

# County of Lambton Child Care and Early Years Service System Plan 2024-2028



# A MESSAGE FROM THE WARDEN



Lambton County Council is committed to supporting the highest quality care for children, a healthy community for everyone, and innovative approaches to growing our workforce.

Child care facilities provide a point of connection for all members of a family. Having a positive early years experience supports a child's development and resiliency for years to come, impacting their future education experiences and social connections to the community.

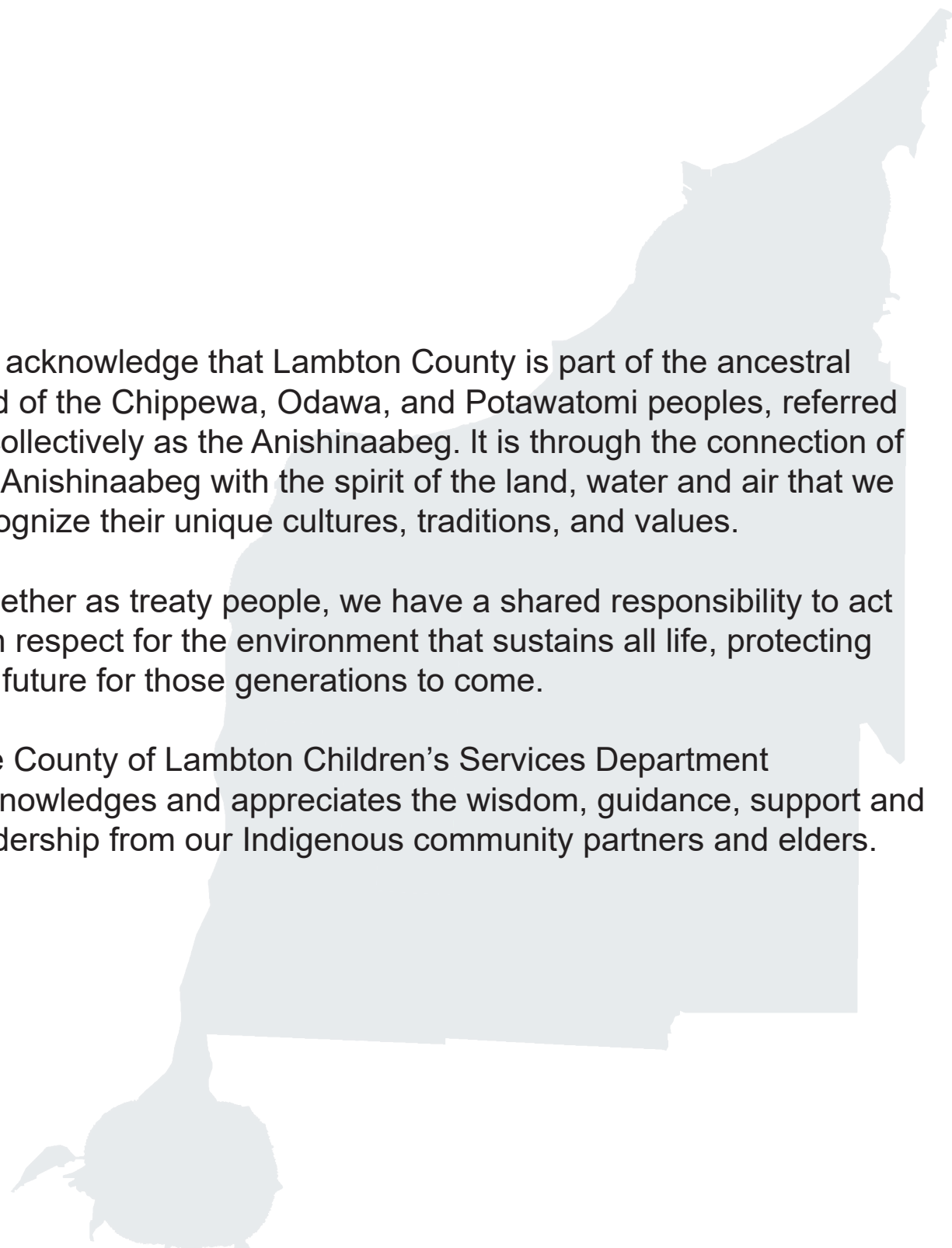
Having confidence that inclusive and accessible care is available changes

how families in our communities can engage in the labour market, training, and education opportunities, while maintaining peace of mind their child is receiving the best experience possible for their own unique needs.

This five-year plan is a commitment to not only the requirements of funding partners, but also to ourselves. It is a commitment to continue our collaborations, innovation, and growth. At the same time, it is a commitment to make sure every child, and every family, feels supported, accepted, and included within our community.

Kevin Marriott  
Lambton County Warden

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF ANCESTRAL LANDS



We acknowledge that Lambton County is part of the ancestral land of the Chippewa, Odawa, and Potawatomi peoples, referred to collectively as the Anishinaabeg. It is through the connection of the Anishinaabeg with the spirit of the land, water and air that we recognize their unique cultures, traditions, and values.

Together as treaty people, we have a shared responsibility to act with respect for the environment that sustains all life, protecting the future for those generations to come.

The County of Lambton Children's Services Department acknowledges and appreciates the wisdom, guidance, support and leadership from our Indigenous community partners and elders.

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# VISION

The County of Lambton, in collaboration with early years and community partners, commits to a child care and early years system that places children and families at the centre of all decisions. A system where all children and families have access to an inclusive system that supports learning, development, and overall well being.





# ACCESS AND INCLUSION

Accessibility involves designing systems to increase access. Being inclusive is about giving equal access and opportunities to all children wherever possible. In the early years sector, this involves reducing and overcoming barriers that might occur, to ensure all children and families have access to a responsive system that meets individual needs.

Ontario's vision for access and inclusion is that more children, of all abilities and socio-economic backgrounds, can actively and meaningfully participate in child care. Planning and collaboration should occur through a lens of access and inclusion that support the needs of diverse and underserved populations, vulnerable families, children with special needs, low-income families, Francophone, Indigenous, Black, other racialized and newcomer communities.

