

# **Strategic Priorities and Policy Committee**

## **Report**

4th Meeting of the Strategic Priorities and Policy Committee  
January 17, 2019

**PRESENT:** Mayor E. Holder (Chair), Councillors M. van Holst, S. Lewis, M. Salih, J. Helmer, M. Cassidy, P. Squire, J. Morgan, S. Lehman, A. Hopkins, P. Van Meerbergen, S. Turner, E. Pelozo, A. Kayabaga, S. Hillier

**ALSO PRESENT:** M. Hayward, A. Barbon, B. Card, B. Coxhead, S. Datars Bere, J. Davies, A. Dunbar, M. Galczynski, S. King, G. Kotisfas, L. Livingstone, B. O'Hagan, S. Stafford, D. MacRae, J. Millson, K. Murray, M. Riberia, D. O'Brien, C. Saunders, M. Schulthess, and B. Westlake-Power.

The meeting is called to order at 4:03 PM, with all Members present except Councillor M. van Holst.

### **1. Disclosures of Pecuniary Interest**

Councillor S. Turner discloses a pecuniary interest in Item 3.1, specific to the request for funding from Merrymount Children's Centre, by indicating that his employer the Middlesex London Health Unit has indicated a position on the matter, and further by indicating that his spouse's employer receives EarlyON funding.

### **3. Scheduled Items**

#### **3.1 Not to be heard before 4:00 PM - Public Participation Meeting - 2016-2019 Multi-Year Budget**

Moved by: P. Van Meerbergen  
Seconded by: A. Kayabaga

That the following written submissions for the 2016-2019 Multi-Year Budget 2019 Public Participation Meeting BE RECEIVED for consideration by the Municipal Council as part of its 2019 Multi-Year Budget approval process:

- a) a communication dated December 12, 2018 from L Simpson;
- b) a presentation and communication from P. Howarth, Executive Director, Merrymount Children's Centre;
- c) a communication from R. Al Absi;
- d) a communication dated December 21, 2018 from L. A. Cross, Merrymount Children's Centre;
- e) a communication from S. Wells, Merrymount Children's Centre;
- f) a communication dated January 2, 2019 from W. Tapp-Moore, Merrymount Children's Centre;
- g) a communication from K. Rupert, Merrymount Family Mental Health Coordinator;
- h) a communication dated December 20, 2018 from M. Mouritzen, Healthzone Nurse Practitioner, Interim Director Clinical Services – Merrymount Children's Centre;

- i) a communication from S. O'Halloran, Bachelor of Social Work Intern Student – Merrymount Children's Centre;
- j) a communication dated January 7, 2019 from C. Foote, Merrymount Children's Centre;
- k) a communication from K. Lamport, Merrymount Children's Centre;
- l) a communication from A. Brooks, Communications & Development Coordinator, Merrymount Children's Centre;
- m) a communication dated January 2, 2019 from R. Nasswetter, Merrymount Children's Centre;
- n) a communication dated January 4, 2018 from L. Sortun, Program Manager Crisis Residential/Respite Program, Merrymount Family Support and Crisis Centre;
- o) a communication dated January 6, 2019 from A. Connell, Merrymount Children's Centre;
- p) a communication dated December 18, 2018 from S. McKane, Merrymount Children's Centre;
- q) a communication dated January 8, 2019 from R. Macgregor, Director of Finance, Merrymount Children's Centre;
- r) a presentation from A. Conlon, Executive Director, London Children's Museum;
- s) a presentation from C. Butler;
- t) a communication from A. Bruner;
- u) a communication from C. Johnston; and
- v) a communication from J. Winston, Tourism London;

it being pointed out that at the public participation meeting associated with this matter, the individuals on the attached public participation meeting record made oral submissions regarding these matters.

Yeas: (15): Mayor E. Holder, M. van Holst, S. Lewis, M. Salih, J. Helmer, M. Cassidy, P. Squire, J. Morgan, S. Lehman, A. Hopkins, P. Van Meerbergen, S. Turner, E. Peloza, A. Kayabaga, and S. Hillier

#### **Motion Passed (15 to 0)**

Additional votes:

Moved by: A. Hopkins

Seconded by: A. Kayabaga

Motion to Open the Public Participation Meeting.

Yeas: (14): Mayor E. Holder, S. Lewis, M. Salih, J. Helmer, M. Cassidy, P. Squire, J. Morgan, S. Lehman, A. Hopkins, P. Van Meerbergen, S. Turner, E. Peloza, A. Kayabaga, and S. Hillier

Absent: (1): M. van Holst

#### **Motion Passed (14 to 0)**

Moved by: M. Salih  
Seconded by: P. Van Meerbergen

Motion to Close the Public Participation Meeting.

Yeas: (14): Mayor E. Holder, S. Lewis, M. Salih, J. Helmer, M. Cassidy, P. Squire, J. Morgan, S. Lehman, A. Hopkins, P. Van Meerbergen, S. Turner, E. Pelozo, A. Kayabaga, and S. Hillier

Absent: (1): M. van Holst

**Motion Passed (14 to 0)**

**4. Items for Direction**

None.

**5. Deferred Matters/Additional Business**

**5.1 Merrymount Children's Centre Funding Request**

Moved by: P. Squire  
Seconded by: E. Pelozo

That the following actions be taken with respect to the request for funding from Merrymount Family Support and Crisis Centre:

- a) the request for 2019 funding in the amount of \$368,704 BE REFERRED to the 2019 Budget process for consideration;
- b) the Budget Chair BE REQUESTED to work with the Civic Administration, Provincial and Federal Government officials and representatives from the Merrymount Family Support and Crisis Centre to investigate and determine any potential appropriate sources of funding with respect to the 2019 request for funding; and
- c) the Merrymount Family Support and Crisis Centre 2020 request for funding in the amount of \$238,704 BE REFERRED to the 2020-2023 Multi-year Budget Process for consideration;

it being noted that the Strategic Priorities and Policy Committee received a variety of communications through the Public Participation Meeting associated with the 2016 - 2019 Budget.

Yeas: (11): Mayor E. Holder, S. Lewis, M. Salih, J. Helmer, P. Squire, J. Morgan, S. Lehman, P. Van Meerbergen, E. Pelozo, A. Kayabaga, and S. Hillier

Nays: (2): M. Cassidy, and A. Hopkins

Recuse: (1): S. Turner

Absent: (1): M. van Holst

**Motion Passed (11 to 2)**

**6. Adjournment**

Moved by: S. Hillier  
Seconded by: M. Salih

That the meeting Adjourn.

Yeas: (15): Mayor E. Holder, M. van Holst, S. Lewis, M. Salih, J. Helmer, M. Cassidy, P. Squire, J. Morgan, S. Lehman, A. Hopkins, P. Van Meerbergen, S. Turner, E. Pelozo, A. Kayabaga, and S. Hillier

**Motion Passed (15 to 0)**

The meeting adjourned at 5:03 PM.



**From:** linda.simpson

**Sent:** Wednesday, December 12, 2018 10:31 AM

**To:** CWC <[cwc@london.ca](mailto:cwc@london.ca)>

**Subject:** Noticed that the Civic Works Committee had as part of its agenda, only, Senior's bus ticket reduction in price...

Good Day Mr. Squire and all the councillors involved with the Civic Works Committee:

I want to try to impress on you, all, that as a longtime Senior bus taker - Bus Pass - it is very important to me that there be a Lower Priced Public Transit Bus Pass for Seniors and that it embody 2 things at once:

- 1) that there **be an overall price reduction** for a renewed category of Seniors' Bus Pass (and for Seniors' single or multiple ticket purchase as well);
- 2) that the Seniors' overall Public Transit price reduction be **based on Age alone** - not on either before or after income tax, income.

Linda Simpson.



# Giving our Community Strength

## Introduction



1. Merrymount - Who we are
2. Our Contribution to London and region
3. Pressures
4. Our Ask: Bridge Funding
5. Questions



Giving our community  
strength for 144 years

Pressures

Crisis and  
Respite  
Beds



# Pressures Yazidi Child Soldiers

## Budget: 2018/2019 Budget Summary

	Government Funding	Expenses	Deficit
Fully-Funded Programs	\$3,890,097	\$3,890,097	\$0
Crisis Respite Program	\$358,785	\$1,537,816	-\$1,179,031
Family Resource Program	\$719,449	\$1,246,633	-\$527,184
Family Child Support Program	\$1,219,778	\$1,609,767	-\$389,989
	<b>\$6,188,109</b>	<b>\$8,284,313</b>	<b>-\$2,096,204</b>
	Off-Setting Revenues	Expenses	Surplus
Contracted Services	\$150,000		\$150,000
Fundraising Activities	\$615,000	\$220,000	\$395,000
Bequests	\$63,000		\$63,000
Bank Interest	\$10,000		\$10,000
	<b>\$838,000</b>	<b>\$220,000</b>	<b>\$618,000</b>
Net Draw From Foundation (2018/2019):			<b>-\$1,478,204</b>





Our Ask:  
Short-term  
Bridge  
Funding

2019 : \$368,704

2020 : \$238,704



Questions



## Merrymount Financial Sustainability Plan

### 2018/2019 Merrymount Budget Summary

*Note: Merrymount operates eight (8) fully-funded and three (3) non-fully-funded programs. Fully-funded programs have been grouped for simplicity.*

	Government		
	Funding	Expenses	Deficit
Fully-Funded Programs	\$3,890,097	\$3,890,097	\$0
Crisis Residential / Respite Program	\$358,785	\$1,537,816	-\$1,179,031
Family Resource Program	\$719,449	\$1,246,633	-\$527,184
Family Child Support Program	\$1,219,778	\$1,609,767	-\$389,989
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	Off-Setting		
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Net Draw From Foundation (2018/2019):			-\$1,478,204

### Non-Sustainability

*The Net Draw From Foundation is projected to increase annually based on inflation and, by conservative estimates, will **deplete the Merrymount Foundation within 8 to 9 years**.*

Our financial advisors have stated that for the Merrymount Foundation to reach a sustainable funding level, the annual Net Draw From Foundation (transfer of funds to Merrymount operations), **must be reduced to \$850,000 immediately**.

Merrymount has a working plan to reduce to this amount, but cannot reach this transfer level in a quick enough timeframe to avoid service cuts, without bridge funding from the City of London.

**Planned Reductions to achieve \$850,000 targeted transfer level:**

Starting Balance (2018/2019 Transfer Level)	\$1,478,204
Reduction of One Manager Position (completed)	-\$97,000
Revised Philanthropy Plan (2019/2020)	-\$162,500
Projected 2019/2020 Transfer Level	\$1,218,704
<b>2019/2020 Shortfall to meet \$850,000 target:</b>	<b>\$368,704</b>

Starting Balance (2019/2020 Transfer Level)	\$1,218,704
Reduction in Support Services Costs (2020)	-\$55,000
Revised Philanthropy Plan (2020/2021)	-\$75,000
Projected 2020/2021 Transfer Level	\$1,088,704
<b>2020/2021 Shortfall to meet \$850,000 target:</b>	<b>\$238,704</b>

Starting Balance (2020/2021 Transfer Level)	\$1,088,704
Reduction of Second Manager Position (2021)	-\$97,000
Revised Philanthropy Plan (2021/2022)	-\$75,000
Targeted Bed Donation (2021)	-\$83,000
Projected 2021/2022 Transfer Level	\$833,704
<b>2021/2022 Shortfall to meet \$850,000 target:</b>	<b>-\$16,296</b>

Merrymount is projecting it can reach sustainable funding levels by fiscal 2022 (April 1, 2021).

**Request to City of London**

Merrymount is requesting bridge funding from the City of London to allow time to reach sustainable funding levels of **\$368,704 in 2019** and **\$238,704 in 2020**. This funding will allow Merrymount to balance its operations and not cut valuable services to the London Community.

**Implication if funding is not received**

*If funding is not received Merrymount will be forced to reduce services by these amounts until sustainability can be achieved.*

*\$607,408 in reductions equates to:*

*Closure of 7.11 of 18 beds (= reduction of 2,595 bed nights for children in crisis)*

*or*

*Cancellation of 567 targeted parenting / child programs (= loss of 4,217 hours of program service to children and 5,137 hours of program service to parents)*

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# MERRYMOUNT

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Family Support and Crisis Centre



Business Case for the  
Crisis Residential and Respite Program





**Giving Our Community  
Strength for 144 years**



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Background	4
Our Community	5
Child Soldiers	6
Respite and Crisis Care	8
Financial Overview	9
Budget Summary	9
Bridge Funding	11
Benefits	12
Testimonials	16
Supporters	20
References	21
Contact Information	22
Letters of Support	23

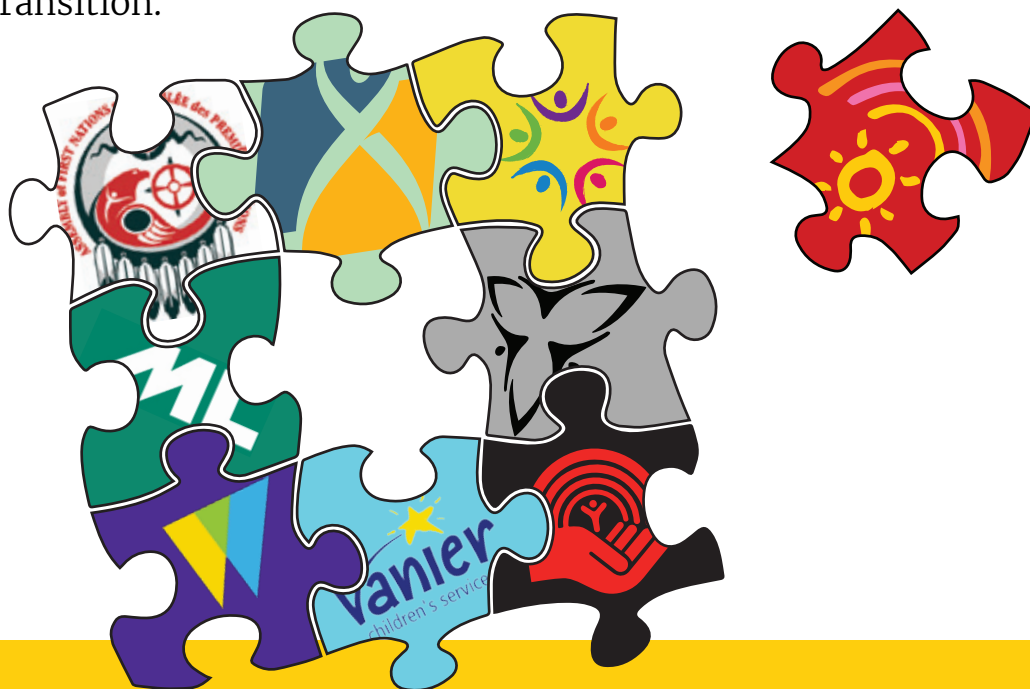




## BACKGROUND

Merrymount is a recognized and respected leader in crisis support and transition services, caring for 8,000 families and 4,000 children facing difficulty each year. The organization is 1 of 5 accredited Children's Mental Health Centres in London, handling children from 0 - 13 years old who fall between a 1 - 3 rating on the mental health spectrum.

