Réseau d'intervenantes et d'intervenants en petite enfance

Maintenir - Renforcer - Développer

Demographic analysis and shortage of French-language early learning and childcare services

Profile of French-language ELCC services for children aged 0 to 4 eligible for French-language education in

Northern Ontario

cnpf

La Commission nationale des parents francophones

September 2026



Summary

Several communities in Northern Ontario are left with a shortage of full-time spaces in French-language early learning and childcare services for young children. As part of the federal program aiming to reduce childcare costs, it is essential that this cost saving initiative be associated with an increase in the number of available spaces. This analysis, produced by the Commission nationale des parents francophones [National Commission of Francophone Parents] (CNPF), presents a situation assessment in Northern Ontario as of September 1, 2025, and suggests communities to target to optimize the impact of these new spaces.

The project "Creation and Support of the Network of Early Childhood Stakeholders in Minority Communities" by the Commission nationale des parents francophones (CNPF) is funded by the Government of Canada through the "Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) Program" under the Action Plan for Official Languages. The ideas and opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors. They do not necessarily reflect those of the Government of Canada.

Funded by the Government of Canada | Canad

Table of Contents

1- Background 3
2- Methodology 4
3- Foundations of the analysis 7
4- Presentations of results 8
Greater Sudbury CMA 9
Rest of Northern Ontario 10
Sudbury District 11
Nipissing-Parry Sound Corridor 12
Nipissing Division 12
Parry Sound Division 13
Algoma-Manitoulin Corridor 14
Algoma Division 15
Manitoulin Division 16
Cochrane-Timiskaming Corridor 16
Cochrane Division 17
Timiskaming Division 18
Kenora-Thunder Bay Corridor 19
Thunder Bay Division 20
Kenora Division 21
Rainy River Division 22
5- Conclusion 23
Appendix 1 24
Appendix 2 27
Appendix 3 28

Note: The terms "French-language early learning and childcare (ELCC) service" and "French-language ELCC service" include the diverse terminology used in the provinces and territories, such as daycares, educational centres, early childhood centres (ECC), etc.

1- Background

In 2021, the Government of Canada aimed, in its budget, to implement an accessible and affordable early learning and childcare system for the Canadian population[1]. With the aim of helping Canadians return to work after the COVID-19 pandemic, the government identified the cost of childcare services as a barrier preventing some parents from returning to work. Budget 2021 therefore provided $30 billion over five years for this initiative, with the main goal of reducing childcare fees for preschool-aged children.

However, while the focus was placed on reducing childcare fees, this was not accompanied by an equivalent creation of spaces in French-language early learning and childcare (ELCC) services, making the shortage of spaces even more important. Five years later, accessibility remains a major challenge: many parents struggle to find a full-time space for their child in a French-language ELCC service. Fee reduction is an important incentive for parents. On the other hand, it does not necessarily make up for the shortage of available spaces. This sharp increase in demand for services by parents has not been offset by a corresponding supply of new spaces.

In a Francophone minority setting, this problem is made worse by the spread of Francophones across the territory. Early childhood stakeholders see this program as an opportunity to start new services, knowing that, obviously, many families could benefit from such a service.

[1] https://www.budget.canada.ca/2021/home-accueil-en.html

This study fits into this context by identifying geographic areas where children aged 0 to 4 are present (according to the 2021 *Census of Population*), but where there are not enough childcare services. In other words, we seek to identify, for Francophone parents looking for a space in a French-language ELCC service, the chances that they will be able to find such a space for their child. We must be aware that parents unable to find a French-language ELCC service will face two choices: delay their return to the labour market or send their child to a centre in another language, usually English.

It is important to specify that the areas identified in this document may be childcare deserts for Francophones, while overall there are enough spaces for parents of the English-speaking majority. The CNPF believes it is essential to identify areas that are Francophone deserts so that the Government of Canada's program achieves its objectives, meaning that access to childcare for Canadian women and men is equal for parents of both official languages.

Launched in 2025, the project *Creation and Support of the Network of Early Childhood Stakeholders in Minority Communities* aims, by 2028, to improve access to high-quality, affordable, flexible, and inclusive early learning and childcare (ELCC) spaces, services, and programs in Francophone minority communities (FMCs). To achieve this, the CNPF was able to conduct studies and data analyses.

This present study aims to identify service deserts in Northern Ontario communities, based on census subdivisions and the number of rights-holders aged 0 to 4, to determine the number of spaces in French-language ELCC services to be created to meet the needs of Francophone communities in the province.

2- Methodology

This study identifies French-language ELCC service deserts by identifying a ratio of full-time spaces per child. To conduct this analysis, we use the number of children aged 0 to 4 identified as eligible for French-language education, pursuant to section 23 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*[2], as measured by Statistics Canada's 2021 *Census of Population*. The term "child" used in the rest of this document refers to this definition.

To obtain the number of spaces in French-language ELCC services, this study uses data from the Association francophone à l'éducation des services à l'enfance de l'Ontario (AFÉSEO) [Francophone Association for Early Childhood Services Education of Ontario], and direct calls to various French-language ELCC services. The identified spaces are accurate as of September 1, 2025. We thus identified 1,853 full-time spaces in French-language ELCC services in Northern Ontario[3,4].

From these datasets, we were able to identify a parameter indicating, for each preschool-aged child, how many spaces are available.

To accurately represent the situation in Northern Ontario, we used the datasets that locate the children in this part of the province as precisely as possible. While in some cases it was possible to specify a municipality (CMA) directly, in others we had to fall back on census divisions or areas. The city of Sudbury was divided into sectors when using this dataset. These sectors (shown in Appendix 2) were identified by postal service areas (the first three characters of the postal code).

