

NORTH LAMBTON CHILDCARE CENTRE

Message from the Board President – 2020

Good evening everyone and welcome to the North Lambton Child Care Annual General Meeting for 2020. On behalf of the board of directors I would like to thank you all for taking the time to join us tonight. It is going to be tough to summarize all the highs and lows we have been on over the past rollercoaster of a year! 2020 was a time in history that no one could have predicted or prepared for and yet I am happy to say that almost all of what I am going to touch on tonight is positive thanks to the flexibility and hard work of our staff, the dedication of the board, the leadership that Claire provides and the patience and understanding of the families and community we serve. The Board was fortunate to welcome a new member during the pandemic - Kristen McColl. Thank you for joining our team during a super challenging time and jumping right in to help. We have only met with you virtually and we look forward to when we can safely be in the same room and see you face to face. This year we also said good bye to Karen Fogwill who served on the board for four years. We were sad to see her go but thankful for her time and abilities that she gave us.

The start of 2020 saw a second preschool room open at St John Fisher which created sixteen new preschool spaces for children at that location. This filled a big need in our community. We also were able to upgrade playground equipment at the Kinnwood site, which the EarlyON program will also be able to enjoy. Our Grand Bend site also received a playground upgrade. We hope the children are enjoying their outdoor exploration time.

In March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic was declared and life drastically changed for all of us. The child care was closed for approximately four months and there was lots of uncertainty. It seemed that information was changing daily, and it was hard to keep up with new rules and regulations. The board met over Microsoft Teams at least once a week during this time and it seemed every time we came to a decision, the information would change and we would have to meet again to discuss, adapt, review etc. It was a challenging time for staff as well, not knowing when or if they could return to work, how would they pay their bills, would it be safe for them and the children? As a parent of someone with children who attend NLCC, I can attest to the stress that came from not knowing when I would have child care again. Our families had to do the impossible task of trying to work from home while caring for young children and homeschooling older ones. No one escaped the stress of the Corona virus. We were able to open our doors again in July but so much had changed and the stress levels remained high. Many new policies and procedures were put into place regarding health and safety, PPE, screening, sick days, drop off and pickup, cohorts, etc. Even though there was fear and challenges, you the staff showed up every day and put a smile on under your mask and made sure that the children had positive experiences. We cannot thank you enough for enduring and continuing to endure the ever-changing landscape of COVID-19. You have served our families and our community well. We also would like to specially acknowledge the EarlyON staff whose role was completely turned upside down. For most of the last year the early on has been offering only virtual programming. The creativity and ability to step outside their comfort zone and learn new things has been incredible and very appreciated.

We cannot talk about how well NLCC fared during the pandemic without acknowledging the support we received from both the federal and provincial government. The Canada Emergency Wage subsidy ensured that we were able to pay our staff for the duration of our closure last year and much financial support was given to ensure that families were not charged for absent days and staff could stay home without penalty when ill. It was reassuring to know that our government recognized and valued the well being of our organization. One of the board's favourite decisions to make was to reward all our hardworking staff with a year-end bonus again in 2020 as a way to give back for all the effort put into our programs on a daily basis. One of our upcoming goals is to ensure that we better compensate our staff either through increased wages or reliable year end bonuses.

Lastly, I personally would like to recognize all the hard work and dedication that our Executive Director Claire has given us during this time. Claire worked tirelessly to ensure that we had up to date information and guidance from Public Health as well as the government and the County. Claire, I am truly impressed with your dedication to us as a centre. Your number one priority has always been to keep our staff and children safe.

Thank you again NLCC staff for all that you do. As a board of directors, we are very proud of the work that you all do. My time on the board of directors is now finished and I would like to say how much I have enjoyed working with all of you. As a parent I would also like to say that I have loved having my children attend NLCC for the past 7 years. You have shown them love and they loved you in return. My youngest starts kindergarten in September and we will miss you! Keep up the good and important work you are doing!

Laura Campbell
NLCC Board President