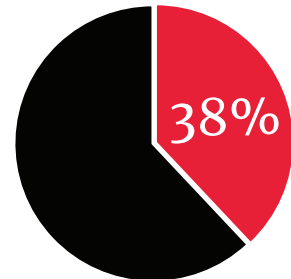
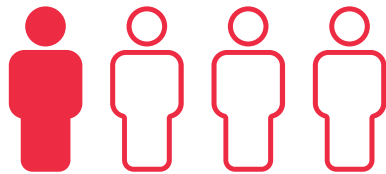
We are also a partner of the Child and Youth Network, working with other social service agencies in the London area. Merrymount provides 30 education and prevention programs for adults and children. We offer 24 hours of continuous, overnight crisis care for children. The programs are non-exclusive, recognizing that any family can experience a breakdown and need community support. The families we serve at Merrymount do not have anyone to turn to. Their extended families and friends are either unwilling or unable to step in and help. When their lives face a crisis, we become their extended family, offering their children a safe place where they are cared for by understanding, compassionate, and skilled professionals equipped to help them in crisis and transition.



# OUR COMMUNITY IS IN A CRISIS

There are many Londoners in our community who struggle against overwhelming odds to keep their lives and families together. At Merrymount, we are seeing an increase in families presenting housing and shelter issues, family breakdowns, family violence, social isolation, mental and physical illness concerns, and the challenges of poverty.

**71,030 Londoners and one in four children are living in poverty**



Indigenous children and youth are living in poverty.

**We have the 3<sup>rd</sup> highest child poverty rate in Canada**

London has seen a **50% jump** in calls to the police for children in mental health distress since 2010.



Children are waiting anywhere from **8 months to 2 years** for counselling and psychotherapy support.



The age group most likely to be on social assistance in London are young children (aged 0-4 years), such that roughly **one in eight** preschoolers have parents who are either on ODSP, or (more likely) Ontario Works.

The number of children living in families who are relying on social assistance has **increased by 26.4%** since 2006.

**London's broader emergency shelter system is operating at 100% capacity.**



These pressures have resulted in growing demand from London residents for critical supports from Merrymount's Crisis Residential/Respite Program which cannot be met due to funding constraints. **Better resourcing would make a significant difference** in the human costs resulting from increased social issues as well as service savings for the City of London.



# CHILD SOLDIERS

Displaced Yazidi communities, fleeing the terror of ISIS in Iraq, Syria and surrounding areas, have taken refuge in Canada. Over a quarter of these refugees have settled in London since early 2017. These children, some as young as 5 years of age, were forced into committing crimes against their own families by ISIS, and made into child soldiers. City Council have effectively placed these children in our care, and Merrymount is doing all we can in order to build resiliency in the face of grievous social trauma.

This community has seen some of the worst atrocities and crimes imaginable. Whilst they have made London their home, the echoes of their past still linger and are not easily shaken. These families require specialist education, language and translation services, cognitive behavioural therapy, intense psychological therapy, and transportation.

A number of these families went through bus hijackings and have developed post-traumatic stress disorder. It takes an immense amount of psychological therapy in order to facilitate these families to do something as simple as take the bus to Merrymount's headquarters. Merrymount must, therefore, spend a considerable amount of their budget allocation towards private transportation.

Interpreters for court, immigration, and other legal proceedings for these communities – who can speak a variety of dialects – is provided by Merrymount. The associated costs with staff training needed for this community is high, given compassion fatigue and burnout due to the gravity of the atrocities the families have gone through. As there were no interpreters available to meet the demand in London, Merrymount stepped in and developed a program to train new translators in-house, and helped train these staff through their official certifications. This is a vital step to recovery for the Yazidi community, many of whom are illiterate in their own language.

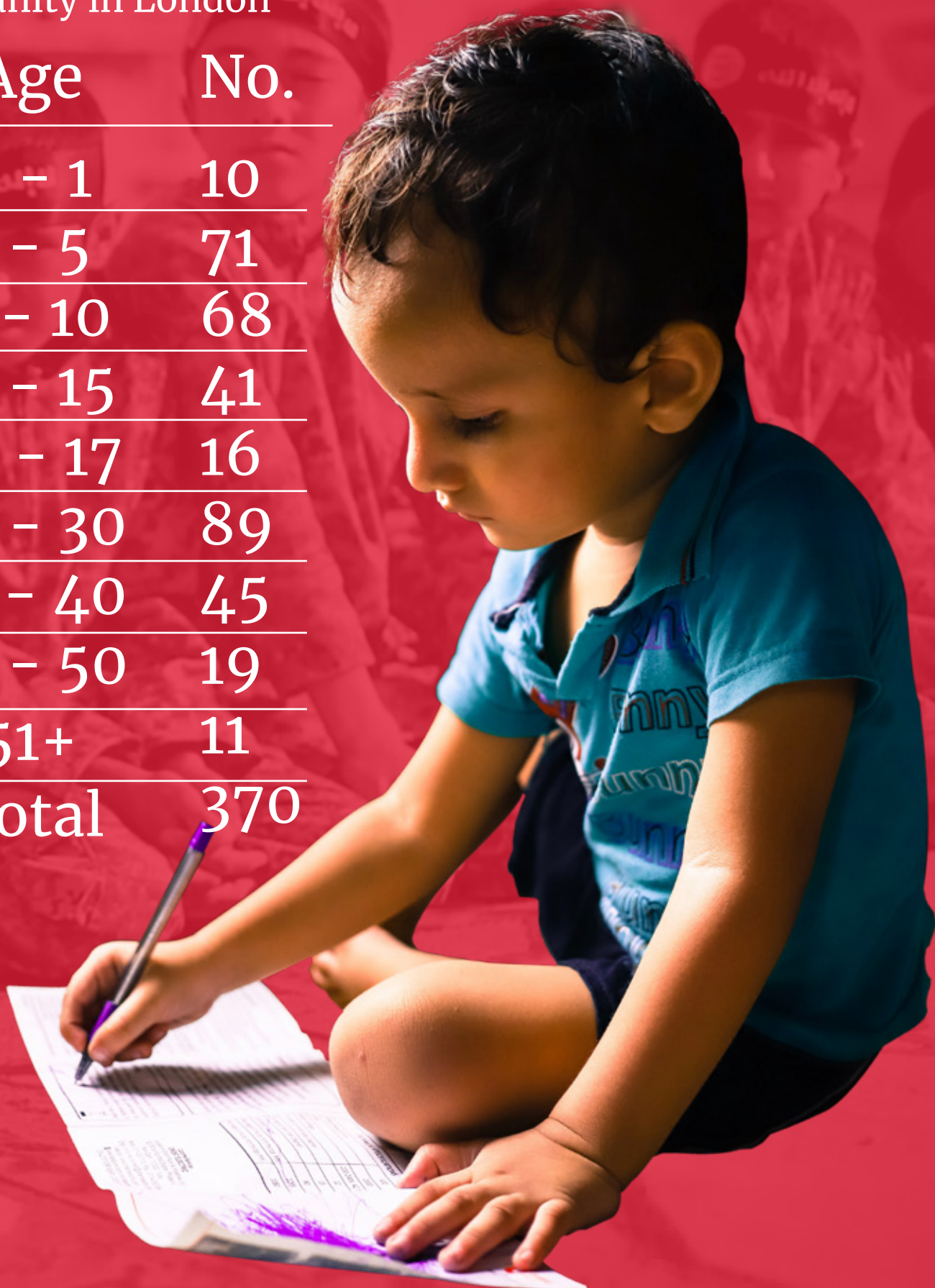
The demands placed upon other similar organizations is also relevant – Merrymount steps in to help those families who are on the waiting list for Vanier, for example, which can take up to six months.

The Yazidi community has been historically one of the most persecuted people throughout history, and have experienced collective trauma, including genocides. The step towards recovery for the families in London will take decades of hard work, with the help of Merrymount's programs and trained staff.

One of the predominant reasons why Merrymount is asking for bridge funding is due to this influx of high-needs refugees dealing with multi-generational trauma, which has placed a significant strain on our programs, facilities, and staff.

## Age Range and Number of Yazidi Community in London

Age	No.
0 – 1	10
1 – 5	71
6 – 10	68
11 – 15	41
16 – 17	16
18 – 30	89
31 – 40	45
41 – 50	19
51+	11
Total	370



# RESPITE AND CRISIS CARE

Merrymount operates 18 Children's Mental Health Crisis, Residential, and Respite beds.

This program provides care to children (from birth to 13 years old) when their families are experiencing serious disruptions including crisis, stress, and transition requiring respite care. We provide a safe and positive environment with programming that meets their physical, social, and emotional needs.

Four of the beds are funded through the Ministry of Children and Youth Services (MCYS) to provide intensive Treatment Residential services specifically for children that are diagnosed with a mental health disorder.

**The remaining 14 are unfunded.** The deficit cost to operate these beds for crisis and respite care requirements of London families, is **\$1,179,031 annually**.

At over 100% capacity, neither Merrymount nor any other crisis care centre will have the capacity to look after nearly 900 children who will desperately need our services.

## Of the 18 available beds:



**4**  
target intensive  
treatment



**14**  
target crisis  
treatment





# TOTAL BUDGET SUMMARY – MERRYMOUNT

	Government Funding	Expenses	Deficit
Fully-Funded Programs	\$3,890,097	\$3,890,097	\$0
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	Off-Setting Revenues	Expenses	Surplus
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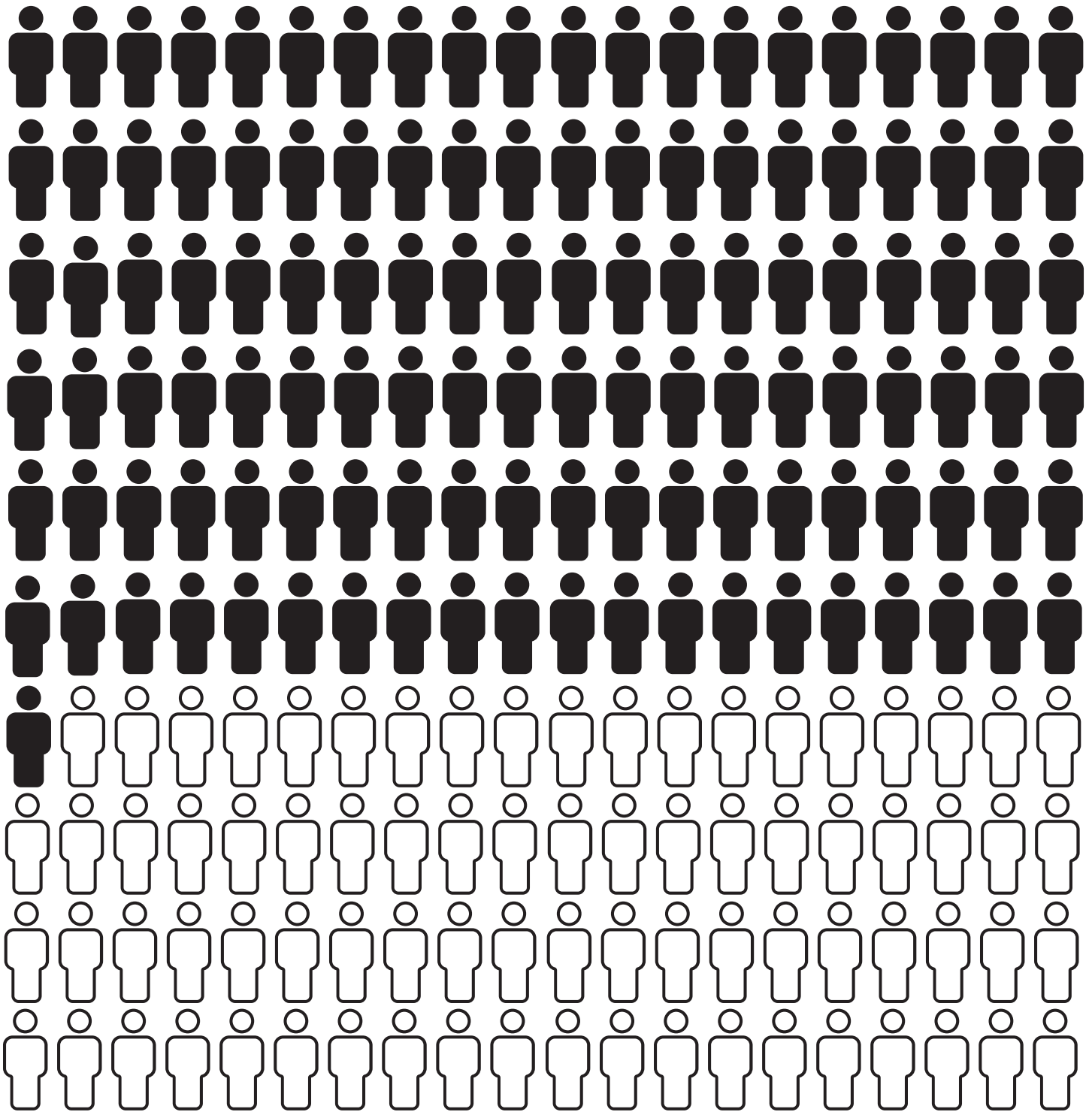
Net Draw From Foundation (2018/2019): -\$1,478,204

## LACK OF SUSTAINABILITY

The current track is unsustainable given the public demand for Merrymount's services. Merrymount is requesting bridge funding for our Crisis Residential/Respite Program from the City of London to balance our operational costs and help ensure the ongoing sustainability of Merrymount programming.