To determine the French-language ELCC service deserts, we will use three simplified thresholds:

[2] Table n° 98100541 from Statistics Canada's former CANSIM database.
[3] The complete list of identified French-language ELCC services is found in Appendix 1.
[4] Please note that full-day kindergarten is available to eligible 4-year-old children in French-language schools in Ontario and this program is not included in this study.

1. **First threshold: ratio between 0 and 0.40 (in white)**

   It corresponds to **high-need** sectors, meaning there are more than 2.5 children per available space. On average, this means a parent waits 2.5 years before getting a space in a French-language ELCC service. Considering that a parent registers their child on a service waitlist from birth, the child will be over two and a half years old when a space is offered. By this point, the parent will likely have chosen another childcare option for their child.

2. **Second threshold: ratio between 0.40 and 0.70 (in yellow)**

   It corresponds to **medium-need** communities, where there are between 1.5 and 2.5 children per space in French-language ELCC services. As explained previously, this means the child will, on average, get a space around the age of 2. In this case, we find ourselves in a situation where the parent might use a temporary option while waiting to get a space in a French-language ELCC service.

3. **Third threshold: ratio superior to 0.70 (in green)**

   It corresponds to **well-served** communities. In these areas, there are enough French-language ELCC spaces, and parents can trust they will get a space for their child relatively quickly (before 18 months of age)[5]. Given that the parental leave permitted by law is 18 months, it can be assumed that children in these communities will secure a French-language ELCC space on their very first day.

Thus, only communities with a ratio of more than 0.70 spaces per child aged 0 to 4 (meaning at least 7 spaces for every 10 children) are considered properly served, while all others are classified as areas in need.

[5] According to the *Québec Study on the Accessibility and Use of Childcare Services 2021* by the Québec Institute of Statistics, 70% of children use childcare services. As Québec is a model in childcare, a threshold of 0.70 spaces per child (where 70% of children have a space) is considered sufficient.

3- Foundations of the analysis

A few elements deserve to be presented from the outset to lay the groundwork for this analysis.

Data as of September 1, 2025

Current data represent the best available information as of September 1, 2025. Given how quickly an ELCC service can close and current efforts to develop new spaces, we must be aware that a geographic area can rapidly shift from a high-need community to a well-served area, and vice versa.

Pre-kindergarten and school-age childcare services excluded

Since the purpose of this study is to present an inventory of available full-time spaces in French-language ELCC services, all preschool services offering part-time spaces were excluded from the ratio calculations. The same applies to all support services for school-age childcare programs that serve school-aged children.

Proximity to home: the primary reason for choosing an ELCC service

A study by Learn Square Inc.[6] revealed that the primary reason parents choose an ELCC service is its proximity to their home or workplace. The 2025 *Canadian Early Learning and Child Care Survey* by Statistics Canada[7] arrives at a similar conclusion: two thirds of parents mention location as a determining factor in choosing childcare services for their child.

Although censuses provide an overview of the average distance a parent travels to work, they do not indicate the destination of that commute. This means that home location data is the only usable data. Despite this limitation in the data, the proximity of the home remains an important factor in the parent's choice.

[6] Learn Square Inc., *Rapport d'évaluation des services de garde privés francophones et bilingues dans les régions d'Edmonton et Calgary*, [*Evaluation Report on French-Language and Bilingual Private Childcare Services in the Edmonton and Calgary Regions],* presented to the CDÉA, February 2021.
[7] Statistics Canada, *Table 42-10-0006-01 Parent and guardian reasons for using main childcare arrangement, children aged 0 to 5 years*, 2025.

4- Presentation of results

According to the 2021 *Census of Population*, there were 9,680 children aged 0 to 4 eligible for French-language education in Northern Ontario. With 1,853 full-time spaces in French-language ELCC services, the provincial average ratio is **0.19 spaces per child**, or a little less than 1 space for every 5 children. This means that for Northern Ontario to become well served by French-language ELCC services, the number of full-time spaces would need to be increased considerably. Table 1 presents a summary of the situation regarding available French-language ELCC spaces and children in Northern Ontario.

Table 1: *Distribution of spaces in French-language ELCC services and children in Northern Ontario*

Region	N° of spaces	N° of children	Ratio
Greater Sudbury CMA	921	3,305	**0.28**
Sudbury District	26	390	**0.07**
Nipissing-Parry Sound Corridor	278	1,525	**0.18**
Algoma-Manitoulin Corridor	230	825	**0.28**
Cochrane-Timiskaming Corridor	364	2,760	**0.13**
Kenora-Thunder Bay Corridor	34	875	**0.04**
TOTAL – NORTHERN ONTARIO	**1,853**	**9,680**	**0.19**

To maximize the reach of these potential new spaces, their location is paramount. This is why a more detailed analysis by geographic area is necessary to identify the municipalities where the needs are greatest.

Greater Sudbury

Greater Sudbury corresponds to the Sudbury Census Metropolitan Area (CMA), which has a population of 177,415 according to the *2021 Census of Population*. It is the CMA in Canada with the highest proportion of children eligible for French-language education relative to the total population.

Greater Sudbury has 3,305 children, according to the 2021 census data. With 921 full-time spaces in French-language ELCC services, the average ratio stands at **0.28 spaces per child**, or just over 1 space for every 4 children. It is therefore a high-need area. Table 2 presents the situation in Greater Sudbury.

