Childcare**
- **Melanie Dixon from the College of ECE- Continuous professional learning portfolio and professionalism**
- Communities Supporting Families series including presentations from Highland Shores CAS and Ontario Autism Program
- Patricia Couroux from the Early **Childhood Community Development Centre from ECCDC- delivered a 3 part series for school age educators**
- Three half day sessions focused on imbedding pedagogy, shared space and physical literacy called **"Speaking the language of school"; and,**
- Early Learning and Child Care Wellness Conference including a variety of guest speakers who focus on health and wellness including: Pam Fountas, Nick Foley, Alicia Preston and Faizan Imtiaz

### Quality Initiative: Example

In 2018, funding for play based materials was provided to licensed child care centres and licensed home child care providers as well as before and after programs. The purpose of these additional funds was to enhance and create enriching environments both indoors and outdoors **with open ended material that promote children's learning, development and** inquiry consistent with *HDLH?*, and thereby increasing the quality of the learning environment.

It was noted in several key informant interviews that the additional funding to support the purchases of materials did support the quality of the programming and helped to upgrade and replace necessary materials for children.

## Training and Recruitment

Similar to other areas of the province, retaining qualified Registered Early Childhood Educators (RECEs) is challenging for many reasons including low wages and demands of the job. Licensed child care providers have noted that many positions remain empty due to the lack of qualified staff.

Hastings County participates in the Early Childhood Education Advisory Committee and the issues of recruitment, training and retention are ongoing items of discussion.

*"To retain ECEs, they need to be inspired, get so excited that they stay in field."*

Key Informant Interview, 2019

There are many supports available to students who want to look at non-traditional methods of obtaining their Registered Early Childhood Educator (RECE) Diploma. The Ontario College of Trades provides a Child Development Practitioner program which is a pathway to becoming a RECE. This is an apprenticeship training program which provides in school and on the job training. The Anishinabek Educational Institute is an Aboriginal-owned and controlled post-secondary institution in Canada. This institute partners with colleges and universities to offer students degree programs, apprenticeships, certificate programs and diploma programs including RECE. This program can complement the Journey Together initiative (Indigenous Program) that is operated in Hastings County. The department supports the early learning sector to access programs that best fit their current schedule and work demands.

## Centres of Excellence

Centres of Excellence for Early Years and Child Care support professional learning across the early years sector. These centres take into account the diverse needs of the province, such as culture, language and geography through the development of specialized networks. In March 2018, the Ministry announced the following leads, for the Centres of Excellence:

- Provincial Centre of Excellence – Western University and Ontario Reggio Association
- Indigenous Centre of Excellence – Ontario Aboriginal Head Start Association and Kenjgewin Teg Education Institute; and
- Francophone Centre of Excellence – Collège Boréal and Association francophone à l'éducation des services à l'enfance de l'Ontario.

Centres of Excellence were established to:

- Support alignment with *How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years* and promote cohesion in pedagogical approaches and practices across early year programs;
- Build the pedagogical leadership capacity of program staff in the early years sector through innovative models and strategies that are grounded in current research
- Create linkages to and/or develop professional learning resources that are responsive to the needs of the sector and accessible online through a Centre of Excellence portal.<sup>8</sup>

A pedagogist is a specialized role introduced to Ontario by the Provincial Centre of Excellence for Early Years and Child Care. This is a 12 week program and once completed, individuals **become active participants in the Centre's network of pedagogists**. Ongoing participation for pedagogists involves meeting regularly and engaging in other related activities regionally as appropriate.

There are currently four (4) early learning educators in Hastings County participating in the Centre of Excellence Pedagogist Program. This program includes three (3) phases in which the final phase is set to begin in the fall of 2019.

## Other Community Services

### Informal Child Care

Ontario Works clients using informal child care has decreased from 79 families in 2017 to 48 families in 2018. This reduction aligns with the Ministry of Education's approach to promoting the use of licensed child care options. This means that Ontario Works participants may only access informal (unlicensed) child care when a licensed child care arrangement is not possible **due to the client's needs and the availability of service**. Caseworkers also educate Ontario Works parents with the benefits of formal licensed care.

Through focus groups, staff have identified that there are a large number of informal home care providers who attend EarlyON Centres. Many of the caregivers identified that they are part of a larger social media network that supports one another with their profession. Many attend the EarlyON Centres and there is a large group who arrange their own programs at libraries and parks. This informal network is open to receiving information and support from Hastings County if available.

Many considerations parents have noted in accessing informal care include: flexibility, access, affordability, transportation, and choice.

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<sup>8</sup> Ontario Ministry of Education, <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/childcare/CentresofExcellence/>



## Camps and “Childrens Recreation Program”

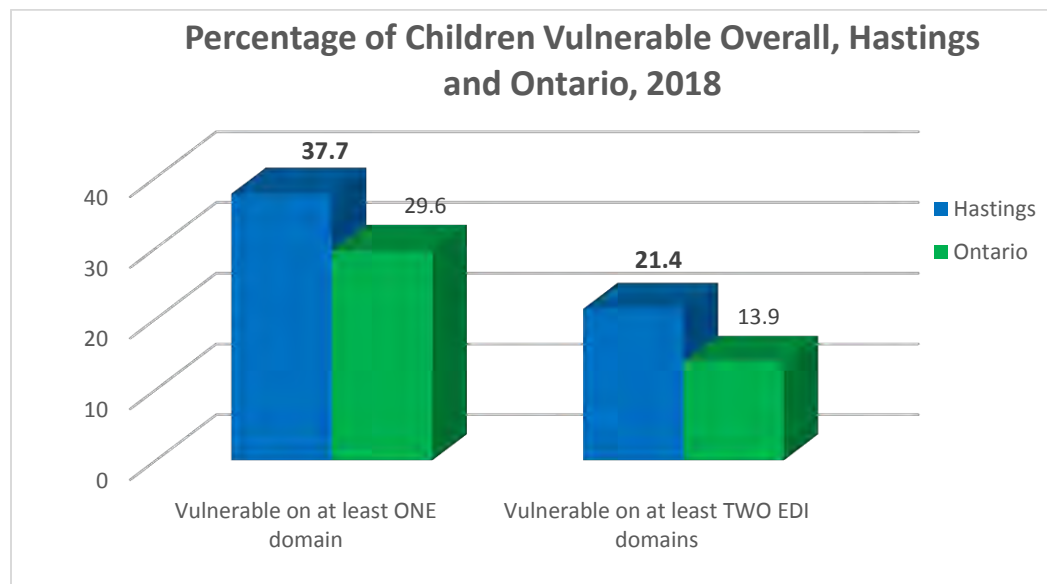
There are currently two service providers that offer Authorized Recreation Camps in Hastings County for school aged children. One service provider offers Professional Activity day programming in addition to summer camp. The programs support the Belleville, Quinte West, Frankford, and Tweed areas. These programs see approximately 70-75 children monthly with increases in the summer months averaging from 160-170 children. The number of children served in the summer recreation camps increased in 2018 by 40 additional children which is possibly due to the fact that the eligible age to participate was reduced to four (4) years in 2018 to support JK/SK ages requiring care outside of the school year.