# 60.5%



In 2017, only 60.5% of Londoners who are able to work  
are employed or looking for a job.  
(source: vital signs London report, 2018)

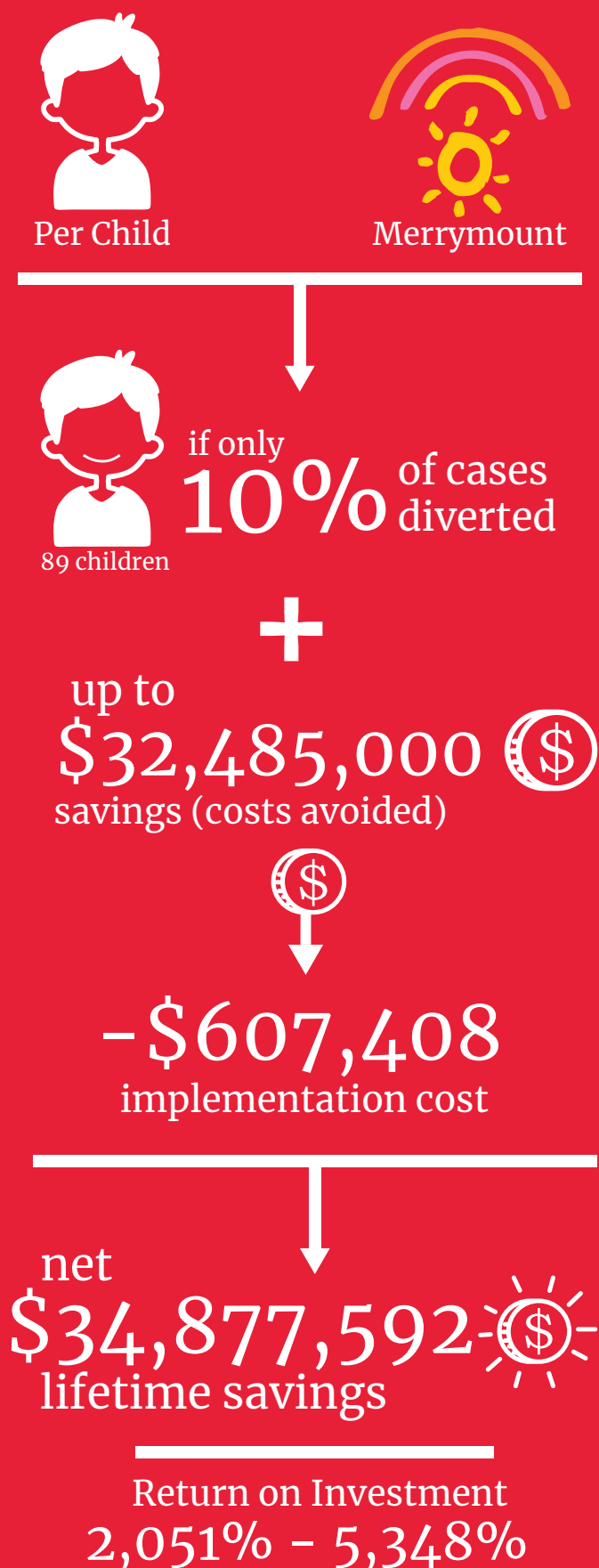
# BRIDGE FUNDING

**2019: \$368,704**

**2020: \$238,704**



# BENEFITS



There is strong evidence that promotion, prevention, and early intervention targeted at children and families going through a crisis or transition can produce significant tax savings and social benefits.

The direct and indirect cost to our community of not providing appropriate services for those who are vulnerable are much greater than if left unaddressed. This includes the loss of productivity associated with failure to complete school, criminal justice costs, increased support costs, and medical costs of associated physical conditions. (McGorry, Purcell, Hickie, & Jorm, 2007; Mash & Barkley, 2006) Investing in a program that prevents high-risk children from falling through the cracks involves expenditures today but is proven to yield benefits over a 15 to 20-year time span, and over the lifetime of the child.

A study was conducted in the United Kingdom, investigating the prevention of conduct disorders in a single child through an early intervention program. It was found to result in lifetime savings, as stated above, as well as increased higher lifetime salary for the child; an

indirect positive impact for the economy. The study concluded that for every dollar invested in parenting interventions for families resulted in an \$8 dollar return on investment. (Friedli and Parsonage, 2007)

A separate study in the US found that parent education and family support programs result in better outcomes for people living with mental health problems and illnesses such as depression and anxiety, with return on investment ratios ranging from \$1.80 to \$17.07 for every dollar invested. (Karoly, 2010)

The National Forum on Early Childhood Policy and Programs has found that high quality early childhood programs can yield a \$4 (USD) – \$9 (USD) dollar return per \$1 (USD) invested. (University of Pennsylvania, 2015)

A study published in the Journal of Quantitative Criminology estimates (Cohen, 1998) that 1.7–2.3 million dollars can be saved for successful intervention for each high-risk child. These children might have otherwise veered into criminal activities, severely impacting not only their own lives, but that of potential victims.

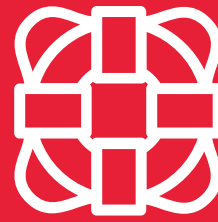
A meta-study, consisting of four studies of family therapy treating conduct disorder concluded that 8 to 36 hours of behavioral or functional family therapy was effective in improving family communication, reducing conduct problems, and lowering recidivism rates in delinquent adolescents with severe behavioural issues from a range of socio-economic backgrounds. (Brosnan & Carr, 2000)

These independent and international scientific studies all agree and conclude that investment in the type of programs that Merrymount provides will result in a net positive for the economy and a high return on investment over a lifetime. The lifetime savings per child accessing the services Merrymount provides ranges from \$140,000 to \$365,000 annually. (Mental Health Commission of Canada, 2013)

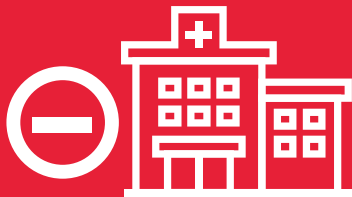
If use of Merrymount services prevented just 10% of incidences (89 children), it would result in potential lifetime system savings ranging between \$12,460,000 and \$32,485,000. The return on investment would be between 2,051% and 5,348% in indirect lifetime costs avoided.



UK Study



Early Prevention  
Programming



healthcare  
costs



higher lifetime  
salary / earnings



criminal justice  
costs



for every

(\$1

invested in parenting interventions  
for families, you get



(\$8 back in savings

# OUTCOMES

**Extracurricular activities**



**More investment in the health and hygiene of a child**



**Increase children's sense of safety and wellbeing**



**Decrease the need for more intrusive services**



**Savings on medical costs**



**Savings on social assistance costs**



**Savings on criminal justice costs**



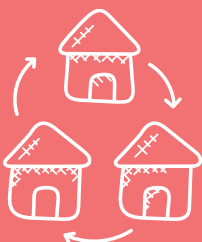
**Preventing anti-social behaviour and tragic events**



**Improve the coping strategies, social skills and resilience of children**



**Increase parents' ability to focus on their own needs**



**Decrease the level of stress for families**



**Enhance positive parent-child interactions**





# TESTIMONIALS

Hello my name is Lindsie, I'm a single, working mother of three beautiful children (Mariah – 15, Leah – 11, and my youngest Noah – 13 months).

Being a Mom has been a substantial part of my identity since I was 18 years old. I take much pride in my role, and strive to be the best parent I can be to my children. Being a single parent is the most challenging yet rewarding responsibility. The pressure to take care of my children without any outside support can be desolate and overwhelming at times. I'm truly grateful for my children, they are who complete me and encourage me to thrive to be the best person. However, I'm only one person, who is juggling life on a daily basis. And let's face it – some days are better than others.

I reached out to Merrymount when Noah was 11 months old because I found myself at a place in my life of hopelessness and desperation. This was a feeling I had never experienced in my time of parenthood. These feeling had taken over my life and I no longer felt pride in myself, leading to depression. In all my life I had never felt so alone. My baby rarely sleeps through the night, he has been sick for a great deal of his short life, and his father has recently abandoned fatherhood. With my world falling apart, and the sleep deprivation getting the best of me, I was turning into a person that I did not want to be. I had hit a point where I needed to reach out, before things got unmanageable.

Finally I called Merrymount. That call brought me hope and support in my life. They told me on the phone that they would take Noah overnight the very next day! My world changed from one phone call – finally someone was willing to listen to my struggle and support me.

Having Merrymount's support brought hope back into my life. No longer do I feel all alone in parenthood. This service changed our lives! I can be a more patient, nurturing and loving mother now that I have the assistance of respite care. I do not know where my family would be without the services of Merrymount. I count on the support and it is essential in our life. There is light at the end of the tunnel for us now.

Thank you so much for all that you do. You are appreciated.

**LINDSAY THOMAS**

“I have a 6-year-old grandson who has been going for respite care at Merrymount Family Support and Crisis Centre since he was 3 years old.

I am a full-time grandmother who has had my grandson since he was 2 months old. Being a senior raising a child on my own has been challenging.

I have no other support other than Merrymount. I was referred to Merrymount as my grandson reached a point where I needed to have a bit of a break of 24/7 child care. I have health issues in which the brief respite is beneficial. My grandson has ADHD and ODD. As much as I would like to think of myself as SuperNana, I need any respite care that is available.

I recently had a heart attack and Merrymount Family Support and Crisis Centre has been great in offering a respite break over/above my scheduled 4 per year. Without having the respite care it would be very stressful, even unhealthy for me. My grandson loves going to Merrymount as he has made friends /attachments over the couple years. The staff have been wonderful and very supportive as well. Merrymount respite gives my grandson a bit of a break from me so that he can grow independently.”

**JANET WESTERLING-DROUIN**



“My name is Lise Camirand and our son Michelson started visiting Merrymount in mid September of this year. Michelson is adopted from Haiti and has been home with us for five years. He is 9 yrs old and is diagnosed with ADHD combined type, Oppositional Defiant Disorder and Disturbance in Attachment. Michelson sometimes shows Episodic Aggressive Rage, especially in the evenings when the ADHD medication wears off.

We have worked with Vanier and we have appointments with a psychiatrist at CPRI every 4-6 weeks to go over progress and medications. Currently, Michelson is taking Concerta, Intuniv and Risperdone. Even though Michelson is showing some success with this combination of medications, he can still be very difficult, frustrating and draining for our family. We have three biological daughters, aged 18, 21 and 23. What seems to work best for us as a family is to have breaks from Michelson so that we can be stronger and more patient and understanding with him when we are together. He is a precious boy and is a true example of “it takes a village to raise a child.”

Merrymount has been a great support for us with respite care for Michelson. He has visits once every week or two for 4-6 hours and truly enjoys his stays. Eventually, we hope to do overnight visits. It is very reassuring to know that the Merrymount staff are well trained to work with children like Michelson and they show great support and understanding for his strengths and needs. The facility is wonderful and offers all kinds of engaging, appropriate, safe and fun activities. We are very appreciative of the help we receive from Merrymount and our hope is that Merrymount will continue to provide these services.”

### **LISE CAMIRAND**

“I am writing today in support of Merrymount Family Support & Crisis Centre. We are a family of 4, I currently have both of my 2 nieces (7 & 8) in my care. Both girls have experienced trauma in their lifetimes.

I heard about Merrymount through friends. I was enquiring about support services for my nieces. The eldest one was starting to act out and we needed some support. I have only been using Merrymount services for a couple of months. These couple of months Merrymount has helped me greatly and have been a great asset to the girls. It has allowed me to take care of myself and spend quality time with my partner. Also, the girls are making new friends.

Having a place for the girls to spend time at and also to feel comfortable and safe is truly a blessing. Also, there are great staff there too (very friendly and caring).

Merrymount is a one of a kind place and a very important service that I truly believe is necessary for parents. In today's world it is hard to find someone trust worthy you would leave your child with. Not having Merrymount would make it difficult for those parents/guardians that need that little rest/break here and there. It gives them the chance to take care of themselves and recharge to be better guardians.

I would highly recommend Merrymount and it is well worth it for anyone raising a child.”

### **SHELLY LONGBOAT**



"I am writing today in support of Merrymount Family Support Centre.

I have one child, she is 35 yrs old.

Being a single parent with no family in London and few friends brought me to Merrymount. I also have issues physically and mentally which at times need a break from parenting.

I have been using *[sic]* services at Merrymount for 3 yrs.

I have used the Crisis Residential program for at least 1.5 ys.

The program has helped me by allowing me to rest, sleep, attend counseling, programs for mental health. When need this program allows me to rejuvenate myself. Having a break from my daughter allows me to care for myself which in return helps me to be a better parent.

I have no family and few friends in London.

If I did not have this respite service I would suffer greatly and my daughter would also.

My mental and physical wellness would suffer.

Merrymount respite program is also great for my daughter. She loves spending time there.

It is a safe, fun place for my daughter to socialize with healthy seperation *[sic]* from me.

I also rest well knowing my daughter is safe and properly cared for.

It would be terrible if these services were not available.

