

Dear Ms. Olan-MacLean,

Thank you for your email of July 23, 2012 regarding the announcement that Niagara College will cease being the operator of the child care centre located on our Welland Campus, effective April 30, 2013. I appreciate the advocacy role and your organization's vision for child care. As you note, the ECE program has been operating at Niagara College for over 40 years, and we continue to be strong advocates for early childhood education.

The decision to cease being the operator of the centre was based on a number of environmental and organizational issues and was considered extensively prior to the announcement. Changes to day care demand, driven by the extension of full day kindergarten and greater school-based before and after day care programs, has changed the financial viability of stand-alone day care centres such as ours.

Equally as challenging, our centre has been incurring significant deficits in operation, with internal College resources being called on to sustain services that were not core to our mandate, while enrolment and service demands for core services have been increasing. The College had to prioritize what services it can sustain internally, with a focus on its core mandate for academic programming. The decision to cease operating the centre is not unique to Niagara College, as several colleges have made similar announcements in recent years.

Note that Niagara College is seeking to have the centre operated by a community partner rather than the College after April 2013. This decision was made after discussions with the Region of Niagara, which provides the majority of funds to operate the day care, and was made with the understanding that we would be soliciting requests for proposals for an operator that would continue to meet high program quality standards and continue to provide opportunities for student engagement at the site.

There are certainly qualified organizations, including non-profit organizations with significant day care centre operations, currently providing services in the Niagara region that meet these requirements.

Niagara College's child care centre was opened in the mid 1990's through a grant by the Government of Ontario Services as a community resource, not as a lab school. The College intends that the facility will continue to be operated in this manner if at all possible. The centre provides only a small number of placements for the students in our programs, with the vast majority of students having placements integrated into day cares throughout the Niagara region and beyond.

I trust that this provides clarity on the future path for the day care centre and the rationale for our move forward. While a very difficult decision, I believe that this decision is the best one for our College and the community given the current circumstances.

Sincerely,
Dan Patterson, Ph.D.
President
Niagara College