## Early Development Instrument (EDI)



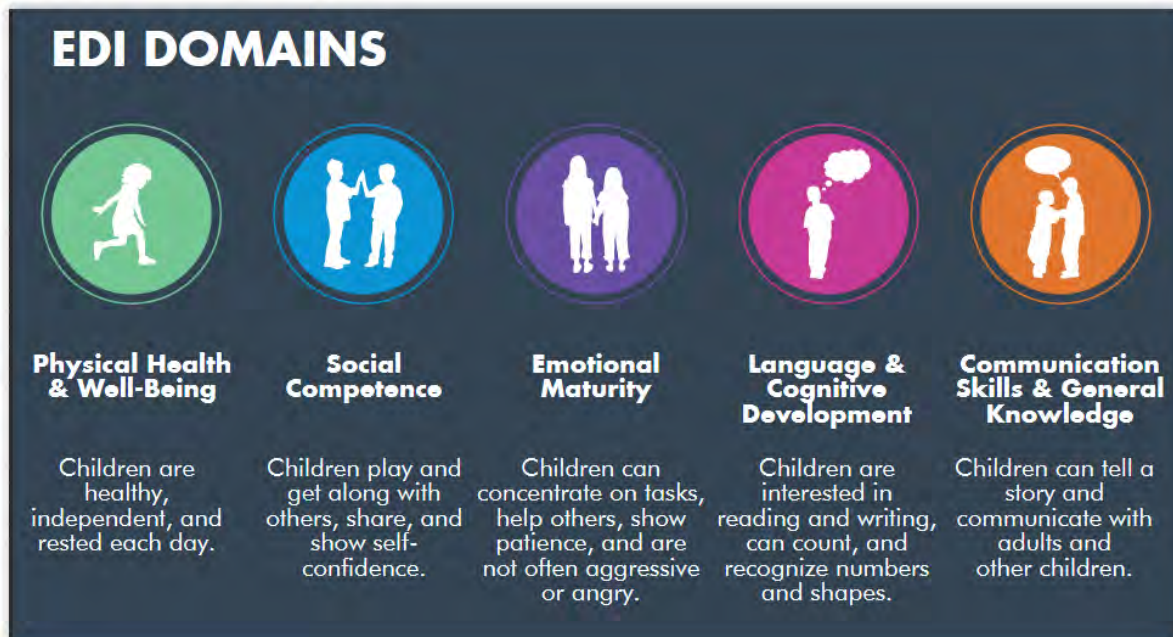
The Early Development Instrument (EDI) measures early childhood development of young children when they are in the second year of kindergarten. The EDI has been completed 5 times in Hastings County (2006, 2009, 2011, 2015 and 2018). Understanding the developmental health of children allows organizations and policy makers to make informed decisions about programs that support **children’s areas of greatest need**.<sup>9</sup> The results give decision-makers an opportunity to look at **the factors in the community that influence their children’s development**.

In Hastings County, young children have significantly higher rates of vulnerability than Ontario as a whole. In 2018, more than 1/3 (37.7%) of senior kindergarten children were vulnerable on one or more developmental domains.

