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

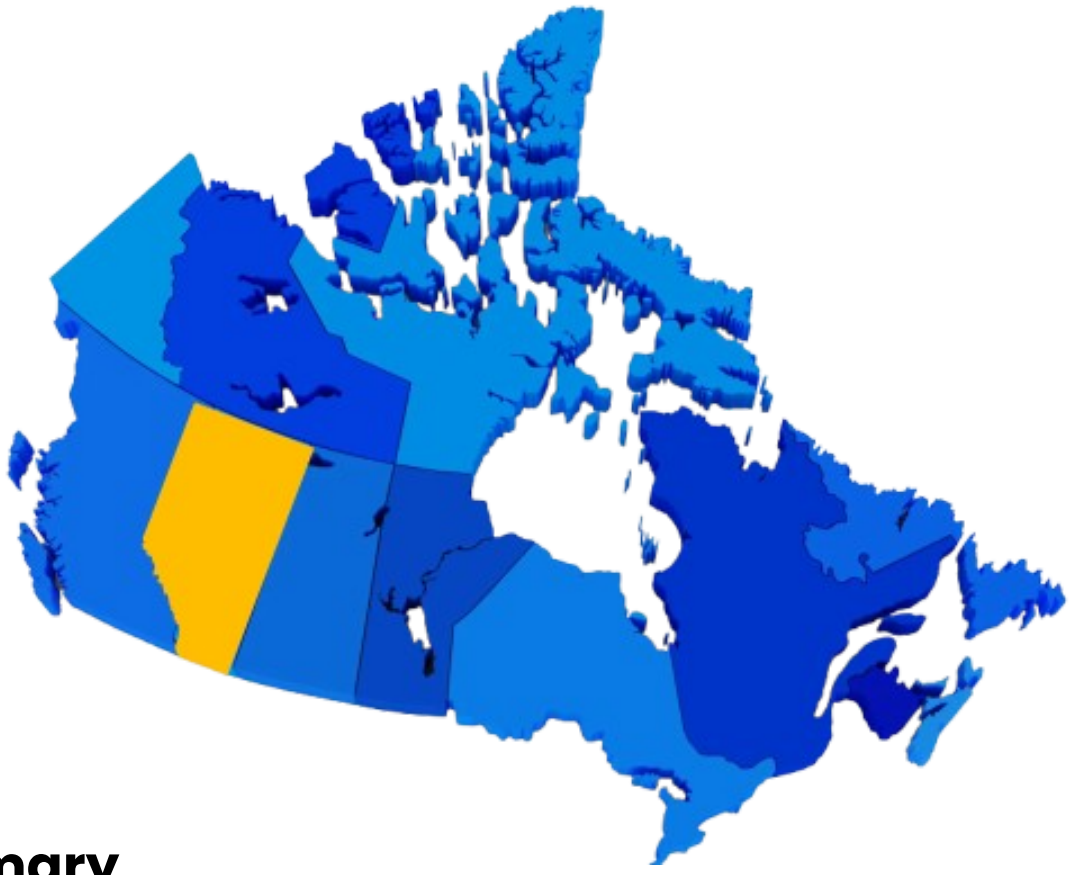
Profile of French-language ELCC services for children aged 0 to 4 eligible for French-language education in

Alberta

cnpf

La Commission nationale des parents francophones

September 2026



Summary

Several communities in Alberta are left with a shortage of full-time spaces in French-language early learning and childcare services for young children under five years of age. 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 Alberta 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.

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Table of Contents

1- Background 3

2- Methodology 5

3- Foundations of the analysis 7

4- Presentation of results 8

The City of Edmonton 9

The City of Calgary 11

The Rest of the Province 13

Southeast Region 13

South Region 15

South Central Region 17

Rockies Region 18

East Central Region 20

Central Region 21

Northeast Region 24

Northwest Region 25

5- Conclusion 27

Appendix 1 28

Appendix 2 30

Appendix 3 31

Appendix 4 32

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.

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

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

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 the communities of the province of Alberta, 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 obtained from the Fédération des parents francophones de l'Alberta (FPFA) [Francophone Parents' Federation of Alberta] and direct calls to various French-language ELCC services. The identified spaces are considered accurate as of September 1, 2025. We thus identified 1,217 full-time spaces in French-language ELCC services across the province[3].

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 Alberta, we used datasets that allowed us to locate children in the province as precisely as possible. While it was possible, in some cases, to specify a municipality directly, in others we had to rely on census divisions or regions. The cities of Edmonton and Calgary were 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 services is found in Appendix 1.

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)[4]. 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.

[4] 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.[5] 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[6] 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.

[5] 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.
[6] 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 16,145 children aged 0 to 4 eligible for French-language education in Alberta. With 1,217 full-time spaces in French-language ELCC services, the average ratio for the province stands at just **0.08 spaces per child**, or approximately 1 space for every 13 children. To reach a coverage level of around 0.70 spaces per child, the threshold used in this study to consider a region well served, the current number of full-time spaces would need to increase tenfold.

To clearly present the situation in Alberta, the province was divided into 10 areas: the city of Edmonton, the city of Calgary, the Southeast region, the South region, the South Central region, the Rockies region, the East Central region, the Central region, the Northeast region, and the Northwest region. Table 1 presents a summary of available spaces in French-language ELCC services and the number of children across the province.