Fundamentally, all priorities and actions of the service plan shall be guided by the principles of access and inclusion, to ensure that every child and family has what they need to succeed by removing barriers that disadvantage some groups over others. Children should have equitable access to early learning opportunities that support them in realizing their capacity as engaged learners who are competent, capable of complex thinking, curious, and rich in potential.



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



## A PARTNERSHIP WITH LAMBTON COUNTY COMMUNITIES

Lambton County works closely with community partners to offer a wide range of child care and early years programs and services to our **16,940** children aged 0 to 12 years and their families.

All children and families should benefit from a child care and early years system that supports children's learning and development and families' overall well being. The County of Lambton, in collaboration with early years and community partners, commits to a child care and early years system that places children and families at the centre of all decisions. A system where all children and families have access to an inclusive system that supports learning, development, and overall well being.

The 2024 to 2028 Child Care and Early Years Service System Plan is an opportunity to continue building a child care and early years system with the community that puts children and families at the centre. The plan provides a common focus and a set of priorities to make sure we continue to support Lambton County's changing needs as a system. It also establishes services for children based on five pillars: **access, affordability, inclusion, quality, and data and reporting**. These pillars reflect the Province's mandate to Lambton County and sets the foundation for our priorities and actions over the next four years.

This plan was created through a collaborative process including robust community engagement with various partners and key informants.



# PRIORITIES

## 1. Access to Service

Create child care and early years services that are accessible, inclusive, and dependable.

## 2. Workforce, Retention, and Recruitment

Support the attraction and retention of an early years and child care workforce.

## 3. Collaborate for System Planning

Work together through ongoing collaboration to deliver responsive services that reflect the needs of children and families.

## 4. Build Community Capacity

Build capacity in parents, caregivers, and professionals to support children's development.



# BACKGROUND AND LANDSCAPE

## LAMBTON COUNTY AT A GLANCE

Understanding Lambton County's children and their families is critical to helping us plan services that meet their needs. This snapshot, using 2021 census data, provides an overview of some of the characteristics used to inform our planning.



County of Lambton is home to **16,940** children aged 0 to 12 years



**1,778** Lambton County children aged 0 to 12 years were living in low income households



Since 2016, the greatest percentage increases in population aged 0 to 12 years were in Petrolia (**6.5%**), Lambton Shores (**12.1%**) and Plympton-Wyoming (**12.2%**)



In 2021, the Indigenous population aged 0 to 12 years was **1,210**  
\* This number includes Indigenous peoples living on First Nations, in urban and rural communities within the County of Lambton



**231** children aged 0 to 12 years identify French as their official language of choice



**12%** of families were single parents with at least one child aged 0 to 12 years



# ROLE OF THE CONSOLIDATED SERVICE MANAGER

Under the Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014 (CCEYA) the County of Lambton as a Consolidated Municipal Service Manager (CMSM) is designated to manage child care and early years services across the County. These services include the planning and funding of licensed child care programs, administering financial assistance for eligible families through fee subsidy, and allocating additional resources to families and programs that provide care to children with special needs. Additionally, CMSMs are responsible for the oversight of EarlyON Child and Family Centres, Indigenous-led child care and early years services, and the implementation the new Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC) agreement.

The CCEYA outlines that each service system manager shall have a child care and early years service plan for its service area. The plan should be reviewed and approved by Council and reflect local priorities as well as align with Provincial interests and policy statements. The child care and early years service system plan should:

- (a) focus on Ontario's children and families;
- (b) promote the health, safety and well-being of children;
- (c) provide high quality experiences and positive outcomes for children with a provincial framework to guide pedagogy;
- (d) include knowledgeable, self-reflective and qualified professionals and staff, including members of the College of Early Childhood Educators;
- (e) responds to communities' needs by,
  - (i) providing services both for families who receive financial assistance for child care and for families who do not receive such financial assistance,
  - (ii) providing a range of service options to support parents who are part of the workforce, such as options that address varied working hours and arrangements, and
  - (iii) providing centre-based and home-based options for families in relation to the receipt of licensed child care;
- (f) respects equity, inclusiveness and diversity in communities and the particular qualities of,
  - (i) Aboriginal, First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities,
  - (ii) children with disabilities;
  - (iii) Francophone communities, and
  - (iv) urban, rural, remote and northern communities;
- (g) provide for strong and sustainable partnerships among the Province, service system managers and others in the community;
- (h) be co-ordinated with other community and human services;
- (i) be flexible and able to adapt to local circumstances;
- (j) support the social and economic well-being of Ontarians;
- (k) ensure appropriate accountability for public funding;
- (l) support the transition from child care and early years programs and services to school;
- (m) approach pedagogy in child care and early years programs and services in a manner that supports the transition referred to in clause (l);
- (n) address any other aspect prescribed by the regulations.



# HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2020 to 2023

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN SUPPORTING CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND EARLY YEARS PROFESSIONALS

From 2020-2022, when many workplaces and schools switched to remote work due to the pandemic, the child care sector offered emergency child care three times. **1,030** children from **653** families who worked in essential services received emergency child care support.

**1,304**

Average number of children living in low and moderate income households who receive financial support through child care fee subsidy to attend licensed child care.

**482**

Children living in low and moderate income households received financial support to participate in recreational programs.

**510**

Average number of families per month who received support through Child Care Fee Subsidy so parents could go to work or school.

**2,329**

Average number of parents and caregivers supported through Lambton's EarlyON Child and Family Centres each year.

**59** of **60** operators enrolled in the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care program representing **99.6%** of all licensed spaces.

**441**

Average number of children who received social, emotional, and developmental support through special needs resourcing programs.

Maintained **zero** wait time for families to access fee subsidy when required.

**1,849** children were supported with a **25%** reduction in child care fees.

**3,849** children accessed EarlyON Child and Families Centres **35,532** times to support their development.

# HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2020 to 2023

## OUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN SUPPORTING CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND EARLY YEARS PROFESSIONALS

**481**

Average number of child care staff per year who received wage increases through wage grants.