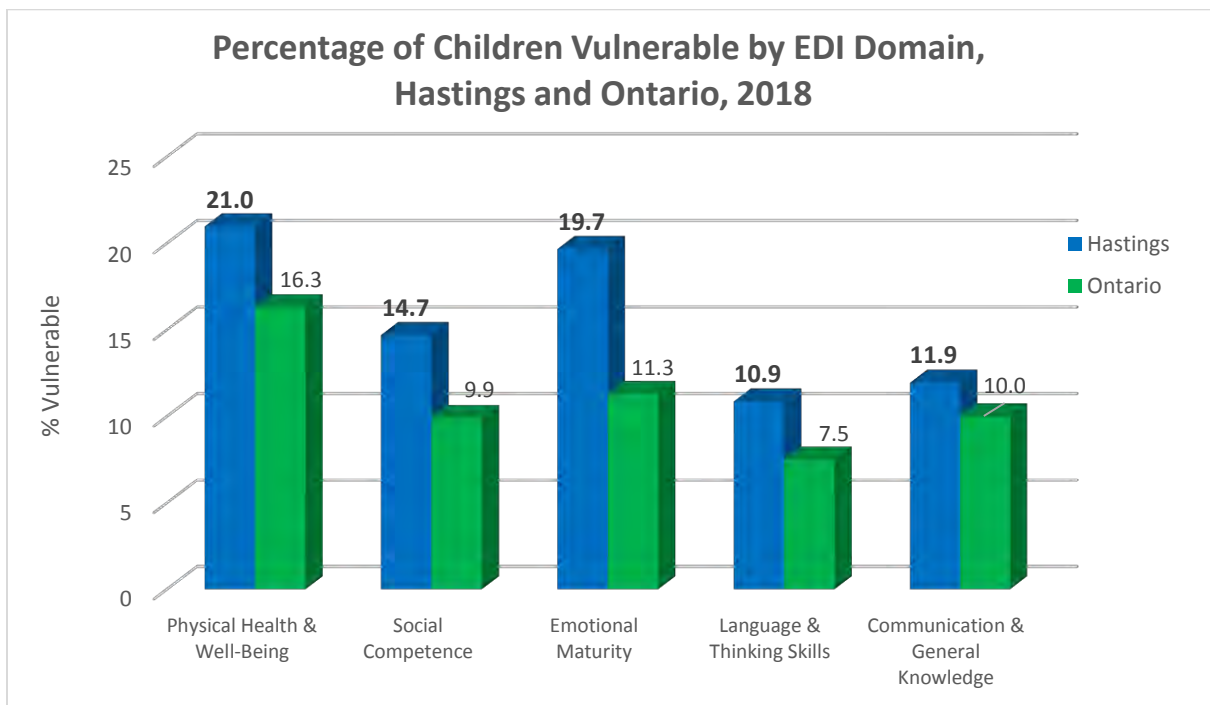


<sup>9</sup> Offord Centre for Child Studies (undated). Objectives of the National EDI Research Program Available at: <https://edi.offordcentre.com/about/what-is-the-edi/>

Hastings children also had higher vulnerability in every domain: physical health and well-being, social competence, emotional maturity, language and cognitive development, and communication skills and general knowledge. Furthermore, the 2018 results indicated that developmental challenges have increased with each round of EDI completion since 2009.



Children are considered to be “vulnerable” if they score below the 10<sup>th</sup> percentile cut-off of the Ontario baseline population. Higher vulnerability indicates a greater percentage of children are struggling in that community. Refer to Appendix E for detailed reports of the EDI.



The EDI provides a snap shot of how well a neighbourhood supports the development of young children. The map following, demonstrates that Hastings County, vulnerability varies by neighbourhood. In all except one neighbourhood, at least ¼ of the children are vulnerable.

Kindergarten educators who completed the EDI questionnaires are asked if each child has already been identified as having a special need (e.g. a medical, physical, mental health diagnosis by a doctor, psychologist or assessment by a speech and language pathologist of some other professional). In addition, the educators are also asked if they think that any student has a problem that influences his/her ability to do school work in a regular classroom. In Hastings, there were 300 children (23.2%) with one or more special concern in this way, an increase from 19.1% in 2015.



EDI research shows that vulnerability in kindergarten is related to: lower scores on provincial standardized tests, greater likelihood of having Special Needs status later, and greater risk of not graduating from secondary school. Research has shown that attending high quality early childhood education programs, such as child care, may be an effective approach **to improving children’s developmental** outcomes, since children who attend such programs have lower rates of vulnerability. The researchers concluded **that** “engagement with preschool

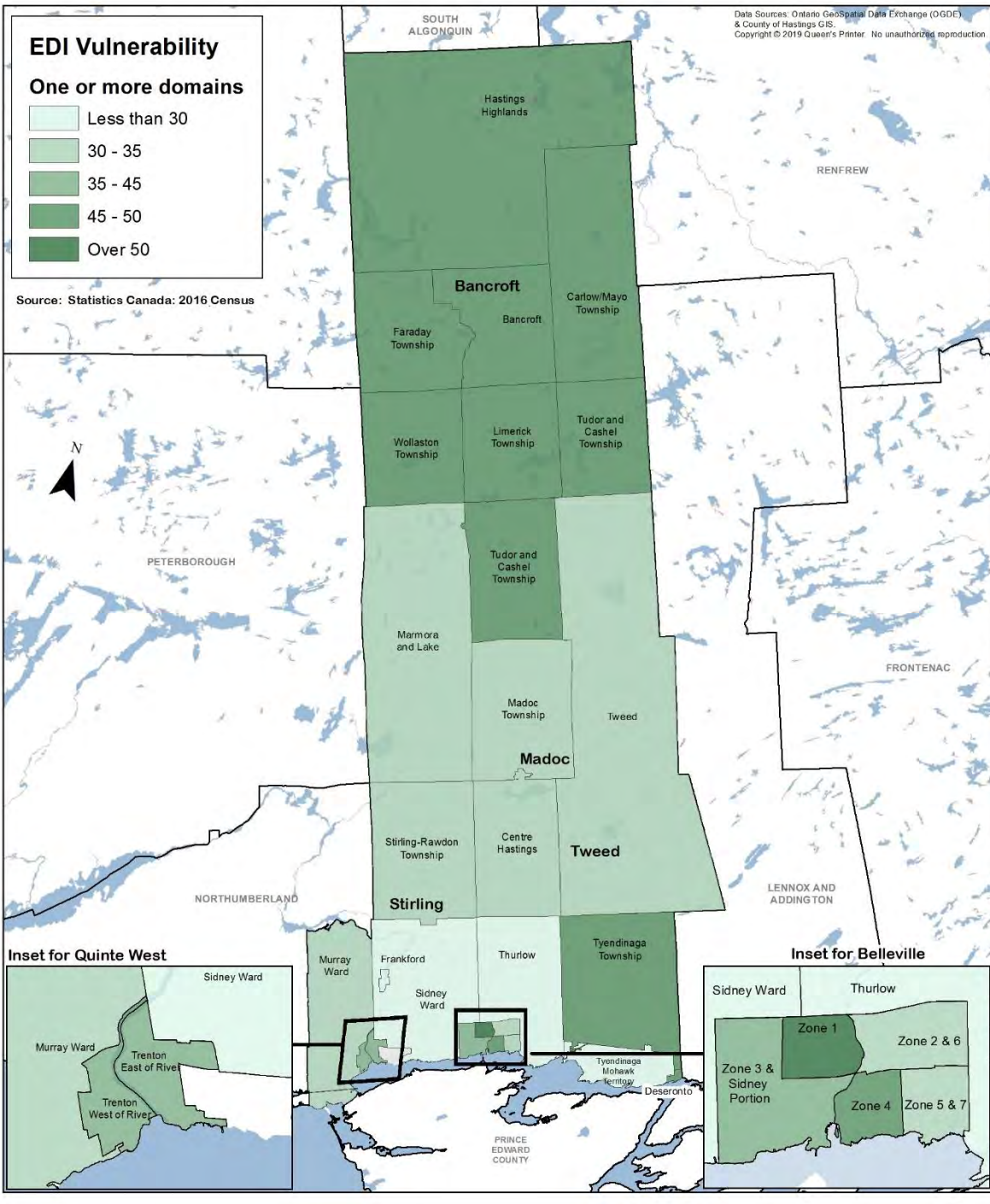
programs may present a plausible, equitable, and modifiable approach to improving children’s developmental outcomes.”<sup>10</sup>

This research combined with the EDI results in Hastings County suggest that greater support for licensed child care and greater availability may be key to increasing the developmental health of children.