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

Sector *(census divisions)*	N° of spaces	N° of children	Ratio
City of Calgary	229	4,790	**0.05**
City of Edmonton	292	4,525	**0.06**
Central Region	114	2,010	**0.06**
South Region	77	1,335	**0.06**
Northwest Region	70	890	**0.08**
East Central Region	207	735	**0.28**
South Central Region	45	585	**0.08**
Southeast Region	107	500	**0.21**
Northeast Region	42	475	**0.09**
Rockies Region	34	300	**0.11**
Total province	**1,217**	**16,145**	**0.08**

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 sectors where the needs are greatest.

The City of Edmonton

The city of Edmonton is a census metropolitan area (CMA) with a population of 1,472,402 according to the *2021 Census of Population*. Given its size, it has been divided into seven sectors (see Table 2 and Appendix 2).

Table 2: *Distribution of spaces in French-language ELCC services and children in the city of Edmonton*

Sector	N° of spaces	N° of children	Ratio
North	63	1,055	**0.06**
South	0	850	**0.00**
Central	172	755	**0.23**
Southeast	0	720	**0.00**
Southwest	0	525	**0.00**
Northwest	33	375	**0.09**
Rural areas	0	180	**0.00**
East	24	65	**0.37**
Total - City of Edmonton	**292**	**4,525**	**0.06**

According to data on children eligible for French-language education, there are 4,525 such children in Edmonton. Given that we identified 292 spaces in French-language ELCC services, only 1 in 16 children (or a **ratio of 0.06 spaces** per child) has access to a space. However, when analyzing the situation across the different sectors, a significant disparity emerges between needs and available spaces.

The Central sector has the highest number of spaces. With 172 spaces for 755 children, its ratio is 0.23, or 1 space for every 4 children. The number of spaces in this sector would need to triple to adequately serve the community. In the East sector, with 24 spaces for

65 children, the ratio is 0.37, just below the threshold for a medium-need area.

However, the North sector has the largest number of children. Despite having 1,055 children, there are only 63 spaces available. With a ratio of 0.06, it is classified as a high-need area. The Northwest sector has one French-language ELCC service offering 33 spaces. With 375 children in this sector, the ratio is 0.09.

It is worth noting that there are no services in the city's southern sectors. The South (850 children), Southeast (720 children), and Southwest (525 children) sectors have no spaces in French-language ELCC services whatsoever. The same is true for the city's rural areas sector (no spaces for 180 children).

To achieve satisfactory coverage and a ratio of 0.7 spaces per child, the city of Edmonton would need 3,168 spaces, namely 2,876 additional spaces.

Table 3 presents the neighbourhoods within each of these sectors where new French-language ELCC services could be added to be close 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 Edmonton*

Sector	N° of spaces to create	Example of location (neighbourhood)
North	675	Brintnell
South	595	Rutherford
Central	356	McCauley
Southeast	504	Minchau
Southwest	368	Callingwood
Northwest	230	Hawks Ridge
Rural areas	126	Aurora
East	22	Maple Ridge
Total - City of Edmonton	**2,876**	

The City of Calgary

The city of Calgary is a census metropolitan area (CMA) with a population of 1,540,242 according to the *2021 Census of Population*. Given its size, it has been divided into eight sectors (see Table 4 and Appendix 3).

Table 4: *Distribution of spaces in French-language ELCC services and children in the city of Calgary*

Sector	N° of spaces	N° of children	Ratio
South	103	940	**0.11**
Northeast	44	735	**0.06**
Northwest	14	620	**0.02**
West	68	605	**0.11**
North	0	585	**0.00**
Southeast	0	575	**0.00**
Central	0	500	**0.00**
East	0	230	**0.00**
Total - City of Calgary	**229**	**4,790**	**0.05**

According to data on children eligible for French-language education, there are 4,790 such children in Calgary. Given that we identified 229 spaces in French-language ELCC services, only 1 in 20 children (or a **ratio of 0.05 spaces** per child) has access to a space. Just like in Edmonton, the situation varies across sectors.

The South sector has the highest number of both spaces and children. With 103 spaces for 940 children, this represents a ratio of 0.11, well below the 0.7 threshold that defines a well-served area. The West sector (68 spaces and 605 children) has an identical ratio.

The Northeast (44 spaces and 735 children; ratio of 0.06) and Northwest (14 spaces and 620 children; ratio of 0.02) sectors are the other two areas with French-language ELCC services. However, these ratios are very low, making them high-need areas.

In the remaining sectors, there are no French-language ELCC services at all. Yet, the number of children could justify multiple services in the North (585 children), Southeast (575 children), Central (500 children), and East (230 children) sectors.

Every sector therefore requires a significant number of new spaces. To achieve satisfactory coverage and a ratio of 0.7 spaces per child, the city of Calgary would need 3,353 spaces, namely 3,124 additional spaces.

Table 5 presents the neighbourhoods within each of these sectors where new French-language ELCC services could be added to be close to the homes of families with children eligible for French-language education.

Table 5: *Ideal distribution of new French-language ELCC childcare spaces in the city of Calgary*

Sector	N° of spaces to create	Example of location (neighbourhood)
South	555	Braeside
Northeast	470	Winston Heights/Mountview
Northwest	420	Silver Springs
West	355	Signal Hill
North	410	Harvest Hills
Southeast	403	Copperfield
Central	350	Hillhurst
East	161	Marlborough
Total - City of Calgary	**3,124**	

The Rest of the Province

Of the 16,145 children in the province of Alberta, 9,315 live in the two main CMAs, Calgary and Edmonton. The remaining 6,830 children are distributed across the rest of the province, where there are 654 spaces in French-language ELCC services. This corresponds to a **ratio of 0.10 spaces** per child, or 1 space for every 10 children—a rate that remains well below the sufficient coverage threshold.