Table 2: *Distribution of spaces in French-language ELCC services and children in Greater Sudbury*

Sector	N° of spaces	N° of children	Ratio
South End	239	1,320	**0.18**
North End	288	915	**0.31**
North-Central	289	705	**0.41**
South-Central	105	365	**0.29**
TOTAL – GREATER SUDBURY	**921**	**3,305**	**0.28**

A more detailed analysis of the data reveals that the situation varies from one sector to another within Greater Sudbury.

The North-Central sector has the best coverage. With a ratio of 0.41 (289 spaces for 705 children), it is considered a medium-need area. However, an additional 205 spaces would still be required to make it a well-served sector.

The South-Central sector has the fewest children. Nevertheless, the 105 spaces in French-language ELCC services are insufficient to meet the needs (ratio of 0.29).

The North End (915 children for 288 spaces; ratio of 0.31) and the South End (1,320

children for 239 spaces; ratio of 0.18) would need an additional 353 and 685 spaces, respectively, to reach a ratio of 0.7 and become well-served areas.

Table 3 summarizes the spaces to be created by sector, as well as the preferred neighbourhoods to ensure proximity to the homes of families with children eligible for French-language education.

Table 3: *Ideal distribution of new French-language ELCC childcare spaces in the city of Sudbury*

Sector	N° of spaces to create	Example of location (neighbourhood)
South End	685	McFarlane Lake
North End	353	Pinecrest
North-Central	205	Minnow Lake
South-Central	150	Lo-Ellen
TOTAL – GREATER SUDBURY	**1,393**	

Rest of Northern Ontario

Outside the Greater Sudbury CMA, Northern Ontario includes several territories where the Francophone population is large enough to justify the development of French-language ELCC services. Indeed, this region has 6,375 children and 932 spaces in French-language ELCC services, representing an overall ratio of **0.15 spaces per child**. It is therefore a high-need area.

To facilitate the analysis of this vast area, the data was grouped into five geographical sectors based on Statistics Canada's census divisions (2021). They are the Sudbury District, the Nipissing-Parry Sound corridor, the Algoma-Manitoulin corridor, the Cochrane-Timiskaming corridor, and the Kenora-Thunder Bay corridor. These groupings allow for a better comparison of coverage levels across the different sectors of Northern Ontario and help identify those where the need for new spaces is more important.

Table 4 summarizes the situation in each of these sectors.

Table 4: *Distribution of spaces in French-language ELCC services and children in the rest of Northern Ontario*

Sector	N° of spaces	N° of children	Ratio
Sudbury District	26	390	**0.07**
Nipissing-Parry Sound Corridor	278	1,525	**0.18**
Algoma-Manitoulin Corridor	230	825	**0.28**
Cochrane-Timiskaming Corridor	364	2,760	**0.13**
Kenora-Thunder Bay Corridor	34	875	**0.04**
TOTAL – REST OF NORTHERN ONTARIO	**932**	**6,375**	**0.15**

Sudbury District

The Sudbury District comprises the rural area surrounding the Greater Sudbury CMA and extends westward to the Chapleau area. There are 390 children and 26 spaces in French-language ELCC services in this sector. Table 5 presents the situation in this area.

Table 5: *Distribution of spaces in French-language ELCC services and children in the Sudbury District*

Municipality	N° of spaces	N° of children	Ratio
Markstay-Warren	0	95	**0.00**
Espanola	0	65	**0.00**
Chapleau	26	55	**0.47**
Rivière des Français	0	50	**0.00**
Saint-Charles	0	25	**0.00**
Sables-Spanish Rivers	0	20	**0.00**
Rest of the district	*0*	*80*	***0.00***
TOTAL – SUDBURY DISTRICT	**26**	**390**	**0.07**

The only French-language ELCC service in the Sudbury District is in Chapleau. With 26 spaces for 55 children, the ratio stands at 0.47 spaces, making it a medium-need area.

There is a shortage of 13 spaces in this community.

In the rest of the district, several communities have enough children to justify adding French-language ELCC services. This is the case for Markstay-Warren (95 children; shortage of 67 spaces), Espanola (65 children; shortage of 46 spaces), Rivière des Français (50 children; shortage of 35 spaces), Saint-Charles (25 children; shortage of 18 spaces), and Sables-Spanish Rivers (20 children; shortage of 14 spaces). In total, 247 spaces would need to be added to this district to reach the threshold of 0.7 space per child and make it a well-served area.

Nipissing-Parry Sound Corridor

The Nipissing-Parry Sound corridor extends from Georgian Bay to the Ottawa River, north of the Ontario Peninsula and National Capital areas. It includes the census divisions of Nipissing and Parry Sound. Table 6 presents the situation in this corridor.

Table 6: *Distribution of spaces in French-language ELCC services and children in the Nipissing-Parry Sound Corridor*

Census divisions	N° of spaces	N° of children	Ratio
Nipissing	**278**	**1,350**	**0.21**
Parry Sound	**0**	**175**	**0.00**
TOTAL – NIPISSING-PARRY SOUND CORRIDOR	**278**	**1,525**	**0.18**

At the outset, children in this corridor are concentrated in the Nipissing division, as are the spaces in French-language ELCC services. Thus, the Nipissing division has a ratio of 0.21 spaces (278 spaces and 1,350 children), while the Parry Sound division has zero spaces for 175 children.

The following sections present the situation in each of these divisions.

Nipissing Division

The Nipissing division has 278 spaces and 1,350 children (ratio of 0.21). It is considered a high-need area. Table 7 presents the situation in this census division.

