

CWELCC expansion in Peel

Questions and answers

These Q&As are intended to support newly licensed child care providers who are opening new child care spaces in Peel or new child care providers planning to expand in Peel Region.

Please visit our website for more information on Peel’s CWELCC Multi-Year Expansion Plan and Application.

If you have any questions not found in this document, please contact your Early Years Specialist or email at: EarlyYearsSystemDivision@peelregion.ca.

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| CWELCC expansion | 2 |
| CWELCC expansion application process | 3 |
| How are applications approved?..... | 6 |
| Start-up Grant..... | 6 |
| Benchmarks | 6 |
| Ineligible settings / age groups | 7 |
| Equipping & furnishing | 7 |
| Minor Renovation..... | 8 |
| Maximum group size | 9 |
| Expenditures | 10 |
| Project planning and implementation | 11 |

CWELCC expansion

1. How were Peel's priority communities identified and will they change?

- Peel's priority communities were identified using child care demand data (which considered multi-generational homes, lone parent households, immigration, ethnicity, income, housing costs/conditions, health, employment, education, and crime) as well as using the well-being/vulnerability indicators from the [Neighborhood Information Tool](#). Data was used from Statistics Canada over the last 5 years.
- We have updated the targets for the priority communities based on our expansion to date. This means that expansion in some priority communities will be paused as targets have been achieved and other communities can be the focus of expansion.
- To support you in identifying the priority communities open for expansion:
 - Refer to the CWELCC expansion map for priority communities on our [website](#)
 - Use the [EYCC Mapping Tool](#). We will be updating the tool regularly so you will know where there is still a need for child care spaces.

2. Why is Peel Region only accepting applications from non-profit providers or home child care?

- After our first application window closed on August 31, 2023, our data shows that we will need to prioritize not-for-profit expansion to meet the ministry's auspice requirement.
- Beginning November 30, 2023 we are accepting applications from not-for-profit providers and licensed home child care agencies, and pausing applications from for-profit providers.

3. When will for-profits be able to apply? How long will the applications be paused for-profits?

- We recognize that there may be interest from for-profits to apply to CWELCC expansion.
- We will monitor our data related to our auspice target for expansion and continue to keep the Ministry informed on our ability to meet the provincial auspice target. We will update the sector on any changes to this requirement.

4. Is there funding available to support not-for-profit providers to expand? (Non-profit only)

- We recognize that there are barriers not-for-profits may experience when considering whether to apply to CWELCC Expansion.
- We continue to advocate to the Ministry share details on the new provincial 2024 funding formula, operational funding to support viability and expansion, and to release details of the [federal *Early Learning and Child Care Infrastructure Fund*](#).

5. Can child care providers set their own child care fees in the CWELCC program?

- The Ministry of Education has established regional maximums for child care fees in the *Child Care and Early Years Act* (CCEYA).
- Peel Region's role as service system manager is to ensure the effective use of public funding.
- If you are a child care provider licensed after March 27, 2022, applying through the CWELCC Expansion Application Process we will work with you to establish your approved base fee.

6. Is Peel approving new sites or only providers that have CWELCC already?

- Yes, Peel is approving applications for both new sites/providers and for existing providers who are interested in expanding sites. After receiving Peel's approval the Ministry will approve licenses for both new and existing providers as long as licensing requirements have been met.

CWELCC expansion application process

7. Can I apply if I am planning to open in an area that is not located in a priority community?

- We are giving priority to applications that are planning to open in any of Peel's priority communities or within a 2-kilometre radius of a priority community.
- Refer to our [website](#) and the CWELCC Expansion Plan for the list of priority communities in Peel.
- We have updated our [mapping tool](#) which you can use to support you with determining where your proposed project is in relation to our identified priority communities.

- If you are opening in a community that is not priority community, you may be placed on wait list and we will monitor our targets and communicate any changes to you.
- Note: home child care agencies are encouraged but not required to open homes in a priority community. We will work with home child care agencies on expansion planning targets.

8. Can we apply to the CWELCC Expansion program if we want to expand our JK/SK spaces?

- To support the needs of families, we are only approving the expansion of spaces for infant, toddler, and preschool age groups.
- Our current data shows that Peel has sufficient spaces in our system to meet the need of the older age categories at this time. We will continue to re-evaluate system data to inform our direction.
- Consideration may be given in some instances, such as those who were licensed for these spaces before January 1, 2023 (when the Ministry announced changes to licensing) or those who were approved for these spaces before we released our Expansion Plan on July 25, 2023.

9. What do I need to submit to Peel Region to participate in CWELCC?

- You will need to indicate any revisions to your licence or new licence in CCLS before completing the Peel CWELCC Expansion Application Form on our [website](#).

10. Can we apply now if our new site is scheduled to start being built in 2024-2025?

- Yes, we will be looking at applications that will be licensed and opened by December 31, 2026.
- Starting November 30, 2023 we're accepting applications continuously from non-profit centre-based providers and home child care agencies, and pausing applications from for-profit providers

11. When will I know if my application is approved?

- We are accepting Expansion Applications starting November 30, 2023 on an ongoing basis and will need up to 4 weeks to review.
- If you are approved through our Expansion Application process, you will receive a letter of approval and have one week to sign and return to Peel Region.