For presentation and analysis purposes, we divided the rest of the province into eight major regions, as shown in Appendix 4:

- Southeast region: census divisions No. 1, 2, and 4;
- South region: census divisions No. 3, 5, and 6 (outside Calgary);
- South Central region: census divisions No. 7 and 8;
- Central region: census divisions No. 11 (outside Edmonton) and 13;
- East Central region: census divisions No. 10 and 12;
- Rockies region: census divisions No. 9, 14, and 15;
- Northeast region: census division No. 16; and
- Northwest region: census divisions No. 17, 18, and 19.

This breakdown makes it easier to observe regional differences in the number of children and the availability of spaces in French-language ELCC services.

Southeast Region

This region covers the southern part of the province, along the U.S. border and directly west of Saskatchewan. It comprises census divisions No. 1, 2, and 4. There are 500 children and 107 spaces in French-language ELCC services, representing a **ratio of 0.21 spaces** per child, or approximately 1 space for every 5 children. Despite higher coverage than in several other regions of the province, supply remains insufficient to meet the region's needs, making it a high-need area. Table 6 presents the situation in this region. Note that Division No. 4 in this area has no children and is therefore not included in the table.

Table 6: *Distribution of spaces in French-language ELCC services and children in the Southeast region*

Division		N° of spaces	N° of children	Ratio
Division N°. 1 – Total		**30**	**150**	**0,20**
Main municipalities	Medicine Hat	30	135	**0.22**
	Cypress County	0	10	**0.00**
	Rest of the division	*0*	*5*	***0.00***
Division N°. 2 – Total		**77**	**350**	**0.22**
Main municipalities	Lethbridge	38	240	**0.16**
	Brooks	39	55	**0.71**
	Coalhurst	0	15	**0.00**
	Rest of the division	*0*	*40*	***0.00***
TOTAL – SOUTHEAST REGION		**107**	**500**	**0.21**

Census division No. 1 has 150 children and 1 French-language ELCC service with 30 spaces, located in the city of Medicine Hat. As this city has 135 children, this represents a ratio of 0.22. An additional 65 spaces would need to be added in Medicine Hat to make it a well-served area. Cypress County, with 10 children, has a shortfall of 7 spaces.

Census division No. 2 comprises 350 children and 77 spaces. The city of Lethbridge (240 children; 38 spaces) has a ratio of 0.16, making it a high-need area. An additional 130 spaces would need to be added in this city to reach the 0.7 threshold. With a ratio of 0.71, the city of Brooks (39 spaces for 55 children) is the only well-served municipality in the Southeast region. Finally, the town of Coalhurst (15 children) has a shortfall of 11 spaces.

South Region

The South region runs along the U.S. border, between the Southeast and Rockies regions. It comprises census divisions No. 3, 5, and 6 (outside Calgary). There are 1,335 children and 77 spaces in French-language ELCC services, representing a **ratio of 0.06 spaces** per child, or approximately 1 space for every 16 children. Table 7 presents the situation in this region.

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

Division		N° of spaces	N° of children	Ratio
Division n° 3 – Total		**0**	**50**	**0.00**
Main municipalities	Claresholm	0	15	**0.00**
	Pincher Creek	0	15	**0.00**
	Willow Creek No. 26	0	15	**0.00**
	Rest of the division	*0*	*5*	***0.00***
Division n° 5 – Total		**0**	**105**	**0.00**
Main municipalities	Strathmore	0	40	**0.00**
	Wheatland County	0	20	**0.00**
	Drumheller	0	15	**0.00**
	Siksika 146	0	10	**0.00**
	Rest of the division	*0*	*20*	***0.00***
Division n° 6 – Total		**77**	**1 180**	**0.07**
Main municipalities	Airdrie	35	430	**0.08**
	Cochrane	26	200	**0.13**
	Chestermere	0	145	**0.00**
	Okotoks	16	120	**0.13**
	Rocky View County	0	100	**0.00**
	Foothills County	0	55	**0.00**
	High River	0	30	**0.00**

Division		N° of spaces	N° of children	Ratio
	Crossfield	0	25	**0.00**
	Olds	0	20	**0.00**
	Mountain View County	0	15	**0.00**
	Carstairs	0	10	**0.00**
	Sundre	0	10	**0.00**
	Rest of the division	*0*	*20*	***0.00***
TOTAL – SOUTH REGION		**77**	**1,335**	**0.06**

In census division No. 3, there are 50 children, but no spaces in French-language ELCC services. The town of Claresholm (15 children), as well as Pincher Creek County (15 children) and Willow Creek County (15 children), each have a shortfall of 11 spaces to be well served.

In census division No. 5, there are 105 children, but no French-language ELCC services. This census division is therefore a high-need area. The town of Strathmore (40 children) has a shortfall of 28 spaces, while the town of Drumheller (15 children) would need 11 spaces to become a well-served area. Wheatland County (20 children; shortfall of 14 spaces) and the Siksika community (10 children; shortfall of 7 spaces) could benefit from home-based French-language ELCC services.