**JACKIE ROBINSON**

# SUPPORTERS



Southwest Ontario  
Aboriginal Health  
Access Centre



Children's Aid Society  
La Société d'aide à l'enfance  
LONDON & MIDDLESEX

**STREET LEVEL  
WOMEN AT RISK**



Canadian Mental  
Health Association  
*Mental health for all*



**Ontario**



**United Way**



**London Health  
Sciences Centre**



**WAYS**  
mental health support | rebuilding  
with you



London Family  
Court Clinic Est. 1974  
Professional Services for Families in Court



**Addiction Services**  
of Thames Valley | Services de toxicomanie de Thames Valley

**MUSLIM RESOURCE CENTRE**  
for Social Support and Integration



Mary J. Wright Research and  
Education Centre at Merry



London  
InterCommunity  
Health Centre



**CPRI** CHILD & PARENT  
RESOURCE INSTITUTE



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# CONTACT INFORMATION

For more information, please contact:

**Sister Nancy Wales**  
**President of the Board of Directors**

**[nwales@csjcanada.org](mailto:nwales@csjcanada.org)**

or

**Paul Howarth**  
**Executive Director**

**[phowarth@merrymount.on.ca](mailto:phowarth@merrymount.on.ca)**

You can also call or visit us at:

**1064 Colborne Street**  
**London, ON**  
**N6A 4B3**

**519-434-6848**



# Letters of Support

November 21, 2018

London City Council  
City of London  
300 Dufferin Ave.  
London, ON N6A 4L9

**Re: Invest in the Merrymount Family Support and Crisis Centre**

Dear Councillors,

On behalf of Addiction Services of Thames Valley I would like to express my support for the invaluable services Merrymount Family Support and Crisis Centre offers our shared community. Merrymount provides essential 24/7/365 services that support families and children facing domestic hardship, familial breakdown, and threats to children's mental health—standing as one of five accredited Children's Mental Health Centres in London that meet strict national standards of care.

Addiction Services of Thames Valley has worked closely with Merrymount for many years. In particular, our Heartspace Program has benefited greatly through the collaboration with Merrymount services in order to support clients and their families. The Heartspace Program is a specialized prevention, early identification, education, and treatment program for women who are pregnant, parenting and substance-involved and their children prenatal – 6 years of age. Our Heartspace Addiction/Mental Health Counsellor's have been able to better support the recovery goals of their client's through the partnership with Merrymount to offer various parenting and children programming. In addition, Heartspace continues to utilize Merrymount's Respite Program for clients and it has been found that this service is integral to helping client's focus on stabilizing their mental health and/addiction so that they can feel stronger in caring for themselves and their families.

The Heartspace program also refers clients to Merrymount for additional parenting support and educational programming. Most recently, our Heartspace program is seeking support of Merrymount to co-facilitate a Strengthening Families Program which is valuable in teaching life skills for our high-risk families.

Merrymount provides three essential services that are at risk without your support:

1. The **Crisis Residential/Respite Program** provides care to children up to 13 years old when their families are experiencing crisis, stress, are in transition, or in need of respite by

delivering a high-quality licensed program – designed to the needs of the individual child - to strengthen children and build coping skills.

2. The **Parenting & Children's Programs** initiative offers more than 20 adult programs and 10 programs for children to help educate, inform, and build parenting and life skills.
3. The **Family & Child Support Program** offers care for children whose families are experiencing an emergency and need non-traditional care. This program focuses on helping children establish resiliency skills.

Demand for these critical, life changing services has grown rapidly in London. This has put significant pressure on Merrymount's operating budget, meaning that families and children in need may have to be turned away.

Merrymount needs additional financial support to ensure the sustainability of these services. With this letter I ask that you provide Merrymount with the support it needs to continue protecting our most valuable asset as a community – our children.

Sincerely,

 BA, ADTP

Carrie Duff, BA, PGC (ADTP)  
Coordinator of Specialized Programs and Elgin Services  
Addiction Services of Thames Valley  
260-200 Queens Avenue  
London ON N6A 1J3





October 1, 2018

Amir Farahi  
amir@blackridgestrategy.com

To Whom It May Concern,

**Investing in the Merrymount Family Support and Crisis Centre**

On behalf of Anova, I would like to express my support for the invaluable services Merrymount Family Support and Crisis Centre offers our shared community. Merrymount provides essential 24/7/365 services that support families and children facing domestic hardship, familial breakdown, and threats to children's mental health - standing as one of five accredited Children's Mental Health Centres in London that meet strict national standards of care.

Merrymount has partnered with Anova in different capacities. Merrymount has provided Anova a safe space for our Community Group Program for Children Exposed to Woman Abuse and has also provided facilitators to help run groups at other locations. Merrymount has gone above and beyond for our families during crises and have been able to support with on-going respite. Merrymount has also provided in-house support at Anova for our families and really stepped up to the needs of our women and our community.

Merrymount provides three essential services that, without your support, are at risk:

1. The **Crisis Residential/Respite Program** provides care to children up to 13 years old when their families are experiencing crisis, stress, in transition, or in need of respite by delivering a high-quality licensed program – designed to the needs of the individual child - to strengthen children and build coping skills.
2. The **Parenting & Children's Programs** initiative offers more than 20 adult programs and 10 programs for children to help educate, inform, and build parenting and life skills.
3. The **Family & Child Support Program** offers care for children whose families are experiencing an emergency and need non-traditional care. The program focuses on helping children establish resiliency skills.

Demand for these critical, life changing services has grown rapidly in London. This has put significant pressure on Merrymount's operating budget, meaning that families and children in need may have to be turned away. Merrymount needs additional financial support to ensure the sustainability of these services. With this letter I ask that you provide Merrymount with the support it needs to continue protecting our most valuable asset as a community – our children.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kate Wiggins'.

Kate Wiggins  
Executive Director

255 Horton Street • London • ON N6B 1L1 • Ph: 519.642.3003 • 24 Hour Helpline • 519.642.3000

**anovafuture.org**

**formerly Women's Community House & Sexual Assault Centre London**

Charitable Registration Number – 12358 2348 RR0001

September 24, 2018

London City Council  
314 – 300 Dufferin Ave.  
London, N6A 4L9

**RE: Financial Investment in Merrymount Family Support and Crisis Centre**

Dear Councillors,

On behalf of the London Cross Cultural Learner Centre (CCLC), I would like to express my support for the invaluable services Merrymount Family Support and Crisis Centre offers our shared community. Merrymount provides essential 24/7/365 services that support families and children facing domestic hardship, familial breakdown, and threats to children's mental health—standing as one of five accredited Children's Mental Health Centres in London that meet strict national standards of care.

The CCLC has benefited from our partnership with Merrymount in multiple ways:

1. The Mutual Aid Parenting Program offered by Merrymount at CCLC brings together newcomers with a shared concern or experience to get help, give help and learn to help each other and themselves.
2. The Care for Newcomer Children offered at our location is staffed and operated by Merrymount employees. In partnership with Merrymount we were successful in obtaining the CMAS accreditation necessary for child care programs that are offered to newcomers to Canada.
3. Merrymount offers to our refugee children the Playing with Rainbow program as an art therapy intervention for survivors of war trauma and violence.
4. The CCLC needs Merrymount to ensure care for children of newcomer families in crisis, particularly being the only child care facility offering such service after hours.

Merrymount provides three essential services that are at risk without your support:

1. The Crisis Residential/Respite Program provides care to children up to 13 years old when their families are experiencing crisis, stress, are in transition, or in need of respite by delivering a high-quality licensed program – designed to the needs of the individual child - to strengthen children and build coping skills.

2. The Parenting & Children's Programs initiative offers more than 20 adult programs and 10 programs for children to help educate, inform, and build parenting and life skills.
3. The Family & Child Support Program offers care for children whose families are experiencing an emergency and need non-traditional care. This program focuses on helping children establish resiliency skills.

Demand for these critical, life changing services has grown rapidly in London. This has put significant pressure on Merrymount's operating budget, meaning that families and children in need may have to be turned away.

Merrymount needs additional financial support to ensure the sustainability of these services. With this letter I ask that you provide Merrymount with the support it needs to continue protecting our most valuable asset as a community – our children.

Sincerely,



Valerian Marochko, PhD, MBA  
Executive Director

November 28, 2018

## Invest in the Merrymount Family Support and Crisis Centre

Dear Members:

On behalf of the London Family Court Clinic, I would like to express my support for the invaluable services Merrymount Family Support and Crisis Centre offers our shared community. Merrymount provides essential 24/7/365 services that support families and children facing domestic hardship, familial breakdown, and threats to children's mental health—standing as one of five accredited Children's Mental Health Centres in London that meet strict national standards of care. As an organization Merrymount is a wonderful partner and collaborator for meeting the needs of children, youth and families in London and Middlesex. For instance, we operate a number of programs to assist families with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) children with Merrymount and sister organizations and rely upon their space and staff to help make these possible.

Merrymount provides three essential services that are at risk without your support:

1. The **Crisis Residential/Respite Program** provides care to children up to 13 years old when their families are experiencing crisis, stress, are in transition, or in need of respite by delivering a high-quality licensed program – designed to the needs of the individual child - to strengthen children and build coping skills.
2. The **Parenting & Children's Programs** initiative offers more than 20 adult programs and 10 programs for children to help educate, inform, and build parenting and life skills.
3. The **Family & Child Support Program** offers care for children whose families are experiencing an emergency and need non-traditional care. This program focuses on helping children establish resiliency skills.

Demand for these critical, life changing services has grown rapidly in London. This has put significant pressure on Merrymount's operating budget, meaning that families and children in need may have to be turned away. Merrymount needs additional financial support to ensure the sustainability of these services. With this letter I ask that you provide Merrymount with the support it needs to continue protecting our most valuable asset as a community – our children.

Sincerely



Dr. Dan T. Ashbourne, C. Psych.  
Executive Director and Psychologist @  
London Family Court Clinic (LFCC)  
[www.lfcc.on.ca](http://www.lfcc.on.ca) or [dan.ashbourne@lfcc.on.ca](mailto:dan.ashbourne@lfcc.on.ca)

1-519-679-7250 (ext. 107) Office; 1-519-494-0557 (cell); 1-519-675-7772 (FAX)

November 29, 2018

London City Council  
c/o City Hall  
300 Dufferin Avenue  
London, ON N6A 4L9

**Re: Letter of Support for Merrymount Family Support and Crisis Centre**

Members of London City Council:

On behalf of the London InterCommunity Health Centre, I am writing to support Merrymount's efforts to secure funding to sustain their Crisis Residential/Respite Program. The service provides 24/7/365 support to children who are experiencing a temporary period of family instability, and supports families to overcome the crisis and plan for a safe return to their home. Demand for this essential program is growing rapidly, and Merrymount is struggling to serve all London families and children who are in need.

London InterCommunity Health Centre provides health and social services to people who experience barriers to accessing care. As part of this work, our Youth Outreach Worker team provides direct person-to-person contact with youth living in North East and East London, working to reduce risk factors that could negatively affect their health and wellbeing. Our team has a strong and valuable partnership with Merrymount, and can attest to the importance of the Crisis Residential/Respite program, and the many other services provided to support children and families in London.

I appreciate that City Council will need to balance many competing priorities when it sets its next multi-year budget. As part of that budget process, I hope you are able to invest in sustaining Merrymount's Crisis Residential/Respite Program.

Regards,



Scott Courtice  
Executive Director,  
London InterCommunity Health Centre

November 19, 2018

Dear Council and Councillors:

**Re: Invest in the Merrymount Family Support and Crisis Centre**

On behalf of the London District Catholic School Board I would like to express my support for the invaluable services Merrymount Family Support and Crisis Centre offers our shared community. Merrymount provides essential 24/7/365 services that support families and children facing domestic hardship, familial breakdown, and threats to children's mental health—standing as one of five accredited Children's Mental Health Centres in London that meet strict national standards of care.

Families within our Board have benefited greatly from the services provided by Merrymount. We know that circumstances emerge in the lives of our families where respite care is desperately needed. To have such services and subsequent programming available to our families is what can turn around a situation which at the time seems 'hopeless' to 'hope filled'.

The Board is very pleased to be working in partnership with Western University Centre for School Mental Health and the Mary J. Wright Research and Education Centre and Merrymount staff to implement in our schools, MindUP, a social emotional learning program designed to improve learning, attendance and behaviour. The value of this work has been recognized provincially and is being supported in part by Ontario Local Poverty Reduction funding.

Without continued support, essential services provided by Merrymount, such as those identified below are at risk:

1. **The Crisis Residential/Respite Program** provides care to children up to 13 years old when their families are experiencing crisis, stress, are in transition, or in need of respite by delivering a high-quality licensed program – designed to the needs of the individual child - to strengthen children and build coping skills.
2. **The Parenting & Children's Programs** initiative offers more than 20 adult programs and 10 programs for children to help educate, inform, and build parenting and life skills.
3. **The Family & Child Support Program** offers care for children whose families are experiencing an emergency and need non-traditional care. This program focuses on helping children establish resiliency skills.



Merrymount Family Support and Crisis Centre  
November 19, 2018  
Page 2 of 2

We know that demand for these critical, life changing services has grown rapidly in London. This has put significant pressure on Merrymount's operating budget, meaning that families and children in need may have to be turned away.

Merrymount needs additional financial support to ensure the sustainability of these essential services. With this letter I ask that you provide Merrymount with the support it needs to continue protecting our most valuable asset as a community – our children.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "L Staudt".

Linda Staudt  
Director of Education

September 24, 2018

**125**  
Years  
1893-2018



Children's Aid Society  
La Société d'aide à l'enfance  
LONDON & MIDDLESEX

London City Council  
City of London  
300 Dufferin Ave.  
London ON N6A 4L9

Re: **Invest in the Merrymount Family Support and Crisis Centre**

Dear Councillors:

On behalf of the Children's Aid Society of London & Middlesex, I would like to express my support for the invaluable services Merrymount Family Support and Crisis Centre offers our shared community. Merrymount provides essential 24/7/365 services that support families and children facing domestic hardship, familial breakdown, and threats to children's mental health—standing as one of five accredited Children's Mental Health Centres in London that meet strict national standards of care.

The Children's Aid Society of London and Middlesex has worked closely with Merrymount over many years. Merrymount provides much need support and crisis intervention services for families in our community. Specifically, the Children's Aid Society has partnered with Merrymount in their crisis residential and respite program; to utilize overnight beds for children whose families are in crisis. Having such a short-term and immediately accessible service for families; often avoids the need for more intrusive services from child welfare.

The Society also refers parents to Merrymount for parenting education and support programming. The programs are of a high quality and are geared towards the needs of the families involved. Most recently, the Children's Aid Society has partnered with Merrymount to support kinship families. This includes grandparents, aunts and uncles and other community caregivers, who are looking after a child, while the child's parent works through their own struggles. This is a much-needed support service in the community. Merrymount's services are always welcoming, flexible and just in time when families need it the most.

