

August.10<sup>th</sup>, 2020

We are writing to discuss Licenced Child Care Network, Fanshawe College and Strive's recommendations of a National Childcare Strategy for Canada. Our three organizations have come together to advocate, collaborate, research, and promote a National Childcare Strategy for Canada. LCCN, Fanshawe College and Strive have set in motion a collaboration that is unique and fluid to meet the needs of those who value the early years in the London region. The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated that now more than ever, childcare is the foundation of Canadian Society. A publicly funded childcare system is the key to a strong economy and society.

### **About Us**

LCCN works collaboratively with the community to raise public awareness about the importance of early learning and licensed child care in London and Middlesex. We are a network of child care organizations dedicated to high quality licensed child care and early learning. Strive is a collaborative group of Child Care and Early Years Practitioners who support learning and development in order to enhance quality practice. Fanshawe is a comprehensive college serving the greater London region by providing flexible learning arrangements and experiential education opportunities developed in response to the ongoing labour demands in the Early Years field..

### **The City of London**

As per provincial requirements, The City of London released the London-Middlesex Child Care and Early Years Service System Plan 2019-2023. The Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014 (CCEYA) requires Service System Managers (SSMs) to establish a child care and early years programs and services plan (service system plan). Service system plans allow for a province-wide opportunity to analyze the impacts of programs and services, identify progress and service gaps, and foster evidence-based decision making to continue to support SSMs and the early years and child care sector. The four pillars highlighted in the plan are: Affordability, Access, Quality and Responsiveness. Our group believes that a change from a Market Model of Childcare, to a Publicly Funded System will best allow for these four pillars to be achieved.

### **The Market Model**

Childcare in Ontario is currently using a market model, as opposed to a publicly funded model like our public school system. The child care market model has been built on a foundation of gender inequalities. The model fails both working mothers who have limited access to high quality care and the women who educate and care for their children. In its current system, childcare revenue is made up of Government Grants and Parent Fees. Parents pay up to \$20,000 per year to enroll their child in care. This creates an inherent inequality in our population between those who can afford childcare and those who cannot. Oftentimes, parents must make the difficult choice of leaving their career and staying home with their child, as the family cannot afford the high cost of childcare. This is also evident with some of the information being shared during the current pandemic, where women are faced with a lack of child care support and accessing employment to support their families.

From an exo-scale perspective on the impact of ECE, it would appear that the lack of childcare spaces for working parents has impacted employers and businesses. Unplanned or prepared absences has "cost

employers an average of \$610 per employee per year” (CCH Unscheduled Absences Survey, 2004) and businesses lose billions of dollars annually due to employees’ care giving obligations” (Friedman,1986; MetLife,1997; Shellenback, 2004, as cited in Morrissey & Warner, 2007, p. 63). As well, working parent’s concerns for their childcare arrangements (if it is unstable) can directly impeded their work performance and concentration at work (Morrissey & Warner, 2007). Studies on work productivity and retention suggest that “when parents are satisfied with their child care arrangements, there are fewer conflicts and breakdowns and thus fewer absences (Abt Associates, 2000; Goff et al., 1990, as cited in Morrissey & Warner, 2007). “We can invest early to close disparities and prevent achievement gaps, or we can pay to remediate disparities when they are harder and more expensive to close” (Heckman, 2011, p. 36).

Child Care Now (CCN) (2020), also known as the Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada is a non-profit organization that is devoted “to advocating for publicly funded, inclusive, quality, non-profit child care system” in Canada. They state, “women in Canada will not and cannot achieve economic security without full access to the paid labour force and to properly paid work, and this will not and cannot happen without a publicly funded and publicly managed child care system”

### **Child Development and The World Health Organization**

The World Health Organization (WHO) addresses early childhood development (ECD) as a social determinant of health (World Health Organization, 2020). In a report done by the WHO entitled, “Early Childhood Development: A Powerful Equalizer,” it is noted by Economists that an investment in early childhood is the most powerful investment a Country can make. One study estimated that every dollar spent on early childhood can generate up to 17 dollars in benefits in the following four decades.

The World Health Organization (WHO) addresses early childhood development (ECD) as a social determinant of health (World Health Organization, 2020). Therefore, it is imperative to invest in high quality childcare for children, families, and communities. The development of a child’s brain is the most significant in the first years of life; ECD is the cornerstone of human development.

Early learning provides a foundation and scaffolding opportunities to be given by educators to fit the needs of all children; providing an opportunity for future success. It is important to involve parents, communities and local organizations to have the most positive outcomes for a brighter future as noted in Jamba-Bidmus’ 2017 research.

### **The Canadian Public Health Association**

The Canadian Public Health Association is an ally advocating for a framework that will enhance the health of people in Canada. It is crucial for our country to begin bettering the health of our younger population. Investing and establishing high quality ECEC centers will not only provide the opportunity to implement ECD as a social determinant of health but support the overall wellbeing of society (Canadian Public Health Association, 2016). Developing ECEC centers and programs will create employment in the sector and promote economic activity in the community (Canadian Public Health Association, 2016). ECEC leads to optimal school performance, children staying in school longer, fostering mental, physical, and emotional health, and results in greater productivity through the adult years (Canadian Public Health Association, 2016).

## LCCN and Fanshawe Partnership

Over the past two years, LCCN has been working collaboratively with Fanshawe College on one of its key goals: advocating for a national Early Years' system as seen through the eyes of parents, child care leaders/providers and Early Years' professionals. This empowerment is evident in the ongoing Early Years' leadership provided by LCCN, a respected voice for stakeholders within the Early Years' field in London and Middlesex. Fanshawe College faculty, through its Early Childhood Leadership program, has been conducting research to support LCCN, focusing on creating an Early Years' child care policy framework prototype. This research is taking a grass roots approach, anchored in the co-construction of an Early Years' policy prototype, going one step beyond consultation. Fanshawe faculty and students in the Early Childhood Leadership Program have been working through the existing Early Years' data from London and Middlesex, which will lead to the first iteration of the policy prototype from the region's perspective. The next steps will involve focus groups representing parents, child care leaders/providers, and Early Years' professionals who will deconstruct and rebuild the first iteration of the policy prototype. Due to COVID-19, there has been a delay in moving to the focus groups; however, this work will resume as soon as it can engage safely with the London and area communities.

All levels of government must take action and create a National Childcare Strategy for Canada, with the pillars of Affordability, Access, Quality and Responsiveness in mind. Licenced Child Care Network, Fanshawe College and Strive are all open to collaborative discussions to support this movement. For a prosperous Canada and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, the answer has never been more clear.

Best Regards,



Licensed Child Care Network



Strive



Fanshawe College