Finally, census division No. 6, surrounding the Calgary CMA, has 1,180 children and 77 spaces in French-language ELCC services. In the city of Airdrie (430 children; 35 spaces), the ratio is 0.08, corresponding to a shortfall of 266 spaces. In the town of Cochrane (200 children; 26 spaces; ratio of 0.13), an additional 114 spaces would need to be added to make it a well-served area. The town of Okotoks (120 children; 16 spaces) has a similar ratio of 0.13 and a shortfall of 68 spaces.

The city of Chestermere offers no spaces in French-language ELCC services, despite having 145 children (shortfall of 102 spaces). In the towns of High River (30 children; shortfall of 21 spaces), Olds (20 children; shortfall of 14 spaces), Carstairs (10 children; shortfall of 7 spaces), and Sundre (10 children; shortfall of 7 spaces), the shortfall in spaces is smaller in absolute terms. Rocky View County (100 children), Foothills County (55 children), and Mountain View County (15 children) have no spaces in French-language ELCC services.

South Central Region

Alberta's South Central region comprises census divisions No. 7 and 8. These divisions cover the territory between Saskatchewan and the Rockies, located between the Edmonton and Calgary CMAs. In total, the region has 585 children and 45 spaces in French-language ELCC services. This corresponds to a **ratio of 0.08 spaces** per child, or approximately 1 space for every 12 children. Table 8 presents the situation in this region.

Table 8: *Distribution of spaces in French-language ELCC services and children in the South Central region*

Division		N° of spaces	N° of children	Ratio
Division n°7 – Total		**0**	**70**	**0.00**
Main municipality	Wainwright	0	50	**0.00**
	Rest of the division	*0*	*20*	***0.00***
Division n° 8 – Total		**45**	**515**	**0.09**
Main municipalities	Red Deer	45	310	**0.15**
	Sylvan Lake	0	60	**0.00**
	Blackfalds	0	45	**0.00**
	Lacombe	0	40	**0.00**
	Ponoka	0	35	**0.00**
	Innisfail	0	10	**0.00**
	Rest of the division	*0*	*15*	***0.00***
TOTAL – SOUTH CENTRAL REGION		**45**	**585**	**0.08**

Census division No. 7 has 70 children, but no French-language ELCC services. This represents a shortfall of 49 spaces in this census division. Wainwright (50 children; shortfall of 35 spaces) is the municipality with the highest number of missing spaces.

In census division No. 8, there are 515 children and 45 spaces in French-language ELCC services. This corresponds to a ratio of 0.08, or 1 space for every 12 children. The French-language ELCC service in this division is in the city of Red Deer. With 45 spaces for 310 children, the city has a ratio of 0.15, making it a high-need area. An additional 172 spaces would need to be added in this city to reach the threshold for a well-served area (ratio of 0.7). The other municipalities have no spaces in French-language ELCC services. Consequently, there is a shortfall of 42 spaces in Sylvan Lake (60 children), 32 spaces in Blackfalds (45 children), 28 spaces in Lacombe (40 children), 25 spaces in Ponoka (35 children), and 7 spaces in Innisfail (10 children).

Rockies Region

The Rockies region runs along the British Columbia border, from Banff to Jasper. It comprises census divisions No. 9, 14, and 15. There are 34 spaces in French-language ELCC services and 300 children, representing a **ratio of 0.11 spaces** per child, or approximately 1 space for every 9 children. Table 9 presents the data for this region.

Table 9: *Distribution of spaces in French-language ELCC services and children in the Rockies region*

Division		N° of spaces	N° of children	Ratio
Division n° 9 – Total		**0**	**55**	**0.00**
Main municipalities	Clearwater County	0	35	**0.00**
	Rocky Mountain House	0	15	**0.00**
	Rest of the division	*0*	*5*	***0.00***

Division n° 14 – Total		**0**	**80**	**0.00**
Main municipalities	Hinton	0	35	**0.00**
	Edson	0	25	**0.00**
	Yellowhead County	0	20	**0.00**
Division n° 15 – Total		**34**	**165**	**0.21**
Main municipalities	Canmore	34	95	**0.36**
	Jasper	0	25	**0.00**
	Banff	0	20	**0.00**
	Bighorn No. 8	0	20	**0.00**
	Rest of the division	*0*	*5*	***0.00***
TOTAL – ROCKIES REGION		**34**	**300**	**0.11**

In census division No. 9, there are 55 children, but no French-language ELCC services, making it a high-need area. The town of Rocky Mountain House (15 children) has a shortfall of 11 spaces. Clearwater County (35 children) would need 25 additional spaces to become a well-served community.

Census division No. 14 has 80 children, yet no French-language ELCC services have been recorded there. Yellowhead County (20 children; shortfall of 14 spaces) and the towns of Hinton (35 children; shortfall of 25 spaces) and Edson (25 children; shortfall of 18 spaces) could benefit from additional spaces.

In census division No. 15, there are 165 children and 34 spaces in French-language ELCC services. This corresponds to a ratio of 0.21, or slightly more than 1 space for every 5 children. These spaces are concentrated in the town of Canmore (95 children). With a ratio of 0.36, the number of spaces in this town would need to double to make it a well-served area.