- We will then approve your participation into CWELCC through CCLS and you will receive notification in CCLS to move on to the next steps in the licensing process.
- We will start the contract execution process for your CWELCC funding once your licence is approved and your site is operational.
- If your application is not approved, you will be put on a waitlist. We will contact you if your application status changes.

12. We are interested in opening a new child care site in Peel but waiting on zoning approval. Can we apply for CWELCC expansion in the mean time?

- As part of Step 1 in the Peel [CWELCC Expansion Plan](#) it is important to do your research.
- It is important that you apply to Peel Region to ensure you are approved for CWELCC expansion before seeking zoning or site plan approvals or entering into a lease agreement.
- As part of your research, you should consult your local municipal Planning and Development Services to understand bylaw and zoning requirements as applicable:
 - [Planning and building online services - City of Mississauga](#)
 - [City of Brampton | Planning & Development | Planning & Development](#)
 - [Building Permits - Town of Caledon](#)
- If you are not approved for CWELCC or are placed on a waitlist, you can then decide whether you still wish to proceed with your project.

13. Can Peel support the application process for building permits or zoning documentation?

- Providers are responsible for managing this process with local municipalities. Staff have engaged local municipalities to explore opportunities to support licensed child care expansion. Discussions include reviewing potential barriers to expansion in municipal policies and processes, and identifying available public assets that are suitable for child care. Staff will continue to partner with our local municipalities to support expansion.

How are applications approved?

14. What is the Service Delivery Area (SDA) that is being used to assess my application?

- The SDA is a smaller community within the Review Area and is your local community/geography.
- Data at the SDA level helps with local planning of programs such as early years and child care.
- We will assess applications against Peel Region specific criteria based on the SDA for your proposed project. Refer to the CWELCC Expansion Plan for more information.

15. Will my application be denied if I do not pay high staff wages?

- We are assessing the base wages (without grants such as WEG and GOF) paid to Registered Early Childhood Educators (RECEs) to support the recruitment and retention of these staff in the sector, our service system priorities, and to the living wage.
- Research shows that higher-paid staff is associated with higher staff retention/recruitment through higher base wages and improved program quality.
- You are not required to pay this amount to staff; we are assessing and prioritizing how closely the base wages you pay to staff align to the [GTA 2023 living wage](#) of \$25.05/hr. We recognize that providers may have varying costs associated with operating child care program.

Note: We also review applications to assess if the new spaces improve access to child care and improve inclusion for underrepresented groups.

Start-up Grant

Benchmarks

16. If my centre uses an alternate capacity for one or more of the licensed child care rooms, how will my Start-up Grant allocation be calculated?

- Peel Region calculates the Start-up Grant allocation based on the number of infant, toddler, and preschool spaces noted in your CWELCC expansion application.
- Your allocation may be reconciled to reflect the licensed capacity as it appears in Schedule 1 of your licence issued by the Ministry of Education for spaces created for infant, toddler and preschool age groups.

- For example, if you apply for 48 preschool spaces but are eventually licenced for fewer preschool spaces, your allocation may be adjusted accordingly.

Ineligible settings / age groups

17. Can licensed child care sites in school-based settings be funded through this process?

- School-based child care spaces are not eligible to receive a Start-up Grant.
- Funding requests for the creation of new licensed child care spaces in schools can be accessed through the Province's Capital Priorities program.
 - The Capital Priorities program serves as the primary means for capital funding requests associated with school-based child care centre capital projects that are a part of a larger school capital project.
 - Through this program, projects can be approved that support costs associated with child care centre additions and/or renovation projects in schools.

18. Why aren't new kindergarten and/or Before and After School Program (BASP) spaces eligible to receive the Start-up Grant?

- In alignment with MEDU and local expansion priorities, Peel Region is prioritizing expansion that creates new, community-based full-day licensed spaces for infant, toddler and preschool age groups only.
- We will continue to monitor both service demand and existing capacity for kindergarten and BASP spaces and adjust this decision, if needed.

Equipping & furnishing

19. I am building a new centre, and the construction costs will be funded outside of the Start-up Grant. Can I use the Start-up Grant to furnish and equip the new spaces?

- Yes, the Start-up Grant can be used to furnish and equip new, community-based, full-day spaces created for infant, toddler and preschool age groups within the identified priority communities for expansion in Peel.

20. If I acquire a site that is already operating child care, can I receive a Start-up Grant to equip and furnish the existing spaces and/or make minor renovations?

- The intention of the Start-up Grant is to support the creation of **new** child care spaces for infant, toddler and preschool age groups.
- If you acquire a site that is already operational, you cannot receive a Start-up Grant for those existing spaces.
- However, if you decide to expand and create new spaces at an existing site, you may apply for a Start-up Grant through Peel’s CWELCC Multi-Year Expansion Application process.
 - Please note that the Grant will be calculated based on the number of net new CWELCC spaces created for infant, toddler and preschool age groups, as listed in Schedule 1 of the licence issued by the Ministry of Education.

