Réseau d'intervenantes et d'intervenants en petite enfance

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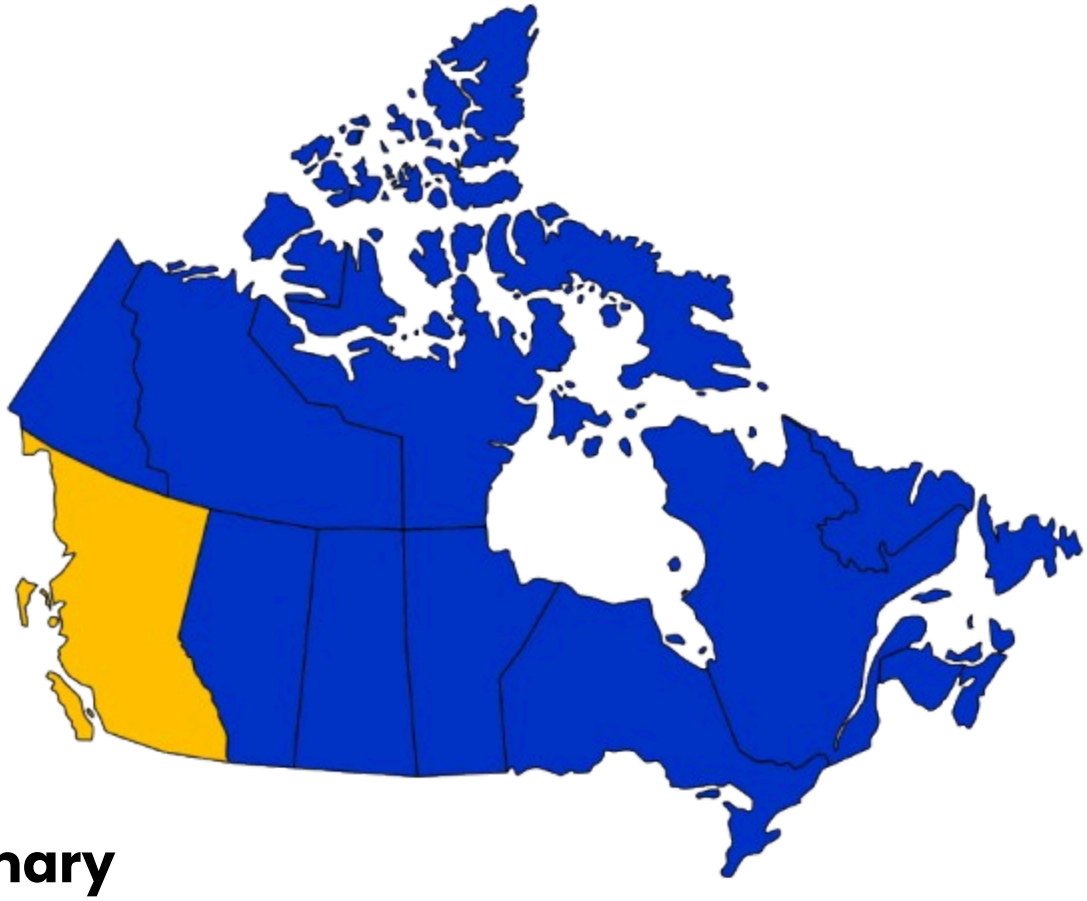
Demographic analysis and shortage of French-language early learning and childcare services

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

British Columbia

La Commission nationale des parents francophones

September 2026



Summary

Several communities in British Columbia 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 British Columbia as of September 1, 2025, and suggests communities to target to optimize the impact of these new spaces.

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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. 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 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 British Columbia, 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 Francophones.

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*[1], 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 Fédération des parents francophones de Colombie-Britannique (FPFCB) [British Columbia Francophone Parents Federation]. The identified spaces are accurate as of September 1, 2025. We have thus identified 571 full-time spaces in British Columbia[2].

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 British Columbia, we used the datasets that locate the children in the province as precisely as possible. While in some cases it was possible to specify a municipality directly, in others we had to fall back on census divisions or areas. The city of Vancouver was divided into seven 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).

[1] Table n° 98100541 from Statistics Canada's former CANSIM database.
[2] The complete list of identified French-language ELCC services is found in Appendix 1.

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

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)[3]. 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.

[3] 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.[4] 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[5] 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.

[4] 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.
[5] 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 11,575 children aged 0 to 4 eligible for French-language education in British Columbia. With 571 full-time spaces in French-language ELCC services, the average ratio for the province stands at **0.05 spaces per child**, or only 1 space for every 20 children. This means that for the province to become well served by French-language ELCC services, the number of full-time spaces would need to be multiplied by 14. Table 1 presents a summary of the situation regarding available spaces in French-language ELCC services and eligible children for the province.