Table 7: *Distribution of spaces in French-language ELCC services and children in the Nipissing division*

Municipality	N° of spaces	N° of children	Ratio
North Bay	192	620	**0.31**
Nipissing	86	430	**0.20**
East Ferris	0	125	**0.00**
Bonfield	0	50	**0.00**
Papineau-Cameron	0	45	**0.00**
Mattawan	0	45	**0.00**
Chisholm	0	10	**0.00**
Rest of the division	*0*	*25*	***0.00***
TOTAL – NIPISSING DIVISION	**278**	**1,350**	**0.21**

More than two thirds of the spaces in this census division are in the city of North Bay. However, the 192 spaces are insufficient for the municipality's 620 children (ratio of 0.31; shortage of 242 spaces).

The situation is similar in Nipissing. With 86 spaces for 430 children, the observed ratio stands at 0.20, and the number of spaces would need to be multiplied by three and a half times to reach the 0.7 threshold and make it a well-served community.

The other communities all show significant shortages of spaces. For instance, East Ferris (125 children; shortage of 88 spaces), Bonfield (50 children; shortage of 35 spaces), Papineau-Cameron and Mattawan (45 children each; shortage of 32 spaces each), and Chisholm (10 children; shortage of 7 spaces) could all benefit from the addition of French-language ELCC services.

Parry Sound Division

The Parry Sound division has no French-language ELCC services, despite the presence of 175 children. This makes it a high-need area. Table 8 presents the situation in this census division.

Table 8: *Distribution of spaces in French-language ELCC services and children in the Parry Sound division*

Municipality	N° of spaces	N° of children	Ratio
Callander	0	45	**0.00**
Powassan	0	30	**0.00**
Parry Sound	0	20	**0.00**
Seguin	0	10	**0.00**
Carling	0	10	**0.00**
Rest of the division	*0*	*60*	***0.00***
TOTAL – PARRY SOUND DIVISION	**0**	**175**	**0.00**

This division has a shortage of 123 spaces to become a well-served area. The main communities where this shortage is observed are Callander (45 children; shortage of 32 spaces), Powassan (30 children; shortage of 21 spaces), Parry Sound (20 children; shortage of 14 spaces), as well as Seguin and Carling (10 children each; shortage of 7 spaces each).

Algoma-Manitoulin Corridor

The Algoma-Manitoulin corridor includes Manitoulin Island between Georgian Bay and a portion of Lake Superior. There are 825 children and 230 spaces in French-language ELCC services. This corresponds to a **ratio of 0.28 spaces**, making it a high-need area. Table 9 summarizes the situation in this corridor.

Table 9: *Distribution of spaces in French-language ELCC services and children in the Algoma-Manitoulin Corridor*

Census divisions	N° of spaces	N° of children	Ratio
Algoma	230	765	**0.30**
Manitoulin	0	60	**0.00**
TOTAL – ALGOMA–MANITOULIN CORRIDOR	**230**	**825**	**0.28**

The next sections analyze the situation in this corridor.

Algoma Division

The Algoma division has 765 children and 230 spaces in French-language ELCC services. With a ratio of 0.30, this census division is a high-need area. Table 10 presents the situation.

Table 10: *Distribution of spaces in French-language ELCC services and children in the Algoma division*

Municipality	N° of spaces	N° of children	Ratio
Sault Ste. Marie	125	395	**0.32**
Elliot Lake	44	90	**0.49**
Algoma district	32	85	**0.38**
Blind River	0	65	**0.00**
Wawa	0	65	**0.00**
Dubreuilville	29	35	**0.83**
Hornepayne	0	15	**0.00**
Rest of the division	*0*	*15*	***0.00***
TOTAL – ALGOMA DIVISION	**230**	**765**	**0.30**

One area is well served in this census division, namely the municipality of Dubreuilville, which has 29 spaces for 35 children (a ratio of 0.83).

The city of Elliot Lake, with 44 spaces for 90 children (a ratio of 0.49), is a medium-need area. Nonetheless, there is still a shortage of 19 spaces.

The main city in the division is Sault Ste. Marie. It has 395 children and 125 spaces in French-language ELCC services, corresponding to a ratio of 0.32. The number of spaces in this city would need to more than double to clear the threshold for a well-served area.

In the Algoma District (85 children and 32 spaces), there is a shortage of 28 spaces.

There are no spaces in French-language ELCC services in the other communities within the division. Therefore, 46 spaces would need to be added in each of the communities of Blind River and Wawa (65 children each), and 11 spaces in Hornepayne (15 children), for them to become well served.

Manitoulin Division

The Manitoulin District has 60 children, but no spaces in French-language ELCC services. This census division is a high-need area. Table 11 presents the situation.

Table 11: *Distribution of spaces in French-language ELCC services and children in the Manitoulin division*

Municipality	N° of spaces	N° of children	Ratio
Billings	0	25	**0.00**
Wiikwemkoong – Unceded Territory	0	10	**0.00**
Rest of the division	*0*	*25*	***0.00***
TOTAL – MANITOULIN DIVISION	**0**	**60**	**0.00**

There are 60 children in this census division, where only two communities have at least 10 children. The Township of Billings (25 children; shortage of 18 spaces) and the Wiikwemkoong Unceded Territory (10 children; shortage of 7 spaces) are the only two communities where a significant number of children could be identified. They could be well served with home-based French-language ELCC services.

Cochrane-Timiskaming Corridor

The Cochrane-Timiskaming corridor covers the Northern Ontario territory along the Quebec border. There are 2,760 children and 364 spaces in French-language ELCC services. This corresponds to a **ratio of 0.13 spaces**, making it a high-need area. Table 12 summarizes the situation in this corridor.

Table 12: *Distribution of spaces in French-language ELCC services and children in the Cochrane-Timiskaming corridor*

Census divisions	N° of spaces	N° of children	Ratio
Cochrane	260	2,110	0.12
Timiskaming	104	650	0.16
TOTAL – COCHRANE-TIMISKAMING CORRIDOR	**364**	**2,760**	**0.13**

There are two census divisions in this corridor: Cochrane and Timiskaming. The next sections describe the situation in these divisions.