Over **16,000** hours of special needs resourcing support was provided in licensed child care programs.

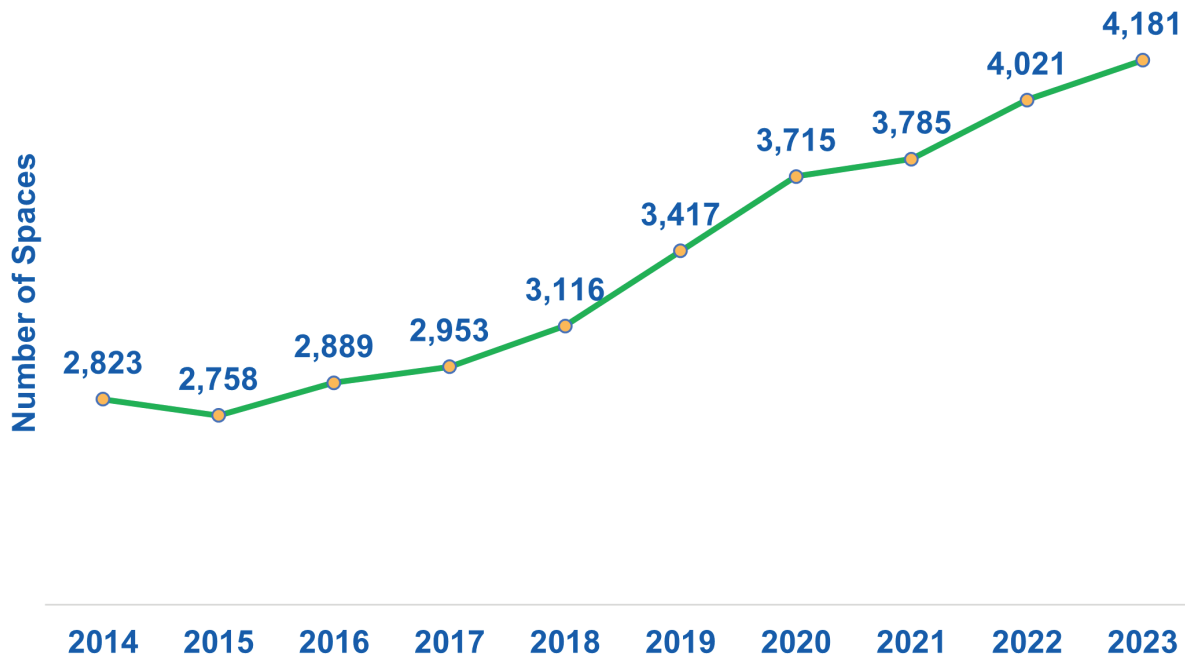
Before and after school spaces increased by **421** spaces.

**686**

New licensed child care spaces added.

Licensed Home Child Care spaces increased by **150%**.

### 10 Years of growth in licensed child care spaces within Lambton County





# HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2020 to 2023

## OUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN SUPPORTING CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND EARLY YEARS PROFESSIONALS

**60**

Average number of events offered through the Parent Professional Resource Centre focusing on mentorship, mental health, well being, Indigenous knowledge, equity, diversity, inclusion and belonging.

**928**

Early Childhood Educators participated **2,657** times in online, virtual, and in person professional learning opportunities.

**8.1%**

Increase in child care staff within the sector.

**575**

Individuals participated in various child care recruitment initiatives such as career fairs.

**170**

High school students attended the Early Childhood Educator career day held at the Sarnia Library.

**19**

Graduates of the new Lambton College pilot Early Childhood Education one year fast-track program.

**1,161** in person visits

from early childhood educators, community partners, students and parents from Lambton County.

Launched two new social media sites from 2020 - 2023.

Facebook reach: **126,461**

Instagram reach: **85,633**.



# CONSULTATIONS AND COMMUNITY PLANNING

## ENGAGING THE COMMUNITY

Community engagement, through collaboration, is the cornerstone of building a service system plan that reflects the needs of both families, children and community partners to achieve long-term sustainable outcomes. Opportunities to inform the development of the plan were offered both in person and virtually through group, team, and individual sessions to direct child care service providers, children's services internal staff, and community partner organizations.

Lambton Child and Family Network members have been instrumental in the development of the plan through multiple dedicated sessions, as well as providing feedback to the priorities and outcomes. All eleven municipalities within the County of Lambton were given the opportunity to provide input from their regions. Direct engagement with Lambton families through in person and virtual surveys provided the foundation of the plan's goals and priorities.





# SPOTLIGHT

## LAMBTON CHILD & FAMILY NETWORK

The Lambton Child & Family Network is a strategic, collaborative, and integrated planning infrastructure which allows members to work together and independently to meet the shared vision of the network.



Chaired by the County of Lambton, the Lambton Child & Family Network includes representatives from the following organizations:

- ✦ Child Care Supervisors Network
- ✦ Conseil scolaire Catholique Providence
- ✦ Conseil scolaire Viamonde
- ✦ County of Lambton Social Services
- ✦ EarlyON Centres
- ✦ First Nations Community Members
- ✦ La Ribambelle
- ✦ Lambton County Library
- ✦ Lambton Kent District School Board
- ✦ Lambton Public Health
- ✦ Pathways Health Centre for Children
- ✦ Sarnia-Lambton Children’s Aid Society
- ✦ Sarnia-Lambton Rebound for Youth
- ✦ St. Clair Catholic District School Board
- ✦ St. Clair Child and Youth Services
- ✦ Urban Indigenous partners

With special thanks to the Lambton Child & Family Network for their dedication, time and expertise in the development of this plan.

## NON-PROFIT

The non-profit child care sector is a great strength of Lambton County and has a long-standing history of being flexible and willing partners to meet the needs of all children, families, and communities.

Their dedication to providing high quality early years and child care experiences through a skilled and competent workforce has been instrumental in offering an effective and valued child care system while also contributing to growth and expansion over the past ten years.