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

Sector	No of spaces	No of children	Ratio
Greater Vancouver CMA	352	5,515	**0.06**
Thompson-Okanagan Region	78	1,355	**0.06**
Vancouver Island and Coast Region	56	1,330	**0.04**
Greater Victoria CMA	53	1,060	**0.05**
Cariboo-Chilcotin Region	0	695	**0.00**
Fraser Valley	16	635	**0.03**
Kootenay Region	16	600	**0.03**
Peace River Region	0	215	**0.00**
North Coast Region	0	170	**0.00**
Total province	**571**	**11,575**	**0.05**

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

The City of Vancouver

The city of Vancouver is a census metropolitan area (CMA) with a population of 2,777,430 according to the *2021 Census of Population*. Given its size, it has been divided into seven sectors, which are presented in Appendix 2.

According to data on children eligible for French-language education, there are an estimated 5,515 eligible children in the city of Vancouver. Considering that we identified 352 spaces in French-language ELCC services, this means that 1 in 16 children (a **ratio of 0.06 spaces** per child) has access to a space. Given this result, it can be expected that most parents will have to turn to English-language services, which increases the risk of linguistic assimilation even before children enter school. Table 2 presents the data for Greater Vancouver by sector.

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

Sector	N° of spaces	N° of children	Ratio
Vancouver Centre	38	1,645	**0.02**
Surrey	24	1,145	**0.02**
Burnaby-Coquitlam	148	935	**0.16**
North Vancouver & West Vancouver	89	680	**0.13**
Richmond	33	415	**0.08**
Langley	20	350	**0.06**
Maple Ridge	0	310	**0.00**
Rest of the city	*0*	*35*	***0.00***
Total – City of Vancouver	**352**	**5,515**	**0.06**

A closer analysis of the data shows that the situation varies from one sector to another, although all sectors are in high-need areas. For example, the Maple Ridge sector has no French-language ELCC services despite having 310 eligible children. In Central Vancouver, where 1,645 children live, there are 38 spaces, or 1 space per 43 children (a

ratio of 0.02). Surrey has 24 spaces for 1,145 children, or 1 space for nearly 50 children (a ratio of 0.02).

The Richmond and Langley sectors show slightly better ratios, though they are still too low, and they remain high-need areas. In the Richmond sector, there are 33 spaces for 415 children (a ratio of 0.08). Finally, in Langley, there are 20 spaces for 350 children (a ratio of 0.06).

The North Vancouver & West Vancouver and Burnaby–Coquitlam sectors have the best coverage in Greater Vancouver, yet they remain far below the 0.7 ratio required to be considered well-served areas. Thus, Burnaby–Coquitlam has 148 spaces for 935 children (a ratio of 0.16), which is slightly higher than that of North Vancouver & West Vancouver (a ratio of 0.13, or 89 spaces for 680 children).

The creation of French-language ELCC services is therefore essential to properly serve the city of Vancouver. To achieve satisfactory coverage (a ratio of 0.7), Greater Vancouver would need 3,509 additional spaces. Table 3 presents the distribution of these spaces by sector so that they are located as close as possible to the children's homes.

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

Sector	N° of spaces to create	Example of location (neighbourhood)
Vancouver Centre	1,137	Dickens or Kitsilano
Surrey	778	Campbell Heights
Burnaby-Coquitlam	507	Eagle Ridge
North Vancouver & West Vancouver	387	Keith-Lynn
Richmond	258	Bridgeport
Langley	225	Willoughby
Maple Ridge	217	Hammond
Total – City of Vancouver	**3,509**	

The Vancouver Centre sector alone would need more than 1,100 additional spaces. Considering French-language ELCC services with an average capacity of 60 spaces, this means 19 services could be added. The Dickens and Kitsilano neighbourhoods have the highest number of eligible children and should be prioritized for the addition of these services.

In the Surrey sector, there is a shortage of 778 spaces (the equivalent of 13 French-language ELCC services of 60 spaces each). The Campbell Heights neighbourhood has the highest number of eligible children in this sector of the CMA.

In the Burnaby–Coquitlam sector, there is a shortage of 507 spaces. The Eagle Ridge neighbourhood is where the reach of a new French-language ELCC service would be maximized.

In the North Vancouver & West Vancouver sector, there is a shortage of 387 spaces. This corresponds to a shortage of approximately 6 French-language ELCC services. The Keith-Lynn neighbourhood has the highest number of eligible children without a French-language ELCC service.

The Richmond sector has a shortage of 258 spaces in French-language ELCC services. The Bridgeport neighbourhood would be a priority location for adding a service.

In the Langley sector, there is a shortage of 225 spaces. The Willoughby neighbourhood has the highest number of eligible children, yet it has no French-language ELCC services. Finally, in the Maple Ridge sector, there is a shortage of 217 spaces. The Hammond neighbourhood has the highest number of eligible children.