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<sup>10</sup> Goldfeld, S. et al. (2016). The role of preschool in promoting children’s healthy development: Evidence from an Australian population cohort. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 35, 2: 40-48. Available at: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0885200615300144>

# Neighbourhood Vulnerability EDI on one or more domains



## Components of the Service System Plan

The recommendations below are structured to support the four (4) themes that are discussed in the plan: accessibility, affordability, quality and responsiveness. Although each one will be analyzed separately, the interaction and the connections between them must be acknowledged. A fifth component that will be considered **for recommendations is the “administrative burden” for CMSM’s. The Ontario Municipal Social Services Association (OMSSA) prepared a report in early 2019 outlining their recommendations to support Ontario’s Child Care Plan. Within this report, reducing administrative and reporting burdens was noted. Hastings County has prepared recommendations locally to support reducing the administrative burden which will in turn support what was heard by licensed child care providers.**

The recommendations below come from the parents, service providers and municipal leaders whom staff heard from. Key themes were identified within the 418 number of parent surveys and countless key informants and focus groups. The recommendations are based on achievable and realistic goals for the department in addition to advocating for continuous supports and funding to support children and families in Hastings County.

### Accessibility: What does this mean?

Access to early care and education means that parents, with reasonable effort and affordability, can enroll their child in an arrangement that **supports the child’s development and meets the parents’ needs.**<sup>11</sup> Increasing access to early years programs gives families more opportunity to benefit from high-quality early childhood programs and services.<sup>12</sup>

Access to child care relies on quality programs that are affordable, but conveniently located and available for parents, within a system that is simple to navigate. The full inclusion of children with special needs and the inclusion of the racial, cultural, ethnic and family structure diversity in our communities is key to an accessible system.<sup>13</sup> Responding to this diversity is also a measure of responsiveness.

All children must have equitable access to programs to participate fully in education, care and community. Early childhood education and care programs should have an inclusion policy that



<sup>11</sup> Friese, S., Lin, V., Forry, N. & Tout, K. (2017). *Defining and Measuring Access to High Quality Early Care and Education: A Guidebook for Policymakers and Researchers*. OPRE Report #2017-08. Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Available at:

[https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/opre/ccepra\\_access\\_guidebook\\_final\\_508\\_22417\\_b508.pdf](https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/opre/ccepra_access_guidebook_final_508_22417_b508.pdf)

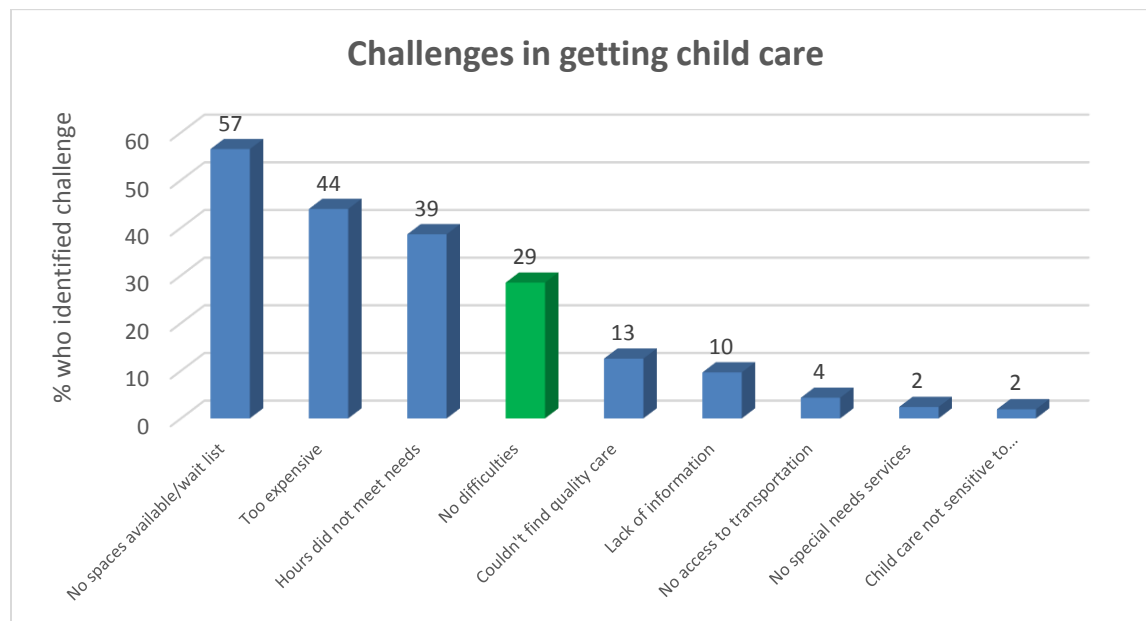
<sup>12</sup> Ministry of Education (2017). *Ontario’s Renewed Early Years and Child Care Policy Framework*.

<sup>13</sup> Unifor (2017). *Early Years and Child Care: Good for Equality, Good for the Economy: Submission to the Ontario Consultation on an Early Years and Child Care Strategy*. Available at:

[https://www.unifor.org/sites/default/files/brief-statements/unifor\\_submission\\_to\\_the\\_ontario\\_consultation\\_childcare\\_en.pdf](https://www.unifor.org/sites/default/files/brief-statements/unifor_submission_to_the_ontario_consultation_childcare_en.pdf)

states the anti-discriminatory policies for enrolment, **children’s behaviour, and programming in the centre.** Service agencies must also have access to the supports they need to meet all **children’s needs. In many settings, resource consultants are available to support staff in inclusion efforts.**<sup>14</sup>

What service providers, parents and caregivers said about [accessibility](#):



Accessibility to child care is a large issue in Hastings County. Parents identified that finding available space for child care was the most challenging concern, especially in relation to infant care.

