



Submission To Standing Committee for 2024 Pre-Budget Consultation

Creating a Hub of Happiness

Presentation by

Kim Hiscott, Executive Director of Andrew Fleck Children's Services



Remarks: Kim Hiscott, Executive Director Andrew Fleck Children's Services

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Good afternoon and thank you very much for this opportunity to speak to you today – I am sure you are well aware of this wonderful Federal and Provincial collaborative initiative called the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC) program; since its implementation here in Ontario in March 2022 it has made a significant difference to families who are able to access a licensed child care space. Addressing the affordability of the cost of child care has enabled parents to enter the workforce but as we all predicted it has also led to significant waiting lists. Ontario's agreement includes expanding the number of licensed child care spaces and speaking as an existing multi-service, multi-site not-for-profit organization in Ottawa, we are ready and willing to proceed but we need assistance.

[Andrew Fleck Children's Services](#) (AFCS) has existed for over 100 years. We have 18 licensed group sites, co-located in a variety of settings (buildings we own, school spaces, workplaces, housing, post-secondary institutions, churches for example). We are also a licensed home child care agency with the capacity to support 350 self-employed home child care providers. In addition to licensed care, we offer Special Needs Resourcing Services, care in women's shelters, EarlyON services and more.

One key to our success is our focus on collaboration and community connections, let me explain by showcasing one example of this. Before 2020, so even before CWELCC was announced, we were having conversations with [Perley Health](#) - a well-known not-for-profit seniors residence and long-term care home in Ottawa - their CEO recently presented to this committee. Together we wanted to consider how we could integrate children and seniors – yes this has been done somewhat, there are examples of co-location, but our intention is true integration, where the children know the 'grandfriends' names and the seniors know the children – Andrew Fleck already has two community-based intergenerational locations and thanks to private funding these and the Perley are being set up as demonstration sites so we can share our success with others. The Perley is committed because they recognize the benefits not only for the seniors and children but also as employee recruitment and retention support, where the child care hours can mimic the shifts ultimately supporting working parents as effectively as possible.

So here we are today with a dedicated location, a keen partner, concept drawings, class D estimates and architects moving us to the building permit stage – AND approved CWELCC expansion spaces – wow! We should be good to go! Except the only funding approved is the CWELCC rates as of March 2022 which won't cover our operating expenses and a small amount of start-up funding, which won't cover the cost of construction.

My understanding is that for CWELCC expansion spaces, going forward, the cost of construction/leasehold improvements is to be rolled into occupancy costs and part of operating funding – leaving us to figure out financing – okay, we can do that but it is obvious that the CWELCC rates from March 2022 cannot cover those costs - so we are stuck – we cannot proceed with this project or our others without confirmation that our costs will be covered. This is not an Andrew Fleck exclusive issue, this is Ontario wide and needs to be addressed by the Province.

I am especially frustrated by the potential delay because we are well aware of what a difference this co-located program will make, definitely for staff and their children, as I have already mentioned, but also for the seniors, of varying abilities and mobilities living at the Perley. We have purposely planned for the early learning and child care program to be located right at the core of the campus, where the children will be seen and heard from both the interior and exterior spaces – their dedicated space will have windows where the children can see out and the seniors can see in, same with their outdoor area. We will have an open door, where grandfriends can spend time as they wish either on their own or if necessary accompanied. We have also planned that the children will eat their lunch in the central dining room - the engagement between generations will be magical. I invite you to take a look at our website where you will find videos and pictures that can't help but make you smile. There is a video from Australia that documents the social and health benefits seniors obtained by being part of an

intergenerational program, the results were astounding; there is a [video highlighting our current playgroup](#) at the Perley – one of the residences expressed it beautifully when she said “it’s a hub of happiness” and there is also my favourite picture where one of our preschool children is looking at one of the visiting ‘grandfriends’ – it is so obvious just how enamored she is with him.

Despite my current frustration let me be clear, I am a fan of CWELCC and what it has done for families – but the existing revenue replacement model, which was not supposed to be the approach but continues as we wait for the release of the funding formula, is not sustainable **plus** we want to expand to address the high waiting lists but **cannot** again because of the lack of commitment to cover the actual costs.



<https://vimeo.com/889275540?share=copy>

So what needs to happen?

Obviously, a funding formula – one that covers our actual costs and respects the compensation levels needed for us to attract and retain qualified staff to deliver the quality of services children deserve – I am sure I am repeating what you already know **but** what is also needed is a way to cover our capital construction costs.

Access to financing is one strategy but so is Capital Construction funding and that does not seem to be considered – we need construction funding that is based on actual costs versus an out of date formula – remember, under CWELCC we no longer have the individual ability to raise fees to cover funding shortfalls so the funding **has** to match our expenses.

I recognize that the implementation of CWELCC is a huge shift for our Province, but we do have great examples of expansion ready to go that can be key success stories – AFCS has multiple aspirational projects with keen collaborators lined up - my hope is that co-location whether it be with housing, employers’, senior services or other sectors will be a significant part of our planning going forward.

Thank you for your time – I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

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