
REPORT TITLE: Peel’s Early Years and Child Care Service System Plan: Strategic Priorities for 2025-2030

FROM: Steve Jacques, MScPI, MCIP, RPP, Commissioner of Human Services

RECOMMENDATION

- 1. That the strategic priorities for Peel’s Early Years and Child Care system, as outlined in the report of the Commissioner of Human Services titled “Peel’s Early Years and Child Care Service System Plan: Strategic Priorities for 2025-2030”, be approved; and**
- 2. That the strategic priorities form the foundation of the Early Years and Child Care Service System Plan (2025-2030), which will be submitted to the Ministry of Education.**

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

- As the Service System Manager, the Region is required to develop a plan with system priorities for Peel’s Early Years and Child Care. The current plan ends December 31, 2024.
- Since 2019, Peel’s Early Years and Child Care investments and achievements included:
 - \$107.3M to improve access to early years and child care programs including 4,000 new child care spaces and 47% increase in EarlyON program hours per week.
 - \$262.9M to support providers to continuously improve program quality, including enhancements to salaries for child care staff.
 - \$482.8M to improve child care affordability including the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care plan which reduced fees by 53 per cent for children under 6, 50 per cent reduction in fees for children in before and after school programs and child care subsidy for eligible families with children birth to 12 yrs. of age.
 - \$53.4M invested in early years and child care programs to ensure that they are welcoming and inclusive to all children and families.
 - \$331.6M invested to support service provider viability and enhance accountability for the responsible use of public funds.
- To establish new system priorities, Peel consulted over 1,800 parents/caregivers, 230 children and service providers inclusive of diverse voices of Black, Indigenous, racialized, 2SLGBTQ+, low-income, newcomer, and families with children with special needs.
- Through the insights collected, five strategic priorities were identified for Peel’s Early Years and Child Care system (2025-2030): Access, Affordability, Quality, Accountability and Diversity and Inclusion.

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- These system priorities will serve as the road map for investments in Peel's EYCC programs over the next five years. It supports the Region's vision to create a Community for Life and an EYCC system that provides parental choice and promotes child growth and development.
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DISCUSSION

1. Background

The Early Years and Child Care (EYCC) Service System Manager is responsible for planning, strategic supports, evaluation, and oversight of Peel's EYCC system. As the Service System Manager, the Region is mandated under the *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014* to develop a System Plan informed by broad and inclusive engagement. System plans must assess community need, reflect the engagement of all relevant community partners, establish strategic priorities and outcomes, and outline steps for implementation. The plan should reflect the diverse needs of Peel's population by ensuring that families from all backgrounds and circumstances, including those from traditionally underserved communities, have a voice in shaping system priorities.

This report outlines the EYCC system priorities (2025-2030) that were developed in consultation with families and service providers in Peel. With Council's approval of these priorities, staff will proceed to develop a comprehensive System Plan, to be submitted to the Province in 2025.

2. 2019-2024 System Plan Priorities and Achievements

The Service System Plan priorities, endorsed by Council, laid a strong foundation for enhancing Peel's Early Years and Child Care services. Below are some key achievements in the five priorities established for 2019-2024.

Accessible: with a total investment of \$107.3 million since 2019:

- Over 7,700 spaces were approved through the CWELCC expansion plan (65 per cent of the target for Peel). Close to 4,000 new spaces have opened since 2019.
- New child care search tool launched to help families find EarlyON and licensed child care locations and resources.
- EarlyON visits increased by 44 percent from 2019 to 2023.
- 8 new EarlyON centres opened in 2023.
- EarlyON program hours per week have increased by 47 per cent.

High Quality: with a total investment of \$262.9 million since 2019:

- All EarlyON and 97 per cent of licensed child care programs participate in initiatives that support continuous quality improvement.
- 390 professional learning opportunities per year to over 16,000 participants; 98 per cent of participants indicated an increase in knowledge as a result of professional learning.
- Invested \$228.5 million to enhance child care staff salaries to attract and retain staff who deliver quality programs.

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Affordable: with a total investment of \$482.8 million since 2019:

- 96 per cent of child care sites in Peel participate in the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care plan which reduced fees by 53 per cent for children under 6. This represents an annual savings of \$16K for a family with two children of toddler and preschool age.
- Pilot program reduced before and after school care fees by 50%, benefiting 7,000 children.
- An average of 11,243 children supported per year with subsidy to pay for child care costs.