The municipality of Jasper (25 children; shortfall of 18 spaces) and the town of Banff (20 children; shortfall of 14 spaces) are also high-need areas, as is the municipal district of Bighorn (20 children; shortfall of 14 spaces).

East Central Region

The East Central region stretches between the city of Edmonton and the Saskatchewan border. It comprises census divisions No. 10 and 12. This region has 735 children and 207 spaces in French-language ELCC services. This corresponds to a **ratio of 0.28** spaces per child, making it a high-need area. The number of spaces would need to increase two-and-a-half fold for the region to become well served. Table 10 presents the situation regarding spaces and children in this region.

Table 10: *Distribution of spaces in French-language ELCC services and children in the East Central region*

Division		N° of spaces	N° of children	Ratio
Division n° 10 – Total		**16**	**210**	**0.08**
Main municipalities	Lloydminster	16	65	**0.25**
	Camrose	0	45	**0.00**
	Beaver County	0	20	**0.00**
	Vegreville	0	20	**0.00**
	County of Vermilion River	0	20	**0.00**
	Bruderheim	0	10	**0.00**
	Rest of the division	*0*	*30*	***0.00***
Division n° 12 – Total		**191**	**525**	**0.36**
Main municipalities	Cold Lake	44	150	**0.29**
	Bonnyville	25	135	**0.19**
	St. Paul	57	135	**0.42**
	Lac La Biche County	65	75	**0.87**
	Rest of the division	*0*	*30*	***0.00***
TOTAL – EAST CENTRAL REGION		**207**	**735**	**0.28**

Census division No. 10 has 210 children and 16 spaces in French-language ELCC

services. This corresponds to a ratio of 0.08 spaces per child, or 1 space for every 12 children. The city of Lloydminster, with 65 children, is where these 16 spaces are located, resulting in a ratio of 0.25 and making it a high-need area. In the city of Camrose (45 children), there is a shortfall of 32 spaces. In the towns of Vegreville (20 children; shortfall of 14 spaces) and Bruderheim (10 children; shortfall of 7 spaces), needs exist but are smaller in absolute numbers. There is also a shortfall of 14 spaces each in Beaver County (20 children) and the County of Vermilion River (20 children).

In census division No. 12, there are 525 children and 191 spaces. With a ratio of 0.36, the census division is only a few spaces short of being a medium-need community. Lac La Biche County, with 65 spaces for 75 children (ratio of 0.87), is the only well-served community in the East Central region. The town of St. Paul (135 children and 57 spaces) has a ratio of 0.42, making it a medium-need area. The city of Cold Lake (150 children; 44 spaces) has a ratio of 0.29, or 1 space for every 3.3 children. This makes it a high-need area, as is the town of Bonnyville (135 children; 25 spaces). Cumulatively, an additional 177 spaces in French-language ELCC services would need to be added in this census division.

Central Region

Alberta's Central region comprises census divisions No. 11 (outside Edmonton) and 13, covering the area surrounding Edmonton and extending north of the city. In total, the region has 2,010 children and 114 spaces in French-language ELCC services. This corresponds to a **ratio of 0.06 spaces** per child, or approximately 1 space for every 18 children. Table 11 presents the situation in this region.

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

Division		N° of spaces	N° of children	Ratio
Division n° 11 – Total		**114**	**1,830**	**0.06**
Main municipalities	Sherwood Park	52	345	**0.15**
	St. Albert	16	315	**0.05**
	Leduc	0	200	**0.00**
	Beaumont	28	165	**0.17**
	Spruce Grove	0	165	**0.00**
	Fort Saskatchewan	0	140	**0.00**
	Morinville	0	90	**0.00**
	Parkland County	0	80	**0.00**
	Sturgeon County	0	80	**0.00**
	Stony Plain	0	60	**0.00**
	Wetaskiwin	0	40	**0.00**
	Devon	0	20	**0.00**
	Gibbons	0	20	**0.00**
	Legal	18	20	**0.90**
	Brazeau County	0	10	**0.00**
	Drayton Valley	0	10	**0.00**
	Ermineskin 138	0	10	**0.00**
	Golden Days	0	10	**0.00**
Division n° 13 – Total		**0**	**180**	**0.00**
Main municipalities	Barrhead County No. 11	0	50	**0.00**
	Whitecourt	0	50	**0.00**
	Athabasca County	0	25	**0.00**
	Athabasca	0	20	**0.00**
	Lac Ste. Anne County	0	20	**0.00**
	Westlock County	0	15	**0.00**
TOTAL – CENTRAL REGION		**114**	**2,010**	**0.06**

In census division No. 11, there are 1,830 children and 114 spaces in French-language ELCC services. With a ratio of 0.06, it is a high-need area. Sherwood Park (345 children; 52 spaces) has the highest number of spaces in French-language ELCC services. Despite this, with a ratio of 0.15, the community remains a high-need area. In the city of St. Albert, the number of children is slightly lower (315 children), but the number of spaces (16 spaces) remains insufficient. The remaining spaces are in the town of Legal (20 children; 18 spaces) and the city of Beaumont (165 children; 28 spaces). The ratio in Beaumont is 0.17, meaning the number of spaces in this community would need to quadruple. Legal is the only well-served community in the census division, with a ratio of 0.90.