Licensed non-profit child care organizations are vital to the County of Lambton child care sector and the 2024 to 2028 Child Care and Years Service System Plan.

# ENGAGEMENT

## Who We Engaged

**62** licensed child care operators.

**12** children's services organizations.

**4** School Boards in Lambton County

Lambton Kent District School Board, St. Clair Catholic District School Board, Conseil scolaire Catholique Providence, and Conseil scolaire Viamonde.

**11** Municipalities within the County of Lambton

were invited to participate in engagement opportunities.

### Families with Children

The County of Lambton engaged families to better understand their needs, challenges, and opportunities of the current system. The feedback received was used to inform the development of this plan. Activities included:

**16** site visits across Lambton County EarlyON centres.

**217** parents and caregivers completed a survey.

## Engagement Activities

**7** engagement meetings and consultation sessions

to understand partners' ideal system, update on the progress of the service plan, and seek feedback on priorities, gaps in the system, and opportunities for collaboration.

**4** key informant meetings

with sector leads in children's special needs and mental health, Indigenous families, Francophone families, and Newcomer families to discuss the complexities and needs of children and how we can work together to build a seamless system.





# ENGAGEMENT

## *We asked*

What does your ideal child care and early years system include? What is most important to you?

### WHAT WE HEARD ABOUT THE CHILD CARE AND EARLY YEARS SYSTEM

We heard from parents, caregivers, county staff, partners, and service providers about their perspective of what is working well in the system as well as what are the needs, gaps, and opportunities to improve service delivery. Feedback demonstrated that families, service providers, and community partners want many of the same features in the system, such as a high quality, accessible, and inclusive system with reduced wait times for services. Through the consultation process, it was evident that all those engaged are committed to serving children and families across Lambton County.

The common themes that emerged through our community engagements helped create a clear direction for the priorities of this plan.



# WHAT WE HEARD

## *We heard*

### **1 Create child care and early years services that are accessible, inclusive, and dependable.**

#### **Feedback from parents and caregivers**

- Additional child care spaces are required to reduce wait times
- Flexible hours of care are needed to meet diverse scheduling needs of families
- Ensure rural areas of Lambton County have access to licensed child care
- Increased access to Francophone child care

#### **Feedback from staff and service providers**

- Targeted growth approaches are necessary to ensure licensed child care spaces are created for underserved neighbourhoods and populations
- Utilize all data analytics and community assessments available to determine service locations
- A service delivery model that is responsive to the changing needs of children and families within the County of Lambton
- Ensure Indigenous and Francophone children and families have access to culturally responsive programs and services

## *This informed*

**Priority #1**

**ACCESS TO SERVICE**



# WHAT WE HEARD

## *We heard*

## *This informed*

### Priority #2

### WORKFORCE RETENTION AND RECRUITMENT

## **2** Support the attraction and retention of an early years and child care workforce.

### **Feedback from parents and caregivers**

- It is important that Early Childhood Educators are responsive to my child and family needs
- Programs are run by positive and well-trained staff who are dedicated to supporting children of all abilities

### **Feedback from staff and service providers**

- Partnership and collaboration between the County of Lambton and Lambton College is important to build a skilled and competent workforce that delivers high quality child care and early years services
- Continued efforts to elevate and promote the importance of Early Childhood Educators and their critical roles in shaping children and communities
- Workforce retention requires mentorship and innovative approaches to ensure staff feel valued and respected
- Professional development and capacity building is critical to ensure child care staff have the skills and knowledge to all support children





# WHAT WE HEARD

## *We heard*

## *This informed*

### **3 Work together through ongoing collaboration to deliver responsive services that reflect the needs of children and families.**

**Priority #3**

**COLLABORATE  
FOR SYSTEM  
PLANNING**

#### **Feedback from parents and caregivers**

- Families have easy access to information and know where to get it
- Regular parent and caregiver engagement to gather input related to challenges and successes with the current early years and child care system
- A responsive and universal child care registry is required to streamline the application and communication process for parents and caregivers
- Continued opportunities for children and families to be connected to the community

#### **Feedback from staff and service providers**

- Expanded system capacity through partnerships, resource sharing, and referral pathways so families do not have to repeat their story multiple times
- Formal and informal processes to assist families to navigate and advocate for their child's needs
- Leverage relationships to ensure knowledge sharing and communication as it relates to supporting children with the transition from early years services to school





# WHAT WE HEARD

## *We heard*

## *This informed*

Priority #4

BUILD  
COMMUNITY  
CAPACITY

### **4 Build capacity in parents, caregivers, and professionals to support children's development.**

#### **Feedback from parents and caregivers**

- Access to information that assists parents with understanding their child's developmental needs
- Programs that provide and focus on learning activities that parents and children can do together and with their families at home
- Offer a variety of programs that consider unique learning styles

#### **Feedback from staff and service providers**

- Continue with the already established mentorship framework to build capacity of staff, ensure knowledge transfer, share experiences, build pedagogical practices, that support a high quality licensed child care system
- Leverage knowledge and expertise from children's special needs and mental health agencies to ensure child care and early years staff are equipped with the knowledge to understand the needs of all children
- Access to online and e-learning professional development allowing for afterhours and flexible access to learning
- Ensure programs and services are designed to support positive experiences and outcomes for children and families



# PRIORITIES

## PRIORITIES

The 2024 to 2028 Child Care and Early Years Service System Plan focuses on four key priorities based on feedback from Lambton County staff, community partners, parents, and caregivers.

## VISION

Commitment to a child care system that places children and families at the centre of all decisions. A system where all children and families have access to an inclusive system that supports learning, development, and overall well being.



This plan aligns with provincial pillars: access, affordability, inclusion, quality, and data and reporting.

Each pillar is aligned with multiple priorities. As progress is made in all priority areas over the next five years, the County of Lambton child care and early years system will become more accessible, affordable, inclusive, and high-quality.

