

London Community Recovery Network- Diane Gordon

I was invited to participate on the Community Readiness and Resilience priority action tables of the London Community Recovery Network (LCRN). On July 21, 2020, the creation of this Network was endorsed by London City Council and was chaired by the Mayor.

As a community-led process to empower London's recovery from COVID-19, its purpose was to streamline collaborative efforts among the private sector and non-profit and institutional organizations in the areas of; employment and talent, supporting London's most vulnerable communities, community readiness and resilience, strengthening London's downtown and core area and making London a destination community.

As a participant, I was tasked with gathering ideas from my network attendees. With the support of the Licensed Child Care Network's Advocacy sub-committee, we developed the following ideas for submission

- #1- promotion of the ECE Profession during COVID- building on the "Unsung Heroes" campaign, this would recognize the resilience of the educators with bold images and stories and would support recruitment and retention.
- #2- City of London Support for a National Child Care Framework- asking council to publicly endorse a national child care framework- recognizing the crucial role of licensed child care a city where families want to live, work and play.
- #3- An Inter-Ministerial Resource Team for Licensed Child Care- this would support a full recovery for operators currently receiving conflicting information between Health and Education. The team would regularly attend LCCN meetings.
- #4- Recruitment of RECEs during COVID- asking the employment and education sector to support the distribution of existing tools created through the "Unsung Heroes" campaign.
- #5- Connecting Business with Licensed Child Care- having reliable and quality child care essential for the well-being of employees and their families. Prior to the pandemic, finding a child care space was challenging, in the current context, licensed child care is operating at 60% enrollment. Promote as a safe and reliable option for families.

The cross-sectoral support for licensed child care is strong and this work opened up the opportunity to work with multiple sectors in our community. Ideas #2-5 were adopted by the Community Readiness and Resilience table as high priority and submitted to LCRN. On February 9th, 2021, at the Community and Protective Services Committee (CPSC) meeting, our idea #2 (#4.7 in the CPSC's report) received unanimous support from Councillors. Councillors spoke of the importance of this initiative as part of the COVID recovery. The following is the excerpt from the 4th Meeting of Community and Protective Services, February 9, 2021.

Idea for Action #4.7 – Support for National Child Care Framework

Background

Economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic depends on a strong child care and early years system. Parents can only return to their jobs if they are able to secure child care for their children. This challenge

disproportionally affects women who are more likely to be excluded from the workforce if they cannot access child care.

This Idea for Action asks the City of London to endorse the development of a National Child Care Framework. It is responsive to the Government of Canada's announcement in 2020 that "the government will make a significant, long-term, sustained investment to create a Canada-wide early-learning and child-care system" and is aligned with strategies in the London-Middlesex Child Care and Early Years Service System Plan 2019-2023.

London-Middlesex Licensed Child Care Network (LCCN), in partnership with Fanshawe College and Strive, has shared its vision for a National Child Care strategy. In an open letter dated August 10, 2020, LCCN asked that all levels of government act to create a National Child Care Strategy for Canada with the pillars of affordability, access, quality and responsiveness in mind.

Actions Underway by Civic Administration

Civic Administration conducted an environmental scan of other municipalities and sector associations that have taken a position on the development of a National Child Care Framework. Additionally, Civic Administration provided support to stakeholders from the Child Care and Early Years sector to develop the following position statement for consideration by Council in advocacy efforts to the provincial and federal governments:

"City Council requests the Government of Canada, in partnership with the provinces, develop and implement a National Child Care Framework to focus on accessibility, affordability, and equity for all families, recognizing that licensed quality child care and qualified Early Childhood Educators are essential to COVID-19 economic and social recovery."

Next Steps

The recommended action steps for implementing this Idea for Action are below:

- The Mayor, on behalf of Council, to communicate support for a National Child Care Framework to the Governments of Ontario and Canada using the position statement articulated above;*
- Civic Administration to communicate Council-approved position statements to relevant sector associations; and,*
- Civic Administration to continue to support community stakeholders in championing local child care and early years priorities, as outlined in the London-Middlesex Child Care and Early Years Service System Plan 2019-2*

The Child Care Advisory Committee and the Licensed Child Care Network want to give our sincere thank you to London City Council and the London Recovery Network for their support in helping us to move this important work forward.