The remaining communities in this census division have no French-language ELCC services. Consequently, the cities of Leduc (200 children; shortfall of 140 spaces), Spruce Grove (165 children; shortfall of 116 spaces), Fort Saskatchewan (140 children; shortfall of 98 spaces), Morinville (90 children; shortfall of 63 spaces), Stony Plain (60 children; shortfall of 42 spaces), and Wetaskiwin (40 children; shortfall of 28 spaces) could all benefit from the addition of French-language ELCC services. The situation is similar in Parkland County and Sturgeon County (80 children each; shortfall of 56 spaces each).

In the towns of Devon and Gibbons (20 children each; shortfall of 14 spaces each), as well as Drayton Valley, Golden Days, and Ermineskin (10 children each; shortfall of 7 spaces each), home-based French-language ELCC services could help meet demand. The same holds true for Brazeau County (10 children; shortfall of 7 spaces).

In census division No. 13, there are no French-language ELCC services, even though 180 children live there, making it a high-need area. By adding 35 spaces each in the

County of Barrhead and the town of Whitecourt (50 children each), 18 spaces in Athabasca County (25 children), 14 spaces each in the town of Athabasca and Lac Ste. Anne County (20 children each), and 11 spaces in Westlock County (15 children), these communities could become well-served areas (ratio of 0.7).

Northeast Region

The Northeast region covers the northern part of the province, bordering Saskatchewan. It is represented by census division No. 16. There is only one municipality with at least 10 children in this region: the regional municipality of Wood Buffalo. It has 475 children and 1 French-language ELCC service with 42 spaces, representing a **ratio of 0.09 spaces** per child. With 1 space for every 11 children, it is a high-need area. Table 12 presents the situation in this region.

Tableau 12: *Distribution of spaces in French-language ELCC services and children in the Northeast region*

Division		N° of spaces	N° of children	Ratio
Division n°16 – Total		**42**	**475**	**0.09**
Main municipality	Wood Buffalo	42	475	**0.09**
TOTAL – NORTHEAST REGION		**42**	**475**	**0.09**

Note that 270 additional spaces in French-language ELCC services would need to be added to adequately serve this region.

Northwest Region

The Northwest region, comprising census divisions No. 17, 18, and 19, covers the northern part of the province bordering British Columbia. There are 890 children and 70 spaces in French-language ELCC services, representing a **ratio of 0.08 spaces** per child, or approximately 1 space for every 12 children. The region therefore has insufficient coverage and is classified as a high-need area. Table 13 presents the situation in this region.

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

Division		N° of spaces	N° of children	Ratio
Division n° 17 – Total		**0**	**125**	**0.00**
Main municipalities	Northern Sunrise County	0	30	**0.00**
	Slave Lake	0	25	**0.00**
	High Level	0	15	**0.00**
	Mackenzie County	0	10	**0.00**
	County of Northern Lights	0	10	**0.00**
	Opportunity No. 17	0	10	**0.00**
	Rest of the division	*0*	*25*	***0.00***
Division n° 18 – Total		**0**	**45**	**0.00**
Main municipalities	Greenview No. 16	0	30	**0.00**
	Sturgeon Lake 154	0	15	**0.00**
Division n° 19 – Total		**70**	**720**	**0.10**
Main municipalities	Grande Prairie	24	535	**0.04**
	Peace River	16	60	**0.27**
	Smoky River No. 130	0	50	**0.00**
	Falher	30	15	**2.00**
	Girouxville	0	10	**0.00**
	McLennan	0	10	**0.00**
	Wembley	0	10	**0.00**
	Rest of the division	*0*	*30*	***0.00***
TOTAL – NORTHWEST REGION		**70**	**890**	**0.08**

In census division No. 17, there are 125 children, but no spaces in French-language ELCC services. This represents a shortfall of 88 spaces in this census division. In Northern Sunrise County (30 children), there is a shortfall of 21 spaces. In the towns of Slave Lake (25 children; shortfall of 18 spaces) and High Level (15 children; shortfall of 11 spaces), the shortfall is slightly smaller. Finally, in Mackenzie County and the County of Northern Lights (10 children each), 7 spaces in French-language ELCC services would need to be added in each, as well as in the municipal district of Opportunity No. 17.

In census division No. 18, there are 45 children, but no spaces in French-language ELCC services. The municipal district of Greenview (30 children; shortfall of 21 spaces) and Sturgeon Lake 154 (15 children; shortfall of 11 spaces) are the only two areas with enough eligible children. Both are high-need areas.

Finally, census division No. 19 (720 children and 70 spaces) has a ratio of 0.10, or 1 space for every 10 children. The town of Falher (15 children; 30 spaces) has a ratio of 2.00, or 2 spaces per child, making it the only well-served area in the Northwest region. Children from the surrounding communities of McLennan and Girouxville (10 children each), as well as the municipal district of Smoky River (50 children), likely use this service.

The city of Grande Prairie, with 535 children, has 24 spaces in French-language ELCC services. With a ratio of 0.04, it is a high-need area. An additional 350 spaces would need to be added in this city to reach the 0.7 threshold and become well served. In the town of Peace River, there are 60 children and 16 spaces in French-language ELCC services. This represents a ratio of 0.27, making it a high-need area. Finally, the town of Wembley (10 children) has a shortfall of 7 spaces.

5- Conclusion

This study aimed to identify the areas, divisions, counties and municipalities in Alberta 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 the province.

Overall, Franco-Albertan families do not have access to enough full-time French-language spaces in French-language ELCC services. With a **ratio of 0.08 spaces per eligible child** aged 0 to 4, coverage is approximately 1 space for every 13 children. This represents a **shortfall of 10,085 spaces** across the province.