PROVINCIAL PILLARS	ACCESS	AFFORDABILITY	INCLUSION	QUALITY	DATA & REPORTING
What they mean for Lambton County	573 new child care spaces created in high need areas by December 2026.	Reduce parent fees for children aged 0-5 to achieve \$10/day average fees.	Ensure affordable spaces and access to child care for priority populations, including low income, vulnerable children, Francophone, Indigenous and other diverse communities.	Increase number of registered early years educators and improve wages.	Support successful implementation through data and reporting.

# PRIORITY 1: ACCESS TO SERVICE

## Why is this important?

Access to high quality licensed child care is fundamental to supporting early childhood development, learning, and well being of children. An accessible and flexible child care system is foundational to meet the changing and diverse needs of children and families.

## What do we want to achieve?

Increase the availability of high quality, inclusive, and affordable licensed child care. A targeted growth approach is necessary to ensure licensed child care spaces are created for underserved neighbourhoods and populations that support child care access for low-income children, vulnerable children, children from diverse communities, children with special needs, Francophone, and Indigenous children. Build and expand partnerships to place available resources and services where demand exists.

## How will we get there?

GOALS	KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS
<p>Increase the availability of high quality, inclusive, and affordable licensed child care spaces</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase access to the number of available Francophone, Indigenous-Led, rural, and special needs child care spaces</li> <li>• Ensure service delivery practices support child care access for low-income children, vulnerable children, children from diverse communities, children with special needs, Francophone, and Indigenous children.</li> <li>• Expand licensed home child care to meet the need for flexible care options</li> </ul>
<p>Build and expand partnerships to place available resources and services where demand exists</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Utilize all data analytics and community assessments to determine service locations</li> <li>• Aligning with Provincial guidance, prioritize the growth of a well-established and reliable non-profit licensed child care sector</li> <li>• Leverage agreements with licensed home child care operators, to meet the needs of newcomer families</li> <li>• Enter into partnership agreements with private developers interested in contributing to the growth of licensed child care</li> <li>• Continue support and collaboration with child care operators to ensure participation in Canada wide child care system</li> </ul>

ALIGNMENT WITH PROVINCIAL PILLARS:



# PRIORITY NEIGHBOURHOODS

Under the Ministry's Access and Inclusion framework, with a focus on improving equity of access, County of Lambton Children's Services through neighbourhood analysis, created an inventory of existing licensed child care spaces, child population data, current point in time waitlists, and other demographic data to develop a directed growth strategy.

Children's Services considered the degree to which new affordable child care spaces across various neighbourhoods will support access to licensed child care for low-income families, vulnerable communities, children with special needs, Francophone families, Indigenous families, families needing more flexible models of care, including evening, weekend, and overnight care.

The following is a breakdown of the proposed new child care spaces to be created during 2023-2026:

<b>Directed Growth Priorities</b>	<b>Number of New Spaces</b>
Lambton Shores	82
Petrolia, Oil Springs, Enniskillen	88
Plympton-Wyoming	49
St. Clair Township	90
Indigenous Led Child Care Centre	49
Special Needs Focused Child Care Centre	49
Sarnia, Brights Grove, Point Edward	113
Home Child Care	53
<b>Total</b>	<b>573</b>



# PRIORITY 2: WORKFORCE RETENTION AND RECRUITMENT

## Why is this important?

Trained and qualified early years childhood staff are critical to high-quality, responsive, and inclusive child care programs. Early Childhood Educators are trusted and highly skilled professionals equipped to care for children of all abilities. A robust and qualified workforce is foundational to the growth of child care spaces.

## What do we want to achieve?

Grow the number of qualified staff in child care and early years to increase access to licensed child care for families. Enhance access to opportunities for the workforce that promote retention including professional development and training.

## How will we get there?

GOALS	KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS
<p>Grow the number of qualified staff in child care and early years to increase access to licensed child care for families</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leverage partnership with Lambton College to ensure maximum intake size each Fall for the Early Childhood Educator diploma program</li> <li>• Where feasible, work with Lambton College to offer a one-year fast track Early Childhood Educator diploma to those working in the sector but are unqualified</li> <li>• In partnership with all local school boards and guidance counsellors, promote Early Childhood Education as a viable career path</li> <li>• Leverage Employment Ontario partnerships to support the non-profit sector with workforce recruitment efforts</li> <li>• Support and provide resources for ongoing County wide early years and child care career fairs</li> <li>• Utilize the County of Lambton Children’s Services social media pages to promote and advertise career opportunities in the early years sector</li> </ul>
<p>Enhance access to opportunities that promote retention including professional development and training</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formalize a senior leadership network to enhance knowledge sharing opportunities for the early years sector</li> <li>• Enhance the early years mentorship framework to build capacity of staff, ensure knowledge transfer, share experiences, build pedagogical practices that support a high quality licensed child care system</li> <li>• Elevate community awareness and promotion of Early Childhood Education as a profession</li> <li>• Provide ongoing professional development and capacity building opportunities to ensure early years staff have the skills and knowledge to support the diverse needs of children and families</li> </ul>

ALIGNMENT WITH PROVINCIAL PILLARS:

ACCESS AFFORDABILITY INCLUSION QUALITY DATA & REPORTING



# PRIORITY 3: COLLABORATE FOR SYSTEM PLANNING

## Why is this important?

When a system works collaboratively to plan services, it results in community partners who are better informed, partnerships that grow, and services that are more integrated to better support children and families.

## What do we want to achieve?

Collaborate to build a more seamless system that is easy for families to navigate. Ongoing engagement with families, caregivers, and service providers is critical to inform a responsive early years system that meets diverse and evolving needs.