Merrymount provides three essential services that are at risk without your support:

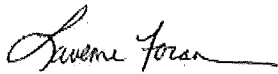
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3. The **Family & Child Support Program** offers care for children whose families are experiencing an emergency and need non-traditional care. This program focuses on helping children establish resiliency skills.

Demand for these critical, life changing services has grown rapidly in London. This has put significant pressure on Merrymount's operating budget, meaning that families and children in need may have to be turned away.

Merrymount needs additional financial support to ensure the sustainability of these services. With this letter I ask that you provide Merrymount with the support it needs to continue protecting our most valuable asset as a community – our children.

Sincerely,



Laverne Foran MSW RSW  
Associate Director  
Children's Aid Society of London & Middlesex  
1680 Oxford St. East  
P.O. Box 7010  
London ON N5Y 5R8



171 Queens Avenue  
Suite 750  
London ON  
N6A 5J7

Tel. 519-438-4783  
Fax 519-673-1509

Toll Free Tel. 1-877-480-2726  
Toll Free Fax 1-877-462-1509

September 27, 2018

London City Council  
London City Hall  
214-300 Dufferin Avenue  
London ON N6A 4L9

Dear Members of Council,

**RE: Investment in the Merrymount Family Support and Crisis Centre**

On behalf of the Community Services Coordination Network, I would like to express my support for the invaluable services Merrymount Family Support and Crisis Centre offers our shared community. Merrymount provides essential services, 365 days a year around the clock, that support families and children facing domestic hardship, familial breakdown, and threats to children's mental health. Merrymount is one of five accredited Children's Mental Health Centres in London that meet strict national standards of care.

The Community Services Coordination Network (CSCN) is a publicly funded, not-for-profit organization operating in southwestern Ontario. The core function of CSCN is to coordinate access to various services and supports with complex special needs children and their families, and with adults who have a developmental disability. We have enjoyed a long-standing, positive, professional relationship with Merrymount for over two decades. Our staff and the families we serve respect and value the many services and supports that Merrymount provides to some of the most vulnerable members of our community.

Merrymount provides three essential services that are at risk without your support:

1. The **Crisis Residential/Respite Program** provides care to children up to 13 years old when their families are experiencing crisis, stress, are in transition, or in need of respite by delivering a high-quality licensed program – designed to the needs of the individual child - to strengthen children and build coping skills.
2. The **Parenting & Children's Programs** initiative offers more than 20 adult programs and 10 programs for children to help educate, inform, and build parenting and life skills.



3. The **Family & Child Support Program** offers care for children whose families are experiencing an emergency and need non-traditional care. This program focuses on helping children establish resiliency skills.

Demand for these critical, life changing services has grown rapidly in London. This has put significant pressure on Merrymount's operating budget, meaning that families and children in need may have to be turned away.

Merrymount needs additional financial support to ensure the sustainability of these services. With this letter I ask that you provide Merrymount with the support it needs to continue protecting our most valuable asset as a community – our children.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Chris J. Symons', followed by a period.

Chris J. Symons  
Chief Executive Officer



**November 13, 2018**

City of London Council  
City Hall  
300 Dufferin Avenue  
London, N6A 4L9

**Invest in the Merrymount Family Support and Crisis Centre**

Dear London City Council:

On behalf of the **Southwestern Ontario Aboriginal Health Access Centre** (SOAHAC), I would like to express my support for the invaluable services Merrymount Family Support and Crisis Centre offers our shared community. Merrymount provides essential 24/7/365 services that support families and children facing domestic hardship, familial breakdown, and threats to children's mental health—standing as one of five accredited Children's Mental Health Centres in London that meet strict national standards of care.

Merrymount provides three essential services that are at risk without your support:

1. The **Crisis Residential/Respite Program** provides care to children up to 13 years old when their families are experiencing crisis, stress, are in transition, or in need of respite by delivering a high-quality licensed program – designed to the needs of the individual child - to strengthen children and build coping skills.
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3. The **Family & Child Support Program** offers care for children whose families are experiencing an emergency and need non-traditional care. This program focuses on helping children establish resiliency skills.

Demand for these critical, life changing services has grown rapidly in London. This has put significant pressure on Merrymount's operating budget, meaning that families and children in need may have to be turned away.



**Southwest Ontario  
Aboriginal Health  
Access Centre**

☐ 77 Anishinaabeg Drive  
Muncey, Ontario N0L 1Y0  
P 519.289.0352 F 519.289.0355

☐ 425-427 William Street  
London, Ontario N6B 3E1  
P 519.672.4079 F 519.672.6945

soahac.on.ca

Merrymount needs additional financial support to ensure the sustainability of these services. With this letter I ask that you provide Merrymount with the support it needs to continue protecting our most valuable asset as a community – our children.

Sincerely,

**Brian Dokis**

Chief Executive Officer  
Southwest Ontario Aboriginal  
Health Access Centre  
493-495 Dundas Street  
London, ON N6B 1W6  
519-914-1858 x 2001  
[www.soahac.on.ca](http://www.soahac.on.ca)

October 18, 2018

Re: Invest in the Merrymount Family Support and Crisis Centre

Dear City Council,

On behalf of the Middlesex-London Health Unit, I would like to express my support for the invaluable services Merrymount Family Support and Crisis Centre offers our shared community. Merrymount provides essential 24/7/365 services that support families and children facing domestic hardship, familial breakdown, and threats to children's mental health—standing as one of five accredited Children's Mental Health Centres in London that meet strict national standards of care.

The Middlesex-London Health Unit and the clients that we serve have benefited greatly from the collaborative relationship we have nurtured over many years with Merrymount. Merrymount is a key agency to which we often refer our clients: whether that be for their wide variety of parenting and children's programs for both targeted and universal populations, help for women and families experiencing Perinatal Mood Disorder through their Mother Reach Program, Crisis Residential/Respite Program and other supports; counseling or alternative education for young mothers. Merrymount is also an active member of the Middlesex-London Community Early Years Partnership and thus involved in planning and executing multi-strategy campaigns and initiatives for both targeted and universal audiences concerning such topics as Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health, Attachment, Resiliency and others related to Child Development. We also very much appreciate Merrymount's generosity as a community partner in hosting a number of MLHU strategies over the years such as Prenatal Classes and Infant Drop-ins, which benefits the clients of both organizations. Finally, Merrymount is continuously seeking out involvement with community partners to enhance their own programming, and Public Health Nurses have provided education for staff, young mom's and families in community play groups on a variety of health promotion topics.

Merrymount provides three essential services that are at risk without your support:

1. The **Crisis Residential/Respite Program** provides care to children up to 13 years old when their families are experiencing crisis, stress, are in transition, or in need of respite by delivering a high-quality licensed program – designed to the needs of the individual child - to strengthen children and build coping skills.
2. The **Parenting & Children's Programs** initiative offers more than 20 adult programs and 10 programs for children to help educate, inform, and build parenting and life skills.
3. The **Family & Child Support Program** offers care for children whose families are experiencing an emergency and need non-traditional care. This program focuses on helping children establish resiliency skills.



Demand for these critical, life changing services has grown rapidly in London. This has put significant pressure on Merrymount's operating budget, meaning that families and children in need may have to be turned away.

Merrymount needs additional financial support to ensure the sustainability of these services. With this letter I ask that you provide Merrymount with the support it needs to continue protecting our most valuable asset as a community – our children.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. Mackie'.

Christopher Mackie, MD, MHSc, CCFP, FRCPC  
Medical Officer of Health and CEO



Laura Elliott, Director of Education and Secretary

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November 22, 2018

Amir Farahi  
Principal  
Blackridge Strategy  
210-717 Richmond Street  
London, Ontario  
N6A 3H1

Dear Amir Farahi,

**Re: Invest in the Merrymount Family Support and Crisis Centre**

Dear Amir Farahi,

On behalf of Thames Valley District School Board, I would like to express my support for the invaluable services Merrymount Family Support and Crisis Centre offers our shared community. Merrymount provides essential 24/7/365 services that support families and children facing domestic hardship, familial breakdown, and threats to children's mental health—standing as one of five accredited Children's Mental Health Centres in London that meet strict national standards of care.

The Thames Valley District School Board, our students and families have benefitted tremendously from the services offered by Merrymount Family Support and Crisis Centre.

Merrymount provides three essential services that are at risk without your support:

1. The **Crisis Residential/Respite Program** provides care to children up to 13 years old when their families are experiencing crisis, stress, are in transition, or in need of respite by delivering a high-quality licensed program – designed to the needs of the individual child - to strengthen children and build coping skills.
2. The **Parenting & Children's Programs** initiative offers more than 20 adult programs and 10 programs for children to help educate, inform, and build parenting and life skills.
3. The **Family & Child Support Program** offers care for children whose families are experiencing an emergency and need non-traditional care. This program focuses on helping children establish resiliency skills.

Demand for these critical, life changing services has grown rapidly in London. This has put significant pressure on Merrymount's operating budget, meaning that families and children in need may have to be turned away.

Merrymount needs additional financial support to ensure the sustainability of these services. With this letter I ask that you provide Merrymount with the support it needs to continue protecting our most valuable asset as a community – our children.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Riley Culhane', with a stylized, cursive script.

Riley Culhane  
Associate Director  
Learning Support Services  
Thames Valley District School Board

RC/slp

I, Rajaa Al Absi, would like to share my experience as a client and then as a volunteer at Merrymount.

Almost 2 years ago, I went through a sudden divorce with three kids and no job! I was not prepared for it at all. I felt like a hurricane hit my life and turned everything upside down. My life was shattered and I couldn't recognize what used to be familiar to me. At that time, I was sad, mad, and ready to fall apart and give up.

While I was going through this entire dilemma, I did not want my kids to feel my pain. I started to look for our first need which was the support. Since my parents live in Montreal, it was impossible for them to provide us with that support for long term. My sister has two kids of her own and works full time every day and she couldn't provide lots of support as well.

Gladly, Merrymount was there for us!

Merrymount provided me with the support I lacked during my breakdown. Merrymount supported me unconditionally by taking care of my children as much as I needed. I felt that I have a family here ready to help me for 24 hours a day and seven days a week. Every parent reading my letter understands very well what it means to have such a support during a difficult time. I felt a burden of fear was taken away of me because this new family is keeping my children safe and happy.

While my kids attended Merrymount, I was a lot more flexible to go through court, appointments with lawyer, finishing paper works and moving away from our matrimonial home. The package of stress that comes with divorce was going through my life with ease due to Merrymount.

While going through divorce process, I came across a new state in my life which is being a single mother. Every time I needed to attend doctor appointments, or school meetings, or shopping for grocery and couldn't manage with three kids Merrymount helped me at all times until I was able to stand up on my feet again.

Merrymount was strengthening me during all of this hard time. I never felt alone. I started to feel my difficult time was ceasing from my life softly and successfully. I remember my last day of using Merrymount services; I walked through the exit door with my three kids having big smiles on our faces and with lots of positive energy. We were ready to start our new life with lots of hope for the future. I understood while leaving that day that Merrymount is a breeze of comfort that families can breathe through during a crisis.

Merrymount's support has a huge impact on my outcome today. I became an independent single mother. I don't feel afraid of the future anymore because this center is always here to support me. Therefore, the first thing I wanted to do in my new life is to come back to Merrymount as a volunteer. I want to give back, I want to help and I want to be part of this wonderful place and provide support the way it was provided for me.

Being a volunteer at Merrymount helped me understand more about a crisis. The first thing is that a crisis does not represent anyone's identity. A crisis can happen to anyone regardless of their backgrounds, their social status or their level of education. A crisis can happen at any time without prior notice. A crisis can destroy the future of many families if they do not get the help they need. Merrymount is basically a cure to all of the side effects that associate a crisis. Merrymount makes it possible for families to go through their crisis and succeed. Merrymount is the light families see during their dark time. Merrymount is also the hope that should grow more in our society and a hope should never be taken away.

Merrymount did a lot to me as to many other families. It is the place that gives the feelings of warm hugs and that "everything will be ok". When families get the support they need during their hard time they overcome their difficulties and they become stronger and they will eventually give back to their society. That way, our society will grow healthier. It is a blessing to have Merrymount in our city and I wish every city in this country can have this blessing.

While writing this letter, I feel afraid that I have not described Merrymount the way this place deserves. But deeply in my heart, I wish that my simple letter could make a difference in any decision to be taken concerning the future of Merrymount.

Sincerely,

Rajaa Al Absi



December 21 2018

Re: Merrymount Children's Centre

I have had the privilege of working for Merrymount Children's Centre since 2016. During that time, I have seen the impact of Merrymount's services on families in need. Merrymount fills an important role in supporting families in crisis or transition.

Our Crisis Residential/Respite and Family Child Support programs offer unique and highly flexible supports to families and children. Merrymount care is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Families access the amount of care that is right for them. For some families, this means they get a much-needed break that enables them to be ready to parent again. For others, it means that they can leave their child in our care while they attend medical, therapy or legal appointments, or look for new housing. For other families, Merrymount's services are utilized in a time of crisis (e.g. domestic violence, hospitalization, etc.) when no other service is available to keep their family together. Our Family Support Program offers innovative and evidence-based programs that help to build family capacity.

Merrymount works in partnership with other organizations in London to ensure that families receive all of the services they need, and to ensure that we do not duplicate services. I am most proud of Merrymount's creativity and welcoming approach, and I believe that our unique services and programs fill many gaps in our system. We meet families where they are, respect and celebrate their diversity. We provide services that help them to grow now, and to be ready to benefit from different or more intensive treatment or services from other organizations.

By providing both practical and therapeutic supports, we enable families to stay together, to avoid further disruption, and to have a brighter future with less dependence on services. I encourage you to support us in continuing to provide these services.

Sincerely,



Lee-Anne Cross  
718 Victoria Street  
London, Ontario



Merrymount Family Support and Crisis Centre services have a significant impact on our community. When a family is in crisis they may access many agencies to help with their crisis, uniquely with Merrymount we can support the whole family in many different ways. We support parent mental health through providing respite care for their children with our Crisis Respite Residential Program and the Family Child Support Program. We provide parenting, children's groups and counseling support through our Family Resource Program. This group programming and counseling support helps parents to strengthening their attachment relationship with their children and building their parenting skills. In our children's groups' children can strengthen their social skills and build their resiliency skills. Through a service coordination model we work with the family at their lead to direct the services that they need as they rebuild and repair their family.

