

Saint John Early Learning Centre

January 23, 2018

Mr. Rob Fowler, Chair,
And the Members of the District Education Council (DEC),
Anglophone School District – South,
490 Woodward Ave, Saint John, NB
E2K 5N3

Dear Mr. Fowler and Members of DEC,

The Saint John Early Learning Centre (ELC) and its partners are in full support of a new school for the South-Central peninsula of Saint John. We have appreciated the opportunity to be part of the school and community dialogue that led to this decision by DEC. The School District has been a major partner in the establishment of our city's first ELC at St. John the Baptist-King Edward School that serves the families who live in the school's catchment area. Your contributions have been outstanding and vital to the effectiveness of the ELC.

The Saint John Early Learning Centre is a national leader in providing child-focused, evidenced-based programming to address the twin issues of low literacy and generational poverty. Since its inception, the ELC has adhered to its core mission to serve its local community. This is rooted in the work of the Saint John Early Childhood Coalition and its founding members - Family Resource Centre (SJ), Business-Community Anti-Poverty Initiative (BCAPI), YMCA, Anglophone South School District (ASD-S), Horizon Health Network and the Department of Social Development – who came together in 2003 to strengthen early childhood services in the City and help address Saint John's high child poverty rate. In 2005, the Coalition participated in a nation-wide federal government study, Understanding the Early Years (UEY), which gathered information to understand every child's preparedness for Kindergarten. The results of the Saint John study confirmed that children living in neighbourhoods with concentrated poverty significantly lagged behind their Saint John peers. The Coalition set about to change this picture and developed a new model of early learning and care for children and their families. This work led to the creation of the Early Learning Centre as one of four provincial demonstration projects, with the YMCA contracted to manage it. Learning from the research and leadership of the Hon. Margaret McCain and the Toronto First Duty model, the Saint John ELC has and continues to receive provincial funding via the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (EECD). Opened in 2009, the ELC staff and School staff work closely together to support the families and their smooth transition to school.

The Saint John ELC's community partnerships have and continue to play an essential role in the growth of its programs and its impact on children and their families. Another key has been ensuring that programs and services are designed to help parents, service providers and family members provide children with the best possible start in life. The ELC has grown by adapting to family and community needs and now offers a multi-faceted program and associated services. In its eight years of operation, the Centre has had the following results:

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- Increased Kindergarten Preparedness scores to 80 per cent from 40 per cent.
- Increased participation of families in drop-in playgroup programs by 300 per cent.
- Increased capacity to serve 7,450 family visits annually.
- Increased enrolment by 175 per cent in licensed programs.
- Created a Community Hub for young families.
- Enhanced 17 program offerings based on community need.
- Increased results in parent engagement with their children.
- Engaged 20 partner organizations.
- Provided work experience to three low-income residents.

In consideration of a new school being built in the South End the Early Learning Centre Advisory Committee is requesting dedicated space to continue to service the community in the following ways:

- To maintain the current service of our licensed Child Care Centre; we will require 5000 sq/feet of indoor space and 2000 sq/feet of outdoor space, to ensure that infants to school age children develop the competencies they need to be successful in school and in life. The proposed amalgamation of two schools and their communities will increase the number of families who could benefit from the ELC services. Potential to expand the ELC service will depend on the availability of space. According to latest census information, 320 children, aged 0 to 4 years, live in the South End and Waterloo Village neighbourhoods .
- To increase our current community programming capacity that allows the centre to support and empower families; an additional 3000 sq/feet of indoor space for partners such as FACE, Talk with Me, Family Resource Centre, Researchers and Health Care providers to provide families with the tools they need to succeed.

We would appreciate your support of the ELC being part of the 'new school' project and look forward to working together with you and community partners to help develop the new school, meet the early childhood needs of the families and positively contribute to the revitalization of the South Central Peninsula.

On behalf of the Early Learning Centre Advisory Committee,



for Steve Whitters
Chairperson

c.c. Adrienne Boudreau and Alice McGovern, YMCA
Silvia Borsic, Family Resource Centre (SJ)
Dr. Erin Schryer, Elementary Literacy Inc.
Dr. Annie Murphy, Developmental Pediatrician, Horizon Health
Steve Whitters and Monica Chaperlin, Business Community Anti-Poverty Initiative