The Victoria Region

Victoria is a census metropolitan area (CMA) with a population of 414,896 according to the *2021 Census of Population*. Because it encompasses several surrounding municipalities, the Victoria region was expanded in this analysis to include all[6] of census

[6]The map in Appendix 3 shows the census divisions for the entire province.

division No. 1.

Thus, the Victoria region has 1,060 eligible children, but only 1 French-language ELCC service with 53 spaces. This represents a **ratio of 0.05 spaces** per child, or 1 space for 20 children. It is therefore a high-need area. Table 4 presents the data for Greater Victoria by sector.

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

Sector	N° of spaces	N° of children	Ratio
Saanich	0	235	**0.00**
Victoria	53	220	**0.24**
Langford	0	180	**0.00**
Esquimalt	0	95	**0.00**
Colwood	0	85	**0.00**
Sooke	0	60	**0.00**
Central Saanich	0	40	**0.00**
View Royal	0	40	**0.00**
North Saanich	0	25	**0.00**
Oak Bay	0	25	**0.00**
Highlands	0	20	**0.00**
Juan de Fuca (Part 1)	0	20	**0.00**
Sidney	0	15	**0.00**
Total – Victoria Region	**53**	**1,060**	**0.05**

From the outset, it is worth noting that the French-language ELCC service is in the Victoria sector. With 220 eligible children in this sector, this represents a ratio of 0.15. It is therefore a high-need area, with a shortage of 122 spaces in this sector.

Despite having more eligible children (235), the Saanich sector has no services. There is a shortage of 165 spaces for this sector to become a well-served area.

The sectors of Langford (180 eligible children, a shortage of 126 spaces), Esquimalt (95 children, a shortage of 67 spaces), and Colwood (85 children, a shortage of 60 spaces) could each benefit from one or two French-language ELCC services with an average capacity of 60 spaces.

For the sectors of Sooke (60 children, a shortage of 42 spaces), as well as Central Saanich and View Royal (40 children each, a shortage of 40 spaces each), adding a French-language ELCC service in each of these sectors would help better meet the needs of these communities.

Finally, for the sectors of North Saanich and Oak Bay (25 eligible children each), Highlands and Juan de Fuca (Part 1) (20 children each), and Sidney (15 children), the shortage of spaces could be met through home-based French-language ELCC services.

Overall, the Victoria region could benefit from 689 additional spaces to adequately meet the needs of the Francophone community.

Rest of the province

While most eligible children live in the province's two largest metropolitan areas (Vancouver and Victoria), 5,000 eligible children are in other regions. These children have been grouped into seven regions:

- Vancouver Island and Coast region: census divisions No. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8 and 9;
- Fraser Valley region: census division No. 11;
- Thompson-Okanagan region: census divisions No. 12, 17, 18 and 19;
- Kootenay region: census divisions No. 13, 14, 15 and 16;
- Cariboo-Chilcotin region: census divisions No. 7, 20, 21, 22, 25 and 26;
- North Coast region: census divisions No. 23, 24 and 29; and
- Peace River region: census divisions No. 27 and 28.

Vancouver Island and Coast Region

The Vancouver Island and Coast region comprises census divisions No. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, and 9. It covers all of Vancouver Island outside Greater Victoria, as well as the British Columbia coast facing the island. In total, it has 1,330 eligible children and 56 full-time spaces in a French-language ELCC service, representing a **ratio of 0.04 spaces** per child, or 1 space for 25 children. Table 5 presents the situation in this region.

Table 5: *Distribution of spaces in French-language ELCC services and children in the Vancouver Island and Coast region*

Division		N° of spaces	N° of children	Ratio
Division n° 2 — Total		**0**	**135**	**0.00**
Major municipalities	Cowichan Valley	0	65	**0.00**
	Salt Spring Island	0	35	**0.00**
	Ladysmith	0	15	**0.00**
	Cowichan	0	10	**0.00**
	Duncan	0	10	**0.00**
Division		**N° of spaces**	**N° of children**	**Ratio**
Division n° 3 — Total		**16**	**355**	**0.05**
Main municipalities	Nanaimo	16	295	**0.05**
	Qualicum Beach	0	10	**0.00**
	Rest of the division	*0*	*50*	***0.00***
Division n° 4 — Total		**0**	**130**	**0.00**
Main municipality	North Cowichan	0	95	**0.00**
	Rest of the division	*0*	*35*	***0.00***
Division n° 5 — Total		**16**	**410**	**0.04**
Main municipalities	Comox	16	135	**0.12**
	Courtenay	0	100	**0.00**
	Cumberland	0	40	**0.00**
	Port Alberni	0	35	**0.00**
	Tofino	0	15	**0.00**
	Ucluelet	0	15	**0.00**
	Rest of the division	*0*	*70*	***0.00***
Division n° 6 — Total		**8**	**140**	**0.06**
Main municipality	Campbell River	8	115	**0.07**
	Rest of the division	*0*	*25*	***0.00***