Merrymount has staff that is skilled in the areas of Early Childhood Education, Child and Youth Care, Resource Consultation, Art and Play Therapy, Parent Education and Counseling. We have volunteers and students that seek out Merrymount to add to their experiences, knowledge and training. In an agency with such multi disciplinary expertise we can provide rich experiences to student and interns looking to practice their skills and learn about family mental health. We have solid partnerships with the College and Universities in South Western Ontario. Through these partnerships we maintain up to date research and excellence in program development that filters to better services to our families.

When we think about a crisis in a family we know that the timeline in needing help is not a set number of sessions or a set length of time. Merrymount services allow families to set their own healing path at their own pace. In comparison when we are building something we want it to be strong and sustainable we need glue that will hold materials together. When I think of our community there are many social service agencies that are the building blocks for families and we are one of them; but with Merrymount they are also the glue that holds the families and the services together. This in the end creates a structure that is safe, secure, protected and provides the time needed to heal and strengthen.

Through all my years of working in social service I have never encountered another agency like Merrymount. There is not an agency in the community that we do not work with in some way either in co facilitating programs, hosting workshops, providing support groups in their neighbourhoods or in our schools. At out of town conferences other colleagues are amazed at the services Merrymount provides to the community. They wish they had a service in their community like Merrymount and our conversations often end with the comment "all communities need a Merrymount." I can't imagine where we would be as a community without Merrymount and could not imagine how we can do this work with families without Merrymount services. This is an essential agency in London and it needs to be nurtured and supported to allow it to service all the families that need Merrymount.

Sincerely,

Sarah Wells

BA, CTS, Parent & Child Group Facilitator  
Adjunct Professor of Field Practice Education  
Merrymount Family Support and Crisis Centre

January 2, 2019

To whom it may concern,

This letter is written in support of the request for funding for Merrymount, and is to be included in the agenda under the Merrymount presentation to council for the January 17, 2019 meeting.

What will happen to children if essential services are not available to them and their parents, to support children's mental health and overall well being?

There is no other centre that offers such a vast array of services that supports children and their parents. As an accredited children's mental health facility, Merrymount services reduce children's exposure to risk factors and build protective factors to reduce impact when risks exist.

The prevalence of children's mental health concerns according to research by Children's Mental Health Ontario;

As many as 1 in 5 children and youth in Ontario will experience some form of mental health problem.[1]

5 out of 6 of those children will not receive the treatment they need.[2]

70% of mental health problems have their onset during childhood or adolescence.[3]

17% of children ages 2-5 years meet diagnostic criteria for mental health problems.[4]

Some of the important influences on children's mental health include children's physical, social and emotional development, family circumstances, sense of belonging to school, and access to resources and support services.

Based on research findings, certain risk factors make it more likely that children will experience poor mental health.

Children's risk factors include; complications during birth and early infancy, difficult temperament, low self esteem, low intelligence, poor bonding with parents and care givers

Family risk factors include; family disharmony, instability or breakup, harsh or inconsistent discipline style, parent(s) with mental illness or substance abuse, sibling with a serious illness or disability

School factors include; peer rejection and/or bullying, academic failure, poor attendance, poor connection between family and school

Life circumstances include; difficult school transition, death of a family member, emotional trauma, experience of physical or sexual abuse

Societal factors include; discrimination, isolation, socioeconomic disadvantage, lack of access to support services

Protective factors can help to reduce the likelihood of developing a mental health problem.

Some protective factors may help by shielding the child from experiencing a risk factor.

Key protective factors that influence children's mental health include;

Child factors; easy temperament, good social and emotional skills, positive coping style, optimistic outlook on life, good attachment to parents or care givers

Family; family harmony and stability, supportive parenting, strong family values, consistency (firm boundaries and limits)

School factors include; positive school climate, sense of belonging and connectedness between family and school, opportunity for participation in a range of activities, academic achievement

Life events; Involvement with a caring adult, support available at critical times

Societal factors include; participation in community networks, access to support services



Though risk factors increase the likelihood of experiencing mental health difficulties, some people who are exposed to significant risk factors do not develop difficulties. Research into resilience has sought to identify the things that allow children to overcome risk or adversity and 'bounce back'. Resilience is most effectively promoted when children are also connected through supportive relationships with family, friends, school and community, and have access to the resources needed to help them succeed and thrive.

Alongside my colleagues on the Family Resource team, we provide six programs to children and nineteen programs to parents. Having a variety of programs allows for the best match for a parent or child's need. These programs are offered based on registration numbers and delivered as needed.

Merrymount children's programs are designed to help children build skills to cope with situations that are identified to be risk factors for poor mental health outcomes; separation/divorce, low self esteem, social isolation, poor social skills, addictions issues in family. Children's programs are offered at Merrymount as well as schools in partnership with the Thames Valley District School Board and London and District Catholic School Board.

Why offer parenting programs at a children's mental health facility?

Parenting behaviour has consistently proven to be one of the most important contributors to healthy child development and well being (National Research Council and Institute, 2000; National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2004, 2007; Centre on the Developing Child at Harvard University, 2010).

Quality parenting during childhood promotes strong parent-child relationships leading to secure attachments (Benoit, 2004; Appleyard and Berlin, 2007; Ginsburg et al, 2007; Balbernie 2013), protects against child neglect and abuse (Ross and Vandivierre 2009), improves school readiness (Brooks-Gunn and Markman, 2005), promotes children's social development (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2004; Brotman et al, 2008; Sturgeon-Apple et al, 2010), and buffers toxic stress that can have life long consequences on health and development. (Shonkoff, 2012).

All Merrymount parenting programs build parenting capacity and skills to promote positive outcomes for children by identifying these risk factors and building protective factors. These programs are offered at Merrymount, Family Centres in London and other sites throughout the city and Middlesex county.

Without these supports available to children and their parents through Merrymount, there is a likelihood that protective factors for children will be reduced and risk factors will heighten, significantly increasing poor mental health outcomes for children. This will increase the need for more intensive services which are more costly to society both economically and for the future of our most vulnerable but valued members.....our children.

Respectfully submitted by,  
Wendy Tapp-Moore  
Merrymount Group Coordinator



## THERAPEUTIC PARENTING

It's been shown repeatedly within the literature that the emotional quality of a child's earliest attachment experience is perhaps the single most important influence on human development. Simply stated, children with histories of secure attachments are less vulnerable to stress and are better able to take advantage of opportunities for growth.

What happens in the first year of a child's life however does not determine what happens for the rest of a child's life. Change is possible, and drawing from the seminal work of Dr. John Bowlby, and expanded upon by contemporary attachment researchers, "every starting point, however early one looks, is also an outcome; every outcome is also a starting point".

Caregivers receiving services at Merrymount - Family Support and Crisis Centre may present with "starting points" that challenge their ability to foster caregiving environments that promote feelings of confidence, security and healthy regulation skills. A history of abuse, neglect, poverty, mental illness, social isolation, substance use and family violence are examples that have been shown within the literature that negatively impact the quality of parent/child relationships and are associated with poor child outcomes.

Therapeutic Parenting, a treatment service provided at Merrymount - Family Support and Crisis Centre is founded on contemporary theory and research in the areas of child development, development within relationships, attachment/caregiving and trauma. The aim of Therapeutic Parenting is to enhance caregiver's feelings of confidence and capacity to provide emotionally attuned, consistent and predictable care to their children.

Therapeutic Parenting moves beyond offering basic parenting and child development information to providing evidence based intervention to help caregivers pay attention to and tune in to their child's signals, make sense of their child's signals, experience their child's "inner life" and respond in a timely and sensitive manner. Services are provided in collaboration with, and are integrated within, on-site therapeutic childcare services and other clinical programs designed to build caregiver capacity and confidence.

Children aren't born resilient. Resilience develops within the context of secure relationships. Therapeutic Parenting, founded upon decades of attachment research, empowers and awakens within caregivers their innate ability to respond sensitively and responsively to their children's needs. It's through secure and healthy relationships with primary caregivers that children are afforded opportunities to grow, develop and realize their potential.

Submitted by

Katherine Rupert, MSW, RSW, ACTP  
Merrymount, Family Mental Health Coordinator



## Health Zone

*Nurse Practitioner-Led Clinic*

*PO Box 25087*

*London ON N6C 6A8*

*Fax: 226-781-9805*

December 20, 2018

To Whom It May Concern,

It is a privilege to have the opportunity to speak on behalf of Merrymount Children's Centre whom we have a close alliance with. Our organization provides primary care to those who are marginalized and face multiple challenges meeting the determinants of health including, access to primary care, affordable housing, food insecurity and affordable daycare.

I recently saw a young woman for her primary health care needs. She has three children under the age of six. Her health care regimen includes attending a local hospital outpatient clinic three times a week for life sustaining treatment. During our visit she identified problems with obtaining safe and reliable daycare. Her partner works shiftwork and they have no family in London, which has led to missed appointments for her treatment placing her at serious risk of life threatening illness and mortality. I spoke to a caseworker at Merrymount and she directed me to speak with an intake worker. This family was provided an opportunity to bring their children to Merrymount for daycare during her treatments at hospital. Merrymount provides safe and nurturing care to children's whose parent's face multiple challenges to life situations and circumstances that we take for granted. It has been my experience when families lack the comprehensive services such as those offered by Merrymount the result is further instability and family breakdown.

Supporting and enhancing family capacity is a unique and important characteristic of Merrymount. Our clinic looks forward to many more years of partnership with this organization.

Best regards,

*Maureen Mouritzen NP*

Maureen Mouritzen BScN MN NP PHC

Healthzone Nurse Practitioner

Interim Director Clinical Services



Dear City of London,

I am a Social Work student doing my internship at Merrymount Family Support and Crisis Centre in the Family Resources program. I first stepped foot in Merrymount on a student tour in the fall of 2017. I was fascinated to see the services that this agency offered. From child minding to respite, therapy programs and supervised access visits, Merrymount was not just for children but the whole family. I had never seen a place that could offer so much to families in the community. I knew from that moment that I wanted to be a student at Merrymount. Since beginning as a student in the agency, I have learned so much about working with families and had experiences I would not get at any other internship in the London community.

During my first four months, I have spent many hours both observing the compassionate staff and participating with them in groups. Whether my tasks have been researching how to improve Merrymount services through our policies, spending time with the drop-in families at Playtime Fun or helping at-risk families improve their parent-child relationship, *I cannot deny that Merrymount plays a vital role for many families in transition or crisis and we want to increase our impact.*

Merrymount wants to help more families. For example, the agency has begun to take a more inclusive approach in order to better help London's diverse and immigrant families. In a co-learning helping experience between these families and Merrymount, cultural inclusivity is amplifying. With these recent changes, we hope to be better able to help refugee families, such as war affected children in the Yazidi children's art therapy group.

It is through our programs that we are able to fulfil our mission to make families stronger. Improvement is, at times, almost palpable in our groups. At the end of an eight-week parent education group, I heard a parent say, "'Be Bigger, Stronger, Wiser, and Kind and take charge when necessary.' I will forever remember that." The determination in her face as she said this told me that this parent, who through this process shared her fears, her stigma, and her heart, had grown and was ready for more.

As Merrymount continues to work hard and develop to be even better for the community, I encourage you as the City of London, to consider helping to fund Merrymount. With your support we could help build strong families through the essential work of children's mental health and parent education.

Kind regards,

Sarah O'Halloran  
Bachelor of Social Work Intern Student

January 7, 2019

To whom it may concern,

My name is Catherine Foote and I have been a staff member for 32 years at Merrymount Support and Crisis Centre. I feel confident in expressing my full support for Merrymount programs and services in the areas of Family Resource, Crisis Residential/ Respite programs and Family Child Support Programs.

During my 32 years of service to this organization I have been involved in all the above mentioned programs. Programs have evolved and grown throughout the years but one thing that has remained consistent is Merrymount's commitment to serving and supporting families in London and surrounding areas.

In my role as an Art Therapist providing psycho-educational group programs to identified groups of children I have observed firsthand the benefits of such programs. Children attending Mom's House Dad's House a group that provides education and support for children whose families are experiencing separation and divorce benefit from being with other children who are going through a similar experience and understanding they are not alone in this situation. In an evaluation completed by the Centre of Excellence in 2013 the following outcomes for children were identified. Two significant differences were noted during the duration of the program: children felt listened to by other children when they shared their feelings, and children believed the future would be better in relation to changes the family was experiencing. By providing groups that are early intervention/prevention that promote self-esteem and resiliency we are helping families build resilience which is at the core of Merrymount groups. Children attending groups explore their strengths, recognize their strengths and recognize the strengths in others and their communities. By offering groups in community children are able to access support that might otherwise be a challenge for families and thus provide further opportunity for parental engagement.

Without early intervention and prevention programs being offered to support children and their families their trajectory is changed and children who currently have access to such programs will now have limited access to supports and put children at further risk.

Sincerely,

Catherine Foote

Merrymount

To Whom It May Concern,

I have worked at Merrymount Family Support and Crisis Centre since 1999. I have spent my years here working in many different departments and roles. In all of these positions I have witnessed the excellent work that Merrymount does and the incredible unique services that we offer. I have watched countless families flourish while receiving support from Merrymount, often in conjunction with other community supports.

I have had the privilege of collaborating with multiple agencies to provide flexible and responsive care for families and children when they are most in need. Merrymount has a long tradition of supporting London's families with a mandate to help families in crisis and stressful situations in a way that no other place can.

I have watched Merrymount respond to the changing needs of the community, with outreach programs and groups as well as in the way that we deliver our Crisis Residential/Respite Program and Family Support and Crisis Program. We have molded our services to accommodate an increase in kinship families needing care to maintain the family unit, addiction concerns, mental health issues of both children and caregivers and the changing needs of our new comer populations that are coming from high conflict areas.

At this time I am the Manger of the Intake Department. We work to meet all families in need by identifying their strengths and supporting them towards their identified goals and family stability. Every day we meet with children and parents who may be experiencing the most stressful time in their lives and we are proud to be assisting these families on their journey.