Minor Renovation

21. “Minor Renovation” is broad. What counts as a Minor Renovation project?

- Minor Renovation projects can involve:
 - Renovations, additions, or repairs to existing spaces to accommodate child care
 - Changes to outdoor play space
 - Leasehold improvements
 - A leasehold improvement is a change made to the interior space of a leased property to meet the operational needs of the child care provider, such as partitioning a large space to create smaller program rooms, flooring, etc.
- We will assess the scale, scope and complexity of your proposed Minor Renovation project based on the project details outlined in your Start-up Grant application, to ensure it is eligible for Start-up funding as outlined by the ministry.
- Depending on the project’s scope, additional accountability measures may be required in terms of required project documentation and reporting.

22. If I am investing money through a mortgage, can I use the Start-up Grant to pay back my mortgage?

- No, the Start-up Grant cannot be used for capital endeavours, such as debt costs (e.g., capital loans or mortgages), the purchase of land, or the cost of construction of new buildings.

23. I am planning on purchasing / leasing an existing building / unit / former child care centre. Can I use the Start-up Grant for renovations to that space?

- The Start-up Grant may be used for Minor Renovations, including leasehold improvements, to prepare an existing space to operate child care or add new licensed child care spaces to existing operations.
- The Grant cannot be used for capital endeavours, such as for the purchase of land, construction of new buildings or debt costs (e.g., capital loans or mortgages).
- We will assess the scale, scope and complexity of your proposed Minor Renovation project based on the project details outlined in your Start-up Grant application, to ensure it is eligible for Start-up funding.

Maximum group size

24. What does it mean to expand to accommodate to a maximum group size?

- Each age grouping has a maximum number of children allowed in a group, as per the CCEYA:
 - Infants: 10 (staff to children ratio: 1:3)
 - Toddlers: 15 (staff to children ratio: 1:5)
 - Preschoolers: 24 (staff to children ratio: 1:8)
- The Start-up Grant should be used to create new licensed spaces that ideally accommodate up to the maximum number of children allowed in a grouping as noted above.
- Based on space limitations, it may be necessary for you to align your expansion to the maximum allowable capacity for each age group that is possible within the available square footage, with consideration to staffing ratios as outlined in the CCEYA. See [Section 16.1\(a\) of the CCEYA](#) for more information on area requirements.

Expenditures

25. If I am approved for a Start-up Grant, do I have to repay it?

- No, the Start-up Grant is not a loan. You do not need to repay the grant, if it is used for eligible expenses, and you meet the following requirements:
 - You are enrolled in CWELCC and participate in the system for the remainder of the current CWELCC agreement (March 31, 2026).
 - You create new community-based, licensed full-day spaces for infant, toddler and preschool age groups in Peel’s priority communities.
 - You expand licensed spaces to accommodate a maximum group size for each age grouping.
 - You spend the grant to open new child care spaces within two years from the date the funding agreement is executed.
 - *For licensed home child care agencies:* You maintain the number of approved child care spaces in the service area for the duration of the CWELCC agreement, even if the home child care agency or capacity of home child care agency changes prior to March 31, 2026.

26. What happens if I opt out of CWELCC, and I have spent some or all the Start-up Grant?

- To be eligible for the Start-up Grant, you must agree to participate in CWELCC until the remainder of the current agreement (March 31, 2026).
- If you choose to opt out of CWELCC before March 31, 2026, and you have spent some or all your Start-up Grant, Peel Region will recover all the funding and return it to the Ministry of Education.

27. Can the Start-up Grant support expenses I have already incurred before I was approved for the grant?

- If you have recently opened new spaces, we encourage you to apply for the Start-up Grant.
- We will review your application and the expenses you have incurred and contact you about your eligibility to receive Start-up funding.
- Eligible expenses incurred prior to project approval may be considered in alignment with the established benchmarks, dependent on project scope and available funding.

Project planning and implementation

28. I am interested in applying for a Start-up Grant, but I am only in the planning stages for my project. Should I still apply if my project will be ready for implementation next year?

- You should apply for a Start-up Grant if you will complete your expansion project within the two-year requirement.
 - *Two-year requirement:* You will have two years from the execution of your funding agreement for the Start-up Grant to complete your expansion project and open your new spaces.
- If you are considering expansion in future years, there will be other opportunities to apply to enrol into Peel Region's CWELCC program and to request Start-up funding. Future opportunities will be communicated to the sector, once available.
- Please be sure to inform Peel Region in a timely manner of any risks related to project progress and/or completion within the required time frame, quality issues or issues affecting the budget.

29. Is there a reconciliation process after the expansion project is completed?

- Yes, you will be required to keep supporting documentation on file for seven years and provide it to Peel Region upon request.
- If you are approved for a Start-up Grant for a Minor Renovation project, you may have additional responsibilities in terms of the reconciliation process which will be outlined in your funding guideline and agreement.