Division		N° of spaces	N° of children	Ratio
Division n° 8 — Total		**0**	**70**	**0.00**
Main municipalities	Powell River	0	60	**0.00**
	qathet A	0	10	**0.00**
Division n° 9 — Total		**16**	**90**	**0.18**
Main municipalities	Sunshine Coast	0	35	**0.00**
	Sechelt	16	30	**0.52**
	Rest of the division	*0*	*25*	***0.00***
TOTAL – VANCOUVER ISLAND AND COAST REGION		**56**	**1 330**	**0.04**

In census division No. 2, there are 135 eligible children, but no French-language ELCC services. The municipality of Cowichan Valley, with 65 children, has a shortage of 46 spaces to become a well-served area. On Salt Spring Island, with 35 children, the shortage is 25 spaces. In the other municipalities (Ladysmith, Cowichan, and Duncan), the shortage ranges between 7 and 11 spaces.

Census division No. 3 has only one French-language ELCC service with 16 spaces, located in Nanaimo. However, because there are 295 eligible children in this city, 190 spaces would need to be added to make it a well-served community. In Qualicum Beach, with 10 children, the shortage is 7 spaces.

In census division No. 4, there are 130 eligible children, but no French-language ELCC services. The largest municipality in the division, North Cowichan, has 95 children. This represents a shortage of 67 spaces for this municipality.

Census division No. 5 has the highest number of eligible children in this region. With 410 children, it should have 287 spaces in French-language ELCC services. However, there is only one service with 16 spaces, located in Comox (135 children, a ratio of 0.12). In the other municipalities of this division, Courtenay (100 children; a shortage of 70 spaces), Cumberland (40 children; a shortage of 28 spaces), Port Alberni (35 children; a shortage of 25 spaces), and Tofino and Ucluelet (15 children each; a shortage of 11 spaces each) are all high-need areas.

Census division No. 6 has 140 eligible children, including 115 in the municipality of Campbell River alone. With only 8 spaces in French-language ELCC services, Campbell River (a ratio of 0.07) is a high-need area.

In census division No. 8, there are 70 children, but no spaces in French-language ELCC services. In the municipality of Powell River (60 children), there is a shortage of 42 spaces. In qathet A (10 children), the shortage is 7 spaces.

Finally, in census division No. 9, there are 90 children. The municipality of Sechelt (16 spaces for 30 children) has a ratio of 0.52, making it a moderate-need area, the only one in the region. Conversely, the municipality of Sunshine Coast has no services, despite having 35 children. Adding 25 spaces would be needed to make it a well-served area.

Fraser Valley Region

The Fraser Valley region is located east of the Greater Vancouver region, extending to the Okanagan Valley. It corresponds to census division No. 11. There are 16 spaces in French-language ELCC services and 635 eligible children. This represents a **ratio of 0.03 spaces** per child, making it a high-need area. Table 6 presents the data for this region.

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

Division		N° of spaces	N° of children	Ratio
Division n° 11 – Total		**16**	**635**	**0.03**
Main municipalities	Abbotsford	0	280	**0.00**
	Chilliwack	0	235	**0.00**
	Mission	16	95	**0.17**
	District of Kent	0	10	**0.00**
	Rest of the division	*0*	*15*	***0.00***
TOTAL - FRASER VALLEY REGION		**16**	**635**	**0.03**

In census division No. 11, there are 635 eligible children and 16 spaces in French-language ELCC services. These 16 spaces are in Mission. With 95 children in this municipality, the ratio is 0.17, which corresponds to a high-need area.

The two main cities in this division, Abbotsford (280 children) and Chilliwack (235 children), have no French-language ELCC services. They would need 196 and 165 spaces in French-language ELCC services, respectively, to become well-served communities. The District of Kent (10 children) has a shortage of 7 spaces.

Thompson-Okanagan Region

The Thompson-Okanagan region, located east of the Fraser Valley region, begins at the U.S. border and extends northward along the Okanagan Valley and the Thompson River Valley. It encompasses census divisions No. 12, 17, 18, and 19. There are 78 spaces in French-language ELCC services and 1,355 eligible children. This represents a low **ratio of 0.06 spaces** per child, making it a high-need area. Table 7 presents the data for this region.