Cochrane Division

There are 2,110 children in the Cochrane division and 260 spaces in French-language ELCC services. This corresponds to a ratio of 0.12. Therefore, the census division is a high-need area.

Table 13: *Distribution of spaces in French-language ELCC services and children in the Cochrane division*

Municipality	N° of spaces	N° of children	Ratio
Timmins	156	1,135	**0.14**
Kapuskasing	16	285	**0.06**
Hearst	57	185	**0.31**
Cochrane	31	140	**0.22**
Iroquois Falls	0	120	**0.00**
Northern Part, Unorganized	0	75	**0.00**
Black River-Matheson	0	45	**0.00**
Mattice-Val Côté	0	30	**0.00**
Moonbeam	0	30	**0.00**
Val Rita-Harty	0	30	**0.00**
Smooth Rock Falls	0	25	**0.00**
Rest of the division	*0*	*10*	***0.00***
TOTAL – COCHRANE DIVISION	**260**	**2,110**	**0.12**

More than half of the children in this census division are found in the city of Timmins, where there are 1,135 children and 156 spaces in French-language ELCC services. With a ratio of 0.14, there is a shortage of 639 spaces to make it a well-served area.

In Kapuskasing, the 285 children only have access to 16 spaces in French-language ELCC services. The shortage in this community is 184 spaces.

The municipality of Hearst has 185 children and 57 spaces in French-language ELCC services. This corresponds to a ratio of 0.31, and the shortage there is 73 spaces.

In Cochrane, there are 140 children and 31 spaces. There is thus a shortage of 67 spaces in French-language ELCC services.

The other communities in the region completely lack spaces in French-language ELCC services. Therefore, the municipalities of Iroquois Falls (120 children; shortage of 84 spaces), Black River-Matheson (45 children; shortage of 32 spaces), Mattice-Val Côté, Moonbeam, and Val Rita-Harty (30 children each; shortage of 21 spaces each), and Smooth Rock Falls (25 children; shortage of 18 spaces) could all benefit from the addition of French-language ELCC services.

Finally, the Northern Part, Unorganized (75 children) has a shortage of 53 spaces.

Timiskaming Division

There are 650 children in the Timiskaming division and 104 spaces in French-language ELCC services, corresponding to a ratio of 0.16. Therefore, this census division is a high-need area. Table 14 presents the situation.

Table 14: *Distribution of spaces in French-language ELCC services and children in the Timiskaming Division*

Municipality	N°of spaces	N° of children	Ratio
Temiskaming Shores	0	230	**0.00**

Municipality	N°of spaces	N° of children	Ratio
Timiskaming	104	130	**0.80**
Kirkland Lake	0	110	**0.00**
Armstrong	0	40	**0.00**
Englehart	0	25	**0.00**
McGarry	0	25	**0.00**
Hudson	0	20	**0.00**
Charlton and Dack	0	15	**0.00**
Coleman	0	10	**0.00**
Evanturel	0	10	**0.00**
Larder Lake	0	10	**0.00**
Rest of the division	*0*	*25*	***0.00***
TOTAL – TIMISKAMING DIVISION	**104**	**650**	**0.16**

There are 104 spaces in French-language ELCC services in this division, and they are all located in Timiskaming. With 130 children, this makes it a well-served community. However, if the neighbouring communities of Temiskaming Shores (230 children) and Armstrong (40 children) are included, there are 400 children and 104 spaces (a ratio of 0.26), representing a shortage of 176 spaces for all three communities combined.

The other communities have no spaces in French-language ELCC services. Thus, in Kirkland Lake (110 children), the shortage is 77 spaces. In the remaining communities (Englehart, McGarry, Hudson, Charlton and Dack, Coleman, Evanturel, and Larder Lake), the shortage ranges from 7 to 18 spaces.

Kenora-Thunder Bay Corridor

The Kenora-Thunder Bay corridor covers the Northern Ontario territory from the Manitoba border, from Lake Superior to Hudson Bay. There are 875 children and 34 spaces in French-language ELCC services, which signifies a low ratio of **0.04 spaces** or 1 space for every 25 children. This makes it a high-need area.

Table 15: *Distribution of spaces in French-language ELCC services and children in the Kenora-Thunder Bay corridor*

Census divisions	N°of spaces	N°N° of children	Ratio
Thunder Bay	34	625	**0.05**
Kenora	0	205	**0.00**
Rainy River	0	45	**0.00**
TOTAL – KENORA-THUNDER BAY CORRIDOR	**34**	**875**	**0.04**

There are two French-language ELCC services in this corridor. Both are in the Thunder Bay census division.

The sections that follow present the situation in these three census divisions in greater detail.

Thunder Bay division

There are 625 children in the Thunder Bay division and 34 spaces in French-language ELCC services. This corresponds to a ratio of 0.05. Therefore, this census division is a high-need area. Table 16 presents the situation.

Table 16: *Distribution of spaces in French-language ELCC services and children in the Thunder Bay division*

Municipality	N° of spaces	N° of children	Ratio
Thunder Bay	16	360	**0.04**
Greenstone	0	90	**0.00**
Marathon	18	45	**0.40**
Manitouwadge	0	30	**0.00**
Oliver Paipoonge	0	25	**0.00**
Terrace Bay	0	10	**0.00**
Rest of the division	*0*	*65*	***0.00***
TOTAL – THUNDER BAY DIVISION	**34**	**625**	**0.05**

The main city in this census division, Thunder Bay, has 360 children and 16 spaces in French-language ELCC services. This means a ratio of 0.04 for this city, making it a high-need area. An additional 236 spaces would be needed to reach the 0.7 ratio and make it a well-served area.