Although more than half of the missing spaces are in the cities of Edmonton (shortfall of 2,876 spaces) and Calgary (shortfall of 3,124 spaces), several other areas could benefit from the opening of French-language ELCC services. The cities of Grande Prairie (shortfall of 350 spaces) and Airdrie (shortfall of 266 spaces), along with the regional municipality of Wood Buffalo (shortfall of 270 spaces), all show a significant shortfall of spaces in nominal terms.

Obviously, it is unrealistic to assume that every municipality can support viable French-language ELCC services, given the number of children eligible for French-language education. Therefore, it is important to use the values presented in this analysis to properly size the French-language ELCC services. 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

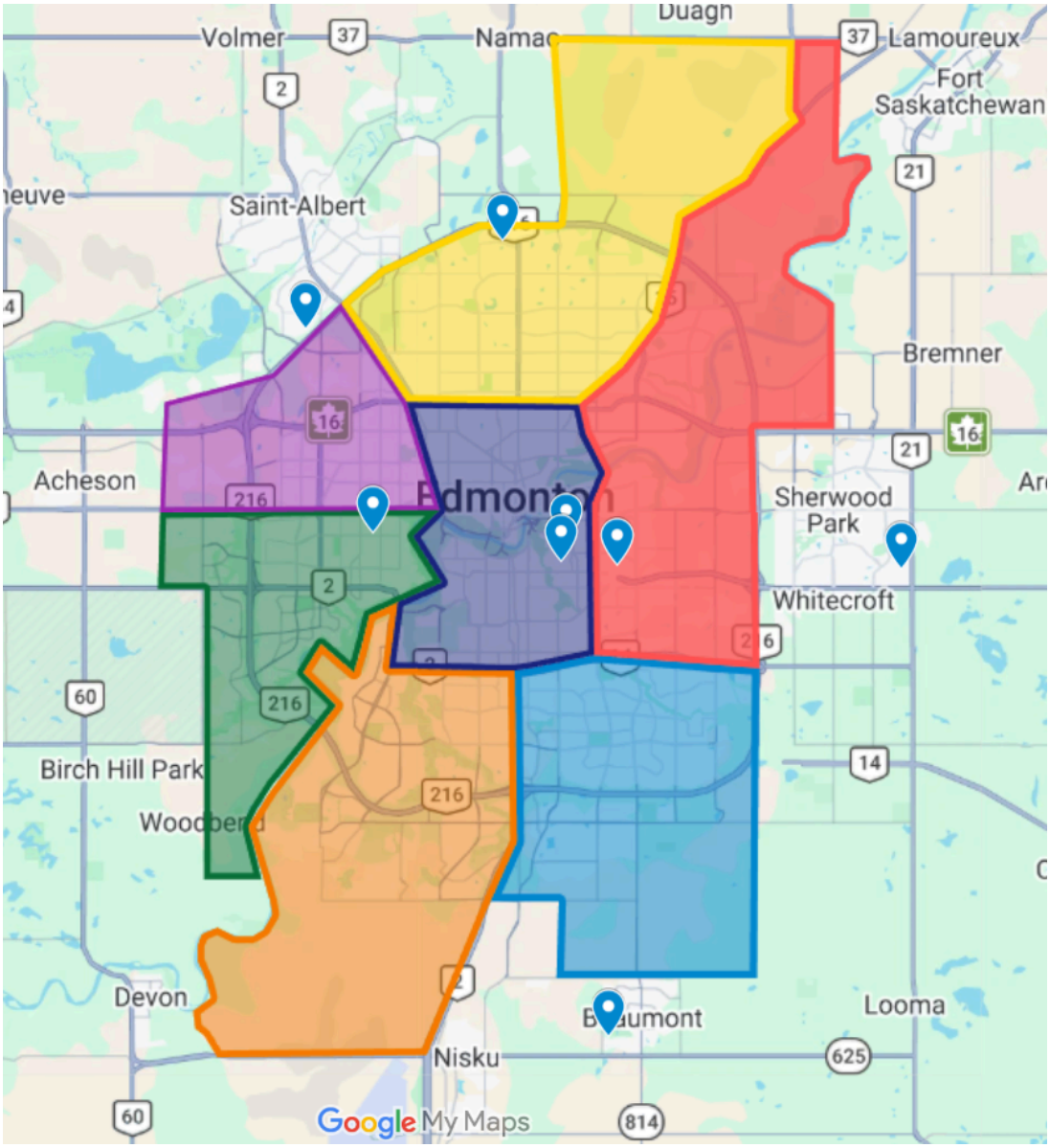
French-language ELCC services in Alberta offering full-time spaces as of September 1, 2025