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

Division		N° of spaces	N° of children	Ratio
Division n° 12 — Total		**0**	**225**	**0.00**
Main municipalities	Penticton	0	80	**0.00**
	Osoyoos	0	35	**0.00**
	Summerland	0	35	**0.00**
	Okanagan-Similkameen	0	10	**0.00**
	Princeton	0	10	**0.00**
	Rest of the division	*0*	*55*	***0.00***
Division n° 17 — Total		**20**	**340**	**0.06**
Main municipalities	Kamloops	20	245	**0.08**
	Merritt	0	30	**0.00**
	Logan Lake	0	15	**0.00**

Division		N° of spaces	N° of children	Ratio
	Thompson-Nicola P (Rivers and the Peaks)	0	10	**0.00**
	Rest of the division	*0*	*40*	***0.00***
Division n°18 — Total		**0**	**245**	**0.00**
Main municipalities	Vernon	0	140	**0.00**
	Coldstream	0	40	**0.00**
	Armstrong	0	10	**0.00**
	North Okanagan	0	10	**0.00**
	Spallumcheen	0	10	**0.00**
	Rest of the division	*0*	*35*	***0.00***
Division n° 19 — Total		**58**	**545**	**0.11**
Main municipalities	Kelowna	58	345	**0.17**
	West Kelowna	0	100	**0.00**
	District of Lake Country	0	50	**0.00**
	District of Central Okanagan	0	10	**0.00**
	District of Tsinstikeptum 9	0	10	**0.00**
	Rest of the division	*0*	*30*	***0.00***
TOTAL - THOMPSON-OKANAGAN REGION		**78**	**1, 355**	**0.06**

Census division No. 12 has 225 eligible children, but no French-language ELCC services. This represents a shortage of 158 spaces. The municipality of Penticton (80 children; a shortage of 56 spaces) has the largest shortage in this division. In Osoyoos and Summerland (35 children each), there is a shortage of 25 spaces each to become well-served areas. Finally, in Okanagan-Similkameen and Princeton (10 children each), the shortage of 7 spaces each could be met through home-based French-language ELCC services.

In census division No. 17, there are 340 eligible children and only one French-language ELCC service with 20 spaces, located in Kamloops, a municipality with a total of 245 children, giving it a ratio of 0.08 and making it a high-need area. There is a shortage of 152 spaces in this city. In the other municipalities (Merritt, 30 children;

Logan Lake, 15 children; Thompson-Nicola P, 10 children), the shortage ranges from 7 to 21 spaces.

In census division No. 18, there are 245 eligible children. This represents a shortage of 172 spaces. The municipality of Vernon (140 children; a shortage of 98 spaces) accounts for more than half of the children and missing spaces in this division. The municipality of Coldstream (40 children; a shortage of 28 spaces) also has a significant number of children. The communities of Armstrong, North Okanagan, and Spallumcheen (10 children each) could become well-served areas through the creation of home-based French-language ELCC services.

The region's main concentration of spaces is found in census division No. 19. This includes the city of Kelowna (345 children; 58 spaces). The ratio in this city is 0.17, making it a high-need area. An additional 184 spaces would need to be added to properly serve this city.

In the surrounding municipality of West Kelowna (100 eligible children; a shortage of 70 spaces) and the District of Lake Country (50 children; a shortage of 35 spaces), the number of children is sufficient to consider adding centre-based French-language ELCC services.

In the districts of Central Okanagan and Tsinstikeptum 9 (10 children each), adding home-based French-language ELCC services would make them well-served areas.

Kootenay Region

The Kootenay region runs along the U.S. border between the Okanagan Valley and the Rocky Mountains. It encompasses census divisions No. 13, 14, 15, and 16. There are 600 eligible children and 16 full-time spaces in French-language ELCC services. This represents a shortage of 404 spaces across this entire high-need area. Table 8 presents the data for this region.

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

Division		N° of spaces	N° of children	Ratio
Division n°13 — Total		**16**	**65**	**0.25**
Main municipalities	Rossland	16	20	**0.80**
	Trail	0	10	**0.00**
	Rest of the division	*0*	*35*	***0.00***
Division n°14 — Total		**0**	**215**	**0.00**
Main municipalities	Nelson	0	60	**0.00**
	Central Kootenay	0	55	**0.00**
	Castlegar	0	15	**0.00**
	Slocan	0	15	**0.00**
	Rest of the division	*0*	*70*	***0.00***
Division n°No. 15 — Total		**0**	**215**	**0.00**
Main municipalities	Fernie	0	45	**0.00**
	Cranbrook	0	35	**0.00**
	Invermere	0	30	**0.00**
	Kimberley	0	25	**0.00**
	Golden	0	20	**0.00**
	Sparwood	0	20	**0.00**
	Rest of the division	*0*	*40*	***0.00***
Division n° 16 — Total		**0**	**105**	**0.00**
Main municipalities	Revelstoke	0	40	**0.00**
	Columbia-Shuswap	0	35	**0.00**
	Salmon Arm	0	30	**0.00**
TOTAL - KOOTENAY REGION		**16**	**600**	**0.03**

Census division No. 13, with 65 eligible children, has 16 spaces in French-language ELCC services. These spaces are in the municipality of Rossland. With 20 children for these 16 spaces (a ratio of 0.80), this makes it a well-served area, the only well-served area in British Columbia. The remaining children in this division are dispersed, such that more than half live outside a community with at least 10 children.