*"...We are currently thinking about our next child and are concerned about finding a space."*

Parent Survey, 2019

Other important accessibility challenges (besides affordability and quality which will be discussed subsequently) that parents raised included:

- difficulties in finding child care that meets non-regular work hours
- lack of information about child care and early years services and programs
- complicated registration processes
- transportation issues (including problems with public transit and lack of transportation)
- lack of child care services in their community or close to home/work, and the recognition of child care deserts (areas in Hastings County where there are no services)
- stigma based on social class, family structure and developmental or behavioural challenges

<sup>14</sup> Underwood, K. (2013). Everyone Is Welcome: Inclusive Early Childhood Education and Care. Available at: <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/childcare/underwood.pdf>

## What accessibility would look like:

- Adequate licensed child care spaces for all ages of young children
- Programming is provided for children with special needs and/or other vulnerable populations/communities, including rural and isolated areas
- Readily available information about licensed child care and early years programs
- Choices regarding flexible hours, extended hours, and part-time child care
- Increased availability of special needs resourcing
- Good connections to other community services
- Awareness of service providers to the individual needs of all families and children
- Service gaps are addressed by programs

*"More information needs to be readily available. More needs to be done when it comes to advertising and letting people know what services are available."*

Parent Survey, 2019



## Strategic Priorities and Measurement Indicators

Accessibility	
<i>Strategic Priority</i>	<i>Indicator</i>
Support expansion of licensed child care including infant and before and after school spaces in Hastings County, in particular in Quinte West, Belleville, Deseronto and North Hastings	<p>Number of new licensed child care spaces in identified areas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of new before and after school programs</li> <li>• Number of new infant spaces</li> <li>• Number of new licensed child care programs</li> </ul>
Support the expansion of home-based licensed child care in all areas, in particular, Tyendinaga, Deseronto, and North Hastings	Number of new home-based licensed child care providers
Create an awareness campaign locally regarding early years programs and services including EarlyON through all venues of media	<p>Increased parent knowledge of EarlyONs and early years programs</p> <p>Increased participation in EarlyON programs</p> <p>Number of people reached by the various media campaigns</p>
Support improved public access to Hastings County website and information about licensed child care and early years programs	<p>Families reporting increased knowledge about child care and early years programs through various community engagement processes</p> <p>Creation of a tool to measure hits on <b>Hastings County Children's Services page</b></p>
Encourage service providers to consider flexible and extended hours to support working families, and part-time child care	<p>Number of child care providers with flexible and extended hours</p> <p>Number of child care providers with part-time options</p> <p>Expanded hours for child care</p>
Continue to advocate for increased financial needs of children with special needs	Number of hours of service reported from Service Provider
Professional Development for SNR Consultants	<p>Reported funding increases to support additional SNR consultants</p> <p>Number of professional development opportunities related to SNR</p>



## Affordability: What does this mean?

Affordability has been acknowledged as the main barrier to access for parents.<sup>15</sup>

According to Cleveland, licensed child care can be said to be “affordable” if a family can access it for their 0-6 year-old children for less than 10% of after-tax, after-benefit family income. If licensed child care costs 10% to 19.99% of net family income, we call it “unaffordable”. If purchasing licensed child care costs 20% or more of total family income after taxes and benefits, licensed child care is “completely unaffordable” for that family.<sup>11</sup>



Without child care fee subsidy, given the average cost of centre-based child care, even for one child, only 3% of parents with children 0 – 5 can afford infant care, fewer than 9% could afford care for their toddler, and preschool care would be affordable by slightly over 10% of parents.

According to the 2016 Census, the median after-tax income of families with children 0 - 5 in the Belleville CMA in 2015 was \$62,901. For most families in Hastings County, licensed centre-based care is unaffordable. This lack of affordability is especially an issue for lone parents of young children, whose median after-tax income in 2015 was \$39,916.

## What service providers, parent and caregivers said about affordability:

Affordability was the second most identified challenge parents identified with regards to child care.

*Affordability of programs is an issue. The cost is ridiculous.*

Parent Survey, 2019

Many parents raised concerns about the lack of affordability of child care, and their preference for licensed care but their inability to access it because of the cost. Those parents who accessed child care fee subsidy expressed stressed the importance of that program and gratitude about its availability:

*“Child care subsidy is extremely important and needed in this community. I would not have been able to afford daycare for two children without receiving subsidy. It allowed me to have a career and provide a home for my children.”*

Parent Survey, 2019

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<sup>15</sup> Cleveland, G. (2018). Affordable for all: Making licensed child care affordable in Ontario. Available at: <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/childcare/affordable-for-all-en.pdf>

Parents also suggested that awareness of fee subsidies need to be increased. A further proposal from parents was that a fee affordability strategy be developed that considers not just income but also other factors, such as age and number of children, other expenses, and student status.

Service providers had some additional points to make about affordability. Struggling with both **their increasing costs and the importance of child care affordability, they spoke of a “delicate balance”**. They also acknowledged the importance of recognizing the importance of early child education and the necessity of compensating early childhood educators adequately. The role of the government in wage enhancement and the General Operating Grants is crucial.

Clearly, affordability of child care requires a systems approach.