The town of Marathon, with 18 spaces and 45 children (a ratio of 0.40), is a medium-need area. Nonetheless, this municipality still needs an additional 14 spaces to become a well-served area.

The other communities completely lack spaces in French-language ELCC services. Therefore, the municipalities of Greenstone (90 children; shortage of 63 spaces), Manitouwadge (30 children; shortage of 21 spaces), Oliver Paipoonge (25 children; shortage of 18 spaces), and Terrace Bay (10 children; shortage of 7 spaces) could all benefit from the addition of French-language ELCC services.

Kenora Division

The Kenora division has 205 children. An additional 144 spaces would be needed to make it a well-served area. Table 17 presents the situation.

Table 17: *Distribution of spaces in French-language ELCC services and children in the Kenora division*

Municipality	N° of spaces	N° of children	Ratio
Kenora	0	80	**0.00**
Red Lake	0	30	**0.00**
Sioux Lookout	0	25	**0.00**
Dryden	0	15	**0.00**
Rest of division	*0*	*55*	***0.00***
TOTAL – KENORA DIVISION	**0**	**205**	**0.00**

With 80 children, the community of Kenora has a shortage of 56 spaces. In absolute terms, this is the community with the highest needs.

In Red Lake (30 children), the shortage is 21 spaces. In Sioux Lookout (25 children), the space shortage is 18 spaces. Finally, in Dryden (15 children), 11 spaces would need to be added to reach the 0.7 threshold.

Rainy River Division

The Rainy River division has 45 children. An additional 32 spaces would be needed to make it a well-served area. Table 18 presents the situation.

Table 18: *Distribution of spaces in French-language ELCC services and children in the Rainy River division*

Municipality	N° of spaces	N° of children	Ratio
Fort Frances	0	25	**0.00**
La Vallee	0	10	**0.00**
Rest of the division	*0*	*10*	***0.00***
TOTAL – RAINY RIVER DIVISION	**0**	**45**	**0.00**

There are two communities with at least 10 children in this census division. In Fort Frances, there are 25 children. An additional 18 spaces in French-language ELCC services would need to be added to make it a well-served community. In La Vallee (10 children), an additional 7 spaces in French-language ELCC services would need to be added.

5- Conclusion

This study aimed to identify the areas (CMAs, census divisions and municipalities) in Northern Ontario that experience a shortage of French-language early learning and childcare services (ELCC), where the number of available spaces is very insufficient compared to the needs of children eligible for French-language education aged 0 to 4. Without proposing an ideal model, the study mainly provides a database and descriptive analysis for individuals who plan to start a project of French-language ELCC services in this region.

Overall, Francophone families in Northern Ontario do not have access to enough full-time French-language spaces in French-language ELCC services. With a **ratio of 0.19 spaces per** eligible **child** aged 0 to 4, coverage is just under 1 space for every 5 children. This represents a **shortage of 4,923** spaces for the entire region.

About a quarter of the missing spaces are in the city of Greater Sudbury (a shortage of 1,393 spaces). Several other cities could benefit from the opening of French-language ELCC services, notably Timmins (a shortage of 639 spaces), North Bay (a shortage of 242 spaces), Thunder Bay (a shortage of 236 spaces), and Kapuskasing (a shortage of 184 spaces).

Obviously, it is unrealistic to assume that every community can support viable French-language ELCC services, given the number of children eligible for French-language education and their distribution on the territory. Therefore, it is important to use the values presented in this analysis to properly size the French-language ELCC service. In some municipalities, family-based French-language ELCC services may be the best option. These home-based services offer flexibility in how care is provided and help ensure financial stability.

Appendix 1

French-language ELCC services in Northern Ontario offering full-time spaces as of September 1, 2025