In census division No. 14, there are 215 eligible children, but no French-language ELCC services. The communities of Nelson (60 children; a shortage of 42 spaces) and Central Kootenay (55 children; a shortage of 39 spaces) have the largest shortages. In the municipalities of Castlegar and Slocan (15 children each), the shortage is 11 spaces each.

Census division No. 15, with 215 eligible children, has no French-language ELCC services. This includes the communities of Fernie (45 children; a shortage of 32 spaces), Cranbrook (35 children; a shortage of 25 spaces), Invermere (30 children; a shortage of 21 spaces), Kimberley (25 children; a shortage of 18 spaces), as well as Golden and Sparwood (20 children each; a shortage of 14 spaces each).

Census division No. 16 has 105 eligible children, but no French-language ELCC services. This represents a shortage of 74 spaces. These missing spaces are in the communities of Revelstoke (40 children; a shortage of 28 spaces), Columbia-Shuswap (35 children; a shortage of 25 spaces), and Salmon Arm (30 children; a shortage of 21 spaces).

Cariboo-Chilcotin Region

The Cariboo-Chilcotin region covers the central part of the province, from the coast to the Rocky Mountains. It comprises census divisions No. 7, 20, 21, 22, 25, and 26. There are a total of 695 eligible children, but no spaces in French-language ELCC services. It is a high-need area. Table 9 presents the data for this region.

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

Division		N° of spaces	N° of children	Ratio
Division n° 7 — Total		**0**	**35**	**0.00**
Main municipalities	Mount Waddington	0	25	**0.00**
	Port Hardy	0	10	**0.00**
Division n°20 — Total		**0**	**285**	**0.00**
Main municipalities	Squamish	0	175	**0.00**
	Whistler	0	45	**0.00**
	Pemberton	0	35	**0.00**
	Rest of the division	*0*	*30*	***0.00***
Division n°21 — Total		**0**	**60**	**0.00**
Main municipalities	Cariboo	0	20	**0.00**
	Williams Lake	0	20	**0.00**
	Quesnel	0	10	**0.00**
	Rest of the division	*0*	*10*	***0.00***
Division n° 22 — Total		**0**	**10**	**0.00**
Main municipality	Central Coast District	0	10	**0.00**
Division n°25 — Total		**0**	**70**	**0.00**
Main municipalities	Bulkley-Nechako	0	30	**0.00**
	Smithers	0	20	**0.00**
	Mackenzie	0	10	**0.00**
	Vanderhoof	0	10	**0.00**
Division n°26 — Total		**0**	**235**	**0.00**
Main municipalities	Prince George	0	180	**0.00**
	District of Fraser-Fort George	0	15	**0.00**
	Rest of the division	*0*	*40*	***0.00***
TOTAL - CARIBOO-CHILCOTIN REGION		**0**	**695**	**0.00**

Census division No. 7 has 35 eligible children, but no spaces in French-language ELCC services. It is therefore a high-need area. These children are concentrated in the municipalities of Mount Waddington (25 children; a shortage of 18 spaces) and Port Hardy (10 children; a shortage of 7 spaces).

In census division No. 20, there are no French-language ELCC services, despite having 285 eligible children. With a shortage of 200 spaces, it is a high-need area. The municipality of Squamish has the highest number of children (175 children; a shortage of 123 spaces) in this division. This shortage would be met by adding two French-language ELCC services with an average capacity of 60 spaces. In the communities of Whistler (45 children) and Pemberton (35 children), the shortage of spaces is lower, yet still significant.

For census division No. 21, there are 60 eligible children, but no spaces in French-language ELCC services. This represents a shortage of 42 spaces. The communities of Cariboo and Williams Lake (20 children each; a shortage of 14 spaces each), as well as Quesnel (10 children; a shortage of 7 spaces), could have their shortages met through home-based French-language ELCC services.

In census division No. 22, all 10 children live in the Central Coast District (a shortage of 7 spaces).

Census division No. 25 is also a high-need area, as it has no French-language ELCC services despite having 70 eligible children (a shortage of 49 spaces). These children live in the communities of Bulkley-Nechako (30 children; a shortage of 21 spaces), Smithers (20 children; a shortage of 14 spaces), as well as Mackenzie and Vanderhoof (10 children each; a shortage of 7 spaces each).