**Strategic Priorities and Measurement Indicators**

Affordability	
<i>Strategic Priority</i>	<i>Indicator</i>
Maintain fee subsidies for families	Number of families eligible for fee subsidy. Baseline 2018. Amount of funding allocated to fee subsidy
Advocate that the Province review the funding formula for fee subsidy to allow for more families to be eligible for child care. The Ontario Child Care funding formula has not been updated since 2005	Letter submitted to Ministry of Education regarding fee subsidy
Continue to support licensed child care providers with General Operating Grant (GOG) Funding and Wage Enhancement (WE)	Amount of funding under GOG Amount of funding under WE Percentage increases (or decreases per year) Number of providers receiving GOG and WE

## High-Quality: What does this mean?

In child care and early childhood education, there is often the idea that quality is in the eyes of the beholder. However, organizations such as the Childcare Resource and Research Centre, the Canadian Child Care Federation and UNICEF clearly identify ways that quality in early childhood programs can be defined. For example, in the recent publication by UNICEF, *A World Ready to Learn: Prioritizing quality early childhood education* “quality in pre-primary education is measured by how well the learning environment supports children in gaining the knowledge and skills that will enable them to develop intellectually, physically, socially and emotionally.”<sup>16</sup>



The Childcare Resource and Research Centre uses research to support the idea that staff/caregivers are the most critical factor that determine the quality of child care. Caregivers are the child care. High quality child care should promote sensitive, responsive interactions between children and caregivers that are frequent, individual, personal, and developmentally appropriate, not custodial or academic.<sup>17</sup>

High quality centre-based child care has the following characteristics:

- high adult to child ratios
- stable, consistent caregiving
- small group sizes
- staff/caregivers well-trained in early childhood education
- adequate health, safety and physical environment precautions
- decent wages and working conditions (including support and resources)
- good workplace morale

In home-based child care, support and resources have been shown to be associated with high quality child care.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> UNICEF (2019). *A World Ready to Learn: Prioritizing quality early childhood education*. Available at: <https://www.unicef.org/media/51746/file>

<sup>17</sup> Childcare Resource and Research Centre (undated). *What does research tell us about quality in child care?* Available at: <https://www.childcarecanada.org/sites/default/files/fs2.pdf>

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

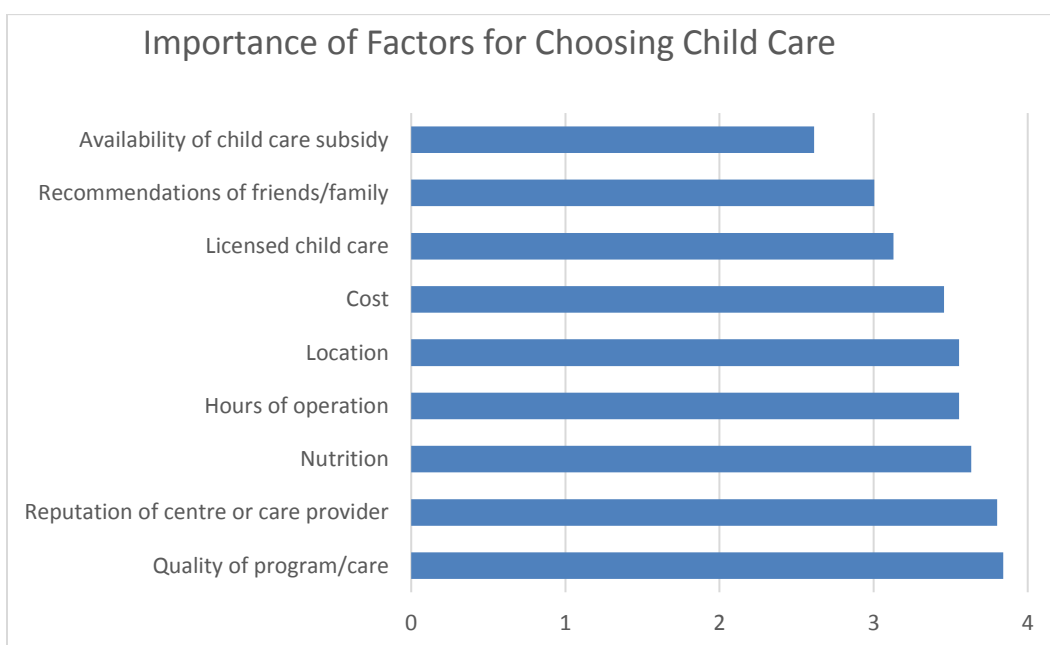
These characteristics are fostered by adequate public funding, and a good system of regulation, such as:

- the health and safety requirements set out in the Child Care and Early Years Act 2014
- Programming and pedagogy is consistent with *How Does Learning Happen? (HDLH?)*: **Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years, and reflects the view of children as competent, capable, curious and rich in potential.**
- Provide capacity building opportunities to engage child care and early years staff in ongoing professional learning.

What service providers, parent and caregivers said about quality:

*"The most consistent indicator of quality is consistent staff."*

Key Informant Interview, 2019



The above graph identifies that the most important factors identified by parents in choosing child care are quality of the program and reputation of the provider. How parents define quality is unknown; however, through key informant interviews with service providers, all identified nurturing responsive relationships with the child and family, professional trained staff, and a welcoming and safe environment as identifiers of quality.

*"It seems that if staff are paid a quality wage and feel valued, the better the programming is for our children."*

Parent Survey

Parents also provided some insights:

- Staff has nurturing, responsive relationships/conversations with kids and parents/families
- Programming and information are consistent
- Best possible environment, including outdoor space is created
- Programming and activities are based on *HDLH?* There is a holistic approach is taken towards the child/family/values
- Staff are knowledgeable, well trained and passionate about children
- Children are engaged and stimulated
- Documentation is kept and made available to parents
- Staff are mindful and reflective

*"Having quality professional RECEs is very important and to maintain growth in wages for RECEs. Professional pay for professional work that is an essential service in our communities."*

Parent Survey

## Strategic Priorities and Measurement Indicators

Quality	
<i>Strategic Priority</i>	<i>Indicator</i>
Support licensed and unlicensed home child care providers with professional development opportunities (specific for ages 6-12) in Hastings County	Number of professional development opportunities per year <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of unlicensed home providers who attend professional development opportunities yearly</li> <li>• Creation of a data base of non-licensed home child care providers</li> </ul>
Create a forum for non-licensed child care home providers to access information, professional development opportunities and updates related to early years	Development of a social media forum/ link to <b>Hastings County Children's Services website</b> for current information and resources. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of non-licensed home providers accessing information</li> </ul>
Continue to support the Quality Initiatives Coordinator to provide mentorship in HDLH? learning approaches	Number of mentoring relationships Number of visits to child care centres Attendance at Communities of Practice Number of professional learning opportunities

## Responsiveness: What does this mean?

Responsive engagement with families is built upon a platform of respectful relationships, so that relationships of mutual trust can be developed. A responsive early childhood educator should **be sensitive to children's uniqueness, providing learning experiences that are guided by children's interests, support social, emotional and cognitive development, and which sustain children's innate desire to learn.**<sup>19</sup>



Ontario's Renewed Early Years and Child Care Policy Framework states that responsiveness entails "providing a range of early years and child care programs that are inclusive and culturally appropriate . . . so that parents, including parents who work irregular hours – can choose the options that work best for their family."<sup>20</sup> Programs and services will reflect:

- diverse needs of children and families in the community and provide families with more choice and flexibility for their child care options.
- reflect cultural and/or linguistic diversity, geography, and demands or gaps in programs and services.