London is a caring community and Merrymount is one of those special places that we call our own. We believe the various Merrymount services being offered have a distinct and positive impact on families and our community at large, and we hope you do too.

I encourage you to support Merrymount's funding request and ensure the sustainability of the life-changing services Merrymount provides to the London community.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Kim Lamport

Dear City Council,

My name is Anne Brooks, I am the Communications & Development Coordinator at Merrymount. I have worked at Merrymount for almost 8 years. In that time I have learned a great deal about Merrymount, this community and the families it serves. Merrymount is there for families in this community when they need it, the staff don't turn families away, and they listen trying to support them to the best of their ability. The staff and programming Merrymount provides is monumental in supporting families who do not have a support system. I have interviewed a lot of families for a variety of communications materials and it is unbelievable the amount of support these families have received, and how far they have come from their first steps in the door, to when they leave Merrymount for the last time, feeling confident and working hard to be the best parents and the strongest family they can be.

Merrymount is a unique organization, and has been helping families in this community for over 140 years.

I hope you will consider supporting Merrymount's request.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Anne Brooks



January 2, 2019

To Whom this may Concern:

I am writing to you today to express my sincere support for Merrymount Children's Centre. I have had the privilege to work at Merrymount for over 32 years. I have developed relationships with many of the families utilizing the services provided by our agency and have witnessed the changes our services make in their life's. Our agency has provided support to families from London experiencing crisis within their family unit. Whether they are long time London residents or have just moved to the London area, or whether their needs are ongoing or temporary (e.g. waiting for transplant surgery or have a sibling ill in Children's Hospital) the flexibility of our programs allows the family to develop their own plan in meeting their family and child's needs.

Our beds have provided care to children whose parents are ill in the hospital, living in a shelter, living at a campsite, or living in a cockroach infested apartment. Our children have experienced vast amounts of toxic stress (harmful stress) and trauma in their young lives; living in poverty, witnessing intimate partner violence, watching their caregiver struggle with substance abuse issues, or severe mental health. Many children struggle with trust and social relationships, struggle with the conformity of school and rules within the community. These children naturally respond by fight (aggressive and verbal outbursts), flight (avoid situations, run away), or freeze (conform due to intense fear, unable to focus); Merrymount provides these children the skills to cope with their situations and respond positively.

Over the years, we've planned, implemented and enhanced our services and programs, for families in crisis. Following best practice research our agency utilizes a trauma informed approach when developing relationships with our families. Our families feel respected, non-judged and safe, leaving their children within Merrymount's care. Many of our families express their appreciation with words such as "Merrymount is my family", "I don't know what I would have done without Merrymount's support", "You gave me hope" and "Now I can be the parent I always wanted to be".

We pride ourselves in supporting families in a crisis through our 24 hour programming, with the ability to provide immediate care as required, and our work with parents, individually or in groups, in gaining an understanding of their own triggers and styles in parenting. Parents learn to increase their skills in listening to and supporting and encouraging their child, while setting limits and developing consistency within the home environment to meet their child's unique needs (e.g. ADHD, FASD, trauma, etc.). Parents and children often learn together through the many concurrent groups offered.

Merrymount is very unique in the services that it provides to families and is the only one of its kind in Canada. All families are unique; the needs and supports they require are unique; and their hopes and dreams for their children are unique. Merrymount provides these families the tools they need to reach their goals.

Respectfully,

Rose Nasswetter

January 4, 2018

To whom it may concern,

I am fortunate to be the Program Manager for the Crisis Residential/Respite Program at Merrymount Family Support and Crisis Centre. I have the privilege of interacting with parents/guardians and children every day in this program. Through these interactions I witness firsthand the impact that our programs and services have on the children and their families. Parents/guardians often state how thankful they are to have access to this program in their community. They share how the support that they receive has assisted their family in building their family's capacity to cope with the ongoing issues and stressors in their lives or in dealing with a crisis situation that has occurred. Families access programs at Merrymount for a variety of reasons. The common denominator is that the family is looking for support in regards to their children. These families lack an appropriate support system to assist them with their children and the issues that can arise when raising a child and living life as a family. Whether a family is looking for respite care due to behavioural challenges related to their child's mental health, respite care due to their own mental or physical health concerns or trauma, respite care for a kinship grandparent who is suddenly faced with raising their grandchild, crisis care for a medical emergency or any other crisis or need for respite they turn to Merrymount for service they can trust. Families count on the fact that this program is not just about a bed but rather about a program that is focused on providing an around the clock positive, nurturing and supportive environment for their children. The parent/guardian can focus on their needs for a period of time knowing that their children are well cared for and will return home to a parent/guardian that is now able to parent with renewed strength and ability because they had time to take care of themselves.

I have the opportunity to see growth in the children as they build resiliency and coping strategies, enhance their social skills, emotion regulation skills, life skills and improve their sense of self and wellbeing in program. I am fortunate to work with a team of skilled professionals who understand child development and are trained to work with children with mental health diagnoses, who live with toxic stress, have been exposed to trauma, children who require someone to focus on meeting their individual needs and issues to promote growth and build capacity in a nurturing and strength based environment.

In the Crisis Residential/Respite Program there are eighteen beds and eighteen different stories behind every child that occupies a bed each night. These stories are unique and individual but all equally important. All are there because their family requires support and assistance to improve their life as a family. Strong and healthy families is the goal and without this program many families could not attain this. Every parent wants the best life possible for their child. The families that come to Merrymount are no different. These families access services to improve their lives and those of their children. I am thankful that I get to be a part of this in working with these parents/guardians and children every day. We need to be responsive to the needs of families in our community by providing this short term residential program that is accessible to families twenty four hours a day. We ask for your support in funding this needed service in our community.

Thanks,

Lisa Sortun

Mossley, Ontario

January 6, 2019

To whom it may concern:

I am writing in support of Merrymount Children's Centre, its staff and its programs. It would not be an exaggeration to say that Merrymount saved our family, transformed our children's lives and strengthened our marriage. Without the amazing programs and the outstanding staff that run them, I sincerely believe that our family would be struggling and broken today.

We arrived in London in the spring of 2008 during the most extreme period of crisis we had ever faced. I was pregnant with our second child, both my husband and I were unemployed, we had no home and we had a 3 year old son with undiagnosed but increasingly severe behavioural problems. At the same time, the economy was crashing and the world was entering a severe recession.

As we sought help for our son we were quickly referred to Merrymount. Within a week the staff had arranged an intake interview, assessments for our son and respite care for him for after the birth of our daughter in order for me to rest and bond with her and for my husband to search for employment. I was at high risk for post-partum depression and the staff were quick to put plenty of supports in place for us.

That summer Merrymount enrolled our son in a program to help him prepare for his entry into kindergarten. They helped prepare me, too, giving us great advice in how to approach the school and the teachers. Our son worked with a play therapist in a program called Don't Make Me Go. It was a wonderful preparation for school. My daughter would do the same program with the same play therapist four years later. Another great strength of Merrymount is the continuity afforded by long term staff who are committed to the clients.

In the fall, I began a parenting course at Merrymount to help understand child development and how to help my son with his behavioural challenges. At that time we received a referral through Merrymount to Vanier and the two organizations complemented each other as we continued to have our son assessed.

Following on from the parenting course I was invited to join a parent's support group that met on Wednesday mornings. We would play with our children for an hour and then leave them with staff while the parents met with a facilitator and guest speakers to discuss parenting issues such as nutrition, sleep, school, family life and sibling relations.

The parents in this group became a close support group for one another as Merrymount and our facilitator created a safe and loving place for us to share our fears and struggles and to help and encourage one another. I was a part of that group for six years, until my daughter was in school full time. Knowing that I had that oasis of peace and caring for several hours on Wednesday mornings was often all that got me through to the following week; that and the amazing cookies they served!

As well as the supports for our son and myself, I needed help caring for our infant daughter. We regularly attended the Friday Well Baby Clinic and got support from the lactation consultants there. We didn't yet have a family doctor so we received vaccines and general care from the nurse practitioner. All of our needs were met in one place by one set of people whom we knew and trusted. I wish that all parents could experience the feeling of security that brings.

In December 2009 our son was diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome, a form of autism, and we began another stage of our journey as we sought to understand what this would mean for his future and for us as a family going forward. Merrymount was there with us all the way. There were staff and counselors and play therapists and nurse practitioners to give advice and a friendly ear. We received assessments from a PhD candidate in child psychiatry who was doing a placement at Merrymount.

And always, we were welcome to just "be" in the building if we needed a safe space where we knew we were accepted and understood. That was an enormous gift to our family. My children especially enjoyed the library and the special bookshelf from which they could choose a free book to take home.

Over the next six years we continued to receive on going but increasingly diminishing support from Merrymount. Diminishing because they were helping us to get back on our feet, to be healthy and self-sufficient while always providing a safety net, encouragement and care as needed. We appreciated this approach because it showed confidence in us and our abilities to self-manage our lives and our children's futures.

As our overall needs tapered off, there were still times when we needed more support than other families because of the nature of our struggles. When I was diagnosed with fibromyalgia, Merrymount offered respite care for my daughter, who was only in kindergarten every other day, so that I could rest and recover. Though we never used it, we also knew that overnight care was available if we needed it. As we have no family nearby these supports were life-saving for us.

In conclusion, I would like to say that Merrymount Children's Centre has been one of the greatest blessings in our lives since coming to London. They helped us to land on our feet during a very difficult and overwhelming time. We could easily have fallen through the cracks and become just another negative statistic. Instead, today my husband and I are both employed in jobs that we love, we own our own home, our marriage is strong and healthy and our children are thriving at 10 and 14 years old respectively. We have not needed Merrymount's support for the last four years, but they remain a beloved place to us and we will always be grateful.

Merrymount is an irreplaceable asset to our community here in London. The institutional knowledge, the overarching framework, the staff expertise and the inter-agency connections make Merrymount uniquely placed to address the needs of families who arrive with a multiplicity of concerns and issues. It is my humble but sincere opinion that this amazing organization deserves the full support of our city council.

Sincerely,

Angela Connell  
London, Ontario

Susan McKane  
31 Brentwood Rd., London

December 18, 2018

***"Merrymount Children's Centre is a caring organization committed to providing around the clock support and crisis care for children and families. We deliver responsive and innovative services and programs to strengthen children and their families in times of transition."***

Merrymount Mission Statement

Between the years of 2003 and 2014, I worked with the Family Resources Team at Merrymount Family Support and Crisis Children's, designing and implementing parenting support programs that the Family Resource Team provides to families in London and area. This agency and the service it provides is one-of-a-kind in south west Ontario. Families from the London area participated in the courses each semester and expressed their gratitude for these services since they were not available elsewhere.

As part of this team, I was provided with the opportunity to design and deliver educational support programs for parents of children 6-12 years of age. Some parents were working to regain custody of their children and, in some cases were successful, some were working to support their children through separation and divorce, some parents were bewildered about parenting a child with symptoms of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. Other members of the Family Resource Team delivered a variety of programs for parents of younger children and some of the team worked with children through art and play therapy programs.

There was always much more demand for our services than there was staff or time to provide them, but our team worked to be creative with time management, to be professional in our approach to these families in crisis and to use current and applicable theory and research on "attachment", "emotional self-regulation", "trauma" and the needs of developing children to inform and educate, to support and empower parents to help their children manage in times of crisis.

This team of educator/support personnel was then, while I was on the team, and is now, committed to the welfare of families, professional in their dealings with adults and children, constructive and positive in their work and of invaluable support and resource to the families that attend our groups. Nothing was ever done that was not of the highest quality and standard.



Referrals to our programs came from other agencies in the city which recognized the necessity of providing parent education - The Children's Aid Society, the Thames Valley District School Board, Mme Vanier, medical professionals and the Provincial Court system used and use still the programs delivered by the team at Merrymount to support their own clients. This fact begs the question – "If left unfunded, where do these agencies and the families which they serve, access these valuable programs?"

The city of London, in my opinion has been slow to value the role of Merrymount Children's Centre in the life of this city – over many decades providing support, respite and education to parents trying to do their very best for their children. Investment at the grass roots, with parents and children through education and awareness, saves our city money in other areas since crises are handled early in their development. .

I sincerely request that London City Council acknowledge the value of the services that Merrymount offers in terms of parent education and support and offer recognition and resources that will enable Merrymount to continue the vital work that it does with families on behalf of the City of London

Susan McKane

Parent Educator (retired)

40350 Huron St, E,

Exeter, ON

January 8, 2019

City of London, 300 Dufferin Ave,

London, ON

N6B 1Z2

Attention: City Councillors

Dear City Councillors,

**RE: MERRYMOUNT CHILDREN'S CENTRE**

I am writing this letter in support of Merrymount Children's Centre. I have been the Finance Director at Merrymount since 1993 and would like to commend the unique services that the agency offers to families and children in London.

Merrymount provides a wide-range of services including our Family and Child Support program (operating 24/7, this program provides care to children whose families are experiencing an emergency or crisis and are in need of non-traditional hours of care), our Crisis Respite / Residential program (including 18 beds, this program is geared to helping families with short-term emergencies and also planned short-term respite care) and our Family Resource program (incorporating groups for children and parents that are strengths-based and that focus on skills development, coping strategies and building stronger parent-child relationships).

Although I am part of the administration at Merrymount, I do witness the wonderful work that our front-line staff does every day and the positive impact they have on all the families and children that use Merrymount's services. As I'm sure you can all appreciate, all families experience problems and stresses and crises from time to time – no one is immune from the realities of life. I believe London is blessed to have an invaluable resource such as Merrymount in the community.

Thank you for considering Merrymount's request for financial support.