Finally, in census division No. 26, there are 235 eligible children, but no French-language ELCC services. With 180 children, the municipality of Prince George would need 126 spaces to become a well-served area. In the District of Fraser-Fort George (15 children), there is a shortage of 11 spaces.

North Coast Region

The North Coast region follows the Pacific coastline and the northwestern part of British Columbia. It comprises census divisions No. 23, 24, and 29. There are 170 eligible children, but no spaces in French-language ELCC services. This makes it a high-need area. Census division No. 29 has no children and no spaces; therefore, it is excluded from the data in Table 10.

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

Division		N° of spaces	N° of children	Ratio
Division n° 23 — Total		**0**	**130**	**0.00**
Main municipalities	Terrace	0	55	**0.00**
	Kitimat	0	30	**0.00**
	District of Kitimat-Stikine	0	20	**0.00**
	Rest of the division	*0*	*25*	***0.00***
Division n°24 — Total		**0**	**40**	**0.00**
Main municipality	Prince Rupert	0	30	**0.00**
	Rest of the division	*0*	*10*	***0.00***
TOTAL - NORTH COAST REGION		**0**	**170**	**0.00**

Census division No. 23 has 130 eligible children, but no French-language ELCC services. This represents a shortage of 91 spaces across the entire division. The municipality of Terrace (55 children; a shortage of 39 spaces) is the community with the largest shortage in nominal terms. In the municipality of Kitimat (30 children; a shortage of 21 spaces) and the District of Kitimat-Stikine (20 children; a shortage of 14 spaces), adding home-based French-language ELCC services would address this shortage.

In census division No. 24, there are 40 eligible children, including 30 in the municipality of Prince Rupert. However, there are no French-language ELCC services, representing a shortage of 21 spaces for this municipality.

Peace River Region

The Peace River region encompasses the census divisions in the northern part of the province, between the Rocky Mountains and Alberta, namely census divisions No. 27 and 28. There are 215 eligible children, but no spaces in French-language ELCC services. This represents a high-need area. Table 11 presents the data for this region.

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

Division		N° of spaces	N° of children	Ratio
Division n°27 — Total		**0**	**205**	**0.00**
Main municipalities	Fort St. John	0	90	**0.00**
	Dawson Creek	0	45	**0.00**
	Peace River	0	45	**0.00**
	Halfway River 168	0	10	**0.00**
	Rest of the division	*0*	*15*	***0.00***
Division n°28 — Total		**0**	**10**	**0.00**
Main municipality	Northern Rockies	0	10	**0.00**
TOTAL - PEACE RIVER REGION		**0**	**215**	**0.00**

In census division No. 27, there are 205 eligible children, but no French-language ELCC services. This means 144 spaces are needed to make it a well-served area. The municipality of Fort St. John has 90 children (a shortage of 63 spaces), making it the community in the region with the largest shortage in nominal terms. The municipalities of Dawson Creek and Peace River (45 children each; a shortage of 32 spaces each) are in a similar situation, where the shortage of spaces could be met by a French-language ELCC service. Finally, in the community of Halfway River 168 (10 children), the shortage is 7 spaces.

In census division No. 28, all 10 children live in the community of Northern Rockies. A home-based French-language ELCC service would allow it to become well served (a shortage of 7 spaces).

5- Conclusion

This study aimed to identify the areas, census divisions, districts and municipalities in British Columbia that experience a shortage of French-language early learning and childcare (ELCC) services. These are areas where the number of available spaces is very insufficient compared to the needs of eligible children 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, Francophone families in British Columbia do not have access to enough full-time spaces in French-language ELCC services. With a **ratio of 0.05 spaces** per eligible child aged 0 to 4, coverage is barely 1 space for 20 children. This represents a shortage of **7,531 spaces** across the entire province.

Although most missing spaces are in the city of Vancouver (a shortage of 3,509 spaces), several other regions would benefit from the opening of French-language ELCC services. The Thompson-Okanagan region (a shortage of 871 spaces), the Vancouver Island and Coast region (a shortage of 875 spaces), and the Victoria region (a shortage of 689 spaces) represent the primary areas where new French-language ELCC services should be considered.

Obviously, it is unrealistic to assume that every municipality can support viable French-language ELCC services, given the number of children eligible for French education. 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.