## How will we get there?

GOALS	KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS
Collaborate to build a more seamless system that is easy for families to navigate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leverage and promote the established “No Wrong Door” referral mechanism to streamline referral pathways so families do not have to repeat their story multiple times</li> <li>• Leverage and promote the SmartStart Hub at Pathways Health Centre for Children which provides a seamless entry point to services for families and connects them with child development agencies and professionals</li> <li>• Collaborate with all local school boards to ensure knowledge sharing and communication as it relates to each child’s developmental needs and individual support plans, to support success with transitioning from early years services to school</li> <li>• Explore options for an effective child care registry that is universal and enhances the communication experience for families</li> <li>• Enhance existing early years website that allows families easy access to information and community resources</li> </ul>
Ongoing engagement with families, caregivers, service providers, and community partners is critical to inform a responsive early years system that meets diverse and evolving needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leverage the expertise of Lambton Child and Family Network as a strategic, collaborative, and integrated planning infrastructure to inform the shared vision and direction of early years service delivery across Lambton County</li> <li>• Regular parent engagement through surveys and focus groups, to gain input related to challenges and successes in the early years system</li> <li>• Regular engagement with low-income, Francophone, Indigenous, children with special needs and newcomer families and organizations to ensure early years programs are diverse, inclusive, and accessible to all</li> <li>• Establish focused advisory tables with Indigenous, Francophone, and children with special needs early years service providers</li> </ul>

ALIGNMENT WITH PROVINCIAL PILLARS:

ACCESS AFFORDABILITY INCLUSION QUALITY DATA & REPORTING



# PRIORITY 4: BUILD COMMUNITY CAPACITY

## Why is this important?

Parents, caregivers, and early years professionals play an important role in supporting child development. Having a skilled and knowledgeable support system results in children who are more successful in school, the workplace, and their communities that supports a strong economy and vibrant future.

## What do we want to achieve?

Build capacity of child care and early years professionals so they can support the development of all children and families. Support parents and caregivers to understand and support their child's developmental needs.

## How will we get there?

GOALS	KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS
Build capacity of child care and early years professionals so they can support all children and families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue with the already established mentorship framework to build capacity of staff, ensure knowledge transfer, share experiences, and build pedagogical practices that support a high quality licensed child care system</li> <li>• Leverage knowledge and expertise from children's special needs and mental health agencies to ensure child care and early years staff are equipped with the required knowledge to best understand the needs of and serve all children</li> <li>• Increase access to online and e-learning professional development opportunities to enable afterhours and flexible access to learning</li> <li>• Regular quality assurance monitoring to ensure child care programs align with the Provincial pedagogy "How Does Learning Happen"</li> </ul>
Support parents and caregivers to understand and support their child's developmental needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhance the existing early years website to increase access to information that assists parents with understanding their child's developmental needs</li> <li>• Ensure child care and EarlyON Child and Family Centres provide programming that considers unique learning styles of children and includes activities that are transferrable to home environments</li> </ul>



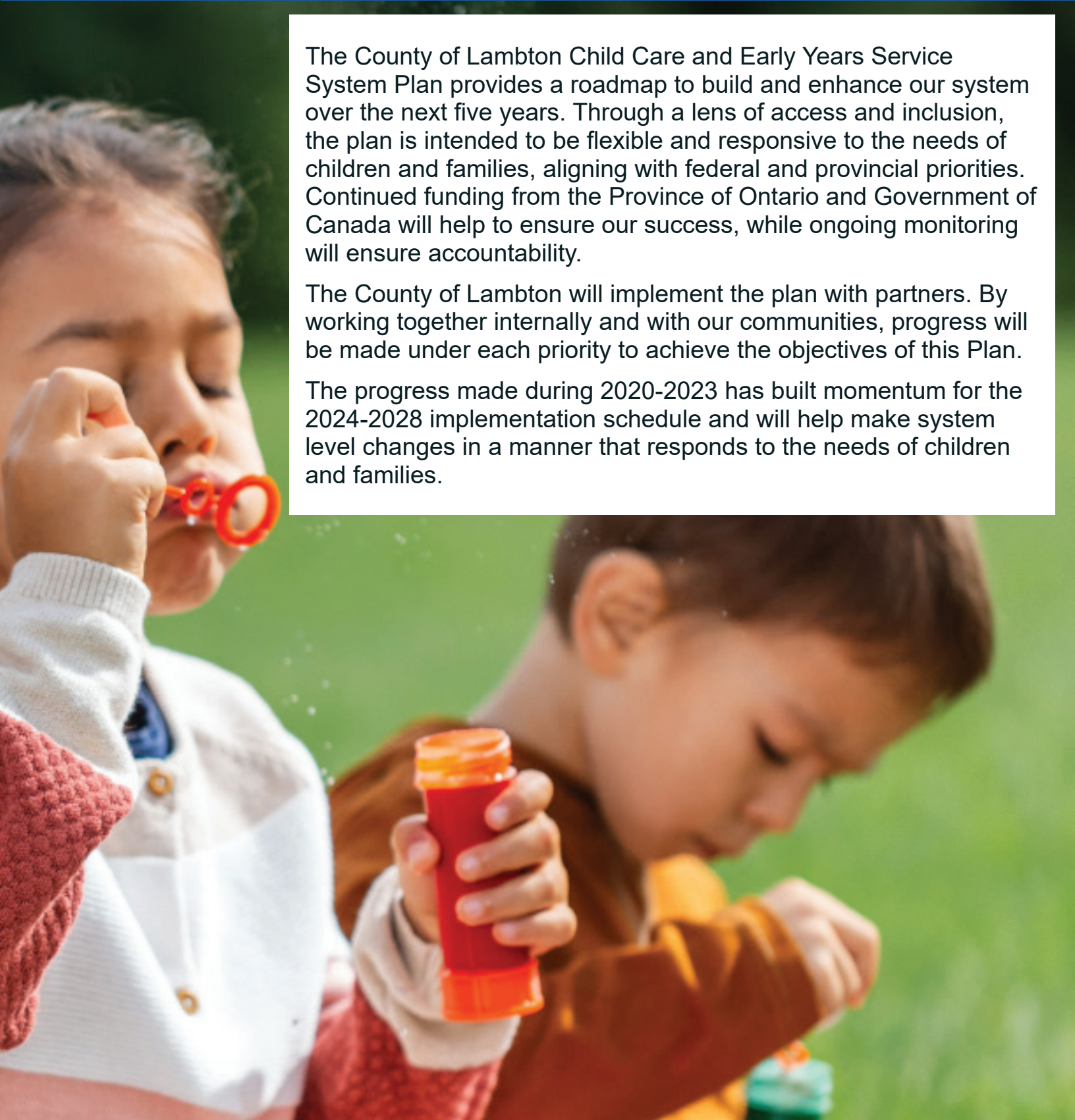
ALIGNMENT WITH PROVINCIAL PILLARS:

ACCESS AFFORDABILITY INCLUSION QUALITY DATA & REPORTING





# IMPLEMENTATION PLAN



The County of Lambton Child Care and Early Years Service System Plan provides a roadmap to build and enhance our system over the next five years. Through a lens of access and inclusion, the plan is intended to be flexible and responsive to the needs of children and families, aligning with federal and provincial priorities. Continued funding from the Province of Ontario and Government of Canada will help to ensure our success, while ongoing monitoring will ensure accountability.

The County of Lambton will implement the plan with partners. By working together internally and with our communities, progress will be made under each priority to achieve the objectives of this Plan.

The progress made during 2020-2023 has built momentum for the 2024-2028 implementation schedule and will help make system level changes in a manner that responds to the needs of children and families.

# IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Quality  
Inclusivity  
Accessibility  
Affordability  
Data Reporting

Goals	Priorities					Indicators
Increase the availability of high-quality, inclusive, and affordable licensed child care spaces across the County of Lambton.	●	●	●	●	●	Increase access to the number of available Francophone, Indigenous-Led, rural communities, and special needs child care spaces.
						Ensure service delivery practices support child care access for low-income children, vulnerable children, children from diverse communities, children with special needs, Francophone, and Indigenous children.
						Expand licensed home child care to meet the need for flexible care options.
Build and expand partnerships to place available resources and services where demand exists across the County of Lambton.			●	●	●	Utilize all data analytics and community assessments to determine service locations.
						Aligning with Provincial guidance, prioritize the growth of a well-established and reliable non-profit licensed child care sector.
						Leverage agreements with licensed home child care operators, to meet the needs of newcomer families.
						Enter into partnership agreements with private developers interested in contributing to the growth of licensed child care.
						Continue support and collaboration of child care operators to ensure participation in Canada wide child care system.
Grow the number of qualified staff in child care and early years to increase access to licensed child care for families.	●		●		●	Leverage partnership with Lambton College to ensure maximum intake size each Fall for the Early Childhood Educator diploma program.
						Where feasible, work with Lambton College to offer a one-year fast track Early Childhood Educator diploma to those working in the sector but are unqualified.
						In partnership with all local school boards and guidance counsellors, promote Early Childhood Education as a viable career path.
						Leverage Employment Ontario partnerships to support the non-profit sector with workforce recruitment efforts.
						Support and provide resources for ongoing County wide early years and child care career fairs.
						Utilize the County of Lambton Children's Services social media pages to promote and advertise career opportunities in the early years sector.
Enhance access to opportunities for the workforce that promote retention including professional development and training.	●	●				Formalize a senior leadership network to enhance knowledge sharing opportunities for the early years sector.
						Enhance the early years mentorship framework to build capacity of staff, ensure knowledge transfer, share experiences, build pedagogical practices that support a high quality licensed child care system.
						Elevate community awareness and promotion of Early Childhood Education as a profession.
						Provide ongoing professional development and capacity building opportunities to ensure early years staff have the skillsets and knowledge to support the diverse needs of children and families.

# IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Quality  
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Goals	Priorities				Indicators
Collaborate to build a more seamless system that is easy for families to navigate.					Leverage and promote the established “No Wrong Door” referral mechanism to streamline referrals pathways so families do not have to repeat their story multiple times.
					Leverage and promote the SmartStart Hub at Pathways Health Centre for Children which provides a seamless entry point to services for families and connects them with child development agencies and professionals.
		●	●	●	Collaborate with all local school boards to ensure knowledge sharing and communication as it relates to each child’s developmental needs and individual support plans, to support success with transitioning from early years services to school.
					Enhance existing early years website that allows families easy access to information and community resources.
					Explore options for an effective child care registry that is universal and enhances the communication experience for families.
Ongoing engagement with families, caregivers, service providers, and community partners is critical to inform a responsive early years system that meets diverse and evolving needs.					Leverage the expertise of Lambton Child and Family Network (LCFN) as a strategic, collaborative, and integrated planning infrastructure to inform the shared vision and direction of early years service delivery across Lambton County.
		●	●	●	Regular parent engagement through survey and focus groups, to gain input related to challenges and successes in the early years system.
					Regular engagement with low-income, Francophone, Indigenous, and newcomer families and organizations to ensure early years programs are diverse, inclusive, and accessible to all.
					Establish focused advisory tables with Indigenous and Francophone early years service providers.
Build capacity of child care and early years professionals so they can support all children and families.	●	●	●		Continue with the already established mentorship framework to build capacity of staff, ensure knowledge transfer, share experiences, build pedagogical practices, that support a high quality licensed child care system.
					Leverage knowledge and expertise from children’s special needs and mental health agencies to ensure child care and early years staff are equipped with the required knowledge to best understand the needs of and serve all children.
					Increase access to online and e-learning professional development opportunities to enable afterhours and flexible access to learning.
					Regular quality assurance monitoring to ensure child care programs align with the Provincial pedagogy “How Does Learning Happen”.
Support parents and caregivers to understand and support their child’s developmental needs.		●	●		Enhance the existing early years website to increase access to information that assists parents with understanding their child’s developmental needs.
					Ensure child care and EarlyON Child and Family Centres provide programming that considers unique learning styles of children and includes activities that are transferrable to home environments.



# ACCOUNTABILITY METHODS

Reporting on progress is imperative to the success of the plan because it evaluates steps taken towards achieving the goals and objectives. Regular evaluation of advancement under each priority, and monitoring performance throughout the five years are crucial. At the mid-point and at the end of the implementation plan, a progress report will be completed outlining the progress made and the results achieved.