### What service providers, parent and caregivers said about responsiveness:

- "Judge-free zone" – no stigma
- Accommodation
- **Recognition that "family" has changed**
- Staff must be reflective, authentic and trained
- Flexibility in programming to allow for cultural differences
- Recognition of the importance of indigenous programming
- Child care and early education programs are culturally responsive to newcomers, and all families and children, including Indigenous and Francophone families and children
- Need for Francophone resources and French speaking staff
- Different materials should be available e.g literacy levels, other languages other than French or English as needed, and family structure.

*"Key Informant Must meet parents where they are at with their cultures"*

Key Informant Interview, 2019

<sup>19</sup> Lally & Mangione, 2006, cited in Respectful relationships and responsive engagement: Evidence Paper. Available at: <https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/childhood/providers/edcare/respectrelns.pdf>

<sup>20</sup> Ontario's Renewed Early Years and Child Care Policy Framework (2017), p. 17.

## Strategic Priorities and Measurement Indicators

Responsiveness	
<i>Strategic Priority</i>	<i>Indicator</i>
Advocate for additional Indigenous-led EarlyON funding to support further outreach into the community	Increased funding for Indigenous programs (Journey Together) with baseline funding at 2018
Advocate and apply for funding opportunities to support enhanced services for francophone children and families	Number of applications made to various funders for francophone services Amount of funding secured
Encourage reflective practice to incorporate cultural and family diversity	Inclusion of a minimum of one reflective practice focused on cultural and family diversity

## Administrative Burden: What does this mean?

Administrative burden has been previously defined as an individual's experience of policy implementation as onerous.<sup>21</sup> There are "costs" of administrative burden, both for the CMSMs and for service providers. These burdens may be

- learning costs that arise from engaging in processes to collect and provide information
- psychological costs including stresses of dealing with administrative processes
- compliance costs or the burdens of following administrative rules and requirements.<sup>11</sup>



## What we heard from service providers?

- Service providers indicated that there was a huge burden on the collection of data
- formulas and spreadsheets are too complex
- Need for increased support to complete complex financials
- Stress of dealing with the administrative processes

<sup>21</sup> Moynihan, D. Herd, P. & Harvey, H. (2014). Administrative Burden: Learning, Psychological, and Compliance Costs in Citizen-State Interactions. JPART 25:43–69. Available at: <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/d1ac/965b3706965c899c53e21fb54265931e88b4.pdf>

## Strategic Priorities and Measurement Indicators

Administration	
<i>Strategic Priority</i>	<i>Indicator</i>
Advocate that the Ministry increase the <b>CMSM's flexibility</b> and decision making around various funding portfolios that will allow the CMSM to make decisions based on the needs of children and families	Ministry action required
Support in reducing duplication in data reporting, aligning federal and provincial reporting and ensuring the same data is being requested across programs, with consistent definitions, language and reporting methods <sup>22</sup>	<p>Reduced data reports (EFIS reporting)</p> <p>Reduced duplication of data entry in multiple reporting documents to the Ministry of Education.</p> <p>Improved upgrades to OCCMS</p> <p>Improvement of reporting system used (EFIS)</p> <p><i>*The above require Ministry action</i></p>
Continue to provide professional development to service providers and internal staff for business and financial practices	<p>Amount of professional development opportunities (informal meetings)</p> <p>Feedback from Service Providers</p>
Simplify data collection and reporting for Service Providers to account for the funding they receive	<p>Number of hours being spent on data collection (internal and external)</p> <p>Feedback from Service Providers</p>

<sup>22</sup> OMSSA (2019). Executive Summary Children's Services Summit



## Conclusion

Hastings County is committed to a responsive child care and early years system for our 18,240 children ages 0-12. Based on recent data, children continue to require supports in all areas of development including physical health and well-being, social competence, emotional maturity, language, cognitive development and communication skills.

Additional licensed child care spaces in Hastings County, especially in Quinte West, Bancroft and Deseronto/Tyendinaga Township, are required in order to support families. One of the key reasons for additional care is related to the most recent announcements of employment opportunities in Hastings County.

Parents and child care providers have told Hastings **County Children's Services that there are** not enough child care spaces in particular infant and before and after school programs. Parents are desperate and are faced with making difficult and stressful decisions for themselves and their children. Child care operators talk very openly about long wait list and distraught parents who struggle to find alternate means of care.

Many families have also expressed the need for extended hours of care and/or part time care due to non-traditional employment. This type of care is difficult to access leaving little choice for families.

**Hastings County's goal is to see children succeed in all aspects of their development.** The EDI results show that Hastings County children are vulnerable in all domains when compared to the rest of the province. Evidence shows that children require support before entering kindergarten and having more access to affordable daycare and opportunities for children to attend EarlyON programs is essential for their developmental health and well-being.

Advocating for continued support for children with special needs and the need for the province to review the current funding formula to allow more families to be eligible for child care is necessary. This formula has not been updated since 2005 and is essential in order for families to be able to afford child care.

Over the course of the next five years, Hastings County will continue to be responsive to the changing environment and work with its community partners to achieve a realistic approach to meeting the needs of families and children.