Municipality	Name of the French-language ELCC service	No. of available spaces
Airdrie	Les Petits Pieds	35
Beaumont	Les Petits Yogis	28
Bonnyville	Le coin des lutins	25
Brooks	Les P'tits Trésors	39
Calgary	Envol et Boussole SO	132
	Prématernelle Entre amis	35
	Les Petits Géants	24
	Les Petits Géants	24
	Prématernelle Capucine – TDJ	14
Canmore	SPEF de Canmore	34
Cochrane	Les Petites Abeilles	26
Cold Lake	Les Kinou-Choux	44
Edmonton	CEPP Gabrielle-Roy	88
	Centre d'apprentissage de la PE La Colombe	84
	CEPP À la découverte	63
	Garderie de l'école Jean-Claude-Mahé	33
	Prématernelle Manon	24
Falher	Prématernelle Les Petits Bourdons	30
Fort McMurray	Garderie Chez Madame Picolo	42
Grande Prairie	Les Petits Boucs	24
Lac La Biche	Les Quatre Saisons	23
Legal	La Petite École	18
Lethbridge	Garderie CREFL	38
Lloydminster	Petits Explorateurs	16
Medicine Hat	Les Joyeux Colibris	30
Okotoks	Les Petits Géants	16

Municipality	Name of the French-language ELCC service	No. of available spaces
Peace River	CPE Les Petits Cœurs	16
Plamondon	Le Coin des curieux	26
	L'Étoile boréale	16
Red Deer	Pays des jeux	24
	Le Câlin des anges	21
Sherwood Park	La Bicyclette	52
St. Albert	CEPP À l'aventure	16
St. Paul	Les Petits Oursons	57
Total		**1,217**

Appendix 2

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



Caption

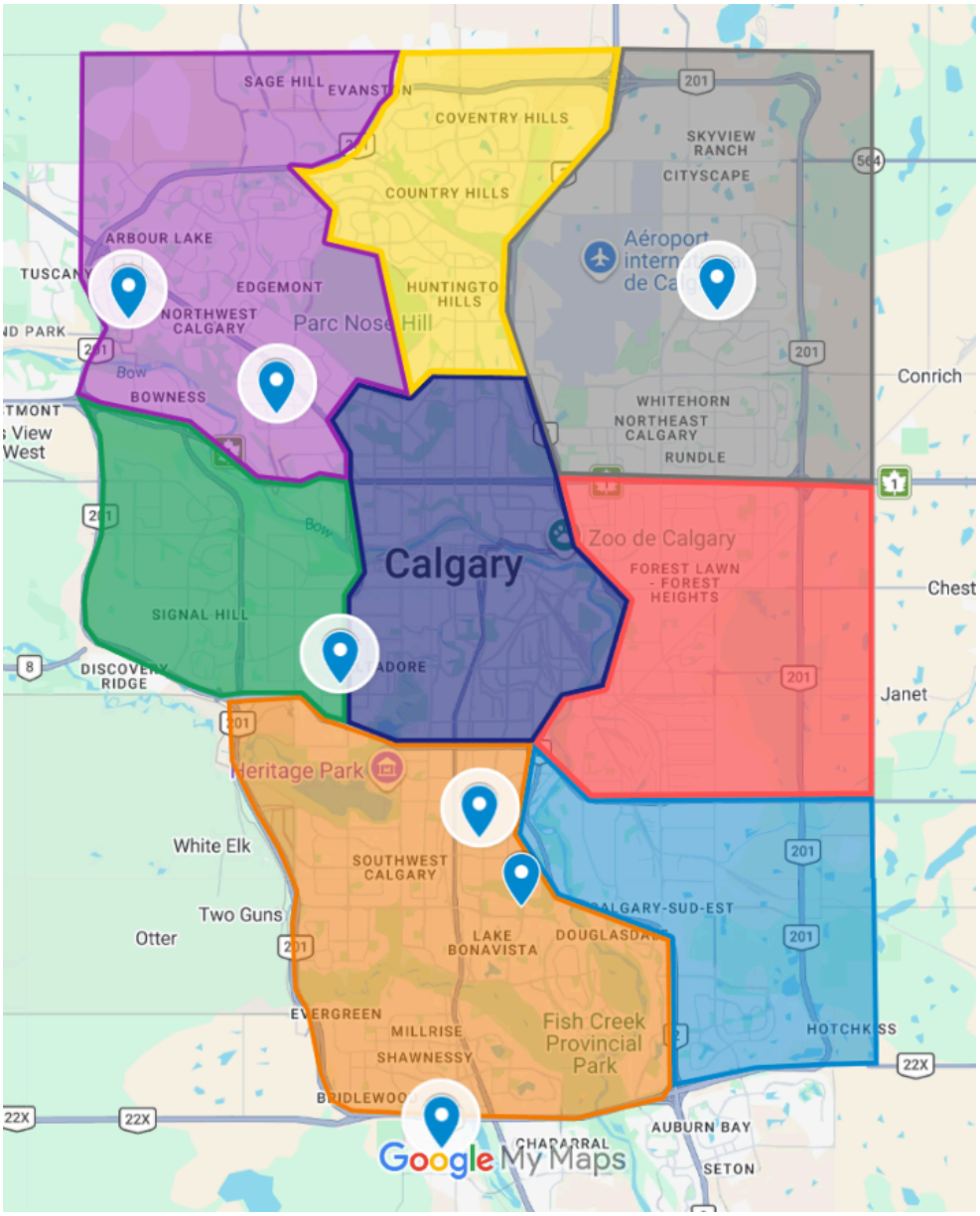
Central **Northwest** **North** **East**

Southeast **South** **Southwest**

French-language ELCC service

Appendix 3

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



Caption

- Central
- Northwest
- North
- Northeast
- Southeast
- South
- West
- East
- French-language ELCC service

Appendix 4

Alberta census divisions (Statistics Canada)



Source: ID 79482561 @ Volina | Dreamstime.com