Yours sincerely



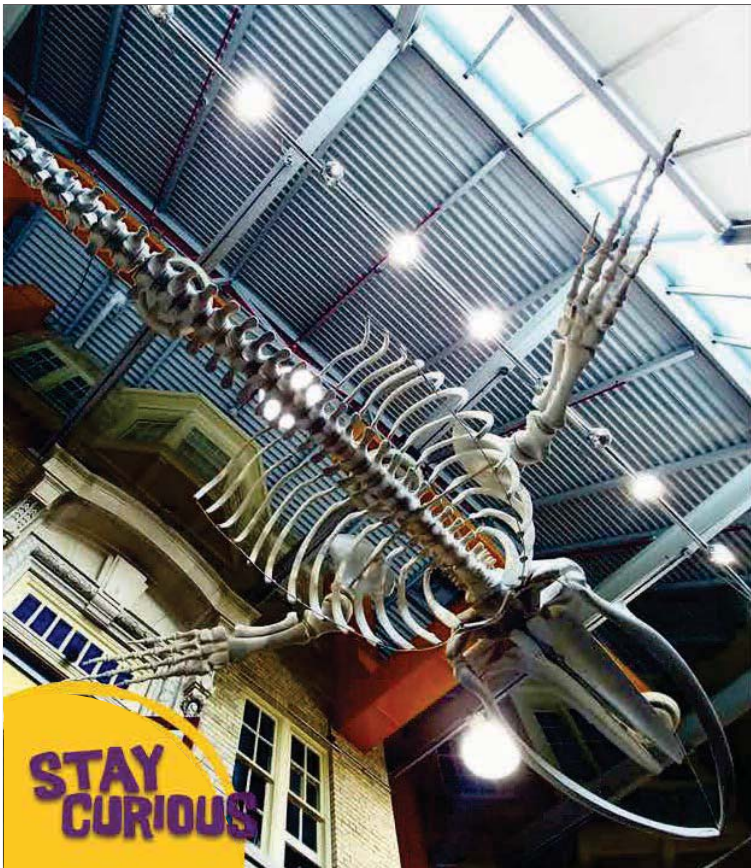
Richard Macgregor

Director of Finance

Children's  
MUSEUM

# STAY CURIOUS

Case Presentation, January 2019  
London Children's Museum



## The Children's Museum

- Canada's **first** children's museum; one of only 9 today
- **\$4.5M** contributed to local economy annually
- **26%** growth in visitors over last 5 years
- **47%** visitors are tourists
- **75%** earned revenue & private sector donations
- **25%** public sector grants (federal, provincial and municipal)



# Stakeholder Engagement

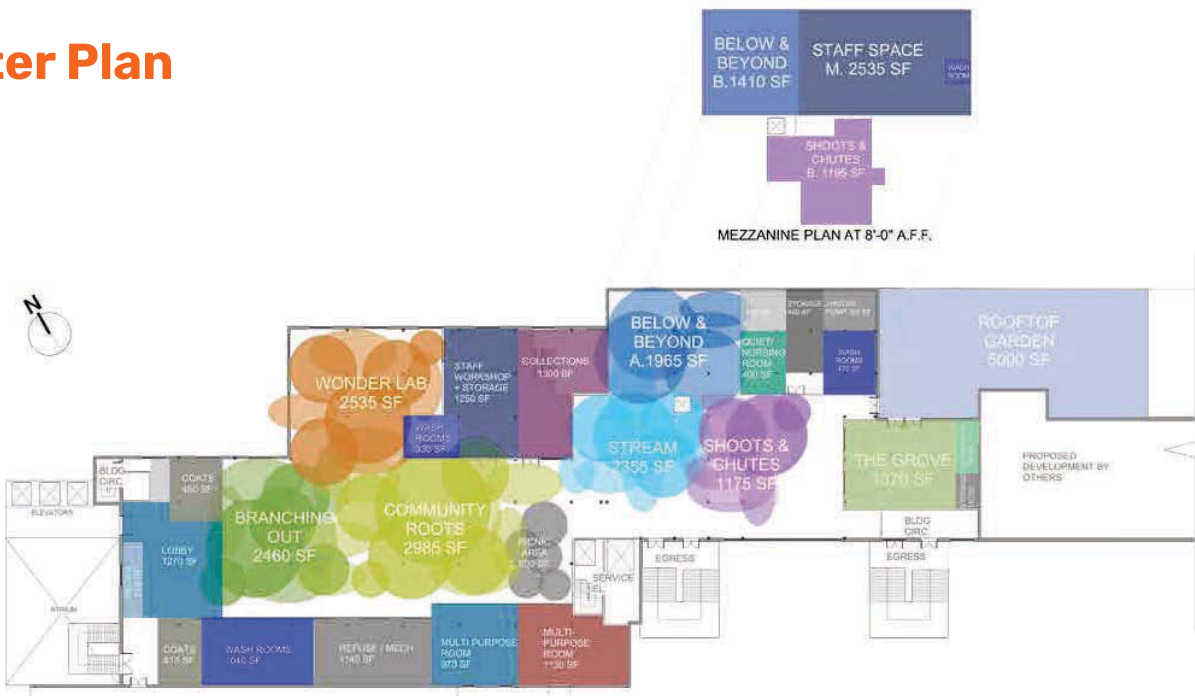
- **Who:** Educators, community partners, accessibility organizations, First Nation communities, industry experts, and the general public
- **How:** Best practice review, insight surveys, market research, design camps and workshops

# What We Heard

- **Advocates for childhood,** understanding and valuing children
- **Hands-on learning experiences** for all children
- **Welcoming and supporting** diversity, equity and accessibility



# Master Plan





## BRANCHING OUT



## WONDERLAB





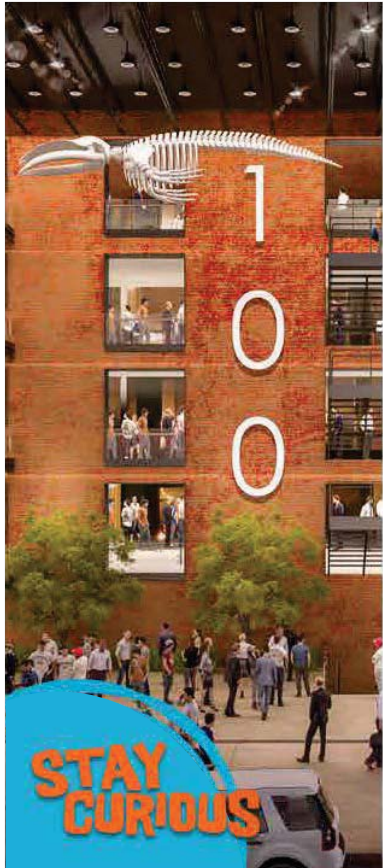
## BELOW & BEYOND



## SHOOTS & CHUTES







## The New Children's Museum

A state-of-the-art educational, cultural, and tourist destination at 100 Kellogg Lane.



## 2019 – My Acceptable Budget Targets

- A 2.5 % Max Budget Increase Target for municipal services – Down slightly from the 2.7 % staff reco.
- This is at the top of the BOC range for targeted inflation going forward and well above the 1.7 – 2.0 % real inflation rate.
- I'm just fine @ Council & City targeting program service cuts and/ or chocking off slightly the pace of growth on the capital side to achieve
- 2.7 % Max Budget increase in the sewer & H2O as this continues to grow annually at high rates and points to even further increases in future rates.
- There is very limited to no disposable income available in our community and my household to allocate to tax increases.

## Tax Increase Consistency / Transparency Request

- Consider this a “ shout out “ request for the city of LDN Finance team to change or add the average tax increase **over 2018** based on the average all in assessed value of a 2018 home ( website – Press Releases etc )
- Example - \$235,000 assessed value 2018– drives a \$75 annual tax increase in 2019 @ 2.7 % increase. ( Per Finance Team )
- Website – Budget at a Glance – 2015 Assessment Value 2015 - \$215,000 without educational assessment levy = \$74 / increase in 2019 @ 2.7 % increase
- Taxpayers only relate to references to “ all in “ assessed value from last year ( 2018 ) from their tax bills . Apples to apples please!

## Future # 1 – Limit & Manage Taxpayer Funded Liabilities

- A clear request to limit taxpayer future liabilities of current and future programs so there are manageable & transparent limits .
- Example – the Current DC Incentive Grant program has unlimited future liabilities ( total allocation to debt and taxpayer ) until 2023 the next scheduled program review by Council @ a public MTG .
- City Finance team provides no forecast forward on liabilities , just monitors building permits .
- What if we have 10 – 12 new high-rises and 3 -4 more factories built out under the incentive zones and I'm stuck with a further \$ 50 - \$60 million increase in current liabilities to pay out over the new 10 year cash flow schedule ?? It's on me !

## Future #2 – We can't get there from here! New Assessment Growth & Allocation

- In any business , the most important \$\$ is new revenue stream and there is nothing more important than allocating a significant portion of this stream to align with strategic planning.
- New Assessment Growth is pegged at 1.4 % / \$8.2 million per year in the City of Ldn ( 2018 ) and for the past few tax years has been over 90 % allocated to OPS budgets across the board **AFTER** the 2.8 % budgeted increases to account for reasonable growth.
- As we grow inward and upward on the same geographic footprint with minor population growth , most City of Ldn services should be up to the challenge of absorbing “ service & growth “ improvements within this footprint @ the regular tax increase round. ( =Service Review Initiatives Program)
- **Request Forward – That this Council start to align the allocation of this revenue to match it's strategic initiatives ( Housing Etc )**

## Future #3 – Reserve Funds – Finance Engineering Request

- All Reserve Funds = \$384  
- \$435 Million Balance
- 4 Key Categories ( Examples – Renew & Replace ETC)
- 80 – 100 separate funds
- Annual Draws - \$ 43 to \$149 Million 4 year span
- CAP Utilization over 2016 – 2019 = 10 % to 40 % / yr
- Very little KIS performance data for taxpayer

### **REQUESTS – KISimple**

- Grass Roots requirements review ASAP as per A.L Barbon CFO MTG sharing.
- Financial engineering and financial tool box review to improve \$\$ utilization without adding significant risk .
- Examples – ETF vs Single Stocks / Life Insurance Funds
- FREE UP THIS UNDER UTILIZED CAPITAL FOR THINGS WE NEED TO DO .  
Lessen taxpayer contributions.



January 14, 2019

Mayor Ed Holder and Members of City Council  
City of London  
300 Dufferin Ave, P.O. Box 5035  
London, ON N6A 4L9

Dear Mayor and members of City Council,

**Re: The New London Children's Museum – Letter of Support**

As a parent of two young children, Children's Museum member, and engaged Londoner, I am writing to you in support of the London Children's Museum and their \$2 million funding request to the City of London.


As a stay-at-home mom, the Children's Museum offers me a place where my children and I can engage in learning and play together. It provides my children with learning opportunities unlike anything they experience at home or in childcare. The Children's Museum allows us to spend time together as a family, making lasting memories during this precious time in their lives.

The new Children's Museum will allow even more families to have this experience. It will provide children with meaningful, educational experiences. It will allow parents and caregivers the opportunity to learn and grow alongside their children. It will be an asset to this city and a valuable resource for families across the region.

I am thrilled my children will one day be able to visit the new Children's Museum. Projects like this make me proud to call London home.

Thank you for supporting rich learning experiences for children and their families.

Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Amanda Bruner', with a long, flowing horizontal line extending to the right.

Amanda Bruner, RN  
377 Rabb St  
London, ON N5Y 3V3  
519-996-2175

**Carol Johnston**

---

1-124 North Centre Road  
London, Ontario, N5X 4R3

January 15, 2019  
To: London City Council

Dear Members of Council,

As I sit here at my desk writing this, I'm remembering back to the late 1970's and our first presentation to London City Council. At that time, we sought your endorsement for the concept of a Children's Museum for our city. Through hard work and with many angels, supportive funding was found, empowering us to open the doors to Canada's first Children's museum, and to flourish within our community. Now we are back again, this time looking for funding to expand and improve our facilities and services.

Time has a way of passing by and creates wear and tear on buildings, spaces and exhibits. The Children's Museum's present home - an old public school, while serving us well in the beginning, does not do well with present-day museum planning. The building has huge stairways and hallways and confining classrooms spread over three floors which makes it inappropriate for large exhibits or for many travelling exhibits, such as Harry Potter, the Titanic or for huge dinosaur exhibits. We need large open spaces to carry the imagination of our young visitors along a trail of discovery to create eureka moments. Our new building at Kellogg Lane has many unique features and dramatic height.

With the help of the greater community, designers and our staff, the ideas, dreams and "must-haves" for our new home have become visualized with drama, colour and organization. We can work with this! And the new building that has been chosen will make all of this spectacular.

We are appealing to all levels of government, businesses and the broad community to share our dream, but as many know we must have our own city securely on-side to leverage others. Your support is crucial to this initiative and we sincerely invite you to share in this endeavor to create a new bigger and better location for Canada's first Children's Museum.

We respectfully request two million dollars. With a fourteen- million- dollar goal, this is a modest ask. The city of London, our families, our employers and our tourism sector will benefit for years to come. The financial and cultural benefits will have a multifaceted effect enriching our community through the support of Canada's first Children's Museum.

It must be awesome, and it will be!

Most sincerely,



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Telephone: (519) 471-9849  
johnstoncarol@hotmail.com



January 14, 2019

Mayor Ed Holder & City Council  
City of London  
300 Dufferin Avenue, P.O. Box 5035  
London, ON N6A 4L9

Dear Mayor and members of City Council,

**Re: The New London Children's Museum – Letter of Support**

On behalf of Tourism London, please accept this letter of support for the London Children's Museum and their \$2 million funding request to the City of London.

The new Children's Museum at 100 Kellogg Lane will be an economic driver and tourist draw for the City of London, contributing to a diverse and resilient local economy. With an expected annual attendance of 145,000 and an estimated economic impact of \$6.4 million annually, this project will have a substantial impact on the number of visitations to the City of London.

As Canada's first Children's Museum and one of only nine to-date, the London Children's Museum is a unique local treasure. It is an asset to our City; one that highlights London's entrepreneurship and innovation. It offers tourists to this City a unique experience they are unable to find anywhere else in the region.

As a state-of-the-art educational and cultural destination in the City of London, the new Children's Museum will continue to offer an enriched and diverse experience to both tourists and locals alike. This project highlights and celebrates London's natural environment, history and innovation, and helps to reinforce the position that London as a desirable destination city.

Thank you for supporting and giving consideration to investing in the new Children's Museum that will not only enhance this project as a tourist destination but provide Londoners and their children a unique opportunity to enjoy its many features.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Winston", is written over the word "Sincerely,". The signature is stylized and fluid.

John Winston  
General Manager