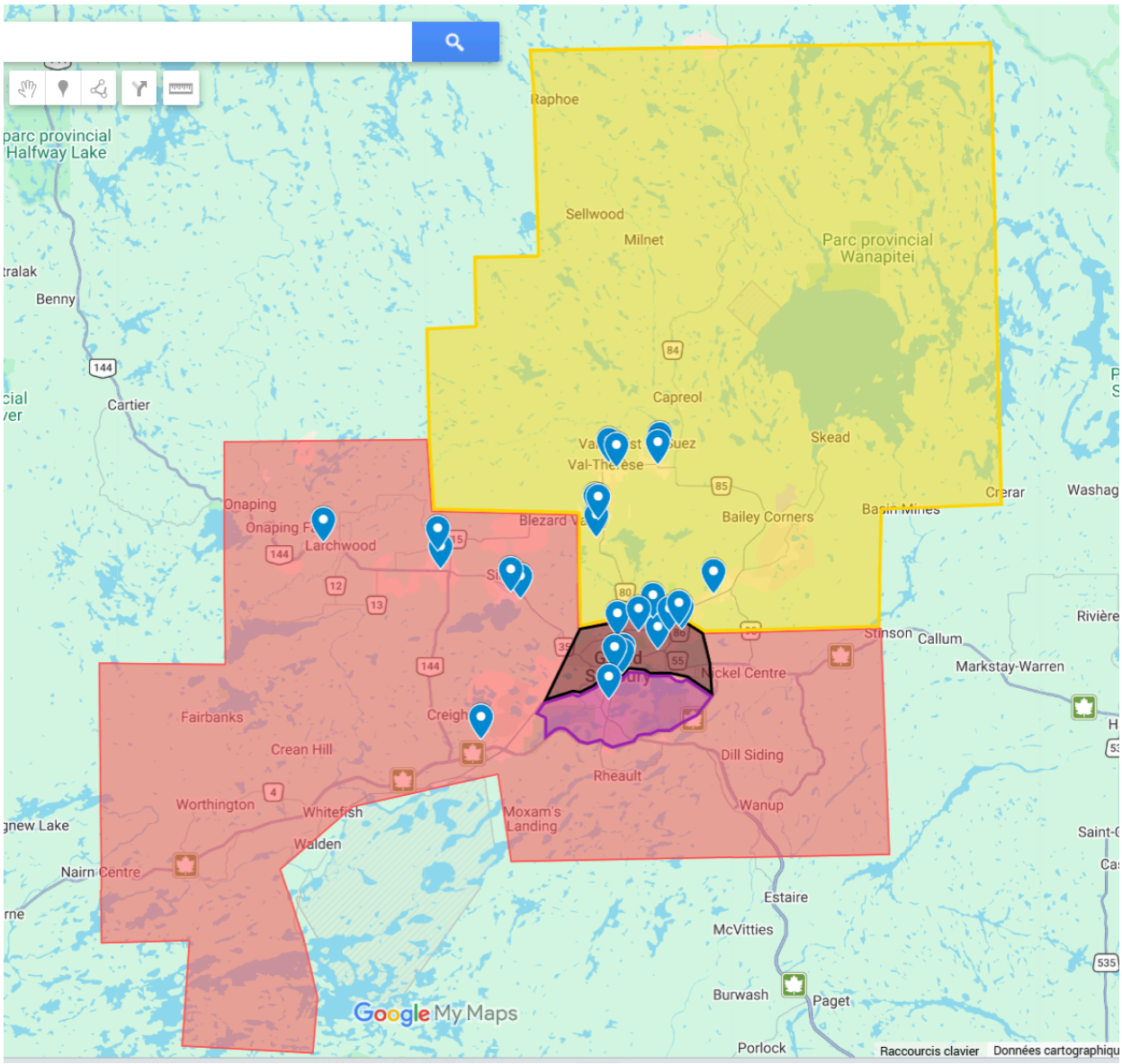
Municipality	Name of the French-language ELCC service	N° of available spaces
Azilda	Carrefour francophone – Boussole des tout-petits – École publique Franco-Nord	**26**
Azilda	Centre pivot du Triangle magique de Rayside Balfour – École Ste-Marie	**70**
Barrydowne	Our Children, Our Future/Nos enfants, notre avenir – St. Dominique	**65**
Chapleau	Chapleau Child Care Centre de garde d'enfants – Strathcona Site	**26**
Chelmsford	Our Children, Our Future/Nos enfants, notre avenir – Alliance St. Joseph	**34**
Chelmsford	Centre pivot du Triangle magique de Rayside Balfour – École St-Étienne	**39**
Chelmsford	Carrefour francophone – Garderie au Pavillon – Pavillon des tout-petits	**49**
Cochrane	Garde d'enfants de Cochrane – 399, 8e, Rue	**31**
Algoma District	Superior Children's Centre — Garderie francophone	**32**
Donovan	Centre pivot du Triangle magique de Rayside Balfour – École Saint-Joseph, Sudbu	**49**
Dubreuilville	Garderie Dubreuilville	**29**
Elliot Lake	All Star Children Services Inc. – Garderie Nouveau Départ	**44**
Garson	Centre pivot du Triangle magique de Rayside-Balfour – École St-Augustin	**26**
Hanmer	Carrefour francophone – Foyer des tout-petits – École Foyer Jeunesse	**31**
Hanmer	Centre pivot du Triangle magique de Rayside Balfour – École Notre-Dame	**39**

Municipality	Name of the French-language ELCC service	N° of available spaces
Hanmer	Centre pivot du Triangle magique de Rayside Balfour – École Saint-Joseph	**39**
Hearst	Garderie Bouts de chou	**57**
Kapuskasing	Garderie d'Iroquois Falls Day Care	**16**
Lively	Our Children, Our Future/Nos enfants, Notre avenir – École Saint-Paul Site	**21**
Marathon	Friends of the North Day Care	**18**
Minnow Lake	Carrefour francophone – Le Cœur des tout-petits – École publique Jeanne-Sauvé	**31**
Nickeldale/ Barrydowne/Donovan	Centre pivot du Triangle Magique – Ernie Checkris Site	**16**
Nickeldale/ Barrydowne/Donovan	Garderie Quatre Saisons	**34**
Nickeldale/ Barrydowne/Donovan	Carrefour francophone – Boréal des tous-petits – Collège Boréal	**47**
Nickeldale/ Barrydowne/Donovan	Carrefour francophone – Carrefour des tout-petits – École Jean-Éthier-Blais	**47**
Nipissing	Centre éducatif Rayon de soleil – St-Jude	**32**
Nipissing	All Star Children Services Inc. – Au jardin de Pierrot	**54**
North Bay	Garderie Tournesol	**30**
North Bay	Garderie Francofleur et miel	**37**
North Bay	La Place ensoleillée	**52**
North Bay	La Garderie Soleil	**73**
Robinson Subdivision/ Lockerby	Carrefour francophone – La Scène des tout-petits – École Hélène-Gravel	**49**
Robinson Subdivision/ Lockerby	Centre pivot du Triangle Magique de Rayside Balfour – École St-Denis	**56**
Sault Ste. Marie	Centre éducatif Rayon de soleil – École André-Cary	**16**
Sault Ste. Marie	Child Care Algoma – Site Notre Dame du Sault	**31**
Sault Ste. Marie	Centre éducatif Rayon de soleil – École Cœur du	**34**

