

ECE Appreciation Day 2022 Remarks

Lois Mahon, RECE

Thank you for inviting me to speak, it is an honour especially this year I celebrate being an ECE for 50 years, and so I guess if nothing else I can speak with the insight of experience

I would like to thank OCBCC, it's Partners CUPE and others, for continuing to sponsor this day every year. Thanks too the City of Sudbury Children's Services for Celebrating it and to my esteemed colleagues thank you! Your commitment and dedication and the value you bring, it truly touches my heart!

I applaud the Worth More theme but I would like to challenge us to refine it a bit. We are worth more, but what is our Value?

We now know, we have scientific evidence to demonstrate the importance of early development. A leader in early development renowned in our province and in fact the world Dr Jean Clinton both in her book Love Builds brains and in her earlier research reminds us that early development is a Key Determinate in population health and wellbeing. She advised us that the scientific world now knows that it isn't a nature vs nurture question any more if fact it is nature interacting with nurture that builds brain function. Brain cells are turned on and activated by external stimulus. Positive external stimulus such as would be found in quality ELCC provided by ECE's

To that end she suggests that ECE's are human developers – neuro placticians neuro the brain and plasticians working with the not yet developed brains of children

Brain system and health systems get build early on Alternatively we know that stress changes how DNA gets messages and that can affect how our immune systems operate in later life. High quality experiences can help to change DNA expressions.

We also know that biology creates change in DNA expressions that can have impact over the next 100 years. I often say to ECE's if you don't think the work, you do is important remember you have the ability to impact change for 100 years! For our FN friends this is not new, they follow the path that plans for and includes 7 generations.

In Ontario our ELCC programs follow a pedagogy, a method of teaching that focuses on how does learning happen. In fact, as you know that is what it is called. Rather than an academic curriculum that teaches children to acquire knowledge we are co learners with children focusing on 4 foundations: belonging, wellbeing, engagement and expression, these foundations set a vision for all children's future potential. The foundations in my humble opinion are what all humans need for any future potential. They align with the

FN framework for a healthy life of hope/purpose/meaning and belonging. This pedagogy sets a firm groundwork for the successful future leaders of our country, for healthy relationships, for self-actualizing individuals for healthy communities.

I had the opportunity to listen to Lorrie Baird, Ann Marie Coughlin Pedagogical leaders in our province along with Dr Clinton in a session last week entitled Finding hope in agency in times of great change. At the beginning of the session Anne Marie suggested these conversations are heart, head and feet. In other words, we need to think, be reflective, to do that with compassion and with passion and to take action. I believe this is a good message for all of us in the ELCC sector today. In fact, I hope my words may inspire you to do just that.

The 3 questions that the session centred on were

1. Why is our work so important now
2. What if we put relationships at the heart of what we do and
3. What if we use ELCC to create a more vibrant, thoughtful and just society

All of these seem not only achievable to me given our pedagogy and what we know about early development they seem essential. Lorrie talked about the burn out and stress we currently are seeing in ELCC. She said we need to “flip the Script” we need to remember why we are so valuable, what makes us passionate and what is the purpose of our work. She believes this will help in these challenging times. I also believe this will help us as we help others to understand the value we bring. She also noted that after this global pandemic we all need to see the world in a defend way, now more than ever we need skills, passion, empathy. Like her I believe it is our children who will be the ones to create a new world and its up to us as human developers to create environments where child can develop the brain systems and health systems to create future healthy communities with successful individuals and families.

So, let me just recap here, what value do we have?

- We provide and promote positive early development a key determinate of population health and well being
- We have positive impact for the next 100 years
- We set the stage for optimum development including social intelligence, self-regulation, problem solving (all skills necessary for the 21 century, and what fortune 500 companies are looking for in leaders)
- We support children and families

Not to forget the economic value ELCC has.

Most analyses of the economic effect of early learning and care show that benefits – both short term and long term outweigh costs.

In 2021 the Conference Board of Canada has established a return of 1.67 to \$5.83 for every dollar invested in a system of ELCC.

When parents can access child care, they are more likely to enter the work force and stay employed.

Child care increases the labor force of participation of women.

At the height of the pandemic shut downs it was emergency child care that supported our essential workers so that they could keep us fed, protected, healthy. regrettably our ECEs were never recognized as essential themselves.

OCBCC said in their promotional material for today:

“our work must continue to ensure that we solve the child care workforce crisis and truly value the work of ECE and child care workers. We know that to expand the child care system to serve more families and to improve the quality of child care for young children, decent work and pay for child care workers are essential. ECEs’ working conditions are children’s learning conditions.”

We know, our leaders know, our governments know that we are in a work force crisis right now. I believe that it’s the value of ECE’s we must start with. Beth Deazely Registrar and CEO of the College of ECE in a recent conversation about ELCC work force said:

“WE are not only a work force. We are humans who have devoted our careers to help develop the next generation of humans. We bring deep professional expertise, rich personal experiences and a level of compassion that is unparalleled among professionals. We are also people with homes and families and health that deserve protection. We are the people you have trusted to safeguard and nurture what is most precious to you and we do it with joy.

All we ask is that you recognize what that is actually worth.”

I would like to challenge us all to first recognize and be proud of the value we bring but even more to help parents and families and community and government understand our value, once they know that they will also understand our worth.

Thank you