*"Great things happen when we work together to engage and support children to become confident and courageous individuals."*

*Children's Services, 2018*

## Appendices

### Appendix A: Licensed Child Care Centres in Hastings County

Belleville & Area	Care Available			
Abigails Learning Centre Inc.	Infant	Toddler	Preschool	
Albert College Preschool			Preschool	
BCI /Quinte Secondary School Child Care Centre	Infant	Toddler	Preschool	
Belleville Montessori School			Preschool	
YMCA of Central East		Toddler	Preschool	School age
Catundra Day Care Centre	Infant	Toddler	Preschool	
Community Partners for Success Child Care and Resource Centre	Infant	Toddler	Preschool	
First Adventure - Belleville and District Children's Services	Infant	Toddler	Preschool	School Age
Kinder Learning Centres -Belleville East		Toddler	Preschool	School Age
Little Rascals	Infant	Toddler	Preschool	School Age
Minds On Child Care Centre	Infant	Toddler	Preschool	
Military Family Resource Centre - Belleville Site	Infant	Toddler	Preschool	
Nova Children's Centre	Infant	Toddler	Preschool	School Age
OMNI Learning Centre			Preschool	
Seeds to Sprouts	Infant	Toddler	Preschool	School Age
The New Old School House Day Care	Infant	Toddler	Preschool	School Age
<b>Quinte West Area</b>				
Kinder Learning Centres - Trenton East	Infant	Toddler	Preschool	School Age
Ecole l'Envol Programme Petits pas a trois - Garderie préscolaire		Toddler	Preschool	
Cite-Jeunesse Programme Bambin/Préscolaire -Daycare	Infant	Toddler	Preschool	
Stirling Co-operative Nursery School (Little Sprouts)			Preschool	
Trenton Christian School Little Sparks Preschool			Preschool	
Trenton Children's Centre			Preschool	
Trenton Military Family Resource Centre	Infant	Toddler	Preschool	School Age
MFRC Bilingual Child Care - Frankford Public School		Toddler	Preschool	
<b>Central Hastings Area</b>				
Bright Beginnings of Tweed	Infant	Toddler	Preschool	School Age
Central Hastings Early Education and Childcare	Infant	Toddler	Preschool	School Age
Children's Nursery Centre (Marmora)		Toddler	Preschool	
<b>Bancroft &amp; Area</b>				
North Hastings Children's Services	Infant	Toddler	Preschool	

For detailed information, visit <http://www.hastingscounty.com/services/social-services/childrens-services>

## Appendix B: Key Informants

### **Abigail's Centre, Mary Mask, Executive Director, February 25, 2019**

Algonquin and Lakeshore Catholic District School Board, Sarah Cassidy, Special Assignment Teacher (Early Years, Equity, Social Justice, Social Inclusion, and Religion) April 8, 2019

Anishinaabe Baptiste Community Organization, Journey Together, Ada Tinney, Elder, April 3, 2019

Central Hastings Early Education and Child Care (Marmora), Sarah Reed, Executive Director, March 8, 2019

Community Development Council of Quinte, Ruth Ingersoll, Executive Director, February 5, 2019

Family Space, Kelly Mathieson, Executive Director, and Diana Beatty, Resource Consultant, Special Needs Resourcing

First Adventure, Debbie Milne, Executive Director, March 7, 2019

Hastings and Prince Edward District School Board, Heather McMaster, Early Years Lead, April 5, 2019

Hastings Prince Edward Public Health, Shelly Brown, Healthy Growth and Development Program Manager, February 7, 2019

Hastings and Prince Edward Learning Foundation, Maribeth DeSnoo, Executive Director, February 11, 2019

### **Hastings County, Children's Services Department, Cathy Utman, Manager, April 12, 2019**

Highland Shores CAS, Tami Callahan, Executive Director, April 2, 2019

Loyalist College, Jennifer DeGroot, Professor, Early Childhood Education Program, April 15, 2019

New Old Schoolhouse Daycare Inc, Alba Siciliani, Executive Director, February 20, 2019

Trenton Military Family Resource Centre, Denise Boucher, Daycare Director, Tamara Kleinschmidt, Executive Director, **Children's Program/Home Childcare Coordinator, February 22, 2019**

### **North Hastings Children's Services, Jessica Anderson, Executive Director, April 1, 2019**

United Way of Hastings Prince Edward, Brandi Hodge, Executive Director, March 8, 2019

YMCA, Belleville, Kerry Vadneau, Supervisor (emailed)

## Appendix C:

### Focus Groups

**Abigail's Centre, Parent Group, February 25, 2019 (5)**

**Children's Services Department, Community and Human Services, March 19, 2019 (8)**

Communities of Practice, Early Learning Child Care Providers, March 19, 2019 (10)

EarlyON Team Lead Meeting, March 21, 2019 (8)

Family Space, Home Licensed Child Care, Communities of Practice, March 19, 2019 (16)

Housing Services, Community and Human Services, County of Hastings, February 21, 2019 (3)

**Hastings County, Children's Services Department, Before and After School Program, April 5, 2019 (12)**

Ontario Works, Community and Human Services, Quinte West Office, Team Meeting, March 6, 2018 (16)

Ontario Works, Community and Human Services, Belleville, Team Meeting, March 20, 2019 (17)

Trenton Military Family Resource Centre, EarlyON Home Child Care Providers, April 4, 2019 (4)

### Municipalities: Delegations

Stirling Rawdon, March 4, 2019 (5)

Town of Deseronto, March 13, 2019 (6)

Tyendinaga Township, March 18, 2019 (12)

Township of Madoc, March 20, 2019 (7)

Municipality of Hastings Highlands, April 5, 2019 (30)

## Appendix D: Bookmark Distribution

Algonquin and Lakeshore District School Board (Social media and Distributed through school newsletters, various)

Community Day, March Break Event, Bancroft, March 15, 2019 (distributed)

Community Development Council of Quinte, 1200 Good Boxes (1200 distributed)

Community Services Network Group (emailed)

Family Space Quinte (distributed and social media)

GH Manufacturing (emailed) 100 staff, 30 contract

Hastings County Community and Human Services Staff (emailed and distributed)

Hastings County (social media)

Hastings and Prince Edward Counties, Public Health (emailed and distributed)

Highland Shores CAS (emailed and distributed)

Madoc/Central Hastings Brown Bag Network (emailed)

Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) (emailed and distributed)

Trenton Interagency Network (emailed)

Town of Deseronto (social media)

Proctor and Gamble, Belleville (480 employees – emailed)