Municipality	Name of the French-language ELCC service	N° of available spaces
	Nord	
Sault Ste. Marie	Centre éducatif Rayon de soleil – JC-poupon	**44**
Thunder Bay	Centre Grandir en français	**16**
Timiskaming	Garderie d'Earlton	**16**
Timiskaming	Centre pour enfants Timiskaming Child Care – Garderie des Moussaillons	**31**
Timiskaming	Centre des Petits Explorateurs	**57**
Timmins	Centre éducatif Rayon de soleil – St-Gérard	**32**
Timmins	Centre éducatif Rayon de soleil – Riverside	**38**
Timmins	Centre éducatif Rayon de soleil – Timmins	**39**
Timmins	Centre éducatif Rayon de soleil – Thériault	**47**
Val Caron	Carrefour francophone – Découverte des tout-petits – École de la Découverte	**26**
Val Caron	Centre pivot du Triangle magique – Valley View Site	**52**
Val Caron	Our Children, Our Future/Nos enfants, notre avenir – Jean-Paul-II	**65**
Val Thérèse	Centre pivot du Triangle magique de Rayside Balfour – École Sainte-Thérèse	**10**
Total		**1,853**

Appendix 2

Division of the city of Greater Sudbury by sector and location of French-language ELCC services as of September 1, 2025



Caption

South-End

North-End

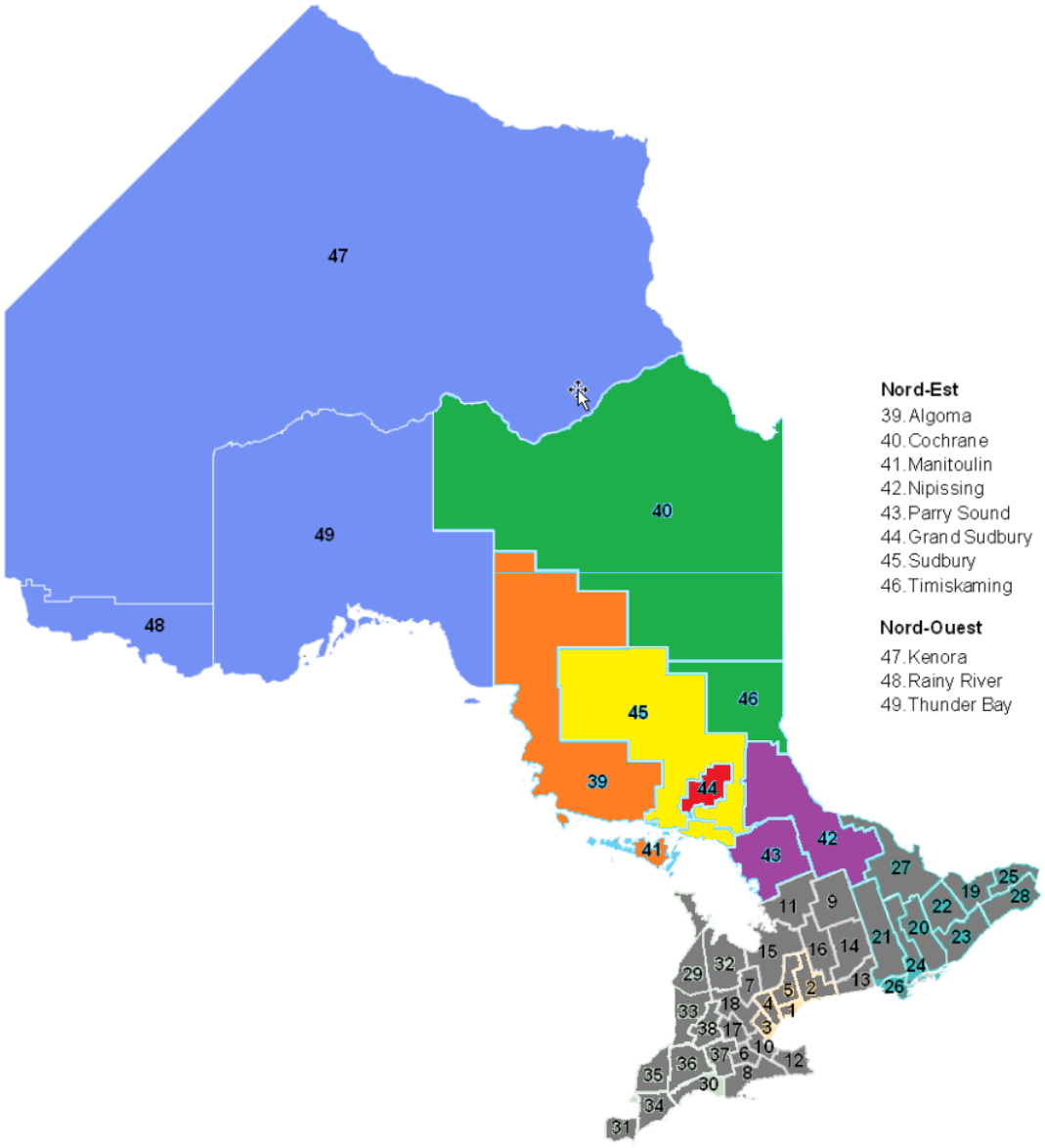
South-Central

North-Central

French-language ELCC service

Appendix 3

Northern Ontario census divisions
(Statistics Canada, 2021)



Sudbury Division

Greater Sudbury CMA

Algoma-Manitoulin Corridor

Cochrane-Timiskaming Corridor

Nipissing-Parry Sound Corridor

Kenora-Thunder Bay Corridor