Inclusive: with a total investment of \$53.4 million since 2019:

- 99 per cent of licensed child care programs participate in Peel Inclusion Resource Services which supports access, inclusion, participation and belonging of all children in licensed care. An average of 2,557 children are supported each year.
- Made significant progress in enhancing diversity and inclusion practices in EarlyON programs including the launch of the DEI Community of Learning and Practice for all frontline staff and leaders.

Accountable: with a total investment of \$331.6 million since 2019:

- Enhanced technology and streamlined contract management processes with a 79 per cent reduction in the number of contracts required to be signed by providers. This has significantly reduced administrative burden for the sector.
- Invested \$266.6 million to support provider stability and viability to ensure their capacity to continuously provide quality child care.

3. EYCC System Priorities (2025-2030)

Peel consulted with over 1,800 parents/caregivers, 230 children, and service providers through surveys, focus groups, interviews, and other engagement methods to inform the new system priorities. Throughout these engagements, effort was made to include diverse voices, including Black, Indigenous, racialized, 2SLGBTQ+, low-income, newcomer, and families with children with special needs.

The following evidence-based priorities will address both gaps and opportunities to move Peel's EYCC system forward over the next five years.

EYCC System Priorities 2025 - 2030

Access	Families have access to Early Years and Child Care programs, services and information that meet their specific needs. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Expand licensed child care spaces and EarlyON services in high-need areas.• Support service providers to increase service flexibility, including extended hours, weekends, and part-time service options.• Improve access to information and make it easier for families to find and apply for programs and services.
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<p>Quality</p>	<p>Families experience high-quality Early Years and Child Care programs and services.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance workforce recruitment and retention strategies to support the expansion of the EYCC workforce. • Support high quality, licensed child care and early years programs that help prepare children for life. • Expand and invest in continuous quality enhancement initiatives and professional learning to grow a qualified workforce.
<p>Affordability</p>	<p>Early Years and Child Care programs are affordable for all families with children aged 0 to 12.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritize investments in Child Care Subsidy to support access to licensed child care for lower income families. • Implement the Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC) plan to achieve \$10-a-day on average child care. • Ongoing investments to reduce costs for families accessing before and after school care.
<p>Diversity and Inclusion</p>	<p>Early Years and Child Care programs are diverse and inclusive of all children and families.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve accessibility of EYCC programs for children with diverse developmental, behavioural, and socio-economic needs, including those from traditionally underserved populations. • Collaborate with the sector to enhance inclusive practices ensuring that all children and their families feel a sense of belonging in our sector.
<p>Accountability</p>	<p>Early Years and Child Care programs are responsive to the needs of families and accountable in the use of public funds.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement transparent policies, processes, and procedures to ensure responsible oversight of public funds. • Maintain open communication and seek continuous feedback to improve our programs and services. • Support service provider financial and operational stability. • Create a responsive system using technology, system modernization, and enhanced monitoring.

Upon Council approval, these priorities will guide the future direction of Peel’s EYCC system. Achieving these priorities will require a shared commitment from all partners and ongoing Provincial and Regional investment.

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As Provincial directives evolve and the needs of families change, we will continuously review progress on these priorities, including ongoing engagement with the community and adapt to ensure the EYCC system remains responsive.

Council will receive regular updates over the five-year period on progress towards achieving these priorities and the associated outcomes for families.

RISK CONSIDERATIONS

With Council's approval of the system priorities, staff will proceed with formulating the Region's Early Years and Child Care System Plan 2025-2030 to fulfill the provincially mandated requirement under the *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014* to develop a System Plan.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications from this report.

CONCLUSION

The system priorities will serve as the road map for investments in Peel's EYCC programs over the next five years (2025-2030). It supports the Region's vision to create a Community for Life and an EYCC system that provides parental choice and promotes child growth and development. Achievement of these priorities will create positive outcomes and support building an affordable, inclusive, high-quality, accountable, and accessible EYCC system in Peel.



Steve Jacques, MScPI, MCIP, RPP, Commissioner of Human Services

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