In accordance with the Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014, the 2024-2028 Child Care and Early Years Service System Plan is approved by County of Lambton Council and is made publicly available on the County of Lambton website.



# CONCLUSION



The child care and early years system must continue to evolve in ways that reflects the needs of children and families to support children’s learning and development and the overall well-being of families. The needs of children and families must be placed at the centre of planning.

By helping parents participate in the work force and promoting children’s learning and development, we are supporting a strong economy and healthy, vibrant communities.

The County of Lambton Child Care and Early Years Service System Plan will continue to be an important guide in shaping service delivery and bringing community partners together to work collaboratively. The plan is flexible and will allow us to continue to adapt to everchanging needs, as well as shifts in government priorities.

The County of Lambton will leverage its position as Service Manager to build partnerships with other levels of government, sector leads, such as Indigenous knowledge carriers, school boards, and children’s special needs and mental health organizations. Early Years partners will work together to build services that are accessible, inclusive, affordable, and high-quality that benefit all children and families across Lambton County.



# REFERENCES

- **Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care CWELCC Access & Inclusion Framework - English(En Français)**
- **Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014 (CCEYA)**
- **Ontario's Early Years and Child Care Annual Report 2022**
- **2023 Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Guideline (CWELCC)**
- **2024 Ontario Child Care and EarlyON Child and Family Centres Service Management and Funding Guideline**
- **Statistics Canada: 2021 Census Data**





# APPENDIX ONE: LAMBTON COUNTY CENSUS DATA

## POPULATION

From 2016 to 2021 Lambton County's population increased from 126,638 to 128,154, reflecting a growth of 1.20%. As indicated in Table 1, the most substantial population growth occurred in Lambton Shores and Plympton–Wyoming. According to the 2016 Census Population Projections it is anticipated that Lambton County's population will maintain a relatively steady trend over the next two decades.

Geographical Area	Census Data		Population Growth / Decline
	2016	2021	
Ontario	13,448,494	14,223,942	5.77%
Lambton County	126,638	128,154	1.20%
Petrolia	5,742	6,013	4.72%
Plympton–Wyoming	7,795	8,308	6.58%
Point Edward	2,037	1,930	-5.25%
Lambton Shores	10,631	11,876	11.71%
Warwick	3,692	3,641	-1.38%
Sarnia	71,594	72,047	0.63%
St. Clair	14,086	14,659	4.07%
Dawn-Euphemia	1,967	1,968	0.05%
Enniskillen	2,796	2,825	1.04%
Brooke-Alvinston	2,411	2,359	-2.16%
Oil Springs	648	647	-0.15%

Table 1 – Population growth and decline between 2016 and 2021.

## POPULATION - (0-12 YEARS)

Between 2016 and 2021 Lambton County's population aged 0 to 12 years increased from 16,385 to 16,653, reflecting an increase of 1.64%. Plympton - Wyoming and Lambton Shores experienced the highest population growth.

Geographical Area	Census Data (0-12)		Population Growth / Decline
	2016	2021	
Ontario	2,207,970	2,251,795	1.98%
Lambton County	16,385	16,653	1.64%
Petrolia	880	908	3.18%
Plympton–Wyoming	1,152	1,293	12.24%
Point Edward	201	178	-11.44%
Lambton Shores	1,127	1,263	12.07%
Warwick	604	607	0.50%
Sarnia	9,252	9,075	-1.91%
St. Clair	2,028	2,125	4.78%
Dawn-Euphemia	323	323	0.00%
Enniskillen	358	411	14.80%
Brooke-Alvinston	369	373	1.08%
Oil Springs	91	97	6.59%

Table 2 – 0 to 12 Years population growth and decline between 2016 and 2021.

# APPENDIX ONE: LAMBTON COUNTY CENSUS DATA

## FAMILY INCOME BY FAMILY CHARACTERISTICS

### Couples With Children

Number of Families: 13,385  
 Average Family Size: 4.0  
 Average Family Income: \$90,000

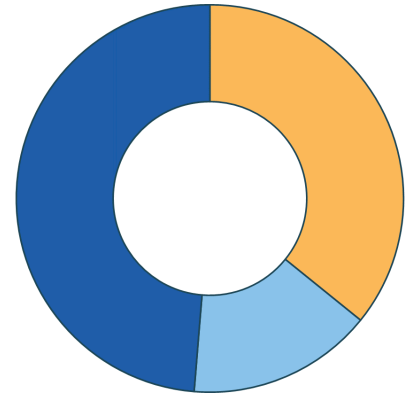
### Single Parent Family

Number of Families: 5,790  
 Average Family Size: 2.7  
 Average Family Income: \$68,700

### Families Without Children

Number of Families: 18,200  
 Average Family Size: 2.0  
 Average Family Income: \$81,000

- Couple With Children
- Single Parent Family
- Families Without Children



*\*In 2020, the median total income of households in Lambton was \$83,000, a 18.53% increase from 2015.*

## OCCUPATIONS

Occupation	%
All occupations	
Sales and service	24.85%
Trades, transport, and equipment operators	21.82%
Business, finance, and administration	12.38%
Education, law and government services	10.49%
Health	9.49%
Natural and applied sciences	6.97%
Manufacturing and utilities	6.36%
Natural resources, and agriculture	5.32%
Art, culture, recreation, and sport	1.66%
Legislative and senior management	0.70%

Table 5.0. Residents' occupation in Lambton County.

## EDUCATION

Educational Attainment	%
No certificate, diploma, or degree	6.7%
Secondary school diploma or equivalency certificate	23.3%
Postsecondary certificate or diploma	55.0%
Bachelor's degree	11.6%
Master's degree	2.8%
Doctorate	0.6%

Table 4.0 Showing Education attainment of the residents in Lambton County.



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Sarnia, ON N7T 7W5

**Phone: 519-344-2062**

**Website: [https://www.lambtononline.ca/en/resident-services/children\\_s-services.aspx](https://www.lambtononline.ca/en/resident-services/children_s-services.aspx)**