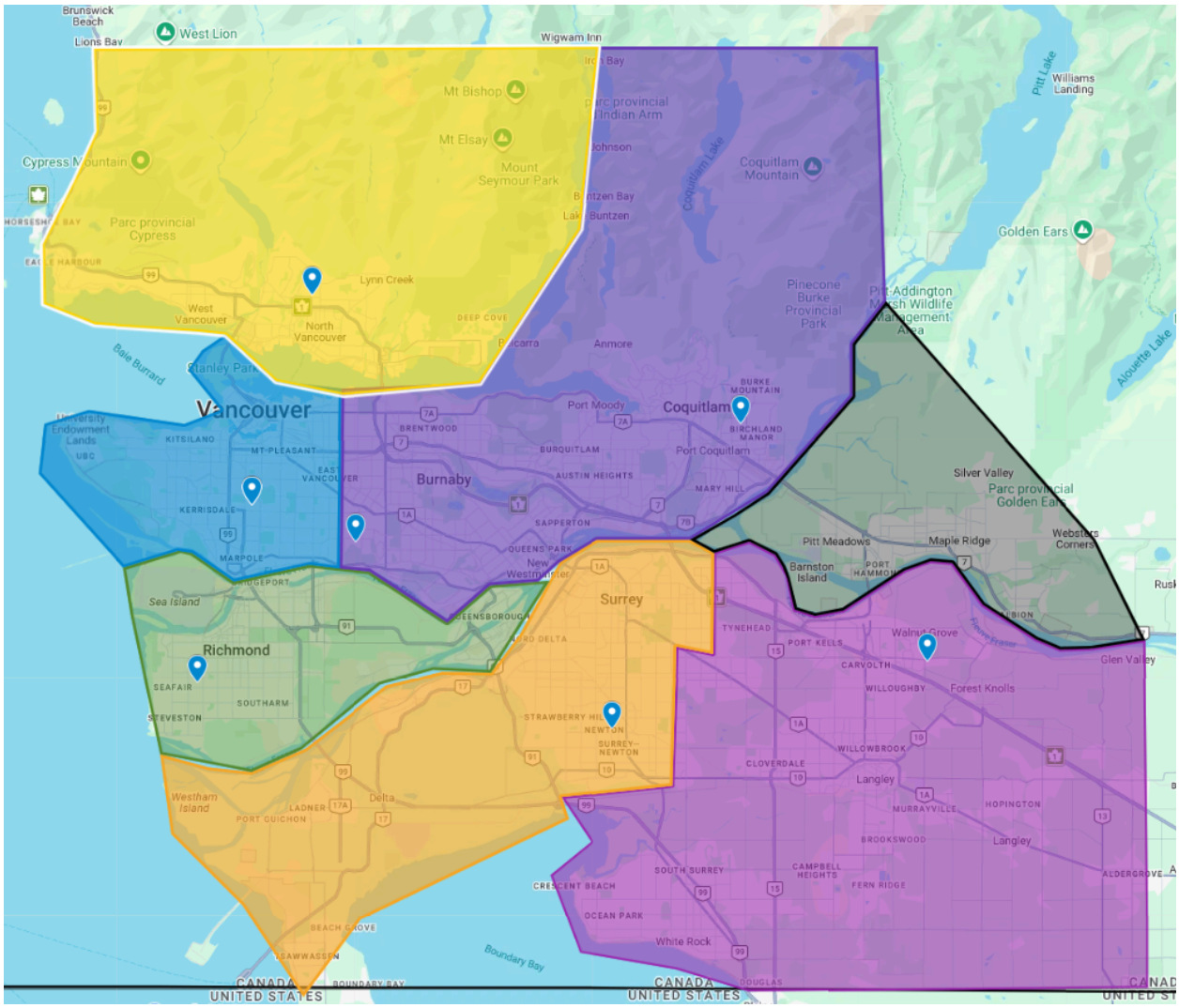
Appendix 1

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

Municipality	Name of the French-language ELCC services	No. of available spaces
Campbell River	Les Explorateurs	8
Comox	Petits Cœurs de l'Île	16
Kamloops	Chez Tintin et Milou	20
Kelowna	Les Libellules	58
Langley	Les Aventuriers	20
Mission	Les Riverains	16
Nanaimo	Les Étoiles de mer	16
North Vancouver	Trottin-Trottinette	89
Port Coquitlam	Les P'tits Lutins	148
Richmond	Les Moussaillons	33
Rossland	Garderie Les Randonneurs (TEMPORARY CLOSED)	16
Sechelt	Les Petits du Pacifique	16
Surrey	La Coccinelle	24
Vancouver	L'Île aux enfants	12
Vancouver	Tartine et chocolat	16
Vancouver	V'là l'bon vent	10
Victoria	Saute-Mouton	24
Victoria	Saute-Mouton - Les Agneaux	29
Total		**571**

Appendix 2

French-language ELCC sectors and services in the city of Vancouver as of September 1, 2025



Caption

Langley

Surrey

Richmond

Vancouver Centre

North Vancouver & West Vancouver

Burnaby-Coquitlam

Maple Ridge

French-language ELCC service

Appendix 3

British Columbia census divisions
(Statistics Canada)



Source: ID 80641382 @ Volina | Dreamstime.com